Creating Risky Spaces:
Writer's Workshop and Students' Perceptions of Resilience

by

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Abstract

This study explores the connections between the writer's workshop approach and high school students' perceptions of their own resilience. The research includes multiple-case studies of student participants being taught in a high school writer's workshop, as well as one teacher participant. The data related to the factors of resilience and the writer's workshop was triangulated using the following methods: field notes observing teacher instruction, student work, and peer conferencing; individual, semi-structured interviews with the teacher and students; and documents including teacher handouts and student writing and reflections. Utilizing hermeneutic and psychoanalytic theoretical lenses, the data was coded to find patterns and emerging themes: using process to build confidence; the power of writing; anxiety, risk, and failure; collaboration and communication; and the role of the teacher as an acknowledger, mentor, and guide alongside. Through these themes, the study finds that the writer's workshop is a valid and valuable approach for the high school English classroom in both the teaching of writing and fostering many factors of resilience in students.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Jennifer Gross. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "CONNECTING WRITER'S WORKSHOP AND SECONDARY STUDENTS' SELF-PERCEPTION OF RESILIENCE", No. Pro00078987, MARCH 21, 2018.

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Preface iii

Acknowledgments iv

Table of Contents v

List of Tables x

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

New Beginnings 1

Frozen. 1

A discovery. 2

A new beginning. 3

Unexpected surprises. 4

Brief overview of the study. 6

Resilience 6

Anxiety. 6

Why resilience? 9

Resilient youth. 9

A resilience deficit. 10

Resilience and writer's workshop. 11

Purpose of this Study 12

Theoretical Lenses 14

Hermeneutics. 14

Psychoanalysis. 17

A dialogue. 21

In Closing 22

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature 24

Overview **24**

Writer's Workshop **24**

Writer's workshop and theory. 24

A brief history. 26

Secondary schools & writer's workshop. 28

Strengths of writer's workshop. 30

Building motivation and encouraging exploration through choice. 30

Exploring and expressing identity and thought through voice. 31

Writing alongside your students. 32

Collaboration, community, and empathy. 34

Perseverance through process. 35

Vulnerability and risk. 36

Self-directedness and independence while building relationships. 37

Factors of Resilience **39**

Relationships, interpersonal skills, and empathy. 39

Planning and goal setting, developing hope, and building empowerment. 40

Problem solving, safe risk-taking, and fostering coping skills. 41

Creating high expectations. 42

Engagement. 42

Self-control, restraint, and taking responsibility for your actions. 43

Development of identity and autonomy. 43

Tying Together Writer's Workshop and Resilience **44**

Writing and anxiety. 44

Writer's workshop and building resilience. 45

In Closing **47**

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods **48**

Situating Myself **48**

Multiple-Case Studies **49**

Ethical Considerations **50**

Participants and data. 50

Recruitment. 52

Descriptions **54**

Setting. 54

Participants. 56

Student participants. 56

Teacher participant. 58

Data Collection **59**

Data Analysis **63**

Limitations **65**

In Closing **66**

Chapter 4: Findings **67**

Using Process to Build Confidence **69**

Learning and respecting differences in approach and process. 70

The importance of preparation and planning. 72

Process, practice, and drafting. 74

Questioning and reflection. 77

Seeing progress and celebrating growth. 79

Work and responsibility. 80

The Power of Writing **82**

Students as writers. 83

Finding value in personal and creative writing forms. 84

Writing to know. 85

Enjoyment in writing. 87

Anxiety, Risk, and Failure **88**

Anxiety. 89

Risk. 91

Failure. 96

Collaboration and Communication **97**

Fostering relationships. 98

Fostering academic dialogue. 101

Fostering leadership. 108

Fostering empathy. 109

The Role of the Teacher: Acknowledger, Mentor, and Guide Alongside **111**

Gaining trust. 112

Acknowledger. 114

Model, mentor, guide, sounding board, and participant-observer. 117

Learner alongside. 120

Teaching Writer's Workshop in High School **122**

Teacher resistance. 122

Teacher perceptions. 124

In Closing **126**

Chapter 5: Conclusion **128**

New Beginnings **128**

A Summary of the Study **129**

Lessons **130**

Future Research Directions **131**

Creating Spaces to Build Resilience **132**

References **134**

Appendix A: Research Ethics Board Approval **149**

Appendix B: Teacher Participant Consent Form **150**

Appendix C: Student Participant Parent/Guardian Consent Form **153**

Appendix D: Student Participant Assent Form **156**

Appendix E: Interview Guides **159**

List of Tables

Table 1. Student Case Study Participants 58

Table 2. Themes Emerging from Data Sources 68

Chapter 1: Introduction

New Beginnings

Make New Mistakes. Make glorious, amazing mistakes. Make mistakes nobody's ever made before. Don't freeze, don't stop, don't worry that it isn't good enough, or it isn't perfect, whatever it is: art, or love, or work or family or life. Whatever it is you're scared of doing, Do it. (Gaiman, 2011)

Frozen.

At twenty-two, I entered the teaching profession, prepared to inspire students through English Language Arts: to become better writers and to become better people. Despite this clear focus and drive, I was, as many beginning teachers are, terrified. Terrified of failing my students. Terrified of students failing my course. Terrified of making mistakes. As such, I plotted my course according to those expert teachers who had mentored and guided me. I created clear checklists and rubrics, complete with curricular outcomes. I wrote entire booklets with brightly colour-coded cover pages, with tables of contents, which would walk students step-by-step through specific writing assignments. I broke each writing task down into small chunks, holding students' hands through the intimidating processes of writing. I wanted to make things clear for students. I wanted to see them succeed. I wanted to make things easy for them. I wanted them to be less afraid than I was.

A few years ago, despite this arsenal of, what Kent den Heyer (2009) calls "the politics of clarity" (p. 346), I became frustrated in my attempts to teach writing. I had been teaching secondary English for eight years, and I was baffled by how many students

seemed to plateau in their writing. Many students would hand in piece after piece — on which I would meticulously write feedback, spending hours with stacks of paper and draining pens — only to have the next batch of writing reflect a similar quality with few improvements. True, some improved steadily, but they were the self-motivated ones, the ones who, I was certain, would have succeeded regardless of their teacher. But what of the others? Did my feedback change nothing? Were they not reading it? Was my printing undecipherable and they too shy to ask questions? Why was I not connecting with them?

In addition, I was struggling with the desire to make a genuine difference in their lives. With each new group of students that entered my classroom, I felt a familiar ambivalence. Along with the rush of the new and the potential for possibilities, I was met with a certain amount of doubt: What could I help them to find that they did not already know? What could I teach them of value? When they left me, what would I have given them that would make their lives more meaningful? If I couldn't even help them to leave me as better writers, what further purpose could my class have in their lives?

It felt as though my students were frozen, and I was frozen along with them.

A discovery.

Walking down the hallway during a preparatory block one afternoon, I casually observed a new colleague sending small groups of students outside of her classroom, into the library, unsupervised. They were talking about their writing. I was surprised by their conversations: "You need to cut the clutter here." "I don't really understand what you're trying to say in this part." "What do you think is at the heart of my piece?" As I peered voyeuristically back inside her classroom, other students remained, busily writing on

paper and on screens; still others were staring off into the distance or at walls, thoughtfully. My colleague was seated at her desk, quietly conversing with a student, pointing to their writing, the student talking as much or more than his teacher.

Perplexed, I approached her at the end of the day. What was this strange scene she was directing? Did it work?

A new beginning.

I discovered that these bizarre goings on were the result of the writer's workshop, an approach used to teach the writing process, which, despite being completely unknown to me, has been popular in English Language Arts classrooms for decades. Common elements of the writer's workshop include predictable structures, mini-lessons, independent writing time, conferencing with teachers and peers, student choice in writing and form, revision and editing, and publication or sharing (Atwell, 2002; Calkins, 1983; Elbow, 1998; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008; Murray, 2009d).

At first, I was resistant. Using this approach seemed to go against much of what I had done for years in my classroom. How could I prepare students, safely, for an assignment, if they were working in different places, at different paces, and on different pieces? How could I ensure productivity if I allowed them out of my sight? How could I entrust their peers to give strong enough feedback? And, perhaps most importantly, how could I carve out the class time for this intense process when I often struggled to cover all that needed to be taught using my current methods? It was clear that writer's workshop would be a place in which I would have to give up much of my coveted control. Mistakes would be inevitable. As an ever-recovering perfectionist, this was daunting.

However, I couldn’t betray what I was seeing in my colleague's classroom, and I couldn’t pretend that what I was currently doing was working to my satisfaction.

My initial adaptation process, six years ago, involved borrowing all I could from this colleague and doing voracious reading into the authors she suggested. In my classroom each day, I opened with a new writing prompt, encouraging students to write quickly and freely. I had students look at mentor texts: we were all writers, and we could now “steal the moves” from the writers we were studying. I chose Thursdays to act as “Writer’s Workshop” days, in which we would begin with a mini-lesson on an element of writing. The rest of the class was self-directed by students: they could work on their writing, conference with me, or sign up to leave the room (in order to keep the room a quiet writing space) and conference with each other. Although students were still sometimes asked to write in certain specific forms or on specific topics, I regularly opened up choice in order to include possibilities of personal and creative writing, forms many students had not used since junior high school.

I was learning to let go.

Unexpected surprises.

As I had hoped, students’ writing abilities seemed to grow more significantly. I noticed strength building in their ideas, support, voice, and mechanics. In my province, Alberta, students write standardized provincial examinations, called diploma examinations, at the end of most of their grade twelve academic courses. These examinations currently make up 30% of students’ final marks in a course. In English Language Arts, half of the examination’s grade is based on a reading comprehension test,

and the other half is based on two written assignments. Like my students' course marks, their standardized test results, especially on the writing portion, began to improve.

In addition to writing, I began to notice other developments in students that seemed to be linked to the writer's workshop. Many students appeared to be more engaged in what they were writing, excited about opportunities to explore and play in their language. I remember the smile that flashed across a student's face when I told him he could write a short story inspired by a video game, or the excitement of another student who was told that the manual she had written in my class for the new lighting board would be used to help teach in our theatre tech program. Students began to find their voices and often became more comfortable expressing themselves through their opinions and stories. Students took ownership of our one-on-one whispered conference conversations at my desk, and they signed up to give feedback on each other's writing. Students began finding me before or after school to talk about their work, or would share work with me digitally, looking for input. While some students embraced these opportunities for choice, a search for identity, and to build relationships with me and their peers, others needed a push. I had created a space where risk-taking, while fairly safe, was mandatory.

As I marvelled at the work being done by my students, and at who they were becoming in my class, I wanted to know more about the writer's workshop. Why was it working? What else was it affording my students? What else were students learning from this approach? Was my classroom becoming a place for them to grow in ways outside of the realms assessable by provincial examinations?

Brief overview of the study.

As a result of these questions, I decided to research connections between the writer's workshop approach and resilience. Through classroom visits and interviews, I studied students and teachers in a high school English classroom in which the writer's workshop approach was being used. I attempted to determine whether or not students' perceptions of their own resilience was connected to their work in the writer's workshop. In addition, as a way to help make sense of the data collected, I turned to the theoretical lenses of hermeneutics (especially in regards to collaboration and meaning making in hermeneutic dialogue), psychoanalysis (especially in relation to play), and the dialogue between the two (most particularly, through conceptualizing safe risk-taking as essential to learning).

Resilience

Anxiety.

In the midst of my writer's workshop journey, I became increasingly aware of something integral that students at my school appeared to be lacking. In the staffroom, I heard many of my colleagues speak their concerns about students' inability to cope through challenge, feeling powerless to help. We were finding what both administration and teachers called an "epidemic" of students being absent for assessment days, some being excused "sick" by parents for every exam in every subject. I found out that a particularly hard working student was literally ironing her notes at night because, she believed, everything had to be perfect in order for her to study properly due to an extreme

fear of failure. Although I've always caught students handing in plagiarized work, I have seen a recent increase in plagiarism — not because students run out of time or are uncertain about the assignment — but because they feel worried that their work will never be good enough, breaking down in tears when I confront them. Counsellor's offices are constantly full. Sessions offered on test anxiety are packed with panicked bodies.

Anxiety is an issue growing in attention. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (2017), 53 percent of Canadians believe anxiety and depression to be an "epidemic." And Canadians are not alone. In 2018, the anxiety score in the United States was 51 (derived by mean scores on a 0-100 scale), which saw a five-point jump from 2017 (American Psychiatric Association, 2018). Worldwide, it is estimated that up to 33.7 percent of the population are affected by an anxiety disorder in their lifetime (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015). Youth anxiety seems to be on the rise as well. In a 2018 student survey, for the first time since its initial tracking in 2013, over 50 percent of female students in Ontario showed signs of moderate to serious psychological distress, a term used to refer to anxiety or depression (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2018). Suggested causes of anxiety range from genetics (Eley, 1999; Lau, Eley, & Stevenson, 2006) to social media use (Primack et al., 2017; Vanucci, Flannery, & McCauley Ohannessian, 2017); however, it is unclear whether anxiety is on the rise, or if we are simply more receptive to it with a growing awareness of mental health issues and changes in medical reporting (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015).

In a paper first published in 1930, psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1991) suggests that people need to experience a certain, tolerable, amount of anxiety in order to form

symbols, to learn. However, as Bibby (2011) explains, "if the anxiety provoked by the experience is too great, or if we shut off from it completely, then no symbol formation is possible and learning cannot take place" (p. 24). Essentially, we need anxiety to learn, but too much of it can cause us to shut down completely. D. W. Winnicott (1991), a psychoanalyst who specialized in work with children, suggests that play and creativity can help to address anxiety. It is a challenge, then, for teachers and schools to allow anxiety to exist but — perhaps through creativity and play — to ensure that it does not become overbearing.

It is important that teachers and schools address anxiety in students as it affects their quality of life and their ability to succeed in the classroom (Tramonte & Willms, 2010). There are various strategies that teachers can implement to help students with their anxiety. There are many tools that have been shown to reduce general anxiety, which can be used in educational practice: positive self-talk, which encourages a positive inner and outer dialogue when thinking or talking about yourself (Francesco et al., 2010; Lohaus & Klein-Hessling, 2003; Margolis, 1990); cognitive coping strategies, which utilize cognitive efforts to manage in the face of anxiety (Legerstee, Garnefski, Verhulst, & Utens, 2011; Masia Warner, Colognori, & Lynch, 2018); and mindfulness, a meditation-based practice allowing for work with stress (Barbosa et al., 2013; Foureur, Besley, Burton, Yu, & Crisp, 2013; Robins, Keng, Ekbald, & Brantley, 2012; Song & Lindquist, 2015). Although all of these tools are valuable, and some can be seen in the writer's workshop, I have chosen a different approach in relation to anxiety.

Rather than dealing specifically with anxiety, which feels problem-oriented, I have chosen to focus on resilience, a potential proactive solution to anxiety.

Why resilience?

Resilience can often be challenging to define; however, various researchers suggest that it involves a person's ability to cope with, or be successful in coming through, situations of stress or adversity (Castro, Johnson, & Smith, 2008; Cefai, 2008; Donnon & Hammond, 2007; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994); this is the definition I will use for this study. If resilience has the power to help a person cope with stress, building resilience would have the potential to allow students to face the stresses they were reacting to in high school — the pressures of testing, feeling unprepared, fear of failure — with strength. Ideally, fostering resilience would allow students, proactively, to work through challenges without becoming so anxious. As our school — a school, at the time, of approximately 1200 students in a relatively affluent area in Edmonton — was working on a new mission statement, the high school teaching staff decided that fostering resilience needed to be a key focus, which encouraged me to dig more deeply into researching resilience as well.

Resilient youth.

Fostering resilience in youth is an important task for educators. In school, students who show resilience are more likely to stay focused on their work (Gordon Rouse, Bamaca-Gomez, Newman, P., & Newman, B., 2001; Waxman et al., 2004), have stronger skills in problem solving (Gordon Rouse et al. 2001), have stronger academic performance (Stoffel & Cain, 2018), and have lower dropout rates (Gordon Rouse et al.,

2001). Resilient youth are proven to face future adversity more successfully (Donnon & Hammond, 2007); have lower depression and anxiety (Stoffel & Cain, 2018); and are less likely to bully, vandalize, keep concealed weapons, and consume alcohol (Donnon & Hammond, 2007). In addition, resilience is linked to many valuable attributes such as strong internal control (Castro et al., 2008), positive self-attitude (Gordon Rouse et al., 2001), empowerment (Stoffel & Cain, 2018), and the ability to take responsibility for one's actions (Castro et al., 2008).

A resilience deficit.

Many studies have focused on the importance of resilience in students deemed "at risk," such as those who come from racial minorities or low-income families (Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003). Studies find that it is important to build resilience in students who are constantly faced with adversity and challenge in their lives (Benard, 1997; Gordon Rouse et al., 2001; Wang et al., 1994).

However, more recent research is also pointing to the importance of building resilience in students who come from more affluent backgrounds. It is theorized that children raised in homes with strong socio-economic standings, often being protected from adversity, may miss the opportunity to build resilience (Koplewicz, Gurian, & Williams, 2009). Researchers also suggest that families in which both parents work long hours — as well as families with "helicopter parents," constantly hovering over their children — may be potential causes for a deficit in resilience among these more affluent youth (Koplewicz et al., 2009; Stoffel & Cain, 2018).

Despite its clear importance, resilience is a skill that is in need of development. Many university counsellors feel the strain of working with an increasing number of students who are incapable of dealing with, what they call, “the usual stresses of college life: bad grades, breakups, being on their own for the first time” (Wilson, 2015). Research psychology professor Peter Gray (2015) claims that, in his experience in talking with colleagues who teach in universities, “students are increasingly seeking help for, and apparently having emotional crises over, problems of everyday life” because “for many of them, failure is seen as catastrophic and unacceptable” (para. 1).

If, as Lois Murphy (1987) describes, “the resilient child is oriented toward the future, is living ahead, with hope” (p. 101), the child without resilience is trapped in an overwhelming present, struggling in the moment, hopeless.

Resilience and writer’s workshop.

If resilience is learned from bouncing back from adversity, teachers are understandably concerned that it will not be learned in an education system that seems to avoid adversity: where they are unable to take marks off for late work, students can perpetually re-do assignments, there is constant contact with home, and zeroes are only awarded reluctantly. Terms like “bubble wrapping” children and “helicopter-parenting” are often used to discuss how parents and teachers alike are protecting students from adversity. Essentially, teaching students to overcome failure is challenging in a system where failure is guarded against or removed.

As I continued using the writer’s workshop, I began to see evidence of ways for students to successfully face challenges, failures, and adversity in my classroom. Students

were encouraged to take risks in their writing, were asked to face vulnerability and fear in sharing their work with others, and were learning that reworking or abandoning drafts that were failing them was an opportunity for growth. In addition, in accordance with Winnicott's (1991) theories that play and creativity can help young people work through anxiety, the writer's workshop can facilitate an environment in which these areas can be explored.

Purpose of this Study

I began to wonder, then, if the use of the writer's workshop was fostering resilience in my students. During my early scholarly reading into the writer's workshop, I found that there was a clear gap linking the writer's workshop and resilience. In addition, there were very few studies incorporating writer's workshop in a high school environment. This research study arose out of a desire to understand the possible connections between writer's workshop and resilience — in effect, to close this gap.

The study also comes from a desire to become stronger in my practice. Teachers are often driven to guide their students beyond subject matter. True, we want them to learn algebra and grammar, but there are other skills, both inside and outside of our written curricula, that we know to be important in students' continuing lives. Aoki (2004) describes a similar "pedagogic situation" as "a living in tensionality — a tensionality that emerges, in part, from indwelling in a zone between two curriculum worlds: the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experiences" (p. 159). We seek to teach students skills that they can learn in our classrooms, and that will aid them on various

paths they take throughout their lives. I want to better understand how I can make space in my classroom for growth that will allow students to become stronger writers, while also becoming more resilient. Through this study, I hope to find ways to strengthen my teaching.

The purpose of this study is to explore, document, and interpret the experiences of high school students being taught using the writer's workshop approach, and to report on the connections with their self-perception of resilience. Discovering connections between the writer's workshop and resilience may provide English teachers with a practical means of teaching resilience in a classroom environment. The main research question that guides this study is:

- *What connections can be made between the writer's workshop process and high school students' perception of resilience?*

I use the word "perception" as I acknowledge the challenge in actually assessing levels of student resilience. Although I have found some scales in order to measure things like grit and resilience, I also came to see resilience as something that could be developed, but may not be revealed or used until a later time. As such, rather than claiming to actually be able to measure student resilience, I am looking to discuss students' perception of their own resilience.

I also became aware, throughout the study, of other questions that eventually rose to the surface. Some additional sub-questions for my study are:

- *What are teachers' perceptions of connections between the writer's workshop process and high school students' resilience?*

- *What are the impacts of the writer's workshop process in a high school setting?*
- *What might allow for the writer's workshop process to be successfully used in a high school setting?*

In attempting to answer these questions, I utilize hermeneutics and psychoanalysis as theoretical lenses through which to view my data. From hermeneutics, I primarily use ideas surrounding communication and collaboration, through hermeneutic dialogue, as tools with which to make meaning together. From psychoanalysis, I focus on ideas of play and their relation to the writer's workshop classroom and resilience. I also look at the dialogue opened by both lenses to consider the importance of risk to learning and to the process of this research.

Theoretical Lenses

These two lenses, while different, have come together for me in my research and my understanding of both resilience and writer's workshop. I will briefly explain the key elements of each lens.

Hermeneutics.

Central to hermeneutics is the process of communication and collaboration (Gadamer, 2006; Jardine, 2002; Slattery, Krasny, & O'Malley, 2007; Smith, 1999a). Understanding the limitations of a single person's perspective or horizon, hermeneutics suggests that understanding occurs when the horizons of individuals are fused (Gadamer, 2006). Paradoxically, a hermeneutic dialogue, intent upon fusing horizons with others, begins with understanding the self. Gadamer (2006) explains that "philosophical

hermeneutics concludes that understanding is in fact only possible when one brings one's own presuppositions into play!" (p. 45). As such, beginning with the self — with its traditions, prejudices, and horizons — is an essential starting place in order to engage in a hermeneutic dialogue.

As many writing theorists say that we write in order to understand what we know, writing is a natural place in which to begin to understand the self. Murray (2009b) suggests that, in teaching the writing process, we actually teach "the process of discovery through language. It is the process of exploration of what we should know and what we feel about what we know through language" (p. 2). This view of writing as a process of self-understanding and self-awareness, especially when encouraged in the context of a writer's workshop, can move the writer's purpose beyond the understanding of basic thoughts and ideas. The teacher, too, must explore themselves in adapting the writer's workshop. They cannot hide behind an approach or a lesson. In order to use a writer's workshop approach, I had to become aware of my own place and limitations, I had to see the reality of my practice before I was able to open myself to the possibility of a dialogue with another way of teaching.

In hermeneutic understanding, after deep introspection, you are able to enter into a dialogue that can lead to the possible fusing of horizons. While Gadamer (2006) posits that understanding uses dialogue or conversation, he also explains that much of the speaking together to which we are accustomed is not an invitation for open and questioning dialogue:

> As we know only too well, a conversation is not possible if one of the partners believes himself or herself to be in a clearly superior position in comparison with the other person, and assumes that he or she possesses a prior knowledge of the erroneous pre-judgments in which the other is entangled. But if one does this, one actually locks oneself into the circle of one's own prejudices. (p. 51)

Central to hermeneutics, then, is a genuine participation in open collaboration. Seeing the limitations of a single person's perspective or horizon, hermeneutics suggests that understanding occurs when the horizons of individuals are fused (Gadamer, 2006). Gadamer (1975) argues that "communication always demands a continuing exchange of views and statements" (p. 315). We are unable to create meaningful ideas on our own, having to open ourselves up to dialogue.

In the writer's workshop, students are called to this conversation and collaboration through both student and teacher feedback. As Penny Kittle (2008) describes, discussing her own high school writer's workshop, "collaboration is at the heart of our work" (p. 63). David Smith (1999a) explains that "hermeneutic pedagogy […] requires a giving of oneself over to conversation with young people and building a common shared reality in a spirit of self-forgetfulness, a forgetfulness which is also a form of finding oneself in relation to others" (p. 39). As writer's workshop teachers, we are neither the keepers of knowledge, nor the judges of good and bad writing. We find ourselves in a place of shared knowledge with students, likewise giving ourselves to this newly found relationship formed by the writing process. Our feedback and conferences are places for us to listen and fuse horizons. To understand. Through this hermeneutic

dialogue, not only can writing be strengthened and impacted, but students can learn to interact with others in a meaningful way in order to be open-minded and questioning throughout their lives.

As a researcher, too, I set to place myself in this collaborative, curious place of fusion and interpretation, recognizing that the inherent questionableness of life is a key part of hermeneutic understanding. Nixon (2017) explains that, in Gadamer's hermeneutic imagination, "understanding follows the question wherever it leads" (p. 61). We must always be open to questions, and all of the possible generations and horizons they may lead us to, in order to connect, relate, and fuse horizons. Inevitably, this will bring discomfort and strangeness; however, in hermeneutics, this is the way to find truth and understanding. In my research, hermeneutics inspires and encourages me to remain questioning and curious, continually searching for meaning, in a fusion of understanding with others.

Like the fusion of horizons in hermeneutic understanding, in this study, I choose to fuse elements of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis in order to create meaning.

Psychoanalysis.

Freud's (1955) notion of teaching as an "impossible profession" (p. 273) is referenced by many psychoanalytically-inclined scholars (Bibby, 2011; Britzman, 1998; Farley & Robertson, 2009; Felman, 1982) as a challenge to the educator's desire for mastery and meaning. Deborah Britzman (1998), for instance, suggests that, while students may learn, teachers may be unaware of what motivates that learning (p. 38). As teachers, we cannot simply hand knowledge off to our students. In addition, learning the

complex and personal nature of what motivates or encourages a student to want to learn is elusive. Even when something does work, it can be challenging to determine how or why it has worked, making it impossible to replicate. In addition, there appears to be no guarantee whether or not that same practice will work with another student, or indeed, the same student at different times.

As mentioned previously, in teaching writing as I had in the past, I had begun to feel that teaching writing pedagogy, and teaching in general, might actually be impossible. When students did well, I felt that it was in spite of my teaching, not because of it. I knew that those students were motivated, but I could not link their motivation to the work I was doing, and I could not determine why other students were unmotivated in the same classroom. Only in this feeling of loss and lack of control was I able to become open to new ways of teaching – or possibly non-teaching – that exists in the writer's workshop approach.

If, as teachers, our pedagogical acts will not ensure desired results, what *can* we do? Perhaps, instead of expecting that our direct teaching will lead to student mastery, we can turn to another theory of psychoanalysis: play. As D. W. Winnicott (1991) suggests, "it is in playing, and perhaps only in playing, [that] the child or adult is free to be creative" (p. 53). As creative thinking is essential to complex learning, and is certainly essential in writing, these ideas regarding play are valuable when motivating students to engage in the writing process.

Play is essential to curiosity and creativity, both of which are necessary for learning. Bibby (2011) explains that "play involves creativity rather than rule-following,

there is a degree of spontaneity and involvement or concentration, a wrapped-up-in-it-ness that speaks of engagement and focus" (p. 54). This calls for a classroom in which spaces for creativity, spontaneity, and engagement are able to flourish. These spaces often do not exist in a teacher-focused classroom where lecture and organized seat-work prevail. This freedom can be seen in the way that a writer's workshop classroom often allows students to create their own pace and structure, as well as its openness to allowing students choice of topic and genre in which to write.

In addition to creating a place where students are free to play, teachers must also encourage and foster the play that they have introduced. This openness to play, however, takes bravery on the teacher's part, as they must be able to "tolerate not knowing where the wild thought will take them" (Bibby, 2011, p. 112) or their students. Rather than losing sight of the interest and enjoyment of working with children, Farley and Robertson (2009) suggest that psychoanalysis in education "seeks to restore a more playful perspective" (p. 84). Creating a space for the uncalculated, spontaneous, "wild" nature of play often seems counter-intuitive in later grades. However, this expectation that play will be lost may also be holding students back from creative thinking and learning.

Play is often seen as a thing of childhood, encouraged to be given up in adulthood. Similarly, the writer's workshop is given up in older grades by teachers of high school. Winnicott (1991) suggests that, as we grow older, play is often replaced by more mature "*experiencing*" of illusion in the form of "artistic creativity and appreciation" (p. 5). This replacing of play with experiencing occurs just as, earlier, play itself replaced transitional objects — objects, such as blankets or teddy bears, that help

babies to see themselves as separate from others, especially their mothers. These are all natural stages in becoming more independent, in growing up. Indeed, in many ways, artistic creativity, expressed through the writer's workshop, is itself a form of play. Moreover, these experiences of artistic creativity do not necessarily replace play, but are new interpretations of play, interpretations that are more socially acceptable as we grow older. This is a form of sublimation: a psychic phenomenon in which socially unacceptable, libidinal, instinctual impulses are transformed into more socially acceptable actions. In a discussion of Winnicott's theories of play, Gargiulo (1992) suggests that sublimation is "closely related, if not identical, to the *symbolic use* of objects in this place of play, manifested by the capacity to play" (p. 332).

As students enter the English Language Arts classroom, the transitional object of a blanket or teddy bear may be replaced by a pen and journal, or a computer. Effectively, this ability to think and write creatively becomes a new transition — sublimation through writing. In this space, an adolescent is allowed to experience healthy illusion: just as a child may fantasize and play games with their blanket or teddy bear, so, too, can young people fantasize and play creatively in writing. In this way, through this writing, they may also have the opportunity to find the self. In teaching, through my willingness to lose control, writer's workshop began to open a world of play for my students and myself. I was playful in my teaching, creating lessons that became open to student interpretation.

If mastery through direct instruction is, as suggested by psychoanalysis, impossible, and learning is only made possible through play, this focus on play guides my research as well as my views on education itself. Moreover, this focus instructs me to not

passively expect knowledge to be imparted by simply watching my participants, or following a perfectly crafted plan. It invites me to be curious, to play, and to follow my own "wild thoughts."

A dialogue.

Perhaps the strongest draw, for me, to both of these approaches, is the call to address risk. In seeing my students struggle with anxiety, and noticing how the writer's workshop encourages a healthy and productive relationship with anxiety, I began to also see the early possible connections between the writer's workshop and resilience.

In psychoanalysis, Bibby (2011) explains the complex emotions felt when we learn. Bibby suggests that learning is inherently risky and dangerous; however, this is not only because there is potential for failure. It is also risky because students wish to please their teachers. Often, the psychoanalytic concept of transference can occur in student-teacher relationships. Feelings once felt towards a parent can be subconsciously transferred to a teacher. In this way, students may feel love for their teacher and crave their teacher's acceptance. This increases anxiety around the risk of failure as the failure may lead to rejection from someone they now, through transference, love. In this way, learning itself is a risk. Britzman (1998) also discusses risk in learning, suggesting that "having to learn something is actually felt as an injury to narcissism, for learning reminds the learner that the ego is not all" (p. 25). Accepting that there are things we must still learn admits that we do not know everything. This act in itself is humbling. According to psychoanalytic theory, any kind of true learning puts students in a vulnerable state. They

must accept that they do not know in order to learn, and they also wish to please themselves and others in demonstrating their ability to learn.

Participating in hermeneutic understanding is a challenge that requires openness, humility, and trust that may make many individuals uncomfortable. It is risky. Its constant circling and unfinished nature also makes it hard work. Caputo (1987) sees hermeneutics as the “restoring of its life to its original difficulty” (p. 1). According to hermeneutics, learning and living should be a constant, circular process of challenging what we know, with others, in order to make new meaning. Gadamer (2006) explains that, each time we search for meaning in hermeneutic understanding and introspection, we risk seeing our previous judgments as untrue. If people are to be willing to expose their own horizons, and fuse their horizons with others, vulnerability must be shown, and risk taken.

I, too, am drawn to risk in my research. I was cautioned by peers that the research ethics requirements to work with student participants was rigorous, lengthy, and rarely attempted by master’s students. The balance between teaching high school, research, coursework, and motherhood was precarious. But this place — of risk, of anxiety, of creativity, of play, of collaboration — is a place of learning. It is my education.

In Closing

I came to this study inspired by my own story as a teacher of writing who is passionate about helping students to build their resilience. While I believe that writer’s workshop has been positive in my classroom, I wished to engage in more formal research in order to make connections between student resilience and writer’s workshop.

Resilience is important in helping students to proactively combat anxiety, a problem that is encountered by many young people. I intend to use elements of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis as lenses in this research. In the next chapter, I will review pertinent literature to this study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Overview

The purpose of this literature review is to provide more information related to the writer's workshop, resilience, and the connections between the two. Over the following pages, I will give more detail related to the writer's workshop approach including its organization and history, explain the theories that inform the writer's workshop approach, discuss the reasons that many English Language Arts teachers do not use this approach, and explain the strengths that demonstrate its benefits regardless of the instructional age of the writers being taught. In order to understand its complexities, and place them in an educational context, I will also discuss various factors that are believed to make up resilience. Lastly, through a discussion of anxiety encountered in the writing classroom, introducing potential practices that may help foster resilience, and posing the question of how writing engages with these practices, I will make connections between the writer's workshop and resilience.

Writer's Workshop

Writer's workshop and theory.

As the writer's workshop works through different stages and drafts of writing, it is often associated with writing process theory. Early theorists of writing process theory suggest that learning to write is best studied as a process rather than as a study of products. Donald Murray (2009b) explains that "no matter how careful our criticisms, they do not help the student since when we teach composition we are not teaching a

product, we are teaching a process" (p. 1). Most scholars of the writing process suggest that it includes elements of pre-writing, writing, and re-writing; however, the specific terminology varies (Calkins, 1983; Elbow, 1998; Emig, 1971; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008; Murray, 2009c; Murray, 2009d). In his work related to teaching writing to elementary school students, Donald Graves (2003) suggests that teachers look to professional writers to learn how they produce texts; despite the difference in age and experience, he argues that the processes of "real" writers can be used in our classrooms. According to writing process theory, writing is a process and should be taught as such.

For some, the writing process seems inorganic. Barbara Couture (1999) describes her observation of a group of Detroit public school teachers: "I learned from them that on Monday morning, in each of their English classes, their students must do 'pre-writing'; on Wednesday they must 'draft' their papers; and on Friday, without fail, they must 'revise' them" (p. 30). Critics of writing process theory often suggest that it is overly formulaic and generalized (Kent, 1999; Olsen, 1999; Petraglia, 1999).

Post-process theory reacts to this overly prescribed writing process. It "endorses the fundamental idea that no codifiable or *generalizable* writing process exists or could exist" (Kent, 1999, p. 1). Instead, it assumes that writing is a public act, requiring interpretation, and is always situated in context (Kent, 1999). Post-process theorists also argue that the rigid and formulaic nature of the writing process assumes a belief that the writing instructor has a definitive, correct answer, constructing a "grand narrative" (Foster, 1999, p. 149) of how to write. This notion that there is a single way to write, which could and should be taught to all students, "can be critiqued from a variety

of standpoints: that is masculinist, phallogocentric, foundationalist, often essentialist, and, at the very least, limiting" (Olsen, 1999, p. 9).

In actuality, however, many writers who believe in process theory explain that writing, while technically being a process, is individual, highly complex, and experiential. Emig (1971) argues that there are "no major recursive features in the writing process" (p. 25). This belief is repeated by many other writing process theorists (Elbow, 1998; Kittle, 2008; Murray, 2009d). In fact, Graves (2003) suggests that the "orthodoxy" (p. x) put in place by those using writing process in the classroom, such as the one described by Couture, caused himself and his colleagues to "reevaluate the term writing process which wrongly suggests that there must be very identifiable steps from first conception to end result" (p. xi). While it is possible to interpret writing process theory in an overly generalized fashion, such as Couture's experience in viewing Detroit public school teachers, according to many of its theorists this is not its intent.

In what follows, I will look at writer's workshop as an approach guided by both writing process theory and post-process theory. It follows the basic premise of writing process theory: the importance of pre-writing, writing, and re-writing, though not in a prescribed format or schedule. At the same time since workshop provides a place for writing that is interpretive, relative, collaborative, and public, it also embraces notions of post-process theory.

A brief history.

In practice with hermeneutics, it is important to look at words and where they come from in the process of meaning-making. The term workshop was coined in the

1580s, a combination of "work" and "shop" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2019c). Work, from the Old English *weorc*, denotes doing, action, labour, and craft (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2019b). Shop's origins, possibly from Old English *scoppa*, meaning "cowshed", was coined in English in the 1300s, meaning a "booth or shed for trade or work" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2019a). Certainly, this is not the most romantic image of writing experience: toiling away with language in a cramped space, possibly intended for livestock.

However, writer's workshops (also called writers' workshops and writing workshops) have been key places of learning in which writers have honed their craft for decades. These workshops tend to bring writing away from solitary practice. Often there are teachers or master writers organizing the workshops; however, a key element of these workshops is looking to your peers for discussion and feedback. One of the most famous writer's workshops, The University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, was founded in 1936 and boasts alumni like Flannery O'Connor, John Irving, and Raymond Carver (University of Iowa, 2019). These types of writer's workshops exist around the world for adult writers.

It took some time for the writer's workshop to be explored with student writers younger than at the university level. In *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders,* a book-length multiple-case research study, Janet Emig (1971) described her initial thoughts on writing process theory. Her work inspired individuals like Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins to look into new ways of teaching the writing process to students. In the early 1980s, both Graves and Calkins turned to Don Murray, a Pulitzer Prize winning writer and writing teacher at the University of New Hampshire, with a belief that

educating young writers should be influenced by “what professional writers do” (Routman, 1995).

Secondary schools & writer’s workshop.

When I began teaching using the writer’s workshop method, I wondered why I hadn’t heard of it before. In eight years of teaching, I had never seen it used, nor had I come across its path in professional development opportunities. It seemed shocking to me that an approach, in which my colleague and I had found so much success, appeared to be a kind of secret. However, when I discussed how excited I was by its method with friends who were elementary school teachers, they seemed surprised that the approach was new to me as it was commonly used in elementary schools. Why was it so prevalent in younger grades but not in older grades, especially when it was based on techniques used by professional writers, aspiring adult writers, and university programs? It seemed so strange that this technique seemed to have been deemed valuable for use with young children, skipping adolescence, and leaping directly into adulthood.

There are elements of teaching high school English Language Arts that can make finding the time and space for writer’s workshop a challenge. In many elementary schools, and with university and adult writers, writer’s workshop becomes a daily part of students’ routines. However, high school English curricula often has many other expectations, including the teaching of multiple, and sometimes specific, texts (Urbanski, 2015). In my conversations with colleagues, professional development dialogue often turned to which texts we were teaching rather than approaches being used or curricular

outcomes being taught. Carving out the time for writer's workshop may feel like an impossible task in an often text-driven high school English classroom.

In addition, high school tends to come with high stakes examinations and standardized testing. In her book *Using the Workshop Approach in the High School English Classroom*, Cynthia Urbanski (2015) discusses the pressures of students in the United States performing on standardized tests associated with No Child Left Behind, and later the SATs. I am also quite familiar with the pressures that standardized testing places on teachers. As mentioned, in my province of Alberta, Canada, there are rigorous multiple choice and written tests for students worth 30% of their final grade twelve mark, which they are preparing for throughout their high school career.

It is likely that this combination of dense curriculum and standardized testing makes the writer's workshop an approach less common in high school English Language Arts. Despite these concerns, those who use this practice note the importance of its connections to curriculum, and its proven success with standardized testing (Miller & Higgins, 2008; Urbanksi, 2015). English Language Arts curricula tend to have a strong emphasis on writing, so it is often a simple task to connect the workshop method with curriculum, especially considering that mini-lessons can be catered to the specific needs of your students or curriculum, and mentor texts can be taken from a variety of places. It is also not necessarily at odds with high standardized test scores. Urbanski (2015) describes how, when she began to implement the writer's workshop in her English classroom, despite spending less time preparing her students for the specific standardized tests, her "students soared above the state, district, and school averages" (p. 20).

Colleagues who have used this approach have often spoken to me of success with their provincial diploma exam scores. As such, given the evidence of the usefulness of the writer's workshop approach, many of the reasons given for not teaching the writer's workshop in high school may actually be based more on inaccurate myth than reality.

Strengths of writer's workshop.

In addition to teaching students to become better writers, the writer's workshop approach is one that contains many additional strengths. As I began using writer's workshop in my classroom, and seeing many of these skills and benefits in action, I began to believe that the writer's workshop may also be an ideal place to build soft-skills such as resilience. The following is a discussion of a number of those skills and strengths, as represented in the writer's workshop literature.

Building motivation and encouraging exploration through choice.

In writer's workshop, students are often given the opportunity for exploration through choice of topic and genre (Atwell, 2002; Calkins, 1983; Graves, 2003; Petrosky & Mihalakis, 2016). This choice can provide enrichment, engagement, and motivation for students. As mentioned, choice is also an area in which students may find their space to engage in play, an important element of learning (Winnicott, 1991). In her study of school related writing, Janet Emig (1971) found that pieces of school-sponsored writing, which she describes as "a limited, and limiting, experience" (p. 97), were not voluntarily revised by students; they were far more likely to revise self-sponsored pieces — writing they chose to produce on their own time. When a teacher chooses a topic and genre, rather than writing to learn in a genuine or student-chosen way, the writing is often done strictly

for assessment (Pollington, Willcox, & Morrison, 2001). A personal connection to a topic through choice inspires students to revise and work more meaningfully on their pieces (Kittle, 2008), develop a passion for lifelong literacy (Graves, 1991), and grow in their writing skills (Graves, 2003).

Choice in writing also allows students to find significance and meaning in what they write. When instructing students on choice of topic, Nancy Atwell (2002) suggests they "find topics and purposes for [their] writing that matter to [them], [their] life, who [they] are, and whom [they] want to become" (p. xx). This allows spaces for students to work on tasks that feel authentic (Kaiser, 2013; Miller & Higgins, 2008; Pollington et al., 2001). In addition, as seen in a case study by Kaiser (2013) with urban elementary school students, allowing students to choose their own topics can create spaces for those who may be struggling with their own issues and challenges to explore what is happening in their own lives.

Exploring and expressing identity and thought through voice.

Many writing theorists suggest that we write to understand what we know. Elbow (1998) explains that writing can take students beyond what they currently know and understand, becoming "a transaction with words whereby you *free* yourself from what you presently think, feel, and perceive" (p. 15). By transforming a piece of writing through process in a writer's workshop with others, students discover and evolve their thoughts. This level of personal understanding also allows for important reflection and preparation required in order to undergo hermeneutic dialogue, which can be utilized as a way to better understand the self in the writing process.

This writing to understand what you think can also allow writers to discover their own identity. Through writing, and the process of working through writing, students have an opportunity to explore their developing, personal identities (Atwell, 2002; Cappello, 2006; Elbow, 1998; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008; Murray, 1996; Seban & Tavsanli, 2015). Graves (1990) explains that “writing is learning to listen to yourself and your own voice, to watch for the sense of self that emerges, and to trust what you see coming” (p. 26).

While people discover their voices and opinions through writing, they can also create platforms from which to be heard. Elbow (1998) suggests that “there are times when you simply have to speak out […] It’s the only way to maintain your very integrity or self-respect” (p. 125). This only works, however, if teachers are willing to listen: “Our students have important messages to deliver and their own language in which to deliver them. We need to hear their voices and they need to hear their own voices” (Murray, 2009a, p. 75). In this way, teachers engage in a hermeneutic dialogue with their students, meeting them where they are, rather than telling them where they should be.

Writing alongside your students.

“It is unheard of for a math teacher not to show the art of solving problems on the chalkboard. An artist paints with his class, a science teacher illustrates the art of investigation and documentation, and a coach shows how she spreads her fingers to control a basketball” (Graves & Kittle, 2005, p. 1). Many teachers who use the writer’s workshop approach strongly believe that teachers of writing must write alongside their students (Elbow 1998; Emig, 1971; Graves, 2003; Graves & Kittle, 2005; Kittle, 2008; Murray, 2009c). Donald Graves was an early champion of teachers writing in the

classroom, as influenced by college writing instructor Don Murray, and influencing teacher writers like Atwell and Kittle. During Donald Grave's doctoral thesis work in 1973, he researched the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, and anthropology, all of which supported the importance of writing with students (Kaufman, 2004). Graves (1991) explains that Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" can only be reached through immediate actions and high expectations, which require that teachers' own literacy competency is high.

One element of teaching writing occurs during class time: writing in front of our students and explaining our writing process. Writing in front of our students builds respect for writing, teaches students to see things from a new point of view, creates energy, and saves time (Graves & Kittle, 2005). This writing and sharing with students also acts as a form of professional development. Even if a teacher is not an expert, seeing their teachers write helps students see that teachers value and practice writing (Atwell, 2002; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008).

From a hermeneutic perspective, teachers must be willing to investigate their own biases and prejudices when it comes to writing in order to have a dialogue; this can only be done in a sincere manner if the teacher is, themselves, a writer. Beyond writing with students, Graves (1991) also explains that it is important for teachers to write outside of the classroom and to talk about how and why they write: "Children need to see how reading/writing fits into the teacher's life. They become apprentices to a professional who demonstrates the power of reading and writing in her own life" (p. 30). Through engaging in the writing process, teachers will thus understand that writing requires flexibility. It is

therefore clear why, as Graves (1995) notes, "being a writer yourself is perhaps the most important thing you can do to help children to write" (p. 58). Throughout his professional writing, Graves emphasizes that teachers need to write with their students, experiment with their own writing, tell their own stories, and share their work and process with students (Graves, 1984; Graves, 1989; Graves, 1990; Graves, 1992; Graves, 2003; Graves & Kittle, 2005).

Collaboration, community, and empathy.

Although writing is often seen as a solitary act, many theorists of the writing process and writer's workshop suggest that collaboration and community are essential components of writing (Atwell, 2002; Calkins, 1983; Elbow, 1998; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008; Murray, 2009d). Graves (1989, 1991, 2003) regularly describes writing as being a "social act" that needs to involve both the writer's teacher and peers. Murray (2009d) suggests that writing is collaborative on multiple levels: it is a collaboration between ourselves and our writing, and, importantly, it is a collaboration between the writing and other interpreters.

But community in the writer's workshop does not only build better writing, it also gives students an opportunity to genuinely listen to, and appreciate, the ideas of others. Through reading the work of others and receiving feedback from their teachers and peers, this work thus allows for a hermeneutic dialogue to form between peers and between teacher and student. It also allows students to build empathy. Murray (1996) discusses the importance of reading an author's work in order to genuinely understand them: "listen to what the draft is saying without the preconception of what the writer should say and how

the writer should say it" (p. 154). The writer's workshop is therefore a place for teachers to guide students to become better listeners and people who can give and receive feedback with empathy.

Perseverance through process.

Through its use of writing process theory, the writer's workshop emphasizes the importance of the process as the point of real learning (Atwell, 2002; Elbow, 1998; Emig, 1971; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008; Murray, 2009a; Murray, 2009b). As the name suggests, writing process theory is based in the idea that parts of a process — the elements of pre-writing, writing, and re-writing — are essential to learning to write well. Certainly, in my career, "I'm done!" has been a haunting refrain by many adolescents who would rather have their work be finished than give it the opportunity to become better. With many standardized tests in junior and senior high school pushing for timed writing rather than drafted writing, some students have little experience with writing as a process. Kittle (2008) states that "writing is a process and by focusing on the process and habits of a writer, writing improves" (p. 12).

Writing as a process is also important when it comes to teacher feedback. In criticizing traditional teacher feedback of a final product, which can feel damaging, Emig (1971) suggests that teachers may be "interested chiefly in a product [they] can criticize rather than in a process [they] can help initiate through imagination and sustain through empathy and support" (p. 97). In using the writer's workshop approach, by encouraging the writing process with appropriate guidance, teachers have the ability to create a meaningful arena in which to write and to learn.

This process, however, can be challenging. The process of writer's workshop is not unlike the process of engaging in a hermeneutic dialogue, and certainly resonates with Caputo's (1987) aforementioned "difficulty" (p. 1). Graves (1991) believes that children only truly learn in an "environment that expects challenge" (p. 13), which implies that drafting takes both time and hard work. Calkins (1983) suggests that this learning to work through drafts and writing is important, as a lack of perseverance has become common in our "first-draft-only society, a land of frozen waffles, easy divorces, of commercials every seven minutes. Detachment is built into a time-frame such as this" (p. 30). But this drafting, this perseverance, is one way in which the writer's workshop approach helps to teach students that process and work can be meaningful, potentially helping them later in life.

Vulnerability and risk.

As mentioned in the dialogue between hermeneutics and psychoanalysis, vulnerability and risk are essential to learning. Calkins (1983) suggests that being creative and collaborative feels like a greater and greater risk as students progress in their education:

> Growing up means acquiring new powers, but it also means learning new fears. As young children develop their ability to review and judge their writing, they can become more deliberate, but also more self-conscious. As they develop their ability to see their work through the eyes of another, they can become more conscious of the needs of their audience, but also more aware of peer pressure,

> more afraid of being different. As they develop more ability to plan, they also become more able to worry. (p. 18)

There is no hiding when we write. The words are our own. Writer's workshop is a place in which we must share these elements of ourselves. Especially for adolescents, only coming to understand their identities, sharing their writing puts them in an intensely vulnerable place.

However, if risk and discomfort are often necessary in learning, writer's workshop provides a place that encourages and guides students in their own vulnerabilities. Seban and Tavsanli (2015) report that, in their study of second grade students in writer's workshop, struggling students talked about how they did not feel comfortable taking risks or writing about personal topics or sharing with their peers. Teachers in writer's workshop classrooms constantly ask students to be brave in engaging with tasks and challenges to which they are not accustomed (Atwell, 2002; Kittle, 2008). We ask them to try new things, which inherently suggest the possibility of failure, an essential element of the writing process (Elbow, 1998; Murray, 2009a). However, despite asking our students to constantly be vulnerable, take risks, and fail, workshop is a place where students can do this with the support of their teacher and writing community.

Self-directedness and independence while building relationships.

While the writer's workshop provides space for the teacher to teach elements of writing in mini-lessons, these should be directed towards the needs of students, and kept short (Atwell, 2002; Graves, 2003). Ideally, the writer's workshop becomes a place where students self-direct what they do with the majority of their writing time: think, write, edit,

seek feedback from their peers or teacher (Atwell, 2002; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008). It requires students to be independent and in control of their own writing process.

Despite this increased independence, the relationship between teacher and student remains essential in the writer's workshop. It is not a place where students are abandoned with their vulnerabilities and independence, but instead is a place where students are trusted. The teacher's feedback remains an integral part of the process. Donald Graves (2003) suggests that conferences are one of the most essential parts of the writing process, describing the conference itself as speaking with a voice that says, "I want to help you, I want to listen" (p. 98). Graves explains that our students crave our feedback, as feedback demonstrates that we are engaged positively in their writing, and with them as individuals:

> We teachers need to move around, showing children that we are interested in their texts. They still need to hear our interest in what is on their pages. Above all, we must take the person seriously and look for good words and phrases well used. When we notice and approve what appears in students' texts, we demonstrate what they need to appreciate in their own writing. (p. xiii)

Calkins (1983) suggests that traditional feedback, often picking apart elements of punctuation and spelling, the markings on paper left without a human being to explain them, are "an autopsy on the finished work" (p. 161). Instead of seeing students and their processes, we only see a product, no longer living, and we dissect its corpse. When we present this dissection to students as feedback, they see their writing only as a decaying product, and one that is certainly never good enough. If, as suggested by Bibby (2011),

students are seeking acceptance and love from their teacher, due in part to transference, this dissection may be unfortunately interpreted as rejection and hate.

Having looked at significant strengths of the writer's workshop approach, I will now discuss the literature surrounding different factors and contexts of resilience.

Factors of Resilience

Significant research has been done on elements or factors that a person can foster in order to become more resilient — which educators can then encourage students to develop in their classrooms. Research in resilience suggests that factors of resilience can be learned and practiced until they are internalized, allowing an individual to become more resilient (Castro et al., 2008; Donnon & Hammond, 2007; Nelson & Low, 2004; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). As my focus is on the ability to foster these factors of resilience in an educational setting, I have focused primarily on work in resilience with adolescents and youth, and especially those focusing on factors of resilience that can be fostered in a school setting. In this section, I will discuss areas that appeared to overlap during my initial research, which will later inform possible connections to the writer's workshop. For the purpose of this study, I will call these elements that can help a person to become more resilient *factors of resilience*.

Relationships, interpersonal skills, and empathy.

The ability to be with, to work with, and to understand other people is a key factor of resilience, and as they appear in multiple research studies, these skills are given a variety of different names. Waxman, Padron, and Arnold (2001) use the term

"cooperative learning" (p. 137). Benard (1997) calls these skills "the ability to form relations" or "social competence" (p. 2); the latter is also used by Cefai (2008, p. 22). Castro et al. (2008) identify the importance of both "the establishment of healthy supportive relationships" and "interpersonal skills" (p. 9). In their list of resiliency factors, Donnon and Hammond (2007) suggest that "social sensitivity" includes "empathy, caring, and equity and social justice" (p. 13). As human beings are rarely isolated, the development of factors that help us to interact with others is important in order to build strong connections that allow us to be resilient in the face of adversity. This also connects to the hermeneutic dialogue, suggesting the importance of the ability to make meaning through collaboration and communication with others. In a classroom setting, teachers have the ability to provide a space for students to grow in these healthy interactions with each other.

Planning and goal setting, developing hope, and building empowerment.

In order to be resilient, it is suggested that planning and goal setting can help to instil hope and empowerment in youth, giving them motivation to bounce back from adversity. Donnon and Hammond (2007) suggest that self-concept, a resiliency factor, arises out of planning and decision-making as well as self-efficacy (p. 12). McMillan and Reed (1994) point to personal attributes "such as motivation, aspirations, and goals" (p. 4) as being key traits in resilient individuals. Benard (1997) suggests that planning and fostering hope allow students to develop "a sense of purpose and future" (p. 2). Cefai (2008) also points to a sense of purpose as a key factor in being resilient. Waxman et al. (2004) suggest that people wishing to help others to develop their resilience can assist in

helping them to learn to manage their goals (p. 55). Setting goals allows for individuals to aspire to greater accomplishments, motivating them to continue in the face of adversity (Gordon Rouse et al., 2001, p. 12). In their interviews with resilient adolescents, Gordon Rouse et al. (2001) were told by youth that a way they were able to be resilient despite challenging circumstances was their ability to "stay focused" (p. 13).

Stoffel and Cain (2018) suggest that "resilience and empowerment are positively correlated, suggesting that those who feel more competent and in control of their situations have a stronger line of defense against setbacks" (Stoffel & Cain, 2018, p. 128). Donnon and Hammond (2007) link empowerment and safety, suggesting that, when adolescents feel safe and in control, they also feel empowered in their lives (p. 13). Benard (1997) suggests that teachers help to build empowerment by giving students an opportunity to build and contribute to the classroom. However, these opportunities must be meaningful in order for students to truly feel empowered and to gain the benefit of resilience (Benard, 1991; Waxman et al., 2003).

Problem solving, safe risk-taking, and fostering coping skills.

The ability to problem solve is a key element to building resilience (Benard, 1997; Cefai, 2008; Gordon Rouse et al., 2001). In their interviews with at-risk students who nonetheless demonstrated high resilience, Gordon Rouse et al. (2001) were told a key piece of advice: "[i]f you get distracted or lose focus, don't panic" (p. 13). An essential component of problem solving, of course, is the problem itself. In order to help individuals build confidence, adolescents can be provided with safe risk-taking opportunities, a key element to building resilience (Benard, 1997; Burns & Gall, 2002;

Cefai, 2008; Donnon & Hammond, 2007). In Erik Erikson’s theory on the stages of psychosocial development, he suggests that adolescents, in an attempt to find themselves, need space for a psychosocial moratorium: time and space for adolescents to safely risk and discover their own identities (Stevens, 1983, pp. 48-50). Castro et al. (2008) link problem solving with coping skills to help battle adversity. The classroom is a place in which problem solving, including safe risks, can help students to foster their coping skills.

Creating high expectations.

Having positive, high expectations from self and others is another factor of resilience (Benard, 1991; Benard, 1997; Donnon & Hammond, 2007; Waxman et al., 2003). Donnon and Hammon (2007) suggest that building high expectations is an important element of school culture. Benard (1991, 1997) and Cefai (2008) explain that setting these high expectations is an important part of teacher practice. Waxman et al. (2003) argue that “[t]eachers' high expectations can structure and guide student behavior and challenge students beyond what they believe they can do” (p. 19). It is important that teachers help students in creating these high expectations for themselves and their work in order to foster resilience.

Engagement.

Being engaged, or finding the ability to be engaged in life, is another factor of resilience that can be built in the classroom (Donnon & Hammond, 2007). In their research, Waxman et al. (2004) found that non-resilient students tend to be engaged in their schoolwork less than resilient students. In the classroom, Cefai (2008) suggests that

teachers use “pupils’ own strengths and interests, and tap their intrinsic motivation for learning” (p. 24). Teachers who wish to build resilience in their classrooms should therefore seek to provide meaningful engagement, building their students’ motivation. While knowing what will create this engagement may seem impossible, as with the impossibility of teaching, this place of non-knowing also connects strongly to the idea of play: allowing students to find motivation in wild spaces.

Self-control, restraint, and taking responsibility for your actions.

McMillan and Reed (1994) suggest that students who are successful, despite being considered at-risk, are often excellent at self-control, a factor of resiliency echoed by Donnon and Hammond (2007) and connected to restraint and resistance skills. In a school setting, self-control and restraint can also be seen in relation to “positive use of time (e.g., on-task behavior, homework completion, participation in extracurricular experiences)” (McMillan & Reed, 1994, p. 4). Another factor of resilience is taking responsibility for your actions (Castro et al., 2008, 2008; Cefai, 2008). School culture and classroom activities can seek to build maturity in their students by teaching them to have self-control and restraint, and to take responsibility for their actions.

Development of identity and autonomy.

Having a sense of self and believing in that self’s potential is important to resilience. Benard (1997) calls this developing a “sense of identity or autonomy” (p. 2), which is also an identifying factor of resilience used by Cefai (2008). Castro et al. (2008) call this “self awareness and acceptance” (p. 9), while Donnon and Hammond (2007) suggest that “self-concept” (p. 13) is a further factor of resiliency. In a study of

educationally resilient adolescents, an interviewee suggested to students wishing to increase their resilience to "[b]e yourself" (Gordon Rouse et al., 2001, p. 13). In order to develop resilience, schools and classrooms can therefore strive to provide the space for students' self-understanding. This moment to find yourself is an important first stage of the hermeneutic dialogue, as you must be aware of your own biases before fusing horizons with others. It is also an important element of the psychosocial moratorium, allowing adolescents an opportunity and space to discover their identity.

Tying Together Writer's Workshop and Resilience

Comparing the strengths of the writer's workshop and factors of resilience discussed in this review of the literature, commonalities arise such as building interpersonal skills and empathy, risk-taking, exploring self and voice, and empowerment and independence. Although the purpose of this study is to understand the possible connections between writer's workshop and students' self-perception of resilience through participant-based research, the following section notes the relationship between writing and anxiety, as resilience is often a way to proactively combat anxiety. In this way, building resilience through the writer's workshop may be an effective way to prevent writing anxiety.

Writing and anxiety.

Fostering resilience is a way to help students and writers cope with anxiety. However, writing itself has also been known to induce anxiety in many students (Karakaya, & Ülper, 2011; Martinez, Kock, & Cass, 2011), and in particular female

students (Karakaya, & Ülper, 2011) and second language learners (Cheng, 2002; Negari & Rezaabadi, 2012). As mentioned, without a problem, or perhaps even anxiety, it is challenging to build resilience; however, teachers need to ensure that the risks taken, or problems solved, are safe, and they must help students to build coping mechanisms to deal with those problems.

Writing self-efficacy, or knowing how to write, has been shown to lower writing anxiety (Martinez et al., 2011). The process writing approach, teaching writing as a process rather than a product, has been seen as effective in lowering anxiety (Bayat, 2014). One such process based model, which also works to build writing self-efficacy, is the writer's workshop (Atwell, 2002; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008, Murray, 2009d). Although the writer's workshop may initially induce writing anxiety, its process approach may also help students learn to cope with this anxiety. Teachers are able to help students work through their writing anxiety using these skills, which may be developed to work in other moments of adversity when resilience is required.

Writer's workshop and building resilience.

Research suggests a variety of factors that the classroom teacher can use to build resilience, including: demonstrating caring relationships with their students (Benard, 1991; Cefai, 2008; Waxman et al., 2003); having high expectations of students (Benard, 1991; Cefai, 2008; Waxman et al., 2003); and providing students with involvement and responsibility in their learning (Benard, 1991; Cefai, 2008; Waxman et al., 2004). Benard (1997) suggests that, if teachers "can let go of their tight control, be patient, and trust the process, teaching will become more effortless and enjoyable, and will be responding to

recommendations from the research on resilience and on nurturing teachers and successful schools" (p. 5) This clearly echoes Bibby's (2011) invitation to follow "wild thoughts," and Winnicott's (1991) theories of play.

The writer's workshop addresses each of these three methods, which are suggested to foster resilience in students. Relationship building is integral to the writer's workshop: for instance, student teacher conferences about writing, one-on-one, are common practice (Atwell, 2002; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008).

Expectations are high in the writer's workshop. This approach is based on writing process theory; as this suggests that writing is a process, constant drafting, practice, revision, and editing are essential to improvement (Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008). In addition, teachers have high expectations that students will take risks in the classroom, being vulnerable. In the writer's workshop, students share their work not only with teachers, but with each other. This vulnerability and openness to share their work is a risk that makes many students uncomfortable; however, the high expectation by teachers is that students will participate.

Ultimately, the writer's workshop is a place in which students are constantly involved in their process and are responsible for their work. In *Writing without Teachers,* Elbow (1998) explains that "the teacherless writing class is a place where there is learning but no teaching. It is possible to learn something and not be taught" (p. vii). Given the space of a writer's workshop, students are then responsible for directing their own learning. In addition, workshop tends to be a place where teachers offer choice of topic and genre (Atwell, 2002; Graves, 2003). Students are involved in, and responsible

for, every step of their writing experience. It is in this willingness of teachers to give up control and to allow students to become empowered, that writer's workshop can thus be connected with resilience.

In Closing

Through recounting my personal journey with writer's workshop and this review of literature on writer's workshop and resilience, I have begun to form connections between the two. However, though I may see a link in my own practice and uses of theory, I was still driven to conduct a study, working with a teacher who was not a direct colleague and students who were not my own, wondering if others were also living this connection. In the next chapter, I will discuss the research methodology and methods I used in conducting this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

Driven to find additional connections between the writer's workshop approach and resilience, beyond closing gaps using available academic research, I developed a research study to gain data in a high school setting.

I begin this chapter by situating myself within this study, explaining my own personal beliefs and biases that influence the study. I then explain and justify how and why I used the multiple-case studies approach. I detail ethical considerations, which are especially important as this study deals with human participants. I include a description of the setting and participants from this study. I describe the data collection procedures I used, and the process of data analysis I employed. Finally, I end with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Situating Myself

As previously described, I am an English Language Arts teacher. I have been teaching in junior and senior high schools for fourteen years. For the past five years, I have been using the writer's workshop approach in my classroom. I have seen successes with this approach in student writing, in high stakes assessments, and in building a variety of soft-skills. As such, I realize that I come to this work with a philosophical assumption (Creswell, 2014) that the writer's workshop is, in some places, for some students, a good approach to teaching writing. I acknowledge this as a personal bias; however, I also attempt to keep an open mind, knowing that different spaces, different

teachers, and different students respond differently to different teaching approaches and methods.

In addition, I knew going into this study that it would involve, as participants, both students and an English Language Arts teacher within my school district. While I recognize that this could be seen as contentious, given that I am an "insider" in the field, I look to Mayan's (2016) guidance regarding qualitative research, in which she suggests "the strictly insider or outsider issue is now passé" (p. 80). While I acknowledge that my own experiences and involvement as a teacher in this district, and as a human being, impact the research, I believe that this research becomes rich as a result of those elements that make me who I am. Those elements are what have drawn me to this study.

Multiple-Case Studies

Knowing that I am drawn to people and the potential that their stories bring, I decided to work with a case study style approach for this research, looking at "the *case* and understanding the complexities of it" (Mayan, 2016, p. 50). Yin (2014) suggests that case studies are a strong approach to use when researching an area that is new or burgeoning. As there is so little data about the writer's workshop in high schools, or its connection to resilience, this approach seemed apt for my study.

However, when I began to think about who could give me information about my topic (Mayan, 2016, p. 62), I knew that I wanted to talk with a number of students, so I could best understand multiple perspectives and multiple stories. Also, knowing that the teacher is a key element of the writer's workshop, and wanting a teacher's ideas and

participation, I knew that working with an English Language Arts teacher was key to my research. As a result, I decided to work with a multiple-case studies approach. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) suggest that, in using multiple-case sampling, “we can strengthen the precision, validity, stability, and trustworthiness of the findings” (p. 33). As I am relatively new to qualitative research, I found confidence in having discussions which brought forward both similar and dissonant ideas about writer’s workshop and resilience with the different participants in my multiple-case studies approach.

Ethical Considerations

Knowing that I would be working with human participants, including those under the age of eighteen, ethical considerations were important to this study. I obtained approval to conduct my research from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board (REB) (see Appendix A), the Cooperative Activities Program (CAP) managing research within school districts, and the school district in which the study took place. Although not required, as a consideration for the school in which the study took place, I also ensured that I cleared the study with the school’s principal.

Participants and data.

The teacher participant was given a consent form to sign (see Appendix B). Students were given consent forms to be signed by a parent or guardian if they were under the age of eighteen (see Appendix C) and an assent form to be signed by themselves (see Appendix D). Students who turned eighteen during the course of the study were given their parents’ consent forms and were given the ability to re-evaluate

their involvement in the study. Although there were students in the classroom who had not agreed to be participants, I only observed and made notes related to those participating students who had provided assent/consent forms. In addition, I made it clear to all participants, through their forms and verbally, that they could decline to participate or could drop from the study at any point, free of repercussion. Verbal consent was given by all participants at the beginning and end of each interview. Lastly, participants were given the option to withdraw their assent/consent for the use of their data up to two weeks following the final interview.

Primary concerns related to discomfort had to deal with the personal nature of telling stories that arose in interviews. If participants wrote about a troubling personal event during the writer's workshop and chose to share it in an interview, or chose to talk about troubling life experiences in an interview, I acknowledged they may have felt stressed, worried, or anxious. I also noted this could occur in discussions related to resilience. However, it was unlikely that this would surpass normal levels that would otherwise occur during regular writing or discussion in the classroom. It was also possible that participants could feel mental fatigue by thinking deeply about the writer's workshop or factors of resilience; however, again, it was unlikely that this would surpass the normal levels of fatigue encountered in regular metacognitive work in the classroom. In order to minimize and manage risks and discomfort, I ensured that the interviews were low-pressure: that participants could stop the discussion at any time, choose not to answer specific questions, and/or decide to remove themselves from the study at any time. I also

agreed, through my ethics applications, that, if participants disclosed problematic situations, I would refer them to the school's counselling staff and/or administration.

For privacy and safety, I have not used the name of the school or district in this study. I have removed participant names from all materials used. In addition, if any participants were uncomfortable with the use of any materials, I gave them permission to ask that their materials could be removed from this study. All materials were returned by the conclusion of the study.

To protect the anonymity of participants, names were removed when transcribing and analyzing my data. Participants have been given pseudonyms for the purpose of this study. Names of participants were retained on a master list until the data were analyzed in case there was a need to backtrack and verify conclusions. After that time, the master list was deleted. Names were replaced on observation notes on the day I took them. Audio recordings were transcribed by me, and all instances of participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms.

Hard copy/raw data are kept in a locked filing cabinet. Field notes, interviews, transcriptions, my master list of names, and coded and transcribed data is stored on my password protected computer and backed up to an external, password protected hard drive. The files are encrypted. After five years, the hard copy data will be shredded and the digital data will be permanently deleted.

Recruitment.

Although I worked in the district in which I was doing the research, and it was possible I could be working with a teacher I had taught with, or students I had once

taught, I made it clear that all participants were free to decline, that my study did not depend on their participation, and that I could seek out another teacher or student to continue my study.

In order to recruit a school and teacher participant, once my ethics applications cleared, I contacted, via email, department heads in the district in which I intended my study to take place. By forwarding information to teachers who might be interested, department heads were asked to act as intermediaries in finding a teacher who used the writer's workshop in their classroom. This protected teachers' privacy, as I had no knowledge of the teachers identified by their department heads. After being contacted by a department head from a school in which several teachers used the workshop approach, and after discussion of schedules, the department head who contacted me agreed to participate in the study as the teacher participant. I immediately sent her a consent form.

We selected a semestered class that was appropriate to study, choosing an English 30-1 group. All students were given personal assent forms, and those under eighteen were given parent/guardian consent forms, and were welcomed to participate. All students who received proper consent/assent were involved in participation through observation in the classroom. The teacher then helped me to select participants for the case studies. I asked her to help me to select a diverse group of students (providing for variety in race, socioeconomic background, gender, ability, etc.) in order to minimize the influence of background on the data gained in my study.

Descriptions

Setting.

The school in which the study took place was located in a downtown, urban city centre. It is a school whose purpose is for students who choose to take a fourth and fifth year of high school, in order to upgrade their marks and open up options in terms of post-secondary schooling and career paths. As the school is specialized in this way, it draws from a diverse range of students from across the city. Some students take a full range of courses, others may be upgrading or taking a single class. As a result, the school population is over 2500 students. Students at the school range from seventeen to twenty years of age. The school aims for a business-like setting and partners with post-secondary institutions, businesses, and government agencies.

The class I worked with was an English 30-1 class, which, in Alberta, is an academic course that prepares students for post-secondary programs. The class started with 42 students. While the size is large, the school is aware that they do lose more than an average number of students in each course. In discussion with staff, the causes of high incompletion and withdrawal rates may be that students come to realize, through post-secondary and career counselling, that they do not need a certain course for their career or post-secondary pathways. It may also be the case that students are unable to change the circumstances that caused their need for an additional year or years of high school in the first place.

As the writer's workshop can be adapted in various ways, it is important to explain how the writer's workshop was used in this particular classroom. Workshopped pieces in this classroom often began by generating ideas with others. Discussion was key in the classroom. Pre-writing through idea generation, note-taking, planners, and organizers was regularly incorporated. On certain days, mini-lessons were given about an element of writing. Mini-lessons could also be used spontaneously if the teacher noticed a variety of students struggling with the same concept. While students wrote, and often conferred, the teacher would read over the shoulders of students and engage in impromptu conferences: sometimes one-on-one, sometimes in small groups. The teacher also kept a folder to remember information about who she had conferred with and what the "take-aways" were from the conference. Students were encouraged to write on their own timelines, differentiating for different paces. Regularly, the teacher would model examples from her own writing to students, leading to discussions. Feedback was also obtained, in various stages of writing, from peers. As multiple drafts were encouraged for workshopped pieces, revision and editing strategies were utilized. There was some written feedback on work, but far less on work that had been workshopped and conferenced. In at least one instance, finished pieces were shared, allowing students to peruse each other's narratives. Although on-demand pieces were still written and assessed in preparation for the timed diploma examination, these pieces were often connected to workshopped pieces from earlier in the course.

Participants.

Student participants.

Miles et al. (2014) suggest "five richly researched cases as a minimum for multiple-case sampling adequacy" (p. 35). I had asked the teacher participant to help me to select four-to-six student participants for my case studies. Knowing this school had a high percentage of students who withdrew from, or stopped attending, classes, we agreed that finding six diverse students seemed appropriate for the study. Although the teacher participant and I selected six students originally, a seventh student, Sienna, self-identified as being very passionate about the study. The teacher agreed that she would make a strong contributor to the study, but she had initially been overlooked as she was taking the course for a second time and had more experience in workshop. The three of us agreed that — with her knowledge of writer's workshop being taken into consideration, her passion for contributing and unique experiences as a returning student to the course, and as a self-identified Indigenous student — she would be a welcome addition to the study. While I realize this might be considered a convenience or opportunistic addition to the sample, it felt important to allow her to lend her voice and to tell her story.

Table 1 includes some basic information about the student participants involved in the study. If a third interview was not completed, I include the reason given to me (either by the student, or if the student was not able to be reached, by the teacher) for not being able to complete the interview. All but one student, Kasey, completed the class; however, I did not inquire about why she left the class. In addition, as this study surrounds resilience rather than specific academic achievement, I did not inquire about grades in the

course, grades on diploma examinations, or whether or not the course was passed. If the table indicates that the course was completed, this does not necessarily suggest a passing grade. For all participants, except Sienna and Sarah, as far as they could remember this was their first time being taught using the writer's workshop approach. Sienna had taken the same course with the same teacher the previous year; however, she had dropped out of the course before its completion. Sarah had been involved in the writer's workshop outside of school when she was younger because she loved writing.

Table 1. Student Case Study Participants

Pseudonym	Self-Identified Gender	Age at the Beginning of the Study	Interview #1 Completed	Interview #2 Completed	Interview #3 Completed
Aiden	Male	19	Yes	Yes	Yes
Emilio	Male	18	Yes	Yes	No: Scheduling conflicts; completed the course
James	Male	17	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kasey	Female	20	Yes	Yes	No: Did not complete the course
Layla	Female	18	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sienna	Female	19	Yes	Yes	No: Attendance conflicts; completed the course
Sarah	Female	17	Yes	Yes	Yes

Teacher participant.

The teacher participant, for whom I use the pseudonym Ms. Monroe, had been teaching for 16 years before the fall of the study. It was her fourth consecutive year using the writer's workshop; in addition, she had used it, albeit differently, in her first two years of teaching at a junior high school in which writer's workshop was already implemented by senior English Language Arts teachers. Four years ago, when she was teaching junior high school, Ms. Monroe had been inspired by a colleague who was having strong results

with the writer's workshop at an elementary school, which Ms. Monroe describes as being "high risk" (INT1). Ms. Monroe then ordered materials aimed at grades six-to-eight and began to use the method with her "high needs, high risk population" in an "inner-city" grade seven class, in which she claims to have seen "instant growth" (INT1). She was trained in the Lucy Calkins method, a structured method of writer's workshop available through published materials set from kindergarten to grade eight, which provides explicit advice, strategies, and support related to teaching various forms of writing (Heinemann, 2019). Ms. Monroe explained that she does not follow the Calkins method completely but instead adapts for the needs of her own classroom and students. She was inspired to come to her current school because, for learners enrolling in a fourth or fifth year of high school, she says "something's gone awry. Somewhere. There's a reason that they're coming back" (INT1). As a result, at the time of the study, she was beginning her third year at the school, engaging these students in the writer's workshop.

Data Collection

I employed a qualitative methodology and developed multiple-case studies of individual students being taught using the writer's workshop. My research took place over four visits during the September 2018 to January 2019 school semester. This included four classroom visits to allow for the taking of field notes, two-to-three semi-structured interviews with each student participant, and two semi-structured interviews with my teacher participant.

I scheduled four classroom visits in communication with my teacher participant. One visit occurred during October, when the writer's workshop was a newer process for students; two were during November, when students were more familiar with the workshop; and the final visit was during December when students were completing work in the writer's workshop. Classes were 75 minutes long. For each classroom visit, I arrived before the class began, watching students arrive to class, and left after all of the students left the class, watching their interactions with the teacher and each other. These visits took place on days in which the writer's workshop was occurring at different stages including pre-writing idea generation, conferencing, writing, and editing/revision.

During my classroom observations, I took descriptive and reflective field notes, documenting the classroom space, what was said and done by the teacher, and what was said and done by the students. As Mayan (2016) suggests, these field notes also allowed me to "describe [my] reflections, feelings, ideas, moments of confusion, hunches, interpretations, and so on, about what [was] observed" (p. 77). In fact, I found this quotation comforting, not feeling the need to be detached or simply state facts in my work, allowing my position to engage in the story of the work. In this way, my notes became like a hermeneutic dialogue of what was being interpreted: coming from my own horizon and fusing it with the horizon of the classroom, the students, and the teacher.

Mayan (2016) describes semi-structured interviews as a good method of data collection, especially when a researcher has "a fair enough idea of what is going on in or with the phenomenon to develop questions about the topic but not enough to predict answers" (p. 71). Indeed, with my background knowledge of writer's workshop and

resilience, I felt that this was a productive place for myself as a researcher. As such, I used interview questions, which were previously approved in my ethics reviews (see Appendix E). At the same time, I wanted to allow for spontaneous reactions to what was being said, engaging in real conversations, and respecting the stories of my participants to allow me to venture off-script when it felt called for in the moment. I felt a semi-structured interview created a balance that gave me both support and freedom. When conducting the interviews, I attempted to heed Mayan's (2016) advice: to "[be] a good listener, [be] comfortable with the topic, and [know my] own perspective" (p. 68).

With the students, I ideally wished to engage in three semi-structured individual interviews: one in October, when they had been initially introduced to the writer's workshop; one in November, after a piece had been fully workshopped in the writer's workshop; and a final interview in December, when the writer's workshop portion of the class was mostly complete, and before students switched focus primarily to preparation for their diploma examinations. I was able to complete the first two interviews with all of my participants; however, I was only able to complete a third interview with four of the seven students (as seen in Table 1). As mentioned, however, knowing that there was a chance of students dropping the course, or having inconsistent attendance, I was aware this would be a possibility. Nonetheless, I feel the data collected by the three participants unable to complete a third interview was still rich, and it was important. As a result, I have decided not to omit the data generated by their first two interviews in my findings. These interviews were all conducted on the school site, in either a conference room or

office made available to me by the school. The interviews varied greatly in range from six to 22 minutes. These interviews were recorded and were later transcribed.

With the teacher, I engaged in two semi-structured interviews. The first interview occurred in mid-October, when I started the observation process. The second occurred in early January after students had completed the writer's workshop process and were preparing for their diploma examinations. Although my primary research question centres around connections between the writer's workshop and student perceptions of their own resilience, I did not want to omit data from the teacher's perspective. As mentioned in my sub-questions, I also wanted to know about teachers' perceptions of these connections, the impacts of writer's workshop in high school, and what might allow the writer's workshop to be successfully used in high school. As such, data from the teacher was also important. The first interview took place in a conference room, privately. The second occurred at a public coffee shop, chosen by Ms. Monroe. These interviews were 48 and 34 minutes long, respectively. As with the student interviews, these interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

In order to further triangulate data, I collected some sample work done by students in the class, and Ms. Monroe shared many of her resources used throughout the course. In addition, I kept a personal journal (Mayan, 2016, p. 78) throughout this process. This allowed me to reflect on my field notes, the experience of the interview process, and my comforts and discomforts as a researcher. Adding this additional piece, in conjunction with other methods of data collection, I created "rich, thick, description" (Creswell, 2014, p. 202) necessary for strong qualitative data collection.

With all of these methods of data collection, I feel I was able to achieve detailed information from a variety of sources over a long period of time. Over the course of the semester, I was able to keep prolonged engagement (Mayan, 2016) with my participants and the study.

Data Analysis

My qualitative data analysis took time and patience. When I could, I stepped away from the process, coming back to it later with new eyes. While working with the data, I also considered psychoanalytic ideas of play, hermeneutic dialogue, and ideas of risk as found in both psychoanalytic and hermeneutic theoretical lenses. In addition, I kept in mind the factors of resilience that I had previously identified.

I began by transcribing my interviews. This lengthy process allowed me to listen, multiple times, to what was being said by participants. In transcribing, I attempted to keep things true to what was being said; however, I did omit several false starts. I used "…" to represent pauses in the interview; however, as per APA protocol, I used "[…] to suggest the omission of words and "[….]" to suggest the omission of sentences. In addition, I used "INT#" in parenthesis to indicate from which interview the information or quotation was taken. In the same line, when citing from a document, I used "DOC", and when citing from my field notes, including word-for-word transcription of things being said that I observed, I used the acronym "FN". At times, when other sounds were important, I used asterisks around those sounds, such as "*crying*". When something was a challenge to hear, I used parenthesis and a note to delineate this, such as "(hard to

hear)". Due to the number of interviews and limitations of my own time for transcription, if I listened to a section in which the interview had gone off track so significantly as to not reveal anything about the writer's workshop or resilience (for example, the discussion of a particular text or assignment not related to workshop, or the telling of an unrelated personal story), I opted not to transcribe in detail, but to summarize what was being said on that portion of the recording in parenthesis.

When it came to analyzing the data, I was, primarily, looking for connections between writer's workshop and resilience. I printed out copies of all of my field notes, interview transcriptions, student samples, teacher resources, and personal research journal entries. I read through all data twice before beginning to code. My initial coding was done manually, in different coloured pens, creating a code list organically as I went. I went through all data this way twice. Although Mayan (2016) suggests restricting a code list to 10-12 categories, at the end of this process, I had 17 codes; however, as I coded, I was already seeing where certain codes could be combined to create categories. I tried to avoid being overly "deductive" (Mayan, 2016, p. 93) in my data analysis: not looking for what had already been found. However, since I had done a fair amount of reading into writer's workshop and resilience, I acknowledge that this reading naturally worked its way into the things I saw and the codes I created.

When the code list was complete, I began looking at the codes, and at the data that belonged to these codes, to narrow them to a more manageable and definitive list. In the end, I found that the significant codes, once categorized, were able to be synthesized into five distinct themes, which have become sections in my next chapter. For each of these

themes, I went back to my coded data and pulled, word-for-word, sections of the data pertaining to those themes, which I then placed in a new document, under a thematic heading. Miles et al. (2014) suggest that with multiple-case studies, more than analysis, the work being done is “interpretive synthesis” (p. 103). In this way, and in order to find commonalities and differences under these themes, I brought all of my cases together under these new thematic headings.

However, I do not want this to appear that everything was wrapped up neatly and perfectly. I continued to detail and document negative cases — cases that do not agree with the majority of the findings (Mayan, 2016) — and I have included these in this study’s findings. In addition, there were some pieces of outlying information, especially in relation to my sub-questions, that seemed important to my research. This data has also been included in my findings.

Limitations

Foraying into my first research study of this kind, I have certainly found there to be some limitations to my study — some avoidable, some less so.

Obviously, as multiple-case studies of only seven students and one teacher, in one classroom, at one school, this is a small representation of the writer’s workshop in high schools. The participants can only tell their own stories. The context of the writer’s workshop in this classroom is specific to Ms. Monroe’s approach and style. However, I feel that the data are rich, and there is much to be learned here. I also acknowledge that, as this is a singular teacher in a singular classroom, while we tried to keep our

conversations specifically geared towards the writer's workshop, there are other elements of teaching practice, school environment, and student life that has an impact on how students have learned and grown throughout this semester.

Ideally, there would have been a shorter time period between interviews, transcription, and looking at the data than occurred in this study. When the interviews were taken, I was only able to listen to them, taking several months to complete their transcription, and then another month before analyzing the data. Mayan (2016) does suggest that it can be acceptable to collect data without analyzing them concurrently "for semistructured interviews, in which many participants are recruited, the questions do not change, all participants are asked the same questions, in the same order, and the answers to each question are studied together" (p. 92). Despite this being true of this study, I feel the gaps between transcription and analysis were longer than ideal, not allowing the study to have a more emergent design (Creswell, 2014). Due to the busy nature of my student-teacher-mother-researcher life, I could only find the time where it arose, and sadly, it was less plentiful than I would have preferred.

In Closing

In this chapter, I have explained my situation in this study, my reasons for using a multiple-case studies approach, some ethical considerations, descriptions of setting and participants, the methods and processes of data collection and data analysis, and the limitations of the study. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings generated by this research into the value of writer's workshop and students' perceptions of resilience.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I describe the findings from my collected data. I present findings related to my primary research question:

- *What connections can be made between the writer's workshop process and high school students' perception of resilience?*

as well as my sub-questions:

- *What are teachers' perceptions of connections between the writer's workshop process and high school students' resilience?*
- *What are the impacts of the writer's workshop process in a high school setting?*
- *What might allow for the writer's workshop process to be successfully used in a high school setting?*

As described in Chapter 3, I have coded my data from all of my triangulated sources, categorized that data, and thematically theorized issues related to these questions, in relation to my primary theoretical lenses. Throughout this process, I have arrived at the following five themes:

- using process to build confidence;
- the power of writing;
- anxiety, risk, and failure;
- collaboration and communication;
- and the role of the teacher: acknowledger, mentor, and guide alongside.

Table 2 demonstrates that all of these categories were triangulated by all of my forms of data collection, except for "the power of writing," which did not appear in my field notes.

Table 2. Themes Emerging from Data Sources

	Using Process to Build Confidence	The Power of Writing	Risk and Failure	Collaboration and Communication	Role of the Teacher
Aiden	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Emilio	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
James	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kasey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Layla	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sienna	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sarah	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ms. Monroe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Field Notes	✓		✓	✓	✓
Documents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

For each theme, I tie together the element of writer's workshop being addressed with at least one factor of resilience previously discussed in Chapter 2; I provide an interpretation through hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, or a dialogue of both; and I present my findings related to the theme under sub-categories, used to better organize and present the data. Although some of the connections between factors of resilience and the theoretical lenses are only made upfront, at other times, they arise in the discussions of my findings organically, interwoven within the data and descriptions.

In presenting the data that arose from these themes, however, I felt that from a teacher's perspective, there was still more information to present on the following sub-question:

- *What are the impacts of the writer's workshop process in a high school setting?*

As well, I wanted to investigate whether or not resistance on the teacher's part towards using writer's workshop in high school English appeared to be justified. As such, I have included a section at the end of my findings using data collected from the interviews from my teacher participant, specifically related to the value of teaching the writer's workshop in high school.

Using Process to Build Confidence

One of the key findings of this study is students' ability to use the process of the writer's workshop in order to build confidence. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the writer's workshop is based on the writing process, which asks students to persevere as they work through pre-writing, writing, revision and editing (Atwell, 2002; Elbow, 1998; Emig, 1971; Graves, 2003; Kittle, 2008; Murray, 2009a; Murray, 2009b). Advocating for the importance of process, Elbow (1998) suggests that "in writing, your words must go through stages. There are no shortcuts" (p. 44). Different stages of this process appear to connect to different identified factors of resilience from Chapter 2; however, most strongly, I found evidence of planning and goal setting, developing hope, and building empowerment.

The hermeneutic circle, movement between the part and the whole, is a key idea in hermeneutics, and is also itself a process. We can never stop interpreting, never stop understanding, without constantly being involved in a process. Movement is key. This process was evident in the writer's workshop, through collaboration, but also in working through the writing itself. Writing was never static, never masterable, constantly in motion. In life, Jardine (2002) suggests that this movement is essential to living "well" (p. 128).

In this study, I found that the process of writer's workshop does build confidence through learning and respecting that different people have different processes; understanding the importance of preparation; working through practice and drafts; questioning and reflection; celebrating; and valuing work and responsibility.

Learning and respecting differences in approach and process.

Post-process theory, as discussed in Chapter 2, argues that the same, fixed process does not work for all people in writing. Also explained, however, is that many who ascribe to the writing process theory agree that writing can have a process, but that process can be unique to different individuals. Murray (2009d) explains that process theorists "are talking about a process of interaction, not a series of logical steps" (p. 7). I found in this study that this was true in the classroom and also valued by most students.

I observed that Ms. Monroe regularly addressed the flexibility of writer's workshop in her lessons. On a day in which most students were at a level of pre-writing, Ms. Monroe suggested that some students "might want some time to think on [their] own first" (FN) while others may feel, "I need to talk before I write" (FN), giving them

permission to try various techniques. In an interview, she argued that writer's workshop is "a process that naturally differentiates for students" (INT1).

Three of the seven students specifically spoke to the importance of differentiation in pace and style in the writer's workshop. Layla explained that the writer's workshop gave her opportunities to learn about "methods that have worked for [her] and [haven't] worked for [her]" (INT2). James appreciated the fact that he was able to "go at [his] own pace" (INT2) but also seemed to gain a deeper appreciation of classmates' uniqueness in style and process, explaining that he had learned that "there's no wrong writing styles" (INT2). Both of these students were able to reflect and explain that they appreciated the freedom given to them in writer's workshop and had better learned what processes worked for both themselves and their peers.

Aiden came back to the notion of differentiating pace in all three of his interviews. Having not done well in "high school" English at his previous school, he found himself at this school attempting to upgrade with plans for post-secondary education. He explained his frustration feeling isolated in a more traditional English class:

> Whenever I did English in high school, I never felt like I was with the rest of the class […] like their mindset was on one particular topic and they were all writing about one idea, and they were all on the same train of ideas with that. And I felt like they hopped on that train early, and I was kind of left behind. (INT1)

He contrasted that directly in his discussion of his current English classroom, arguing that "*here,* in workshop, it doesn't matter where you're at. You can always improve where

you're at" (INT2). Aiden expressed that he felt he was able to genuinely grow and learn at his own pace because of the differentiation of the writer's workshop, allowing students to find their own processes and paces.

Sienna, however, presented a negative case. She was taking this course a second time and also had trouble attending. While she expressed that she valued knowledge, she also was regularly frustrated with traditional education systems. Sienna wanted to be able to complete her work and finish the course. The pre-writing elements in this particular writer's workshop class were often run as in-class work, together, with an emphasis on group communication. She suggested that the workshop, rather than being paced differently for different students, was one that was "slow" and which she found "frustrating" (INT1). While she did acknowledge that a slower pace "isn't a bad thing because some people really need time to figure out what to write about" (INT1), the slower pace did not appear to meet her needs. She seemed to feel that this workshop did not give her the flexibility seen by some of the other student participants in the study.

Although the way writer's workshop was utilized in this class may still have seemed too prescriptive for Sienna, many students found the freedom of process and pacing to allow them to learn about themselves as writers, building their empowerment as writers as they began to self-identify what they needed when writing. In this way, they also began to build autonomy, another important factor of resilience.

The importance of preparation and planning.

Preparation, which in the writer's workshop is often found in the form of pre-writing, was emphasized regularly in Ms. Monroe's classroom. Students were given, by

Ms. Monroe, a number of different sheets to help them learn to take notes and organize their writing, including “anchoring charts” (DOC) to use as support. This emphasis on planning and pre-writing was reinforced with Ms. Monroe’s ample allocation of class time being devoted towards this part of the writing process. Ms. Monroe suggested that planning allowed students to “know the moves you are going to make” (FN), assuring students that the task of writing was something for which they had prepared.

Five of the seven students mentioned the importance of planning in their interviews. Some students — like Emilio, Sarah, and Layla — acknowledged that planning was emphasized by their teacher as important, and they believed it was important for them to do as well. Layla explained that “you will only be as good as your pre-planning” (INT2). In this way, planning was valued. Aiden was able to metacognitively reflect that “warming up the creative part of your mind” (INT2) was essential for his writing process. James felt planning gave him the ability to see himself as a writer, suggesting that preparation made him “a capable writer” (INT2). Beyond that, though, James was also able to transfer the importance of planning for writing to planning in other areas of his life, increasing his personal resilience:

> If you put yourself in the spot to succeed in a challenging situation, it will make it a lot easier, but you still have to go out and execute, like go out and write. But it really helps if you put yourself in a good spot and plan ahead. (INT2)

Planning is an important factor of resilience, which I found to be a valued element of the writer’s workshop, especially as encountered through various forms of pre-writing.

Process, practice, and drafting.

One of the important elements of the writing process is practice and drafting, regularly making significant changes to pieces through revision and editing.

During my observations, Ms. Monroe regularly used words like “process” and “practice” (FN). Again, she backed up the importance of drafting by giving students time to write, using mini-lessons, but attempting to keep them short and full of conversation.

Aiden, James, and Layla all expressed some surprise when Ms. Monroe asked students to work on a piece, regularly throughout the year, without a due date. This piece was intended to allow students to draft continually, throughout the term. Although Aiden suggested that “it’s not even really an assignment; she said she might not mark it” (INT1), James understood that “it’s something we can build on as we learn new skills; she just wants us to go back in, change them” (INT1). These interviews were early and students were still growing to understand the importance of drafting.

Beyond this early piece, though, students began to see the importance of drafting, re-writing, revision, and editing. Viscerally, Elbow (1998) claims that “editing must be cut-throat. You must wade in with teeth gritted. Cut away flesh and leave only bone” (p. 41). This ability to genuinely revise, changing things significantly, was expressed by James as he explained that writer’s workshop taught him how to rewrite and revise in comparison to the basic editing he had done at his previous high school:

> At my last school, we did write at least two drafts, or sometimes they’d ask for three, but I’d mostly just copy paste. [….] [Writer’s workshop] was the first time that I actually changed anything other than spelling or little sentence structure in a

> draft. Like, this time my second draft was actually different in the ideas that was put in because I was able to look at the way that I relate to my thesis statement in my body paragraph, so I actually changed my draft significantly. (INT2)

The value in drafting and revision was expressed by five of the seven student participants during their interviews. Echoing James's statements about the difference between editing and revision, Kasey explained that, previously, she was unaware of how to go about doing real revision, arguing that writer's "workshop says, 'here's the tools to build that up'" (INT1).

Sarah explained that in her previous high school English classes, she felt "like it was a lot of learn the piece, […] write the piece, and then you're done with it" (INT2). Here, not only does she value re-writing and revising pieces, she also understands the process of how each piece "just improves [her] for the next one" (INT2). The value she finds in this is her ability to set goals in order to grow: "It's always about trying to be better than yourself and not anybody else" (INT3).

Kasey, who had described her issues with anxiety as one of the key components that had caused her not to finish high school on a traditional three-year schedule (INT1), explained that seeing her progress, and taking small steps, was helpful:

> I find the writer's workshop format is better for my anxiety because I'm able to process it a lot better, and I'm able to see the progress, and that helps me to calm down and be able to handle it because I'm able to see what I'm doing. (INT2)

For Kasey, the process, and the acknowledgment of incremental growth, was important in helping her to deal with anxiety that might have otherwise been evoked through writing.

Aiden, particularly, began to embrace the playful nature of drafting, a strategy I read as connected to Winnicott's (1991) ideas of play, which can be used in order to reduce anxiety. Rather than taking writing too seriously, Aiden explained that workshop allows you to embrace "even just doing *badly* the first time and then getting criticism and encouragement" (INT2). This idea of getting words on paper, beginning, in order to receive feedback and improve, also appeared to embolden him to feel free to play with his pieces: "For the last essay we did, I wrote like four or five different parts of it. Just lots of re-writing, putting it in, seeing what worked and then seeing what didn't work" (INT2). Rather than seeing drafting as onerous, Aiden appeared to see it as an ability to play, change, and grow.

Emilio, however, still expressed himself as challenged by the process of revision. When asked about whether or not he did extensive drafting or editing, he replied

> Not really. Not as much as I wanted to. I feel like high school me would have just handed it in. But like, knowing that it didn't count for marks, I don't think I would have put as much effort in. But this one I put effort, so I know for the essay that's coming up. (INT2)

Despite his initial negative reaction, by stating that he had not put in "as much as [he] wanted to," and then expressing this fact as a change from his prior high school experiences, where he likely would have put no effort at all into drafting, Emilio appears to reflect on this difference and find a new value in revision.

Students in this study suggested that drafting and revision in the writer's workshop allows you to see growth, set goals, work through anxiety, and feel confident in play: all elements that can be connected to resilience.

Questioning and reflection.

Like the hermeneutic circle, in which understanding is only ever found long enough to re-question it in order to fuse it with another horizon, so too is the learning in the writing process never fully complete, growing from one piece to the next. An important part of this continual process is the ability to question and reflect.

Questioning was an important element of Ms. Monroe's writer's workshop classroom. Even as an ice-breaker, getting students to begin to talk and warm up, she began each class with a "question of the day" (FN). During pre-writing discussions for a film study, for example, she asked students to question the characters' body language and facial expressions: "What does that look mean?" (FN). This form of reflection also made its way into goal setting for her writers: "What's your big goal for today? What are you guys going to work on today? What's going to raise the level of the writing?" (FN).

The importance of questioning led directly into the importance of reflection and metacognition. Students were regularly asked, formally and informally, to assess themselves and their learning. As students were leaving the classroom one day, Ms. Monroe cheerfully called out to them, "What did you learn today?" (FN). Students were asked, through self-assessment sheets (DOC), to assess their own writing. Ms. Monroe explained that the work of learning to read these rubrics and understand their writing was important in her classroom. With process-based writing, she explained, "I don't grade it

until you've self-assessed" (INT1). In one class, she discussed the self-evaluation and reflection processes of her students, explaining that she was proud that "a lot of [them] were […] celebrating that [they] were really getting better, but recognized that [they] were not quite where [they] want to be next" (FN).

Four of the seven students mentioned that self-assessment and/or reflection had led them to better understand what they actually needed to do in order to improve their writing. Ms. Monroe would often ask students, after coming up to their desks for an informal conference, "Did that help you?" (FN), inviting students to think about what they actually need in order to grow. Sarah and Aiden both explained that they now have the ability to look at their own writing and see what areas need improving. Sarah explained that this gives her the ability to ask for more specific help: "Now I can point to exactly what I need more help with — I need more sentence structure, I need more vocabulary — and I can say where I actually need help instead of just saying, 'I need help on this essay'" (INT2). There is an empowering nature of writer's workshop here, allowing students to feel more in-control to understand their writing and better utilize help when needed.

Ms. Monroe identified the ability to reflect and self-assess as an important life skill potentially leading to resilience (INT1). Kasey echoed these thoughts, articulating how the resilience found through reflection in writer's workshop can transfer into other areas of life:

> I think [writer's workshop is] giving you the tools to be able to handle it on your own. If you have to bounce back from a personal issue, it helps you to be like,

> okay, let's re-evaluate what's going on now. What can I do to change it? It makes you be able to see the parts of the situation. Just seeing the parts of the situation you can change. (INT2)

Factors of resilience such as empowerment, problem-solving, and fostering coping skills are all evident in questioning and reflection of the writer's workshop.

Seeing progress and celebrating growth.

In order to develop the hope necessary for resilience, it can be helpful to see and celebrate the progress you are making. Writer's workshop often involves an element of publication or sharing in order to celebrate the work that is completed.

The celebration of growth begins with seeing progress. Five of the seven students discussed finding pride and/or enjoyment in seeing the evolution in their writing throughout the course. James explained that seeing "the contrast between the before and after the workshop really helped" (INT2). In his final interview, Aiden reflected on the fact that, though progress seemed incremental at first, he now realized how far his writing had come:

> One of the first days, she gave us a package of example stories, and I was like, "I'll never be able to do that." It was so out of range from what I thought I had available. I didn't think I would be able to reach the point where I am now in terms of reading and writing and being able to formulate ideas about the texts. (INT3)

He now experienced pride, feeling that his own writing could stand up to those examples.

Ms. Monroe described writer's workshop as a celebration in itself: "It becomes a celebration. And an acknowledgment that you've got it, it's in you, you've just got to get it out" (INT1). However, she also discussed the importance of giving students an opportunity to share their work. Ms. Monroe had orchestrated a sharing day, in which students could write positive feedback on sticky notes on students' stories. She explained that one student, who often had "negative self-talk," was "completely changed" after people enjoyed their writing (INT2).

Participants noted connections to developing hope and engagement — both factors of resilience — through seeing and celebrating the progress made in their writer's workshop writing.

Work and responsibility.

Despite the celebration, like most processes, the writing process is hard work. The work of this process therefore helps to build factors of resilience: self-control, restraint, and taking responsibility.

Ms. Monroe describes the desire to build work ethic and responsibility for the young people in her classes, both as students and as citizens. She feels writer's workshop positions students to believe: "I need to be implicated in my life. I'm responsible for my success, and here's the tools I can use" (INT1).

Five of the seven students in this study identified the responsibility for having to do work on your own as an important element of writer's workshop. Aiden, James, and Sarah all reflected Ms. Monroe's sentiments that the learning will not happen unless you

work hard. There is an expectation that work will be done both in class and at home. Sienna explained:

> With workshop, you can do as much work in class as you want, but if there's specific things you need to learn, you have to take the time outside of class to learn on your own, and it's a part of being a good student. (INT2)

In this case, a strong sense of accountability and responsibility is clear.

Several of the student participants pointed to lessons learned from the writer's workshop related to responsibility. Aiden explained, "I know if I delay the work that needs to be done now, it will be more work later" (INT2). When James was asked something he learned from the process, he said, "Taking initiative for your own learning in everything. Don't wait. Don't let other people do it" (INT3).

For Sarah, who had considered dropping the course part-way-through because she was not going to achieve as high an average as she would need in order to be admitted to her post-secondary program of choice, writer's workshop taught her that there was more value than the grade at the end of the course:

> Challenges can be hard in the moment. Just in the moment. And you've got to learn to use what's around you to really be able to get through it. And I think often we'll blame the teacher, like, oh this teacher wasn't a good one; that is making me fail the class. But, really, what are you doing as a learner? Are you being on time? Are you showing up to class? [….] I want to work over the problem. I don't want to just drop the class and be done with it. (INT2)

This realization caused her to decide to continue the class, to learn all she could from it, and then to take the course again with the knowledge she had gained.

In this study, the writer's workshop was found to be a method in which student participants learned the importance of work and began to take responsibility for themselves as students and as people.

The Power of Writing

Another theme that I discovered in this study is about the power of writing. Words on a page, written by students or their peers, allow students to see themselves and others differently. Murray (2009b) describes that the writing process is actually the "process of using language to learn about our world, to evaluate what we learn about our world, to communicate what we learn about our world" (p. 2). This connects most strongly to the factor of resilience related to the development of identity and autonomy.

In hermeneutics, this connects to understanding through fusing horizons in hermeneutic dialogue: understanding the self before being able to fuse your own understanding with that of others. In Chapter 1, I argued that play, according to Winnicott's (1991) theories, occurs in the writer's workshop. He explains that "it is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self" (p. 54). When people are able to engage with others throughout the writing process, it allows for a playful, creative, collaborative space in which to find themselves.

In this study, the power of writing in a writer's workshop classroom lies most powerfully in its ability to help students see themselves as writers, to see the value in various forms of writing, to better know themselves and their thoughts, and to enjoy themselves.

Students as writers.

The first realization I had about the power of writing in the writer's workshop was that of helping students to see themselves as writers. This was aided greatly by Ms. Monroe's practice. In my observations, I regularly heard her call them "writers" (FN). She explained: "I do call them writers all the time, and they see what I mean. I'm not just bull-shitting and trying to blow bubbles up everybody's butt" (INT2).

Ms. Monroe's confidence was certainly well-founded: six of the seven student participants, in their interviews, referred to themselves as writers. However, they also acknowledged how and why this was true. When asked about first impressions of the writers' workshop, Kasey explained, "it definitely gives a lot more support to me as a writer" (INT1). Emilio described himself as being "an *improved* writer" (INT2). As James explained, in reference to his improvement throughout the course, "I can actually be a decent writer" (INT3).

Aiden reflected on his personal philosophy, supported by Ms. Monroe's practice, about embracing the writer title:

> It's not that one day you aren't a writer and one day you are a writer; the first day you start writing, you're a writer. And you become a better writer the more you write. That's another thing I also noticed one of the first days, is that [Ms.

> Monroe] would regard us as writers: "This is what writers do," or, "As writers, we need to start thinking about this and that." Even before we had written anything, even thinking about writing, we are writers. (INT2)

In this study, I observed that simply giving students the word "writer" to describe themselves appeared as a form of empowerment, an important factor of resilience.

Finding value in personal and creative writing forms.

In order for students to be playful and creative in their writing — allowing them to find themselves and to connect to others — a range of personal and creative writing forms are important. Writer's workshop is a place where this sort of writing can be explored, with its emphasis on choice of writing style and genre. However, in my experience, personal and creative writing forms are often less valued in many high school English classes.

Ms. Monroe confessed, guiltily, to once devaluing this sort of writing in her own classroom (INT1). However, she now enjoys watching her students find a place in writer's workshop to reconnect with this type of writing: "it's been a long time since they've been able to write something where their voice and their ideas have been valued" (INT1). She even frames diploma writing, writing to a specific prompt, as an opportunity to be creative or personal, suggesting to her students that "the prompt is just giving you a different lens to view the stories that you want to tell" (INT2).

Five of the seven student participants expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to write personally and/or creatively in Ms. Monroe's writer's workshop.

Kasey explained that she enjoyed personal writing because it was a format with which she felt familiar, and it was one that had helped her in the past: “I do a lot of journal writing for myself because of my anxiety; it’s a coping mechanism for me” (INT1). Sarah expressed that she now viewed writing as a potential “hobby”: “I have all these things, I know how they affected me, I could really talk about them” (INT3). Both students see a place for writing outside of their academic lives, as inspired by the freedom in the writer’s workshop.

The ability to write personally and creatively allows students to autonomously become engaged with their writing process.

Writing to know.

Capello (2006) argues that students are able to “construct personal and social identities within the complex interactional world of writing” (p. 483) provided in a writer’s workshop classroom. In this study, four of the seven participants reflected on the writer’s workshop’s ability to empower them to better know and understand themselves: who they are and/or what they think.

Wanting to understand yourself through writing can be seen through a desire to tell or share our thoughts and stories. Ms. Monroe has become accustomed to witnessing stories that students tell in her writer’s workshop class: “A lot of our students will tap into stories that need to be told. They’ll give voice to things that they need to deal with” (INT1).

One of Ms. Monroe’s writing assignments had students reflect on the personal journey that brought them to this particular school, taking a fourth or fifth year of high

school (DOC). For some students, the opportunity to write this resonated with them. Emilio explained that the assignment made him “reflect on the kind of person [he is], who [he was] in the past years” (INT1). For Layla, the piece caused her to become quite introspective:

> When I think of my educational journey [piece of writing] and my expulsion from a private school, it was almost like it helped me come to terms with what had happened. I had never really thought really hard about it, but when I was writing, I realized the journey I’d actually been on. I didn’t realize it was like a journey until I started writing about it, and I realized it’s actually a really interesting story because there was kind of a lot going on. I saved it for myself so that I could look back on it [….] I was able to see more clearly what had happened from where I am now. [….] Looking back on it now, I just realize that it taught me lessons. (INT1)

The impact of Layla’s writing experience brought about an important realization in the present, and it also created a desire to keep her piece in order to continue to learn from it in the future.

Aiden explained that, in the future, he was likely to help himself understand the importance of an event by writing about it, something he had not considered doing in the past:

> So, if something were to happen to me, like a substantial thing, I might not be able to fully articulate my ideas and my emotions about that thing. And I might be conflicted about how I feel about it. But it’s helpful to put it on paper and be able

> to have it structured. And like break down the event into meaningful events that make up the event and think about: How do you feel about this? How does this make you feel? How is that feeling meaningful? And how does that change you? (INT3)

The idea of writing to understand was particularly resonant with Aiden. He also identified critical writing as a place to discover who he was by better understanding what he thought about different ideas and topics:

> I did enjoy writing about all the things that were conflicted inside me. You can write: one part of me thinks this way, and the other part of me thinks this way. And you compare the issue and where you stand on the issue, and you can kind of critically adapt. Or you can put that one side of the conflict, you can attach it to yourself and connect it to a part of you. (INT1)

For Aiden, whether it be about a personal story or figuring out what he thinks about a particular issue, writing allows him to better understand himself.

In a variety of genres and assignments, the writer's workshop empowers students to better know themselves and what they think, important to the development of identity. Writing can also act as a method of problem solving or as a coping skill — both important factors of resilience.

Enjoyment in writing.

Despite the hard work of writing, including writing to better know yourself, writing can also be enjoyable. In this study, all seven student participants said they enjoyed writing in the writer's workshop.

In asking about student perceptions of writer's workshop, Ms. Monroe explained "for some students, I think it's fun" (INT1). Her students seemed to agree. When asked about writing in the writer's workshop, her students responded "I think it's really cool" (Sienna INT1); "it's a lot more enjoyable and a lot less stressful" (Kasey INT2); "actually, I love it" (Layla INT1); "I really love it, actually" (Emilio INT1). The "actually" in both Layla's and Emilio's responses suggest an element of surprise in finding enjoyment in writing.

Ms. Monroe believes that this may, in part, be because of the way writing is often taught in high school: "You see them breathe. Because they used to like writing. And they haven't been able to write in these ways before [in high school]" (INT2). Aiden, who now enjoys all of the writing in the course, explained that it may be because "the only writing that I've ever felt good about doing is in Ms. Monroe's class" (INT1).

Engagement is a factor of resilience, and finding enjoyment in writing suggests that students in this study were likely engaged in their writer's workshop class.

Anxiety, Risk, and Failure

In Chapter 2, I explained that, while writing has been known to cause anxiety, a process based model like writer's workshop can help students to address and work through that anxiety in a healthy way. The findings of this study show that writer's workshop is connected to anxiety, risk, and failure. Although these attributes may seem negative, the safe space created in a writer's workshop allows students to explore these emotionally delicate spaces in order to foster resilience. Naturally, these emotional

encounters connect to the factors of resilience related to problem solving, safe risk-taking, and fostering coping skills.

As explained in Chapter 1, both hermeneutics and psychoanalysis can be helpful when looking at anxiety, risk, and failure. Both express how there is an inherent risk and vulnerability when a person opens themselves up to learning, since the possibility for change or failure may be jarring in relation to what they previously believed to be true.

In this section, I address how anxiety, risk, and failure arise in the writer's workshop.

Anxiety.

In this study, writer's workshop was a place in which students felt anxiety for a variety of reasons. Although none of the students specifically talked about anxiety in the writer's workshop during their interviews — Kasey mentioned her own struggles with anxiety, but suggested the process of the writer's workshop actually helped her to cope with this — I observed it during my classroom visits, and it was discussed by Ms. Monroe in her interviews.

For some, the writing itself caused anxiety. On a day in which I observed a timed piece of writing in order to prepare for the diploma examination, some students demonstrated anxiety towards this task. Ms. Monroe reminded them, reassuringly, that this was something they had prepared for many times through their workshopped pieces (FN). On another occasion, while students were working in a group on revision, one student asked another student, "Do we feel nervous because we care?" (FN). There was

greater anxiety in this situation because the student felt that the work had value and was important; the pressure to do well was more significant because of their personal buy-in.

Working with others was also a cause for anxiety in Ms. Monroe's writer's workshop. For example, she regularly asked students to switch groups when working through elements of pre-writing discussion and helping others with revision and editing. During one observation, she cheerily explained, "This is your new group. You're going to meet some new people" (FN). I could observe the anxiety, but it was also clearly a safe space in which students were able to practice forming new relationships.

Ms. Monroe also discussed the anxiety felt by students due to her style of feedback and assistance in the writer's workshop. As she tended to give feedback throughout the writing process, rather than focusing it on the finished piece, and typically presented such feedback verbally rather than in writing, students often felt uncomfortable (INT1). In addition, students often felt anxious about giving and receiving feedback from one another. Ms. Monroe attempted to instruct her students about this in order to reduce some of the anxiety surrounding feedback:

> A huge challenge was my students, I had to teach them about feedback. So, we had to deconstruct some of the myths around feedback, some of the emotional responses we have to feedback, and kind of shift our understanding of what is feedback and how do we receive feedback. (INT1)

Despite this work, she still explained that, for some students, "it feels weird. It can feel, I think, uncomfortable" (INT1). She suggested that this discomfort may come from the way that teacher and student are positioned:

> There's some of that discomfort because of the stance that workshop places you in, beside them as a writer, rather than as a teacher in front of the room with all the answers. And certainly with some students there's discomfort with, "Why don't you give it a try? Tell me what you're thinking?" (INT2)

Because the writer's workshop may look different than many English classes students have experienced in the past, it can create discomfort and anxiety.

The anxiety created in the writer's workshop, as seen in this study, included anxiety caused by writing, especially writing that was seen to be valuable; anxiety caused by working in a group; anxiety surrounding feedback; and anxiety formed when things were not as they were expected to be. However, this anxiety may be healthy, as it was often acknowledged by the teacher, openly discussed, and prepared for. In this way, coping skills could be formed from the creation of these low, monitored levels of anxiety.

Risk.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Erikson suggests that adolescents need a space of psychosocial moratorium in order to take risks and engage in the process of self-discovery (Stevens, 1983). Students were regularly asked to take risks in Ms. Monroe's classroom. All seven student participants discussed risk-taking as an element of their experience in writer's workshop.

One of the risks in the writer's workshop was the risk students had to take in trusting themselves in their learning and writing. When asked about the challenges of writer's workshop, Ms. Monroe stated that "getting students to implicate themselves in their learning is the challenge, but I feel like the more I do this, the easier that's

becoming" (INT1). For Sarah, trusting her writing was a risk that she became willing to take: "I've had a lot more faith in my own writing, so I feel like that was a risk, being able to hand something in and go, okay, you did what you did and that's it" (INT2). Learning to trust their writing, and their ability to learn, was a risk that Ms. Monroe challenged her students to take.

As it was a cause of anxiety, it is not surprising that interacting with others was also described by many as a risk taken in writer's workshop. However, it is one that Ms. Monroe, and several of her students, suggested was faced, causing increased resilience. Originally, when expressing opinions, Ms. Monroe explained that students in her class were nervous, and even apologetic, about their thoughts:

> We're so worried about the judgement of what somebody else will think of me, and I see them apologizing less for their thinking. Nobody's starting with "Well, I don't know. This might sound dumb." They don't do that anymore. They just test it out. (INT2)

Layla confirmed that "you're able to open up with people" (INT1) in writer's workshop, which began to feel less risky for her. Before, Aiden was worried about expressing his opinions verbally, feeling that he was not very skilled and did not have a strong vocabulary (INT1); however, in his final interview, he shared: "I do take more risks in that I'm willing to share things that I'm not certain about, in hopes that other people will maybe see the same thing that I see and validate my ideas" (INT3).

Another risk in interacting with others involves asking for help. Kasey explained her evolution in taking this risk:

> [The writer's workshop] made me a lot more comfortable asking for help. I consider myself a really proud person, so it's hard for me to ask for help. I have a really hard time asking for help. So it's helped me kind of open up that way. It's okay to ask for help. It's okay to show weakness. (INT2)

Sarah identified that she took the risk, not only in asking for help, but in seeking people who were "better" than she was to ask for help: "I tell them that I really appreciate their insights, and I never thought I could tell someone they're better without feeling like I'm worse" (INT2). Sarah showed significant vulnerability in recognizing that it is not a weakness to regard someone else as being stronger than you in a particular area; this is a skill that she can definitely use in moving forward.

However, not all students felt comfortable in being vulnerable and taking risks with other students. Emilio presented as a negative case, explaining that he was "pretty scared to show other students [his] work because you don't know that their work may be better, so your self-esteem kind of goes down" (INT2). Unlike Sarah, Emilio did not gain the confidence to share with someone he believed to be better.

The writing itself in the writer's workshop invites risk-taking. Ms. Monroe describes it as "unpredictable. Students are trying different moves" (INT1). However, many of the participants took her up on this challenge to try different approaches and techniques. Emilio suggested that he and other students could be "creative sometimes tying in different things to our work. [In my old high school], I would be really hesitant to do it" (INT2). Sarah agreed that a risk that writer's workshop inspired her to attempt

was “trying something new even though you might not think it’s the best approach for you, you never know” (INT3). James described a risk he took on a particular assignment:

> In my conclusion, I tried to include something I’ve never done before, an ultimate statement as like a world relating one, which I never do. It’s almost personal. I tried to be personal and tried to change it up. [….] So I tried it, and I don’t know how it went, but we’ll see. (INT2)

Despite this assignment being assessed for marks, James felt confident in trying a new “move” in his writing.

Murray (2009d) explains that “writing means self-exposure. No matter how objective the tone or how detached the subject, the writer is exposed by the words on the page” (pp. 24-25). Whether we write something deeply personal, philosophical, or fictional, elements of ourselves become a part of what we write. The subject matter of the writing itself, especially when addressing a personal topic, is a risk that Ms. Monroe regularly sees her students take in the writer’s workshop: “Being brave enough to write about first love and loss. Their disappointments of themselves and their parents. Failure to get accepted to university or post-secondary when their friends did, and still persevere” (INT2).

She also sees the benefits of being willing to take those risks in personal writing. She has had a few students talk to her about real-life applications of risks they have taken by sharing their writing in their personal lives:

> One young woman lost a grandma last fall, and she came in the day after the funeral actually beaming and smiling. And I’m like, “What’s going on?” And she

> said, "I did the eulogy. And everybody clapped. And everybody who went after me to speak said, 'You know [she] said it all.' And the reason I could do that was because I learned these moves that a writer makes, and I transferred them to the eulogy I wrote." Another young man, […] had to go and write a speech for his brother's wedding, the best man speech, and he said he could do that because of the lessons. So I think when you see that the kids will take this to the real world and it makes a difference there, you can't turn back. (INT1)

Students not only found a real life application for their writing, but as shown in these examples, they were also willing to take the risk to share that writing with an audience.

Some student participants were able to explain how their ability to take risks might also impact their personal resilience moving forward. Aiden connected the challenges of writer's workshop to challenges in life:

> There are challenges in writer's workshop, and those challenges… there can be challenges anywhere. I think the ability to bounce back from any challenges, being able to recall a previous challenge that was hard, but the fact that you overcame that challenge, reinforces your belief in yourself that you can overcome that because you *have* overcome those other challenges before. Like, writing is hard, and I've done some writing already. But I can start, and I believe in myself that I can write because I have written a few things in class already. (INT2)

James suggested that taking risks in writer's workshop could transfer to being more comfortable taking risks in other situations: "You have to practice in life going out of

your comfort zone. You're not going to be comfortable doing those things and expanding your skillset without doing things" (INT3).

Trusting in your own abilities, interacting with others, using unfamiliar "moves" in writing, and sharing your writing with an audience are all risks that were demonstrated in this study. In addition, some student participants expressed that these risks could directly transfer to other areas of their lives.

Failure.

Whenever you attempt something, especially something risky, there is the chance of failure. Three of the seven student participants described the potential of writer's workshop as a safe — and important — place to fail.

Aiden expressed that taking a risk that might end in failure was no longer as worrying as it once had been:

> I can take a risk and not be so beat up about it if it doesn't turn out to be a success or victory. [….] It's not the end of the world if I do something wrong. Everybody does something wrong. (INT3)

Sienna explained that writer's workshop was a place where people would likely fail "because not everyone can write immediately" (INT1). However, she also directly related failure to resilience, stating, "I think it's important to fail. Because you don't learn resilience unless you fail" (INT1).

For Sarah, mistakes and failure had become possibilities to improve:

> I mean, every mistake I've made has taught me something better. Every time I don't do well, Ms. Monroe can tell me, okay, this is what you can work on. And I

> always take it in a positive manner, where she's helping me build towards a better future. (INT2)

In her final interview, Sarah connected this idea about writer's workshop to a larger context:

> It's okay to make a mistake as long as you pick up from it, as long as you learn something from it. And you can overcome any challenge that is given to you as long as you're willing to put in the work. (INT3)

From writer's workshop, Sarah felt she had learned that mistakes were opportunities to learn and achieve.

This study suggests that failure gives students an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions and create high expectations moving forward — both factors of resilience — in order to learn and grow.

Collaboration and Communication

The fourth theme identified in this study is collaboration and communication. Elbow (1998) explains that, as writing is usually intended for someone else – an audience – we need feedback from others to understand if what we are writing is actually relatable:

> Writing is a string you send out to connect yourself with other consciousnesses, but usually you never have the opportunity to feel anything at the other end. How can you tell whether you've got a fish if the line always feels slack? (p. 77)

Students in the writer's workshop are regularly asked to collaborate and communicate with each other and their teacher. This social dynamic connects directly to the factor of resilience involving forming relationships, building interpersonal skills, and developing empathy.

As explained in Chapter 1, in a hermeneutic dialogue, collaboration and communication are essential in order to fuse horizons and gain understanding. Winnicott's (1991) ideas on play also relate to collaboration. He explains that "cultural experience begins with creative living first manifested in play" (p. 100). In many ways, the writer's workshop is a space that allows for this collaborative play: working together in the creative endeavour of writing.

My findings about collaboration and communication in Ms. Monroe's class suggest that a writer's workshop approach can help to foster relationships, academic dialogue, leadership, and empathy.

Fostering relationships.

One of the most immediate reactions I had to Ms. Monroe's classroom was how it emphasized the importance of building relationships with others. Because this school is unique and draws from all over the city, it is likely that students will not know a single other person in their class. Upon entering the room on my first visit, I noticed that it was social and chatty. Students were showing each other their Instagram pages. As previously mentioned, there can sometimes be a degree of anxiety related to working with others, and in this sense, it is a risk. However, Ms. Monroe had created a community. When a

girl arrived late and decided to sit on her own, Ms. Monroe immediately invited her to "come be with people. Pull up a chair" (FN).

The work of building a community in which students felt comfortable communicating and collaborating together as writers started for Ms. Monroe long before any writing began. On a day in which they were asked to change groups, she designed an ice-breaker activity: "New academic friends, partner up! You have two minutes to list 20 things you have in common!" (FN). Students were laughing, smiling, and chatting with confidence. Not a single student appeared to be "too cool" for this exercise. Ms. Monroe commented, "Did you guys notice how it sounded like there was a party going on in here?" (FN). One student, who had missed some time in class, suggested, "I know everything about Aiden now" (FN).

Five of the seven student participants suggested that the writer's workshop was a place in which they were able to foster relationships. For some students, this was not an environment to which they were accustomed from past school experiences. In discussing his former high school, Aiden explained that "in English class, I kind of just separated myself from other students. That may be why I kind of felt separated" (INT1). Kasey agreed with this contrast:

> I'm a lot more comfortable talking to other students because it's open. Maybe it's just my experience because I had a strict set of teachers where we didn't talk to other students, and we had to be quiet all the time. (INT2)

The writer's workshop created a space where students "bonded with each other" (Monroe INT2).

Although three students admitted that Ms. Monroe's term "academic friend" was at first met with some hesitance or laughter, Aiden and Layla nonetheless discussed that the word "friend" held some truth for them:

> At first, it felt really corny and like she's just trying to push it on us, but the more she pushed it… everyone *is* my friend. I can talk to anybody in that class, whereas in my *math* class, I don't know anybody else's name. In math, it's just different. [.… In English,] everyone is kind of everyone else's friend. We're all in the class together rather than *at* the class. We're all participating *in* it together. (Aiden, INT2)

> At first, I found it really funny when she called our fellow classmates academic friends, but now I know what she means because we are all kind of friends. We're in an environment where we get along [.…] I really like the social aspect of it. It makes [people] do better in the class. (Layla, INT1)

Rather than "friendship," some students used the word "connection" in their discussion of the relationships that formed with their classmates. As James explained, "I really enjoy connecting with people" (INT1). Although Layla had also mentioned friendships, she talked about how "you build connections in the classroom, which is huge; you're able to open up with people" (INT1). She even explained that the connections with classmates "helps to motivate [some students] to come to class" (INT2). Sienna suggested that, for high school students and young adults, "I think that being at such a vulnerable age where it's hard to make connections, it helps establish connections and build a community within a classroom" (INT2).

This study finds that the community created helps students to form relationships and build interpersonal skills with others, important factors of resilience.

Fostering academic dialogue.

Beyond forming relationships, Ms. Monroe's classroom was a place in which she asked students to use academic dialogue as a means to further their learning. All seven student participants mentioned the helpful nature of academic dialogue at least once in their interviews.

As mentioned, the term "academic friends" was regularly used in Ms. Monroe's classroom (FN). Ms. Monroe suggested that it was her responsibility to teach her students to make academic friends, in order to find sources other than their teacher from which to learn (INT1). Other than the class that occurred during a timed-writing day, during my visits I observed table discussions with group members. The classroom appeared to be a collaborative place in which students volunteered answers, rarely causing Ms. Monroe to rely on significant wait time. It was clear that most students felt comfortable sharing in an academic way with one another. Aiden suggested that he found it helpful to discuss the question of the day and share with table-mates in order to "get those creative thoughts on paper, or just to bring them out" (INT2). Ms. Monroe was also careful to teach elements of communication and how to get the most out of collaboration. For example, she asked the students, "Are we finding that sweet spot between that structure and support, while still allowing you to then go with your groups and explore the kinds of things that *you* think are really important to understand?" (FN).

One of the main functions of these academic friendships in the writer's workshop was to give feedback during the pre-writing and revision stages. During my observations, I overheard many conversations among students in which they were giving each other suggestions to help prepare for writing assignments. At one point, when a student was trying out an idea with another student, they received the feedback: "Ohhhhhh. That's deep" (FN). Sometimes this feedback could be casual, checking in at various stages of writing. For instance, James explained, "I'm always able to go and check and be like, 'Hey, what else have you guys done? I'm stuck here'" (INT2). Documents shared by students and Ms. Monroe showed that they were expected to share their work together in order to obtain feedback (DOC). Ms. Monroe explained that one of the most important parts of her practice in the writer's workshop is "teaching [her students] about the importance of academic partnerships […], and if one academic friend doesn't know, ask another. Getting them to see into that idea that I'm not the only source in the room who can help them" (INT1).

Since students in Ms. Monroe's class are encouraged to discover how they can become more, and learn more, together, the writer's workshop supported a hermeneutic understanding, in which participants – teacher and students alike – are encouraged to fuse horizons. In my observations, this occurred during the pre-writing stage (where students brainstorm ideas), during writing to quickly check ideas, and during revision and editing for feedback. During one of my observations, where students were discussing different quotations from short stories to see which might be the most important or resonant for an essay they were writing, one student came up with a particularly interesting line of

argument and asked the group if he should use it. Another student replied, "You should. I'm going to write it down" (FN). Although she said this almost mischievously, as if she were stealing someone else's idea, it was clear that the idea arose from the conversation and collaboration. In another group, two students were reflecting on the process of the collaborative conversations they were having. The first student said, "I like how other people make me more right." The second replied, "Even if we're all just a little right, we can draw from each other" (FN).

This work goes beyond a poaching of ideas. Collaboration is generative. For Kasey, the collaboration leads to better understanding: "You get to have more discussions and talk about the topics more. Really hammer into what you're writing about. And understand your topic a lot better" (INT1). Emilio suggested, "You get to communicate. You get to get different ideas from people" (INT1). In discussing the contrast between writer's workshop and other educational settings he was used to, especially his nine years being educated in Singapore, Emilio added, "Here it's more you get more ideas from other people and then you do more thinking" (INT1). He suggested that the work is not finished with the group communication; the collaboration helps you to continue building ideas on your own. James agreed that the collaboration was helpful, and he also suggested that it provided confidence and freedom in portraying ideas: "The way she sets up the in-class discussions really gives us confidence to think freely with our writing and build it however we want. And people can build on that; it's really easy to come up with ideas" (INT2).

Sarah and Sienna both reflected on the idea of being "pushed" in collaboration. Sarah used academic friendships in order to better herself, seeking collaboration with people she thought could help her think more deeply and write more strongly:

> I find that the idea of academic friends pushes me to find other people that are better than me, which is something that I never saw for myself. I wanted to be better. I never recognized others that were my competition as actually being able to help me. (INT1)
>
> I used to surround myself with people who weren't as good as writers; I thought that, if I teach them, I'll really know my subject. But now I know that if I hang out with people who do better than me, and who are, I guess, intelligent, I can learn from them. And I never thought that that was something that I could use. (INT2)

Sarah completely changed her understanding of relationships with people who she deemed to be better than she was; there was a shift from seeing them as competition to seeing them as individuals from whom she can learn. Sienna also described being pushed by both peers and the teacher in an academic relationship; she explained that "being held responsible in the class by other people and by the teacher pushes you to do more than you would if you just acted on your own" (INT 2). For Sienna, there is a responsibility to the group to engage in this partnership.

Despite this reaction, Sienna also presented a negative case in regards to the idea that writer's workshop positively fosters academic dialogue. As confirmed by Ms. Monroe, Sienna was quite a strong student, despite having attendance problems. Sienna

believed that her strengths included having thoughtful, strong ideas (INT1). Sometimes, Sienna fought the collaboration in which she was asked to participate:

> The writer's workshop actually kind of makes me a little mad. Because it asks me to be communicative with people. Sometimes I just want to do things on my own. Sometimes having the influence of other people puts too many ideas in my head. (INT1)

At times, she also felt that the collaboration in writer's workshop was not two-sided, that she was being used for knowledge more than she was gaining from the process:

> When I was there, it was a lot of my peers asking *me* questions and asking to see *my* writing. Even though I'm not there all the time. So, I feel that *I* am being used as a resource. Which is fine, I like helping people, I like lending knowledge and stuff like that. But at the same time, it just seems like a waste of my time to go to a class where I'm teaching other people instead of learning. (INT2)

In addition to peers not being willing to share their ideas, or being capable of sharing their ideas, Sienna also suggested that some peers were not emotionally capable of being vulnerable in the way they needed to be for real collaboration to occur:

> A big thing about writer's workshop with me is that not everybody has any sort of soft-skills in a classroom, so they don't contribute in the same way. And I think that experience can be elevated by everybody else — my own peers or whatever — learning how to break down our own boundaries, to how they are socially. Because at this age we're very young and awkward — just socially just not at our best — so I think that if they would break down their own barriers and get over

> themselves a bit to communicate, the experience would be elevated a lot more. (INT1)

Sienna raised some important questions about a student's emotional readiness to be vulnerable, which is especially important regarding the risk-taking required for writer's workshop and whether it will help build resilience. Writer's workshop may be a wonderful place to practice this vulnerability; however, it can be challenging to get the most out of it if these skills have not already been developed at a high school level. However, Sienna also admitted that she may not have felt comfortable in using others to learn: "But also my attendance has been poor [….] I just feel bad accessing my communication network because I'm not coming to class the way I should be" (INT1). Although there are problems with the collaborative nature of writer's workshop for Sienna, she did admit that part of the problem may have been due to her issues with attendance.

Sienna was not the only negative case when it came to the issue of collaboration. Emilio explained, "At times, I have groups that are really quiet who don't want to talk as much, but sometimes I'll have good conversations with some groups" (INT2). This echoes Sienna's comments about students being ready or able to collaborate.

Layla also had trouble in the writer's workshop with collaboration; however, her problem was that she felt the collaboration did not remain as strong as the course progressed:

> At the beginning, there was a lot of peer-talking about ideas, connecting ideas together. And that was really useful; I thought I grasped the concept a lot. But as

> we continued and we got more into personal work, we kind of stopped doing that. But since we stopped doing that, I felt I wasn’t able to conceptualize the ideas as well. (INT2)

Although other students did not bring this up in interviews, Layla felt that the collaborative nature of the classroom weakened. Though, she did admit:

> Part of it was that I was really busy, and I was staying up late doing math. I kind of felt like a zombie. So I came to English class and I would just be zoned out. I wouldn't be able to focus on it. (INT2)

It is possible that Layla was too tired to get as much out of the collaborative process as she had earlier.

For most students, fostering academic dialogue and collaboration was an important element of the writer’s workshop, certainly connecting to the factors of resilience surrounding forming relationships and building interpersonal skills. However, some good points arise from the negative cases. Students must feel willing and able to engage in this work that is challenging both academically and emotionally. They may need additional coaching and work to be able to be open and vulnerable with their ideas, and to take those necessary risks. Students who understand the work more strongly may not feel that they are getting as much from the experience. And, like all work, students must be in a place in which they feel ready to physically engage in collaboration in order for it to be meaningful in the writer’s workshop.

Fostering leadership.

For some students, Ms. Monroe's writers' workshop classroom allowed them to grow as leaders. Ms. Monroe sets up this collaborative work intentionally, telling students "You're leading discussions" (INT 2). On my last observation day, I observed students in small-group discussions. One of the students in particular, who though a consenting participant in the class, was not a case study member, demonstrated significant growth. Although he had previously appeared to be shy, he was now informally leading a discussion with another student. His eyes were lit up, conversing with confidence, making eye contact, and laughing. Emilio, who had showed some nervousness in sharing his ideas with other students (INT1), was also acting as a leader in his small group.

Aiden and James were both able to reflect on their growth as leaders in the classroom. During the same observation of small group discussions, I overheard Aiden say to his group, "I just want to know what the title means to every single one of you?" (FN). He was leading this discussion with questions, emulating how Ms. Monroe often directed the classroom. In his final interview, he explained that he recognized this emerging style of leadership in himself:

> I can see a lack of self-confidence in others in the class, and it became a natural process of me to kind of encourage ideas of other people. Like, why do you think that? Rather than shutting it down or making fun of them for it. (INT3)

James also found that his evolving leadership style was to engage and involve others:

> I've learned how to involve other types of learners [….] I would never do that last year because I was never really sure about my ideas. I would participate, but I wouldn't lead, and I wouldn't pull other people into it. (INT3)

Neither of these students had seen themselves as leaders in the past; however, the writer's workshop helped them to develop a leadership style that encouraged others to be heard, thereby empowering them.

The leadership fostered in Ms. Monroe's class — which empowers students to become leaders, in turn empowering other students to share ideas — connects to many factors of resilience: forming relationships, building interpersonal skills, developing empathy, building empowerment, safe risk-taking, creating high expectations, and the development of identity and autonomy.

Fostering empathy.

Murray (2009d) explains that a writing classroom becomes a place of empathy: "As the students in the writing class hear a piece of writing, they laugh with the author, grieve with the author, nod in understanding, lean forward to learn more" (p. 20). With all of the collaboration in Ms. Monroe's writer's workshop class, students are required to build empathy in order to have truly generative discussions about other people's writing and opinions. Three of the seven participants discussed the importance of being able to respect the opinions of others. For Sarah, collaboration in workshop gave her an opportunity to challenge her own perspective, see another perspective, and better her ideas. When asked about a risk she took in writer's workshop, she answered:

> Talking to other people about their opinions even though I may disagree with it. Now it gives me a perspective. And it either challenges me to step up my game and have better evidence, or maybe it shows me that I want to write something differently. [….] It's okay to disagree with people. And you should communicate with other people because you need it in order to write anything or think about something. You need to discuss that idea. Whether it's talking to yourself or talking to another person. You're able to process your ideas and verbally get them out. (INT3)

Sienna echoed these thoughts: "Instead of being so limited and stuck in your own thinking, you get to see and hear what other people are thinking as well. And it helps broaden your scope and understanding" (INT2). When asked about the benefits of collaboration in the writer's workshop, Aiden said, "Being able to deal with other people's opinions rather than seeing them as an attack on your own opinions. And then also maybe thinking about why they have those opinions" (INT3).

In collaborating with others in a place of vulnerability, like Ms. Monroe's writer's workshop, the above data shows that there is a strong potential for developing empathy, a significant factor of resilience. In this development of empathy, there is also an element of restraint, another factor of resilience, which involves being able to learn how to listen to others genuinely, and without reacting defensively.

The Role of the Teacher: Acknowledger, Mentor, and Guide Alongside

I feel it is important to open this section by acknowledging that there was only one teacher participant in this study. As such, my findings related to the role of the teacher are based on one individual. Ms. Monroe appeared to be a strong and dedicated teacher, with a cheerful and energetic personality. As Aiden remarked, “She’s very enthusiastic about what she’s doing. Some would say past the point of… one person called her crazy once. *laughing*” (INT2). As such, I cannot suggest that every writer’s workshop teacher would be the same. However, I will present my findings related to the role of the teacher in the writer’s workshop classroom in the form of attributes and qualities found in Ms. Monroe that appeared to be beneficial to teaching when using the writer’s workshop approach, and that also connect to potentially fostering the factors of resilience in students.

Although, especially with young writers, the classroom teacher is an important element of the writer’s workshop, the writer’s workshop teacher takes on the role of mentor, allowing students to find their way to great writing. Murray (2009c) explains this through metaphor:

> The teacher has to be a guide who doesn’t lead so much as stand behind the young explorer, pointing out alternatives only at the moment of panic. Once the writer/explorer has read one map and made the trip from meaning intended to meaning realized, will the young writer begin to trust the other self and have faith it will know how to read other trails and through other territories. (p. 89)

Although the process of leading their own discovery may seem challenging and, at times, even terrifying for students, the writer's workshop teacher guides the student in the right direction, but knows that they must learn to trust themselves, and their writing, in order to find their way.

As Ms. Monroe stated in her first interview, "[a] challenge [about teaching using the writer's workshop approach] is shifting beliefs about the expertise of the teacher and the *role* of the teacher" (INT1). Seeing the teacher differently connects to ideas from both hermeneutics and psychoanalysis, as described in Chapter 1. In hermeneutics, forming understanding through a fusion of horizons does not position one person as expert and another a student; instead, this work is done together, alongside one another. In psychoanalysis, if teaching is "impossible," a suggestion I have argued is that teachers provide a place for creative play. In this way, the role of the teacher is one of fostering that creativity rather than instructing or lecturing.

My findings in this study suggest that, after gaining trust, Ms. Monroe's roles in the writer's workshop classroom are that of acknowledger; model, mentor, guide, sounding board, and participant-observer; and learner alongside her students. These roles allow her the potential to help her students develop several factors of resilience, including forming relationships, building empowerment, creating high expectations, engagement, and development of autonomy.

Gaining trust.

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2017) define trust as "the willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the other party is benevolent,

honest, open, reliable, and competent" (p. 154). As previously mentioned, the writer's workshop is a place that can cause anxiety, in part due to the expectation to be vulnerable. In Ms. Monroe's classroom, it was clear that she had to gain the trust of her students in order to allow them to feel willing to demonstrate that vulnerability and take the risks important to writer's workshop.

In observing Ms. Monroe's classroom, I immediately felt that she was creating a welcoming atmosphere for her students. She spoke to each of them as they came in, asking questions about their lives. Although her tone was friendly and soothing, and she was repetitive, it was clear that she was not treating them like children. On one occasion, when a couple of students trickled in late, one student dropped off baked goods for Ms. Monroe, as if apologizing. Ms. Monroe appeared at once benevolent and open, while also being reliable and competent. When asked about particular successes that she has found using the writer's workshop, she replied, "Relationships. Huge. Instantly" (INT1). Although writer's workshop provides a place to build relationships, it is clear that Ms. Monroe works to ensure trust is built that will allow these relationships to form.

Three of the student participants discussed elements of trust in their interviews. Kasey explained, "I have a relationship with my teacher more, and I feel more comfortable asking for help" (INT2). Clearly, Kasey trusted Ms. Monroe in order to feel that comfort, having previously discussed her challenges in asking for help (INT2). For Aiden, an important element of his relationship with Ms. Monroe was a belief in her benevolence and openness: "It seems like she *wants* to help us overcome those

challenges" (INT2). Sarah specifically pointed to the importance of Ms. Monroe's honesty: "She'll be honest with you; that's the hard part is accepting the truth" (INT1).

Ms. Monroe exhibited all of the characteristics described by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2017) as important to being seen as a trustworthy party. In this way, she was able to form relationships with many of her students, who in turn formed relationships with her, developing this social factor of resilience.

Acknowledger.

My field notes are full of positive acknowledgements Ms. Monroe made to her students during my classroom observations:

> Thank you for your participation.
>
> This just confirms to me that you guys have what it takes. The work that we're doing together is always enhanced when you are doing the work.
>
> I love this when we do this work together. I've got chills.
>
> I'm so glad you're back.
>
> Oh! I like your word choice.
>
> I was thinking the same thing. Mind meld.
>
> You guys are on this. You're just nailing this piece.
>
> And I'm stealing some of your words. That's a compliment to you.
>
> Aaaaaaaah! Go go go go! (FN)

As explained in Chapter 1, Bibby (2011) suggests that, due to the psychoanalytic phenomenon of transference, students often wish to please their teachers: feelings once felt towards a parent are now directed toward another, in this case, the teacher. Though a

student's anxiety may be provoked through a fear of disappointing their teacher, this anxiety may also cause them to desire their teacher's affection and appreciation. Regularly acknowledging her students in positive terms, Ms. Monroe demonstrates that affection, making her students comfortable in the classroom.

Explaining the meaning of her role when giving feedback to high school students, Kittle (2008) states: "I respond with compassion and interest in my notes on their drafts, and stop by during workshop to look in their eyes and commend their bravery" (p. 104). Although writer's workshop often relies on oral feedback, something Ms. Monroe uses regularly in the classroom, she has also found that students seem to crave written feedback on final versions of work:

> They love at least something. [….] They want me to validate, and maybe that's what the written feedback becomes is just the validation of the effort or the validation of sharing the story [….] It wasn't necessarily about the writing itself, it was just the effort that was put in, and maybe that's where the written feedback needs to be. (INT2)

She is aware that this feedback seems to nurture her students. Ms. Monroe was looking forward to giving positive feedback to a student she described as being "hesitant and withdrawn," because she was "excited to see how he reacts to the feedback" (INT2). When another student was told, "That's one of the best pieces I've ever read. I want to know how the story continues. It's got to become something bigger" about one of his stories, "he sort of emerged as a leader. Gives lots of thoughtful feedback. Makes a lot of connections with [himself] as a learner" (INT2). Her positive feedback had the power to

motivate and encourage some students to become more engaged and to become stronger writers.

Four of the seven student participants directly spoke about the positive nature of Ms. Monroe's feedback. James was surprised by the amount of oral feedback they received in class: "She came and talked to almost everyone individually about what we're writing" (INT1). Both Emilio (INT2) and Aiden (INT2) noticed the importance of receiving guidance when they went astray, but qualified that Ms. Monroe always emphasized something positive about the writing, which they in turn felt as a "confidence booster" (Emilio, INT 2). Aiden explained that Ms. Monroe "encourages us to do [the good] part again so that we can grow on what we have done already" (INT2). Sarah specifically appreciated the specificity of the positive feedback she received:

> I think it's important that everybody gets specific, thoughtful feedback and directive practice, which is getting those things that you're getting really well and pointing out those things [you're not], instead of just saying, "Oh that was a good paragraph." (INT2)

By stating specific examples, Sarah appeared to feel that Ms. Monroe was genuinely paying attention to her work, which helped her to improve.

Layla did present as a negative case about feedback, suggesting that "When it does happen, it's good. Recently I feel like I haven't had as much one-on-one time with [Ms. Monroe]" (INT2). Ms. Monroe acknowledged that it can be very challenging to get to all of the students as much as she would like when class sizes were so large (INT1).

This study suggests that, for many of Ms. Monroe's students, positive acknowledgments, both orally and in writing, helped them feel heard and seen. This acknowledgement could foster factors of resilience such as forming relationships, building empowerment, safe risk-taking, creating high expectations, and engagement.

Model, mentor, guide, sounding board, and participant-observer.

Graves (1991) explains that "children learn from our *demonstrations*" (p. 13). Rather than instructing students on how their writing *should* look, Ms. Monroe modelled how writing *could* look. She realized that students need support, but also respected their unique perspectives, styles, and ideas. Ms. Monroe explained that a "challenge [of writer's workshop] is making your writing public. And so taking the time to write an essay" (INT1). Writing with your students, as shown in Chapter 2, is often seen as a strength of writer's workshop. However, Ms. Monroe clarified that her way was not the only way. In observing her having a quick conference with a student while he was writing, she asked, "Can I model for you how this *might* go?" (FN) giving him the ability to opt out, but also being clear this was one possibility. On the same day, she stated to the entire class, "I don't want you writing *my* essay. I want you writing *your* essay" (FN). James appeared surprised by Ms. Monroe's commitment to modelling by writing her own essay: "She literally wrote an essay along with us, and we could see her. Like, she would have her rough draft and we would do it. She'd change hers. Like same as us, same process as us" (INT2). Sarah specifically pointed out how helpful this strategy was for her: "Seeing her map out her thinking really helps me map out my thinking when I'm all alone" (INT2).

When Kasey identified that Ms. Monroe did not seem to be a traditional teacher, I asked her to clarify how she viewed Ms. Monroe; she replied, "Kind of a mentor. Mentoring. Rather than just speaking to someone. She's mentoring" (INT2). Being a mentor implies that a person trusts your advice. Sarah explained, "She tells me what to work on, and where I can add to it and how to get better. It's never something to put me down" (INT2). When advice is critical, Sarah was able to trust that it was with good intentions, to help her to become a better writer.

Emilio described a similar role as that of a guide: "Ms. Monroe kind of guides you if you're on the wrong path" (INT2). Ms. Monroe also saw herself as a guide, through the previously described modelling: "I'm being very public with my writing, with my thinking process. And so that situates me more beside students as more of a guide than it does as the teacher with all of the correct answers" (INT1). Again, a guide implies someone who can give advice. This certainly describes what I observed of Ms. Monroe in her classroom. When students were writing or discussing, she was hovering, but then crouched at their level, having a discussion, engaged, listening. Ms. Monroe gave mostly oral feedback, suggesting it is "95%" of her feedback because she felt that "face-to-face, in the moment, as you're working on it is far more effective" (INT1). She explained that she is at her "busiest when [she is] reading over shoulders and conferring with students one-on-one and in small groups to raise the level of their writing" (INT1). In this way, she guides them in the moment, while they write.

Ms. Monroe also saw her role as transitioning students to be more independent with their work. She suggested they know more than they realize, but may need a

conversation to help them to understand what they already know, calling herself "just a sounding board for their ideas" (INT2). She explained that, in conferences:

> 90% of what I do is listen because I've asked them a question: 'Well, you tell me what you're trying today that you feel like isn't working." And once they talk it out, I explain to them, "Do you realize that all I did was ask you a question?" (INT1)

Aiden recognized this technique as effective:

> If I ever have a problem and she comes around — if I'm having trouble putting it on paper — I can say something to her, and she'll kind of say it back to me and give me an open-ended question that will keep me going. And it will help me elaborate on my own thinking a bit more. Her coming around for one-on-one is helpful. (INT2)

This work helped her to transition students to being able to work without her: using each other, or themselves, as their main source of support: "I tell them in the beginning that you will no longer need me. And we'll know the moment that you're there. And that usually happens in our second-last unit, and I'm more of a participant-observer in what they're doing" (INT2).

At different times, Ms. Monroe transitioned between these roles — model, mentor, guide, sounding board, and participant-observer — in order to help her students learn to write. Through these roles, this study suggests she fostered various factors of resilience in her students: building empowerment, learning how to problem solve, and

developing coping-skills. She also created high expectations for her students in this work, helping them to learn that they are capable of becoming more autonomous.

Learner alongside.

An important role Ms. Monroe took on in her classroom is that of a learner. One of the ways that she continued to learn is as a writer alongside her students: “I’ve got to get back to being a writer. When I teach writing, I have to get back to doing the writing. So that’s my homework” (INT1). Not only did she need to be a writer, she made it clear that she needs to remember the struggles her students have in writing:

> I have to go back and remember what the struggle was like [….] I need to start a new piece, beside my students, so that I can be able to struggle as a writer again, so that I can trouble it out beside them because if it gets too easy for me, I forget how to teach them. (INT1)

It is important for her to be learning about writing with her students. At one point in an observation, a student came up with a suggestion that she found particularly poignant, and she responded, “You’ve just taught me something new” (FN). There is a humility in this willingness to learn to write with her students.

In addition, Ms. Monroe viewed her role as learner to include her teaching practice. Even during the day-to-day work, she explained to her class, “I have to follow you” (FN). She expected her students to push her, the way she pushed them, to grow:

> I can tell the relationship is there when I’m asking them how was that for you today? What should I keep doing, what should I stop doing, what do you need next? And they actually tell me. And they’ll actually go beyond what was good to

> tell me what they need more of. And that's how I know that relationship is there and that I can actually be their teacher […], going beyond delivering my curriculum to delivering the curriculum in a way that is more accessible to them. (INT1)

Ms. Monroe expected the same, specific feedback that her students expected of her. When I asked her about her comfort level with the writer's workshop, she replied, "I do have to do some reflection on why this is becoming easier" (INT1), expecting the same metacognitive reflection of herself that she did of her students. But she also recognized that things continue to evolve as a result of this hard work: "every term, I learn something new, […] I have to apologize to last term's class *laughing* because this process just gets smarter and better and stronger" (INT1).

Three of the seven student participants spoke of Ms. Monroe as a learner. Aiden explained: "Ms. Monroe tells us that she learns all the time, and she's always learning. That she's always adapting how she writes and what she thinks about when she writes, and it's a continuous process" (INT2). Layla also appreciated Ms. Monroe's willingness to share her journey as a learning-writer with her students:

> She tells about her struggles in writing, about things she's good at and not good at. And it's easy for me to understand that people have their strengths and weaknesses [….] I think it takes certain kinds of teachers to be that self-aware and realize those kinds of things. (INT3)

Sarah also recognized Ms. Monroe's evolution as a teacher as influenced by their feedback: "She really wants me to understand what she's teaching, and she always says

she becomes a better teacher from learning what we want, and she always asks what can I do to help you?" (INT2).

In being willing to be vulnerable as a learner herself, not only did Ms. Monroe build relationships with her students, she also inspired them to understand the importance of having an identity that will evolve as life-long learners, while demonstrating that her classroom is a safe place to take risks, thereby mentoring those factors of resilience.

Teaching Writer's Workshop in High School

While the previous findings address my primary research question and my sub-questions, I also intended the study to help me understand why some teachers might be resistant to the writer's workshop in a high school setting, and whether or not the writer's workshop was a viable approach to teaching English in high school. This is important because, as described in Chapter 2, many high school teachers argue that writer's workshop does not fit or make sense in a high school English classroom.

I have taken the findings for this section directly from Ms. Monroe's two interviews. I acknowledge that these findings are based on the words of only one high school teacher using the writer's workshop approach.

Teacher resistance.

Connecting to my own understanding that some English teachers at a high school level seemed to resist writer's workshop, I asked Ms. Monroe about her perceptions of how other teachers saw the writer's workshop. When she discussed having other English

teachers visit her classroom, she described their fear in reacting to a classroom that appeared to be very different than their own:

> At first blush, when I have visitors in the room, who are scared, because seeing kids for the first time who are talking, they're in pods. I'm in different places around the room. I'm not in front of the room the whole time. [….] And so the first time you see it, it can feel like something really foreign. (INT2)

These sentiments were echoed when I asked her to describe any conversations she had participated in with other English teachers about the writer's workshop:

> When you haven't tried it, just talking to some of my peers, they think it sounds interesting, but there's some hesitation because you are giving students more power over the writing process. It's not as clean as assigning a piece of writing. It can be a lot of work because of all the conferencing you're doing during the day. They're wondering how does that impact my grading load. And I think there's some misconceptions. It just seems like a big shift, and if you've been doing something for a long time that seems to work for you and your students, why would you interrupt that? If the diploma results say my kids are doing okay, and if it appears that things seem to be going well, it's hard to justify a change. (INT1)

Even when Ms. Monroe explained to other teachers that her marking load, a major concern of some of the teachers she conversed with, was lighter when using a writer's workshop approach, they appeared to feel that this, in itself, was a sort of betrayal of some unwritten contract between English teachers and their students:

> I think we punish ourselves as English teachers by thinking that we need to continue that, or thinking that, it's a violation. You know I've heard a lot of feedback that, "Oh, that's violating the relationship that I have with my students and what they expect." Well, we can change the expectations. (INT1)

Psychoanalysis suggests that, in psychical terms, there may be a reason to resist change even when it appears to be beneficial. Anna Freud (1974) explains that a resistance to knowledge is not uncommon, and may in fact be a necessary stage to go through before reaching understanding. She asserts that people may be resistant to change, wanting instead to ensure their own continuity. In essence, this initial resistance is caused because the ego feels the need to assert itself as correct, important, and real, encouraging things to continue as they always have.

However, when a teacher is able to move beyond this initial resistance, this study implies that the writer's workshop is a viable approach to use in a high school environment.

Teacher perceptions.

While there may be some resistance, this study suggests that Ms. Monroe's perceptions confirm writer's workshop as a strong approach to use in teaching writing to high school students.

Ms. Monroe argued that writer's workshop is more effective in teaching writing than other methods she had used in the past: "We've been assigning writing for a long time and not *teaching* writing" (INT2). In addition, she argued that writer's workshop allows students to find joy and diversity in their writing forms, something that is often not

encouraged in high school English. She described the way she used to approach writing before using the writer's workshop approach:

> They come into grade ten, all bright-eyed, [….] their first [idea] is I love writing. "Well what do you like to write?" "Well, I love to write stories." And you crush them with, "Yeah, well, that's not *really* the type of writing that we do in our literature course." And I just remember crushing the spirits of these writers to conform to this sort of academic writing where I would end up with forty of the same-ish essay. (INT1)

According to Ms. Monroe, writer's workshop allows for the teaching of writing in a more effective way, and in more encouraging and diverse forms.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, some high school teachers argue that the writer's workshop takes too much time, and that at the secondary level, teachers need to focus more on standardized testing. Ms. Monroe, however, found a number of natural connections between writer's workshop and standardized testing, in her case, Alberta's diploma examinations: "I just teach them how to be good writers; the diploma's taken care of itself with that targeted instruction: 'Now how do we angle what we've done toward the diploma'" (INT1). In fact, she argued that she has actually seen an increase in her diploma results since using the writer's workshop method (INT1).

For a variety of reasons, Ms. Monroe argued that she does not feel she could go back to teaching writing in a different way: "I couldn't go back because I wasn't building resilient writers. I was building dependent writers. Panicked writers. […] Mediocre

writers" (INT2). She also felt the data she has collected proves that the writer's workshop approach is worthwhile in her high school setting:

> You've got the anecdotal, the touchy-feely stuff, which is wonderful, and then you've got the numbers to say it works. That's the motivation to keep going. I can't go back to what I was doing. I can't even remember what I was doing. (INT1)

Although there may be some resistance, and continued worry about finding the time and space to use the writer's workshop in a high school English classroom, according to this study, the approach is both valid and valuable.

In Closing

In this chapter, I presented the findings from my research study, focusing on my research question and sub-questions, as presented through five themes: using process to build confidence; the power of writing; anxiety, risk and failure; collaboration and communication; and the role of the teacher: acknowledger, mentor, and guide alongside. While I did not knowingly set out to do so, this study positively connects the writer's workshop with all of the factors of resilience discussed in Chapter 2: building relationships, interpersonal skills, and empathy; planning and goal setting, developing hope, and building empowerment; problem solving, safe risk-taking, and fostering coping skills; creating high expectations; engagement; self-control, restraint, and taking responsibility for your actions; and development of identity and autonomy.

In addition, I questioned why some high school teachers are resistant to the writer's workshop approach, and, using findings from my teacher participant, presented positive teacher perceptions of the writer's workshop, arguing that it is a valuable approach to use in the teaching of writing in a high school classroom.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

New Beginnings

At twenty-two, I entered the teaching profession, prepared to inspire students through English Language Arts. This September, at thirty-six, I began my fifteenth year in the teaching profession, more confident that I have that ability.

My desks are arranged in pods, anticipating my students' collaboration. My own notebook awaits its fill of writing alongside my students. Although there may still be some checklists and rubrics, and even the occasional booklet with a brightly colour-coded cover page, much of the day-to-day of writing instruction remains unplanned. On many days in my planning calendar, I have simply written "workshop." I know that the things I will plan need to emerge from time spent with my students. Through conversations and peeking over shoulders, I'll know what mini-lessons will best meet their needs. Mostly, I know that I need to leave space for thinking, talking, writing, re-writing, and conferencing. I need to leave space for play.

I still want them to succeed, but I am less concerned with things being made clear or easy. Because, while I may not want students to be afraid, at times I want them to feel uneasy or uncomfortable. I want them to push their limits. I want them to be vulnerable, to take risks, and to learn from their failures. I want them to grow in both their writing skills and their resilience. And this September, more than ever before, I believe that all of this can happen in the writer's workshop.

A Summary of the Study

In my practice, I want to find ways, as a classroom English teacher, to help foster various factors of resilience in my students. Over the past five years, I have had success, seeing improvements in student writing and other soft-skills, when using the writer's workshop approach. As such, I was drawn to pursue this study, to observe another teacher's classroom and students, to see if there were any connections between an approach I was using and a trait I wished to help my students to build.

In this thesis, I used both hermeneutic and psychoanalytic lenses to guide my work. From hermeneutics, I engaged with the idea of a hermeneutic dialogue: the fusion of horizons in order to develop an understanding. From psychoanalysis, I embraced Winnicott's (1991) ideas of play. From both, I engaged with the importance of vulnerability in order to take risks.

I found that writer's workshop does appear to be a viable approach in the high school English classroom. Despite potential teacher resistance to change, and arguments about time limitations and standardized testing, the writer's workshop was found to be both valuable and important. I also found strong, positive connections between the writer's workshop approach and fostering resilience in students.

I found that students can use their own individual processes in writer's workshop in order to build their confidence, see their progress, and respect the importance of work and responsibility. I discovered that writing can be powerful and enjoyable, allowing student writers to better understand themselves and what they think. I realized that the writer's workshop can be a place to face anxiety, take safe risks, and appreciate what can

be learned from failure. I learned that students can use the collaboration and communication inherent in writer's workshop in order to foster relationships, academic dialogue, leadership, and empathy. And I determined that teachers in the writer's workshop have essential, but not always traditional, roles: as gainers of trust, acknowledgers, models, mentors, guides, sounding boards, participant-observers, and learners-alongside their students.

Lastly, I found that writer's workshop requires vulnerability, risk-taking, empathy, and play from the teachers and students who work alongside one another, and moreover, that this work is worth all of its effort and strangeness.

Lessons

As a new researcher, there are several valuable lessons I take with me, moving forward.

Although I felt very comfortable around the student and teacher participants, and they seemed to be fairly at-ease, I found it a challenge to engage them when their answers to my questions were short. I was often able to come up with some follow-up questions quite quickly, but when students were concise, I could have attempted to engage them further in the telling of their stories and experiences. As such, some student participants ended up with shorter, less rich interviews than others.

Because it took so long to get back to my transcriptions, and many students at the school at which I researched were only registered for one semester, I was unable to provide students with a copy of transcripts to act as participant checks, which would have

increased the credibility of my study (Mayan, 2016). I only had their school emails with which to communicate. This did not violate the ethics of my study as I had only agreed to pass along the data if students had requested it (they all were given my email address and phone number to contact); however, I feel it did not give the participants of the study the opportunity to ensure that what was transcribed was always what they had meant.

I feel these lessons, in addition to the long time periods between interviews mentioned in Chapter 3, also weakened the study hermeneutically. In order to make meaning in hermeneutics, there should be a constant movement, or spiral, back and forth between the "specific and the general, the micro and the macro" (Smith, 1999b, p. 190). The issues of time in this study did not allow for this movement to be as regular or as natural as a hermeneutic understanding would suggest is ideal. As well, as hermeneutic understanding is about a dialogue in order to fuse horizons, the potential dialogue in this study was limited by a lack of communication after the final interviews between myself and the participants.

I feel this study has given me many opportunities, harkening back to my initial quotation, to "Make New Mistakes" (Gaiman, 2011). However, moving forward, these mistakes also become lessons.

Future Research Directions

Although this study begins to close the research gap related to writer's workshop and resilience, there is certainly room for more work to be done in this area. As mentioned, there is little research done about high school writer's workshop at all, and

continued research would be valuable, especially considering the limited scope of this study.

There could be further research into other soft-skills that could be developed and fostered through the writer's workshop program, as I have observed that its potential far surpasses that of writing.

There could be research done related to the potential impacts the writer's workshop has on various standardized test results, and potential impacts on the ability to teach various curricula while using the writer's workshop approach.

There could be more investigation into what makes a strong writer's workshop at a high school level, or how teachers adapt this approach among various grade levels.

There could also be research done into other approaches that classroom teachers could use in order to foster factors of resilience in their students.

Creating Spaces to Build Resilience

I would like to end on a final thought about spaces. Teacher's classrooms are important spaces in the lives of our students.

In writing about the potential for Gadamer's hermeneutic dialogue in education, Nixon (2017) suggests that we create spaces:

> Spaces in which we can find 'the genuine question' — the question that engages who I am with what I am seeking to understand — and then follow that question wherever it leads. They are spaces in which we play with and try out ideas: spaces of 'ingenious improvisation and innovation'; spaces of collaborative sense-

> making; spaces within which we operate according to organic time rather than clock-time. They are spaces that resist the constraints and strictures of 'a highly bureaucratized society, thoroughly organized and thoroughly specialized society' and in doing so 'strengthen existing solidarities'. (p. 63)

Winnicott (1991), too, troubles the lack of spaces; in his case, spaces in which to play:

> There is in many a failure in confidence which cramps the person's play-capacity because of the limitations of the potential space; likewise there is for many a poverty of play and cultural life because, although the person had a place for erudition, there was a relative failure on the cultural elements at the appropriate phases of the person's personality development. (p. 109)

Teachers have a responsibility to allow students to develop a cultural life, to develop an ability to play.

Teachers need to think about our spaces. We need to foster spaces in which we — students and teachers — can question, understand, collaborate, play, create, trust, take risks, make mistakes, fail, and be alongside one another. We need to foster spaces in which we can become resilient. In the high school environment, writer's workshop is an example of such a space, offering the unique potential for fostering resilience while simultaneously building capacity for creative expression.

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Appendix A: Research Ethics Board Approval

8/19/2019 https://remo.ualberta.ca/REMO/sd/Doc/0/NGNH04E8088KR7A0GJQ5QGQ6C9/fromString.html

Notification of Approval

Date:	March 21, 2018
Study ID:	Pro00078987
Principal Investigator:	Jennifer Gross
Study Supervisor:	David Lewkowich
Study Title:	Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience
Approval Expiry Date:	Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Approved Consent Form:

Approval Date	Approved Document
3/21/2018	Information Letter and Consent Form_ Teacher.pdf
3/21/2018	Information Letter and Consent Form_ Parent.pdf

Thank you for submitting the above study to the Research Ethics Board 1. Your application has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the committee.

A renewal report must be submitted next year prior to the expiry of this approval if your study still requires ethics approval. If you do not renew on or before the renewal expiry date, you will have to re-submit an ethics application.

Approval by the Research Ethics Board does not encompass authorization to access the staff, students, facilities or resources of local institutions for the purposes of the research.

Sincerely,

Anne Malena, PhD
Chair, Research Ethics Board 1

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system).

https://remo.ualberta.ca/REMO/sd/Doc/0/NGNH04E8088KR7A0GJQ5QGQ6C9/fromString.html 1/1

Appendix B: Teacher Participant Consent Form

INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM: TEACHER PARTICIPANT

Study Title: Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience

Research Investigator:
Jennifer Gross

Supervisor:
David Lewkowich

Background
I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, supervised by Dr. David Lewkowich. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been implementing an approach known as the writer's workshop. The results of this study will be used in support of my master's thesis.

Purpose
I am studying how the writer's workshop approach may connect with student resilience. The writer's workshop approach usually involves mini-lessons on elements of writing, student choice of writing topic and form, revision and editing, teacher and peer conferencing, and publication or sharing. This approach may provide students with the ability to build certain factors of resilience such as self-awareness, self-acceptance, interpersonal skills, dealing with demands, working through personal adversity, and risk taking.

Through this research, I hope to accomplish the following goals:

1. describe the various approaches the teacher uses to implement the writer's workshop;
2. identify possible connections to factors of resilience;
3. describe students' perceptions of their experiences with the writer's workshop; and
4. assess the impact of the writer's workshop on students' self-perception of resilience.

It is my hope that the results of this study will help teachers interested in a writer's workshop approach as well as those who wish to implement strategies to build resilience in their classrooms.

Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience

Study Procedures
I will be studying one of your classes throughout the course of this semester (September 2018-January 2019). The research does not require you to do anything differently than your normal instruction with the writer's workshop process. If you agree to participate in this research, your involvement would include the following:

- helping me to select 4-6 students, who have received parental consent and have given their assent, to provide me with low, medium, and high achieving students for the study;
- allowing me to be in your classroom while I observe and take written notes during 4-6 writer's workshop lessons. I will be making notes of your teaching and students' responses and interactions during the class;
- where possible, I will collect materials you have made for students, and student work and reflections to examine and identify areas that display indicators of resilience;
- participating in at least two semi-structured interviews (30-60 minutes) outside of class time. Questions will be used to draw out your impressions of the writer's workshop approach and how it may impact students' perception of certain factors of resilience (self-awareness, self-acceptance, interpersonal skills, dealing with demands, working through personal adversity, risk-taking, etc.). Open-ended questions will be used to encourage you to share your experiences. These interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by me. I will only be completing interviews with 4-6 students. These Students will be selected based on who will be able to provide a diverse set for my research (providing variety in background, gender, ability, etc.) in order to minimize the influence of background on the data gained in the study.

I will return any materials to you no later than my last visit at the end of the semester.

Benefits
There are multiple benefits of the study. Teachers may have a better understanding of their practice, and they may see improved opportunities in their teaching. Students may become more aware of their own resilience through the semi-structured interview process. It is my hope that the results of this study will help inform other teachers interested in this approach.

Risk
There are no expected risks for teachers who take part in this study. There is a chance that, if a student chooses to write about a topic of a troubling or personal nature, there could be some slight feeling of stress, worry, or anxiety. This could also occur in discussion of certain factors of resilience. However, it is very unlikely that this will surpass normal levels experienced in the classroom, and students may choose not to share this information. Students could feel some mental fatigue by thinking deeply about the writer's workshop or factors of resilience; however, it is again unlikely that this will surpass normal levels found in the classroom.

Voluntary Participation

- You are under no obligation to participate in this study. There are no negative repercussions if you choose not to participate.
- You are free to refuse to answer any question, deny the request for any materials, and withdraw consent to participate at any time, for any reason, up to two weeks following the final interview. No data from participants who withdraw at any time will be used in the study.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

- The results of this research will be communicated through my thesis and possibly other academic publications and conference presentations, though no one taking part in this study will be personally identified.
- Only my supervisor, Dr. Lewkowich, and I will have access to the data.
- Participants will not be personally identified in any presentation of the data.
- All raw data and individual consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet for 5 years, to which only Dr. Lewkowich and I will have access, at which point (to ensure privacy and confidentiality) they will be destroyed. All digital data will be kept on a password protected, encrypted computer; and after 5 years will be permanently erased.
- If anybody participating in this study wishes to receive a report of the research findings, they may email Jennifer Gross ( ) and request a copy.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Gross at , Phone #:

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

____ ________________

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature Date

____ ________________

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience

Appendix C: Student Participant Parent/Guardian Consent Form

INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM: PARENT/GUARDIAN OF STUDENT PARTICIPANT

Study Title: Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience

Research Investigator:
Jennifer Gross

Supervisor:
David Lewkowich

Background
I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, supervised by Dr. David Lewkowich, and I will be conducting research in [insert teacher's name]'s class. Your child is being asked to participate in this study because [teacher name] has been implementing an approach known as the writer's workshop. I am recruiting students who are being taught using this approach. The results of this study will be used in support of my master's thesis.

Purpose
I am studying how the writer's workshop approach may connect with student resilience. The writer's workshop approach usually involves mini-lessons on elements of writing, student choice of writing topic and form, revision and editing, teacher and peer conferencing, and publication or sharing. This approach may provide students with the ability to build certain factors of resilience such as self-awareness, self-acceptance, interpersonal skills, dealing with demands, working through personal adversity, and risk taking.

Through this research, I hope to accomplish the following goals:

1. describe the various approaches the teacher uses to implement the writer's workshop;
2. identify possible connections to factors of resilience;
3. describe students' perceptions of their experiences with the writer's workshop; and
4. assess the impact of the writer's workshop on students' self-perception of resilience.

It is my hope the results of this study will help teachers interested in a writer's workshop approach as well as those who wish to implement strategies to build resilience in their classrooms.

Study Procedures
[Teacher name] is currently using the writer's workshop approach. I will be studying in [his/her] classroom throughout the course of this semester (September 2018-January 2019). The research does not require your child to do anything differently than they normally do in this class. If you agree to have your child participate in this research, their involvement would include the following:

- being in class while I observe and take written notes during 4-6 lessons. I will be making notes of students' responses and interactions during the class;
- where possible, I will collect student work and reflections to examine and identify areas that display indicators of resilience;
- participating in three semi-structured interviews (30-60 minutes) somewhere near the beginning, middle, and end of the writer's workshop process. Questions will be used to draw out the students' impressions of the writer's workshop approach and how it may impact their perception of certain factors of resilience (self-awareness, self-acceptance, interpersonal skills, dealing with demands, working through personal adversity, risk-taking, etc.). Open-ended questions will be used to encourage participants to share their experiences. These interviews will be audio recorded and late transcribed verbatim by me. I will only be completing interviews with 4-6 students. These Students will be selected based on who will be able to provide a diverse set for my research (providing variety in background, gender, ability, etc.) in order to minimize the influence of background on the data gained in the study.

I will return any materials to your child no later than my last visit at the end of the semester.

Benefits
There are multiple benefits of the study. Teachers may have a better understanding of their practice, and they may see improved opportunities in their teaching. Students may become more aware of their own resilience through the semi-structured interview process. It is my hope that the results of this study will help inform other teachers interested in this approach.

Risk
There are no expected risks for students who take part in this study. There is a chance that, if a student chooses to write about a topic of a troubling or personal nature, there could be some slight feeling of stress, worry, or anxiety. This could also occur in discussion of certain factors of resilience. However, it is very unlikely that this will surpass normal levels experienced in the classroom, and students may choose not to share this information. Participants could feel some mental fatigue by thinking deeply about the writer's workshop or factors of resilience; however, it is again unlikely that this will surpass normal levels found in the classroom.

Voluntary Participation
- You are under no obligation to allow your child to participate in this study.

- There will be no negative repercussions in the course if you do not allow your child to participate in this study (it will have no negative impact on students' grades if they do not participate, they will not receive any additional instruction if they do participate, etc.).
- Your child is free to refuse to answer any question, your child is free to deny the request for any materials, and you and/or your child are free to withdraw assent/consent to participate at any time, for any reason, up to two weeks following the final interview. No data from participants who withdraw at any time will be used in the study.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

- The results of this research will be communicated through my thesis and possibly other academic publications and conference presentations, though no one taking part in this study will be personally identified.
- Only my supervisor, Dr. Lewkowich, and I will have access to the data.
- Participants will not be personally identified in any presentation of the data.
- All raw data and individual consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet for 5 years, to which only Dr. Lewkowich and I will have access, at which point (to ensure privacy and confidentiality) they will be destroyed. All digital data will be kept on a password protected, encrypted computer; and after 5 years will be permanently erased.
- If anybody participating in this study wishes to receive a report of the research findings, they may email Jennifer Gross ( ) and request a copy.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Gross at , Phone #:

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to allow my child to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

____
Student's Name

____ ______________
Parent/Guardian of Student's Name (printed) and Signature Date

____ ______________
Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

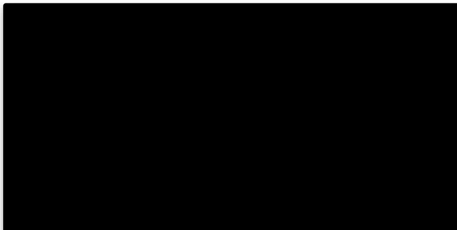
Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience

Appendix D: Student Participant Assent Form

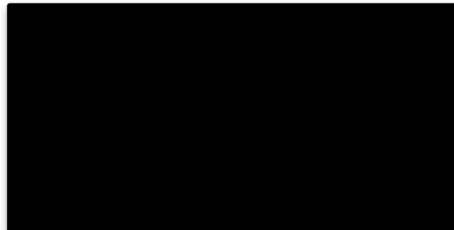
INFORMATION LETTER AND ASSENT FORM: STUDENT PARTICIPANT

Study Title: Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience

Research Investigator:
Jennifer Gross



Supervisor:
David Lewkowich



Background
I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, supervised by Dr. David Lewkowich, and I will be conducting research in [insert teacher's name]'s class. You are being asked to participate in this study because [teacher name] has been implementing an approach known as the writer's workshop. I am recruiting students who are being taught using this approach. The results of this study will be used in support of my master's thesis.

Purpose
I am studying how the writer's workshop approach may connect with student resilience. The writer's workshop approach usually involves mini-lessons on elements of writing, student choice of writing topic and form, revision and editing, teacher and peer conferencing, and publication or sharing. This approach may provide students with the ability to build certain factors of resilience such as self-awareness, self-acceptance, interpersonal skills, dealing with demands, working through personal adversity, and risk taking.

Through this research, I hope to accomplish the following goals:

1. describe the various approaches the teacher uses to implement the writer's workshop;
2. identify possible connections to factors of resilience;
3. describe students' perceptions of their experiences with the writer's workshop; and
4. assess the impact of the writer's workshop on students' self-perception of resilience.

It is my hope the results of this study will help teachers interested in a writer's workshop approach as well as those who wish to implement strategies to build resilience in their classrooms.

Study Procedures
[Teacher name] is currently using the writer's workshop approach. I will be studying in [his/her] classroom throughout the course of this semester (September 2018-January 2019). The research does not require you to do anything differently than you normally do in this class. If you agree to participate in this research, your involvement would include the following:

- being in class while I observe and take written notes during 4-6 lessons. I will be making notes of students' responses and interactions during the class;
- where possible, I will collect student work and reflections to examine and identify areas that display indicators of resilience;
- participating in three semi-structured interviews (30-60 minutes) somewhere near the beginning, middle, and end of the writer's workshop process. Questions will be used to draw out the students' impressions of the writer's workshop approach and how it may impact their perception of certain factors of resilience (self-awareness, self-acceptance, interpersonal skills, dealing with demands, working through personal adversity, risk-taking, etc.). Open-ended questions will be used to encourage participants to share their experiences. These interviews will be audio recorded and late transcribed verbatim by me. I will only be completing interviews with 4-6 students. These Students will be selected based on who will be able to provide a diverse set for my research (providing variety in background, gender, ability, etc.) in order to minimize the influence of background on the data gained in the study.

I will return any materials to you no later than my last visit at the end of the semester.

Benefits
There are multiple benefits of the study. Teachers may have a better understanding of their practice, and they may see improved opportunities in their teaching. Students may become more aware of their own resilience through the semi-structured interview process. It is my hope that the results of this study will help inform other teachers interested in this approach.

Risk
There are no expected risks for students who take part in this study. There is a chance that, if a student chooses to write about a topic of a troubling or personal nature, there could be some slight feeling of stress, worry, or anxiety. This could also occur in discussion of certain factors of resilience. However, it is very unlikely that this will surpass normal levels experienced in the classroom, and students may choose not to share this information. Participants could feel some mental fatigue by thinking deeply about the writer's workshop or factors of resilience; however, it is again unlikely that this will surpass normal levels found in the classroom.

Voluntary Participation
- You are under no obligation to participate in this study.

Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience

- There will be no negative repercussions in the course if you do not participate in this study (it will have no negative impact on students' grades if they do not participate, they will not receive any additional instruction if they do participate, etc.).
- You are free to refuse to answer any question, you are free to deny the request for any materials, and you are free to withdraw assent/consent to participate at any time, for any reason, up to two weeks following the final interview. No data from participants who withdraw at any time will be used in the study.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

- The results of this research will be communicated through my thesis and possibly other academic publications and conference presentations, though no one taking part in this study will be personally identified.
- Only my supervisor, Dr. Lewkowich, and I will have access to the data.
- Participants will not be personally identified in any presentation of the data.
- All raw data and individual consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet for 5 years, to which only Dr. Lewkowich and I will have access, at which point (to ensure privacy and confidentiality) they will be destroyed. All digital data will be kept on a password protected, encrypted computer; and after 5 years will be permanently erased.
- If anybody participating in this study wishes to receive a report of the research findings, they may email Jennifer Gross ([redacted]) and request a copy.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Gross at [redacted], Phone #: [redacted]

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at [redacted]

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this assent form after I sign it.

____ _______________

Participant's (Student's) Name (printed) and Signature Date

____ _______________

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Assent Date

Connecting Writer's Workshop and Secondary Students' Self-Perception of Resilience

Appendix E: Interview Guides

INTERVIEW GUIDES: TEACHER

FIRST INTERVIEW

Understanding that your identity will remain anonymous, and that I am the only one who will listen to this recording, I was hoping I could start by asking you some general questions about yourself. Is this all right?

How many years have you been teaching?

How long have you been using the writer's workshop approach?

In your own words, how would you describe the writer's workshop approach?

How did you learn about the writer's workshop approach?

How do you think the writer's workshop approach is perceived by other high school teachers that you know?

In high school English, can you describe some challenges in teaching using the writer's workshop approach?

Can you describe some of the successes that you've found using the writer's workshop approach?

How, in your opinion, are writing skills developed during the writer's workshop approach?

How do you feel the writer's workshop approach encourages students to learn important life skills or personality traits outside of writing?
(if necessary, lead to: learning about themselves, developing interpersonal skills, dealing with demands or timelines, working through adversity, taking risks)

Can you describe any other ways that you feel the writer's workshop approach encourages students to build resilience?

How do you think the students perceive their experience with the writer's workshop approach?

Is there anything else you would like to share about the writer's workshop approach?

Any questions for me?

EXIT INTERVIEW

How has your understanding of the writer's workshop changed over the course of this study?

How has your understanding of student resilience changed over the course of the study?

Can you describe some of the successes that you've found using the writer's workshop approach this semester?

How were writing skills developed during the writer's workshop approach this semester?

How do you feel the writer's workshop approach encouraged students to learn important life skills or personality traits outside of writing this semester?
(if necessary, lead to: learning about themselves, developing interpersonal skills, dealing with demands or timelines, working through adversity, taking risks)

Can you describe any other ways that you feel the writer's workshop approach encouraged students to build resilience this semester?

How do you think the students perceived their experience with the writer's workshop approach this semester?

Is there anything else you would like to share about the writer's workshop approach, resilience, or this study?

Any questions for me?

INTERVIEW GUIDES: STUDENT

FIRST INTERVIEW

Understanding that your identity will remain anonymous, and that I am the only one who will listen to this recording, I was hoping I could start by asking you some general questions about yourself. Is this all right?

How would you describe your strengths in writing?

How would you describe your areas for growth in writing?

How would you describe your personal resilience?

Can you describe some life skills or personal strengths that you think you have?
(if necessary, lead to: learning about themselves, developing interpersonal skills, dealing with demands or timelines, working through adversity, taking risks)

Can you describe some life skills or personal strengths that you think you need to improve?
(if necessary, lead to: learning about themselves, developing interpersonal skills, dealing with demands or timelines, working through adversity, taking risks)

To your knowledge, have you ever been taught English using elements of the writer's workshop approach before? (If so, did you like it? Why or why not? If so, what did you learn from it?)

What are your first impressions of the writer's workshop with [teacher's name]?

Can you describe the sorts of things do you like to write?

Can you describe the sorts of things do you not like to write?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

SECOND INTERVIEW

In your own words, can you describe the writer's workshop approach?

How are you feeling about the writer's workshop program?
(could lead to likes/dislikes)

Can you describe what you think you are learning about writing from being taught using the writer's workshop approach?

How do you feel the writer's workshop approach encourages you to learn important life skills or personality traits outside of writing?
(if necessary, lead to: learning about themselves, developing interpersonal skills, dealing with demands or timelines, working through adversity, taking risks)

Can you describe any other ways that you feel the writer's workshop approach encourages you to build resilience?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

THIRD INTERVIEW

How would you describe your strengths in writing now?

How would you describe your areas for growth in writing now?

Can you describe what you think you have learned about writing from being taught using the
writer's workshop approach?

How do you feel the writer's workshop approach encouraged you to learn important life skills or personality traits outside of writing?
(if necessary, lead to: learning about themselves, developing interpersonal skills, dealing with demands or timelines, working through adversity, taking risks)

Can you describe any other ways that you feel the writer's workshop approach encouraged you to build resilience?

Can you describe the sorts of things do you like to write now?

Can you describe the sorts of things do you not like to write now?

Is there anything else you would like to add?