Relational Narrating: Supporting a Reluctant Writer in Writing Workshop

Fred L. Hamel

Abstract: In this paper, I use narrative methodology to examine and interpret the experiences of Shaun, a 4th grade student in the United States, navigating his own reluctance and disaffection with writing in school – in a writing workshop that sought to foster language experimentation, choice, and agency. From the perspective of a participant-observer and classroom volunteer, I describe the challenges of my own work with Shaun, emphasizing the twists and turns of Shaun's experience and highlighting especially the relational factors, or "relational narrating," through which he ultimately came to produce writing on his own. The paper conceptualizes writing as a process of "becoming" rather than as final products and endpoints, and the analysis considers the role of "imaginative co-investments" in writing, between peers, as shaping factors supporting writer identity and practice.

Keywords: writing workshop, narrative ethnography, social relationships, relational narrating

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Introduction

Shaun was a 10 year old student I met during a writing workshop where I was a participant observer. The workshop took place twice a week in Shaun's fourth grade classroom, and during this time I served as both volunteer and researcher. In the first month, as Shaun's peers took off with writing projects and initiatives, Shaun moved in the opposite direction. He[1] seemed to experience negatively-spiraling motivation. Shaun did not present significant behavior challenges in the classroom, but he seemed less well served by the flexibly-drawn workshop space and unsure how to make progress as a writer, especially on his own. Mr. Allegro, the classroom teacher, said that Shaun had a tendency "to start something and then drift away from it" and that there were forces in his life that made this a survival strategy.[2]

What follows is a narrative ethnography of Shaun's writing experience as a fourth grader—framed as a tale of possibility. My goal is to make visible the steps and turns by which a disaffected young writer eventually came to see himself as part of a writing community. With assistance, Shaun came to engage workshop with a degree of motivation and creativity as the year progressed. However, my own assistance itself was a source of controversy, and it took a long time for Shaun's writing to emerge. My hope is to make transparent the complex social and relational forces that led to a transformation in Shaun's literate practice. Shaun's emergence as a writer, I argue below, relied not just on having extra support or an available community in the classroom, but more deeply on something I call "relational narrating"— that is, ways of imagining and engaging narrative worlds together with others.

Narrative Ethnography

Narrative ethnography (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mills & Morton, 2013; Riessman, 2007;) falls under the broader domain of "narrative inquiry"—or "the study of experience understood narratively" (Clandinin & Huber, n.d., abstract). Such inquiry involves a "recursive, reflexive process of moving from field (with starting points in the telling or living of stories) to field texts (data) to interim and final research texts" (Clandinin & Huber, n.d., abstract). Narrative is both a mode of representation and a vehicle for interpretation—or more broadly, a way of thinking about phenomena which can be helpful in uncovering the richness of human interaction in complex settings and evoking resonant recognition and response.

Narrative ethnography is inquiry that often includes the ethnographer's experience within the description and investigation of another cultural world. My own use of narrative ethnography thus first involves making visible my own role and interactions with students as a volunteer/researcher —in this case, in a classroom space where I held a hybrid role as volunteer, advisor to the teacher, and researcher. Secondly, I use narrative to aesthetically represent data as a mode of sense-making – that is, to use story-telling as a means of capturing and credibly representing my experiences with Shaun and his peers in the classroom, mindful that any re-telling is an act of interpretation. In this respect, my choice of how to represent Shaun's world reflects a kind of "appreciative" inquiry (Boyd & Bright, 2007), one I characterize as generous and even hopeful toward the work of students. Dahlberg and Moss (2009) refer to reestablishing "an affirming and experimenting attitude" (p. xiv) with regard to children's lives in

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[1] I acknowledge that there is a gender spectrum and that multiple pronouns exist for referring to individuals in my writing. Throughout this article I will use "he/him" to refer to individuals who identify as male, "she/her" to refer to individuals who identify as female, and "they/them" for individuals who identify as non-binary or gender neutral.

[2] The name "Shaun" is a pseudonym – as are all the names in this narrative except mine and Mr. Allegro's, whose name is used with permission.

schools. From this vantage point, I am most interested in representing students in light of their own self-driven purposes as they encounter writing events.

Conceptual Framing

My considerations of Shaun's writing are grounded in critical social constructivism and enacted through narrative ethnography. Specific framing assumptions include:

- writing as a process of "becoming" rather than as defined by endpoints and products;
- mutual entanglements of writing and relationships – how relationships support writing and how students use writing to do things relationally;
- the role of popular media and visual imagination in shaping writer development.

These differ from common framings of writing curriculum in American classrooms – which emphasize directed forms of instruction, skill development toward particular writing outcomes, assigned tasks, use of models, and assessment on predetermined standards.

Critical literacy theorists (Boldt, 2009; Genishi, 2016; Genishi & Dyson, 2012 Leander & Boldt, 2012; Wohlwend, 2013) have questioned the ways in which children's literacy practices are designed around expected and often traditional products—such as first-person narrative and essay form. Leander and Boldt (2012) observe that writing curriculum and research are dominated by a "future orientation" and a privileging of "textual outcomes" (pp. 28-29), which too often render invisible the ways literacy is lived and experienced by children—and fail to make space for the emergence of something new, creative or unexpected. In the words of Leander and Boldt (2012): "The dynamic unfolding of living practices is dominated by a future conception of their desired

results or effects, rather than through the affectivities of living practice" (p. 34). These researchers suggest that our understandings of writers and of writing itself is diminished by a restricted focus on "desired results," which often eclipses what children in fact are doing and accomplishing through literacy. Instead, they invite us to attend to students' practices, desires, interests and "affectivities" in the moment—precisely to understand more about what it means to be and become a writer.

A second assumption in the work below involves the ways in which writing is bound up with social relationships and social action. Dyson (2010) invites us to think about writing among children less in terms of "the composing of individual selves" and more in terms of "the complex participatory dynamics by which writing becomes relevant to children" (p. 7). Such "participatory dynamics" include the ways in which writing drives relationships and relationships drive writing. In our setting, writing was not merely about following a writing process or about specific written outcomes, but about how students used writing workshop and their literacy engagement to do things relationally. For example, Shaun's writing occurs substantially within a network of male relationships in the classroom, and part of my goal is to portray aspects of this gendered sub-community and how writing came to function within it.

A final conceptual frame involves the importance of multiple modalities, popular media, and visual imagination in the development of young writers. Writing theorists (Cook & Sams, 2018; Genishi, 2016; Kuby & Gutshall-Rucker, 2016; Wohlwend, 2011, 2013) invite teachers to conceptualize writing beyond interactions with print. The lives of 21st century children are saturated in "mediascapes" (Attalah & Shade, 2006), which richly shape student perspective and imagination. Hamel (2017) found that, given significant choice in a writing workshop setting, 4th

grade students regularly chose to re-tell or adapt popular media sources rather than write first-person personal narratives. This re-representation of media commonly involved multiple modalities—drawing, acting, physical artifacts—as constitutive to the act of writing—that is, as central to the generation of meaning. These findings suggest the power of visual imagination for young writers, the impact of media and new technologies on writer imagination, corresponding influences on writer motivation, and the importance of re-thinking what counts as literate practice.

Context

General Context

This case grew from a five-year project studying writing workshop and student writing practices in Mr. Allegro's classroom.[3] Adams Elementary, the site for this research, is a majority White, middle class school in an urban school district in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. At the time of this study, about 85% of students at Adams were identified as White, with 12-14% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. This contrasted with the school district at large, which was about 50% White and 50% students of color, with over 50% of all students receiving free or reduced lunch. The de facto racial segregation in the district created forms of privilege in a school like Adams. For example, the fact that Mr. Allegro was encouraged or even allowed to implement writing workshop by his building administration revealed the greater curricular freedom afforded to teachers at a

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school with higher test scores, which correlated with racial demographics. Shaun is a White, English-speaking male, as is Mr. Allegro, as am I, which is to say that even with the many challenges Shaun faced in the classroom, the overall context and relationship between central actors (teachers, parents, volunteers, students) reflected one of relative privilege.

Mr. Allegro's workshop met twice per week for about 60 minutes each session, squeezed within a district-prescribed curriculum. Given the traditional literacy curriculum he was asked to teach, Mr. Allegro, in our early conversations, had expressed a desire to "try something new"—to create a writing context that was more motivating and "intimate," as he put it. In terms of structure, the workshop we developed relied on routines found in early workshop literature (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983) – specifically a three-part process that included: 1) an introduction which sometimes included a mini-lesson, 2) open writing time, and 3) sharing time near the end of each session. Within this general structure and given other general parameters, priority was given to offering students flexible choice, time and space. Students received permission to select their own topics and genres for writing. Students were allowed to direct their own timelines for completing work—with some adult support and encouragement. Students were also allowed to work independently or with partners. Students moved about the room, seeking out resources and sharing their work. A central purpose of the workshop revolved around

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[3] The school site was selected for its proximity to my own work setting and due to my relationship with the school. For a full exploration of this IRB-approved work, see Hamel (2017).

Research findings from the original study and for this paper were reviewed and approved by Mr. Allegro.

writer identity and agency—helping students develop an internalized sense of themselves as writers by engaging in purposeful, self-driven acts of writing within a community of learners.

Classroom Space

We organized the classroom space for movement (Kaufmann, 2001), so students could have access to one another. In our first year, Mr. Allegro's desks began in rows, and he gradually adjusted to pods of four desks, which supported social interaction and created more ways to move within the classroom. We created designated spaces, such as a specific conferencing table away from the teacher's desk (although conferences tended to occur organically throughout the room). We developed an "idea station," a simple physical space near the windows, marked by a divider, with a couple of chairs and pillows, where students could go if they were especially trying to generate writing ideas. Although students brainstormed and developed ideas throughout the classroom, this space was a way to make visible the fact that writers need room, and time, to come up with ideas. The hallway just outside of Mr. Allegro's room became a common space for some students or partners to work on writing ideas, as regulated by Mr. Allegro. There were two student computers in the room, which students used for online searches and information-gathering. As the workshop progressed, especially after the first year, we brought the school's laptop cart into the classroom so many students could word-process electronically if they desired.

Mr. Allegro often began writing workshop with an idea, goal, or mini-lesson—sometimes briefly sharing the work of a student from a previous day, introducing a writing problem, or reading an interesting passage from a book. We did not operate with a predesigned sequence of learning goals or writing skills to instill during mini-lessons; instead, we tended to raise issues as they emerged. During this time, we encouraged discussion and used the whiteboard to draw ideas, list suggestions, and clarify norms (e.g., noise level reminders) for the day. Workshop itself would begin with a simple statement such as "Okay, it's time for workshop" or "Let's get started." This would switch the classroom from teacher-centered mode to a decentralized hub of student activity. Much workshop time operated in this decentralized form—with students writing, moving, talking, sharing resources, sitting with a partner in the classroom or hallway, and engaging based on their own timelines and interests.[4] During sharing time, we would invite volunteers to share their daily progress – making writing a public event. Individuals or pairs would come forward and talk about their writing project and read a section for us. Mr. Allegro and I would often facilitate peer questions and brief feedback.[5]

Writing Process Sheet

To support students in such an independent space, we developed a writing process sheet—known as the "blue sheet" (for the paper color we printed it on)—that guided students in relation to a series of general steps as their writing progressed (see Appendix B). The blue sheet aimed to make the steps of the writing process (drafting, conferencing, revising, publishing) visible for young writers, emphasizing feedback and social interaction via conferencing. Student would fill out one sheet per writing piece and use it during conferences.

Many aspects of this process are familiar to educators, but one original feature was the invitation for students to identify their own "investment" in a piece

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[4] For a snapshot of student activity in the classroom, see Appendix A.

[5] For more on the sharing time aspect of workshop, see Hamel, 2017, Chapter 5.

of writing.[6] Typically, as part of the adult conference phase, students were asked: "How interested are you in working further on this piece of writing?" (i.e. are you into it? ready to be done? in between?). We asked students to rate their piece from a 1 (low investment) to a 5 (high investment). Such self-ratings helped students surface their own affective responses and guided adults in how much revision to encourage. If investment was relatively high, students could take the work further, using peer and adult feedback to move toward a revised "final copy for publication." If low investment was shared, this would often lead to reflection on why, more modest goals for revision, and also discussion on the kinds of writing that might generate energy and enthusiasm.

My Role

My own work in the classroom was one of participant-observer. I inhabited multiple roles, including volunteer, advisor to and collaborator with Mr. Allegro, and researcher. During workshop sessions, I worked with students, helped lead portions of the workshop, and consulted with Mr. Allegro on ways to organize the workshop and respond to students. Each session, I recorded notes by hand, usually based on my own interactions with students or related to general classroom observations. After each session I would review and fill out my notes with additional detail, trying to identify themes or areas of interest and surprise. The story below is drawn from over 20 journal entries recorded during the third year of the study. These entries include descriptions of my work with a wide range of students, yet my interactions with Shaun were a consistent emphasis and thread. In context, the attention I gave to Shaun arose from my own perception, after the first month, that he was the one student not getting off the ground in terms of independent motivation in workshop. As the semester proceeded, I checked in with Shaun nearly every session, offering some form of support and encouragement.

Narrative: Shaun's Story

In what follows, I invite readers to assess the ways in which a less conventional writing environment, devoted to choice and agency, helped to make visible a zone of learning that was constructive for a vulnerable writer like Shaun. As I narrate scenes, my goal is to illuminate various social and relational patterns that marked Shaun's changing growth and motivations as a writer. To begin, I offer a prologue on Shaun's initial month of workshop. I then present scenes from seven workshop days, organized into three chronological sections – first from February when I began to work directly with Shaun, next from March as his motivation began to increase substantially, and finally from May as we were nearing the end of workshop.

Prologue

Shaun's first month of workshop involved high hopes. Unfortunately, these quickly faded as he struggled to secure a partner for writing. In the first week, he and Erik paired up, saying they wanted to do something on "superheroes." Shaun energetically announced that perhaps Erik could "be" the superhero. A parent volunteer, however, expressed skepticism. She noted her surprise that these two were even considering working together, since they had widely divergent skills. Erik's abilities tended to be "off the chart," she shared. She had also overheard the two deciding that Erik would be "the writer," and that Shaun would be the "the illustrator"—and worried about this. She had tried to explain that Shaun could give ideas too, and that they could reverse roles as well. Unfortunately, by the second week, Erik withdrew from the writing

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partnership. He explained to Shaun, kindly enough, that he had his "own" superhero idea, called "The Tick," and that he wanted to develop it independently. Erik seemed to want freedom to exercise his own literacy skills and perhaps not be limited by Shaun's issues and abilities.

Shaun's next partnering attempt, with Randy, also stalled. The two spent nearly a full session trying to determine whether to work together. They used the day creating visual sketches of superhero characters, sitting next to each other, seemingly in a process of negotiation. When I asked if they were going to work together, both said it depended on the "other's" decision. Randy appeared hesitant to commit. Like Erik, he seemed to be negotiating whether working with Shaun would be a liability. Shaun for his part appeared hopeful but cautious, not wanting to impose himself on Randy as a partner. By the next workshop period, not having resolved the decision, they were stuck, and Randy soon moved on to an independent project involving poems—seeming to take energy from a poet-in-residence who had recently visited the school. In the next two weeks, left to his own devices, and as other students found various writing niches, Shaun struggled to make progress or find direction. He sat idly, sometimes with his head down on his desk; he drew occasionally; he joked with peers and moved around the classroom observing others, and he looked less than comfortable at times – as if aware that his experience was diverging from his peers. He did engage with adults who came by to support, but with little result or continuing motivation.

Shaun's early experiences in workshop thus included: 1) initial energy/desire, 2) a broad area of interest (superheroes), 3) seeking out partners, 4) partner prospects dissolving and fading, 5) a few attempts at drawing characters, 6) growing discomfort, and 7) virtually no attempts to write conventionally or alphabetically. A marginal academic reputation preceded Shaun, which placed him in a difficult situation: He needed and hoped for peer support, but due to his apparently low skills he was not easily accepted as a partner by peers, even by those who were otherwise his friends. In the fourth week of workshop, Shaun had little to show and his motivation was waning.

"I know a lot of superhero stories"

February 3

As I look around, I see writer engagement throughout the classroom. Each individual or partnership seems well into some piece, either writing, talking intently, or drawing, having found some self-directed motivation. Except for Shaun. His head is down on his desk. As I arrive, Hal, one of Shaun's tablemates, announces: "Look, I've written over a page." I invite Shaun to pull a chair over toward a side counter near the sink. Shaun moves reluctantly, as if not looking forward to adult help. Seeing a water container, he gets up and pours himself a drink. He takes his time. When he finally sits down, he sees me glancing through his folder and says off-handedly, "There's mostly blank pages in there."

Knowing the goal is to get something started, Shaun asks me if he can "borrow" a story. At first, I think he means "copy" a story, but then I realize that he means adapt an existing storyline. I say yes and share student writing from previous years. I grab a "SpongeBob" story written by Allie, so he can see how another 4th grader adapted a popular TV cartoon. I show him the "The 3 Little Cats"—written by Vanni, an English Language Learner, who adapted "The Three Little Pigs" into his own story. I bring over writing by Martin and Ricky, showing how these students not only borrowed books, movies, and video games—they also used drawings extensively to develop their writing.

Glancing at these, Shaun does not seem especially impressed, and reiterates that he wants his story to have a "superhero." Beyond this, he is not sure how to get started or what to say. I decide to focus on genre—to give him a tool to think with, like a framework that is already inside of him. "What kinds of things happen in superhero stories?" I ask him. Shaun says there's a superhero and a bad guy. I ask if he knows the word "villain," and he says yes. He then says these characters have to "fight."

I say, "OK, yes, superheroes usually have a big conflict of some kind." I ask what happens at the end, and he says first "the whole world blows up," but when I say "Really?" he responds, "Well, the superhero wins."

Me: "Yeah, the superhero always wins."

But Shaun corrects me. He says, "Actually they both live."

This make me think, and I have to agree with him. "You're right. The superhero wins, but not *completely*. The villain usually stays alive in some way, to come back another day."

Shaun's energy perks up with this conversation. He asks me if I've seen a Godzilla movie where in the last scene, after Godzilla has been defeated, one of Godzilla's eggs hatches.

"Ah, yes. Very good," I say. "Godzilla was defeated, but not completely."

Then Shaun says: "It's like, you win the battle but not the war."

"That's a great way to think of it."

Shaun pauses, then says: "Yeah, I know a lot of superhero stories."

Shaun indeed has this genre construct inside of him—which is something we can work with.

I take out paper and write down the main parts of a superhero story we've discussed. I ask Shaun if he wants to brainstorm qualities that his superhero will have.

Shaun says: "What does 'qualities' mean?"

"Like his powers."

"Oh, do you mean skills?"

"Uh, Yes."

We begin to list out skills. More specifically, I write them in a web format as Shaun talks. He starts with what he calls "super strength." I write this down. I use one line branching out from the center for each skill. When Shaun says "super strength," I ask him how much strength—"like able to lift a car?" He says "10 space needles." We branch out farther with this detail. We then add, "super-speed." I ask him how many skills do superheroes have? Shaun says "I think 3 or 4." I give Shaun the paper and encourage him to add to the list, as I head off to work with other students. When I return several minutes later, he has added a new power plus detail to the super speed concept. He then asks, "What should my superhero's weakness be?" I say I'm not sure. After a minute, Shaun decides that his superhero's powers will disappear after 6pm.

Later, just before we go to sharing time, I notice Shaun showing Erik the planning page we developed. As sharing time begins, Shaun comes over to me and says: "Oh, I figured out—he gets his powers back at 1:00 in the morning."

February 10

Mr. Allegro and I are in the classroom while the students are in the gym, getting their class picture. I take a look at Erik's developing story, "The Tick," while students are gone. In many ways, it resembles a "Spiderman" movie I've seen. The Tick, like Spiderman, resolves a series of calamities that cascade one after the other. Crisis, response, crisis, response. As I read, I make a written list of the various enemies and problems that the Tick has faced so far. There is a ring-leader named Shocker with "electric power"; a car chase; a robot disguised as Spiderman; a giant spider; a nemesis named Rhino who captures Tick in a cave; a sinking boat; a fire, and the evil Mr. Morph who can turn into any shape he desires. When the class returns, Erik and Shaun come over to me, and I read my list back to them. Erik's eyes get big, as if he is impressed with all that he's created. Shaun then asks to see the story, and he reads as I conference with Erik. As he finishes, Shaun initiates his own peer conference with Erik. He grabs one of our blue conferencing sheets. I step back to listen. Shaun asks Erik how he came up with his ideas, and he writes down Erik's answers. They discuss together what's coming next and new crises Spiderman might face. They are engaged. I'm impressed with Erik and Shaun's writing relationship, despite the fact that they are not formal partners.

Next, Shaun and I meet to talk about his writing. Besides our notes, he has still written virtually nothing in over a month. We step away from Erik to decide how Shaun can get going. Unfortunately, the planning page we worked on last week has already disappeared. I encourage Shaun to begin writing things down that come to mind. Shaun wonders if he should describe his characters first – and I encourage him to go with whatever gets words on paper. I offer to write for him, if he will dictate, and he accepts my offer.

But dictating is more difficult than anticipated. Shaun mulls over ideas again and again, wondering if he should do X, Y or Z. He mulls over titles, seeming to get bogged down. He is reluctant to commit to anything. We get little on paper. I push him to work with a temporary title, and he agrees, with my help, to "Shaun's Superhero Story." But he again starts to mull over what his hero will be called. He finally says "Aquaman," and I write this under the title. The moment of actually starting to write is high stakes for Shaun – and very challenging.

We have both recently read Erik's story, so I say aloud, "Maybe Aquaman can be friends with Tick." In my mind, I am modeling how to generate possible ideas using what is already in mind and available. Shaun says he has to ask Erik about this. He goes over to Erik and says "Can I use the Tick?" Erik purses his eyebrows together, seemingly concerned. I step in to clarify that Shaun is not writing a Tick story, but his hero might "know" the Tick. After pondering this momentarily, Erik's expression eases. He says "OK" and returns to writing.

February 17

The next time I see Shaun, he has drawn a large, muscular character at the bottom of the page we were working on. I ask if this is Aquaman, our superhero. Shaun replies: "No. It's the villain, Destructo, but his secret name is Patrick." I see "Patrick" written in a few places on the character. I notice Shaun interact with other students using his picture. He shows the picture to Erik, then he walks over to another classmate. I overhear Shaun call over to Erik: "Randy says the Tick is buffer than Patrick!"—which reminds me that Erik also has an elaborately drawn picture of the Tick.

Shaun sits with me, and I ask, "Does Aquaman have a common name like Destructo does?"

Shaun says spontaneously: "Erik."

"OK, Erik,"

Shaun says, "I better ask him first."

Shaun gets up, goes over to Erik, and asks. Erik looks up and nods his head—with a shade of smile.

Commentary

Shaun appears to be drawn to social resources, particularly Erik, to make sense of the act of writing—to locate a purpose for writing which heretofore has escaped him. This purpose is deeply relational. He reaches out to borrow things (the Tick as a character, the name Erik itself). He also bestows – naming his protagonist after Erik and offering Erik respect by asking permission. Shaun willingly and publicly allows the Tick to be described as "buffer" than his own villain character, Patrick. As he shows his character drawings to peers, Shaun's story, his writing process, and Shaun himself become interwoven with the writing of his peers, their stories and characters. Destructo and The Tick are compared, as if they are part of the same field of heroes and villains. For Shaun, these are not "separate" stories but part of a relational web.

"Indeed, although he has written very little at this point, I sense Shaun is almost "there" with this piece of writing – that is, at a point where, through social reassurance and interaction, the act of writing will become self-motivating."

Shaun's work thus involves a kind of "narrative relationship-building," or perhaps "relational narrating," where one's own writing emerges only in the confidence that others you trust are doing something similar or inhabiting a similar kind of world—that one isn't alone in the process. Shaun's writing moves reassure him that his story is part of a network of meaning and connection within the classroom, that he and his characters are not isolated or separate. This reflects a significant social-emotional component (Durlack et al., 2015; Jones & Kahn, 2017; Markowitz & Bouffard, 2020) embedded, and emergent, in Shaun's writing development—something perhaps missing from common definitions of the writing process. Indeed, although he has written very little at this point, I sense Shaun is almost "there" with this piece of writing—that is, at a point where, through social reassurance and interaction, the act of writing will become self-motivating.

Yet, Shaun's relational motivations are interwoven with wider networks of influence. Shaun's meaning-making is not restricted to immediate social connections but is informed by webs of meaning that move beyond the classroom. Superhero popular media—blockbuster films, comics, video games—permeate Shaun's world; his emergent writing flows from a deep familiarity with and participation in the "mediascape" of the superhero genre – its existing narrative structures and predictable tropes. When Shaun realizes that other peers (particularly Erik) also thrive in this culturally-driven genre space – his motivation rises. In other words, immediate relationships interact within larger ecologies of meaning. In this sense, the relationality I've traced above extends beyond Shaun and his peers or between Shaun and myself. Shaun's literacy development seems to build through his identification with what might be called a much larger "affinity space" of superhero subculture, of which Erik, in particular, is a knowledgeable peer.[7]

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[7] My appreciation to JoLLE reviewers for feedback and insight on this point.

Relational Narrating, Social Complexity, Writing Growth

March 17

As Shaun and I conference, I read aloud what is on his sheet with a dramatic voice and stop after the first half of page. It's fun to read. "He can lift 12 space needles…!" Shaun reads aloud the second half – the part that has his own handwriting. We express our satisfaction, then make a few changes. I suggest an emphasis word written in caps before we tell Destructo's weakness. "*BUT* he had one weakness." The narration builds not from a preconceived plot idea, from a sense of beginning, middle and end, but from Shaun's enumeration of traits for his superhero and villain. Shaun then spontaneously adds a new weakness: "temperature." Destructo cannot stand temperatures <u>over 90 degrees</u> or <u>under 20 degrees</u>. I take a chance and ask Shaun if he wants to share what he has during sharing time today. He nods yes. I say, "Would you like to read it together?" He nods again.

At sharing time, six hands go up. I ask Shaun if he wants to share first, and he says yes. We go up together. Shaun lets me read the first few lines aloud. I do so with a bit of drama. "He can lift 12 space needles! He has super strength!" Then Shaun reads the next part: His voice is quieter and students ask him to speak up, which he does. Questions immediately follow. Jesse asks: "Does Aquaman have any other weaknesses?" Shaun ponders this and is quiet. I say I'm not sure he has any other weaknesses. But someone calls out, "It could be really hot water!" Shaun absorbs this attention. People are taking his writing seriously – they are going with it. As we sit down, he goes back to his drawing.

After class, kids head to recess, but Shaun stays at his desk. He says he is working on a new visual of his hero. He then asks me about Destructo's force-field power. He says: "How strong should the force-field be?"

"I don't know. I didn't realize he had a force-field," I say.

He ponders, then asks: "Like 200 pounds?"

I say I never thought a force-field had a limit – I thought a force-field was invincible until turned off. But Shaun wants to know the pound limit.

"Should it be 500 pounds?" he asks.

I say, trying to figure out his thinking: "So, you want it to be a certain amount of pounds, then something heavier or stronger will come along and break it?"

"Yeah, like in the water…"

"Oh!" I finally figure it out. "You've got a great plot idea there! So Aquaman will get Destructo in the water and …." I gesture for Shaun to tell me the rest.

"He'll take him down really deep, and it will crush the force-field."

"Yeah, wow. Great thinking," I say. "So, maybe we need a scientific answer. How could we find out how many pounds of pressure exist in the ocean?"

Shaun isn't sure. I say: "Maybe we can look this up, then you could make Destructo's force-field just a little bit weaker."

Mr. Allegro has been in the room, solving a printer problem during recess. He says, "You know, the public library has an information line. You call them with a question and they give you an answer just like that. The number's right by my phone."

I ask Shaun if he wants to do this, and he says OK. I give Shaun a few pointers on the phone call—e.g.,

how to identify himself. He dials. He soon asks an unknown adult, on the other end of the line: "Um, what is the pressure of water at the bottom of the ocean?" and in a second or two he goes on hold. We wait. After two minutes, he says to me: "I've never been on hold this long." But soon his body language and facial expression change. He is listening intently, writing down numbers quickly—14.7 pounds per square inch, 33, and other numbers. I'm concerned the answer will be too technical and confusing, but he handles this himself. He says: "I just want to know what the pressure is in the deepest part of the ocean." He gets put on hold again. As we wait, I realize that this is one of the few times I've seen Shaun communicate assertively and write things independently and very purposefully.

Soon the voice returns, and he's given a few key numbers. The magic number is about 15,000 pounds per square inch. Shaun writes this down. I wonder how well he understands the concept of "pounds per square inch," but this is I think beside the point—namely, the power of his self-determined communicative action. I stuff the sheet inside his writing folder and ask him to put the folder in the green tub which holds student writing from week to week. Recess is over. Students have already returned. Shaun is off to a reading group in another classroom.

March 18

Today is an early release day, music class will be early, and workshop is only about 45 minutes. Kids also will be getting report cards. By the end of the shortened period, Shaun has written about ten independent, original lines. We sit together as Shaun's classmates leave for music. The last thing he wrote yesterday was: "So Aquaman ran off home. While he was home he ate dinner and went to bed." Today Shaun has written:

Meanwhile destructo was counting his money and laghing and then he put his momey away and went to bed. February 1, 10:32am. Aquaman also known as Nate had just finished eating breakfast. But then he herd someone nocked on the door so Nate went to get as soon as opened the door he shut it. it was destructos minins [minions] but he new ther wekneses It was water. Suddenly they blasted throu the door one by one he shot with water power until they were gone after the battle.

Shaun has re-named Aquaman "Nate", after a classmate who sits at his table. However, the episodic narrative reminds me of Erik's writing, with ongoing action sequences predicated on threat, battle, and resolution. Superhero powers and weaknesses shape the action. Many genre conventions are present (e.g., the laughing evil villain preoccupied with money) as well as other conventions Shaun has seen among his peers (the date/time stamp). It's a big output of writing from Shaun. I give him a high five, and he smiles. He has a new folder today, and I remind him to keep his things together, so they don't get lost. I have some confidence that Shaun will not drift away from this project now.

March 24

Midway through workshop, Shaun is sitting at a four-desk cluster, with his desk next to Amaya on his right, and with Hal and Nate facing them. Hal is creating a cartoon on a sheet of paper. Nate is sitting with a blank notebook.

When I approach, Shaun says, "I left my story at home, but I wrote about it at home." I try to recall where he was last week, and he thinks back—"Yeah, his minions attacked Aquaman, but he knew their weaknesses."

"Oh yeah. So what did you write at home?"

Shaun has lots to say here. He says he invented a new enemy, but the new villain's name is a secret. He whispers it to me so his group-mates can't hear. The secret name is "Hotstreak."

"That's a great name."

"Do you want me to say his powers?"

With my nod, Shaun whispers that Hotstreak has "the power of fire" and "can turn into a fire demon." Also he has "laser vision." Shaun then says we need a nickname for Hotstreak.

"I thought Hotstreak was a nickname." I say quietly.

"No, so we can talk about him out loud."

"Oh."

"How about Heat?" he offers.

Shaun continues to elaborate the story, describing what happens when Aquaman's water power meets Heat's fire power. He is putting forth many ideas.

As Shaun and I talk, others listen in. Nate has not looked at his own notebook yet. After listening to our talk, Hal says aloud, "You spend a lot of time with Shaun."

I let the comment sit, but Hal repeats it a moment later. "You work a lot with Shaun."

I say, "Yeah, we've put some good time into this story." Hal's observation is accurate. It makes me second-guess my support for Shaun. I hear in Hal's comment: "You are working too much with one student—you aren't being fair with your time." I also wonder what Shaun has heard—perhaps: "Shaun, you are a needy student—you consume too much help." or "You're actually not a good writer."

Later in the period, reading a different student's paper, I am interrupted when Jerry announces, "Shaun is crying." I do not react immediately, but look over and see Shaun in tears dragging his desk away from Hal, Nate and Amaya. Several kids have stopped to watch. I wait to see if things will settle, or if Mr. Allegro will attend to this, but soon Nate is crying too. Mr. Allegro is in the hallway. Someone says, "They threw Shaun's paper away." Nate has his head down. I hear him say: "I didn't know it was his story!"

Shaun is upset, un-crumpling the writing he had worked on recently, trying to flatten it out again on his desk. I'm the nearest adult. I excuse myself from Carter and ask Shaun and Nate to meet me outside the classroom. We sit down just outside the door. "What happened, Shaun?"

He shows me the paper he had been working on since last week. "Hal threw my paper in the garbage, and Nate crumpled it up."

Nate defends himself. "I didn't know it was your story! I just thought it was some paper."

I ask Nate why he crumpled a paper that was already in the garbage. He says that Hal and Amaya sometimes tease Shaun by throwing his things away. Nate says this time he joined in, but he claims he didn't know it was his actual story. I ask if he understands how this hurt Shaun's feelings. He says yes, then says, "Sorry Shaun."

"That's OK," Shaun says. The boys are friends; they are trying to work this out.

I ask Nate to send Hal out. He comes out asking brightly, "Am I in trouble?"

Confronted with Shaun's distress and my concern, Hal admits that he sometimes teases Shaun by throwing things away like pencils. "But it's usually

funny," he adds. I ask if he recognizes that this was not funny to Shaun. "Yes," he says. He apologizes, and Shaun accepts. I let them know I will inform Mr. Allegro and that he may follow-up. But I do wonder about the unevenness of my own support. I get around to many students each period, but Shaun has clearly been a focus. This may be backfiring a bit on Shaun.

As workshop ends today, emotions are bruised a bit. There has been no time for sharing, but Shaun still shows me his paper. He has added several new lines:

"Aquaman doged it but it hit his leg he was so mad he made a water tornado and he was in it he got high anuf to reach the ship and flung the ship to the mall after he did that he powered up to maximum level of strength"

I wonder internally if Aquaman's anger is related to Shaun's own emotions today. I help him adjust the spelling of "doged" (dodged) and "anuf." At Shaun's request, I help him adjust his wording so Aquaman is "on top of" the water tornado, not just "in it." The writing has no sentence boundaries (periods or commas), but I decide not to focus here. I ask Shaun what he means by "maximum level of strength."

"What would this look like," I ask, "if it happened in front of me? What would I see?"

Shaun says, "Well, it would be like a giant energy bubble."

"Write that down," I say. "That's good."

Instead, he draws a picture which looks like a large flame. He says, "It isn't really a bubble."

"Maybe you could say it looks like a flame of water," I suggest. Shaun instead writes: "You could see a giant energy bubble around him his hair was longer his eyes were darkish blue he was very angry."

I tell him I like that description very much. I say, "I think I know what 'powering up to a maximum level of strength' is now."

Commentary

Over the last two months, at least in my perception, Shaun has changed significantly as a writer. Today, he has stayed in through recess, again, to write—without being told to do so. The image of Shaun sitting at a table, pencil to paper, independently producing words and images, stays with me—suggesting that not just writing but a "writing identity" is in formation. Shaun appears to be coming to see himself as a writer—not just as someone trying to get through a task assigned by an adult. He is driven to write and revise, is attached to his characters, and is finding purpose in writing—sometimes writing at home to advance his story. This is a distance from where we started. My own support has clearly played a role; indeed in the exchange above, the combination of my verbal feedback and Shaun's drawing seems to push his thinking forward as he creates a depiction of Aquaman's intensity and anger.

I am also intrigued by the social events surrounding Shaun's growth. This day's emergent bullying, with its layers of positioning and power, friendship and forgiveness, has shaped a new kind of writing from Shaun, new forms of attention to emotion, new intensity and vividness in his composition. Aquaman is "on top of a water tornado"—has "powered up to

> **"The image of Shaun sitting at a table, pencil to paper, independently producing words and images, stays with me – suggesting that not just writing but a "writing identity" is in formation."**

maximum level of strength"—something that Shaun describes as a "giant energy bubble." Aquaman's anger is captured in the transformation of his physical traits: "his hair was longer his eyes were darkish blue." This is a dramatic shift in Shaun's writing, which seems to emerge suddenly – like those occasional and hard-to-predict moments when learning truly accelerates.

It is hard not to connect this change in Shaun's writing to immediate events—the teasing and abuse by classmates, all centered on Shaun's actual writing. It does not seem accidental that Shaun's story itself was thrown away; his peers seem to have recognized a point of vulnerability—something Shaun truly cares about. While my intent is not to romanticize the bullying involved, this day's events reveal that Shaun and his writing have become integrated into a real human setting. Shaun's writing, even about a fictional superhero, is not separated or removed from experiential concerns—social dynamics, personal insecurities, and friendship hierarchies. Shaun's newfound success in writing signals a shift in his status in the classroom. Some of his peers seem concerned that he may be getting unfair recognition. Writing is coming to matter to these 4th graders. Shaun and his peers are engaging real desires, needs, and commitments.

For me, Shaun's developing composition holds layers of significance. He is learning how to represent the emotional life of an imaginary character by tapping into his own emotions. He is experiencing the power of writing; that is, Shaun can see how both the content of his composition and the conditions surrounding its production are yielding a response from peers. With adult support, Shaun is gaining social and emotional tools for navigating social complexity and power. On his own, he seems to be using writing as a way to express and channel his emotions, to infuse them into and through the "secondary world" (Benton, 1992) of his superhero

story – where he can gain some distance from these emotions, even as they impact him. In other words, through writing and through the workshop environment, Shaun is learning to let Aquaman, his own superhero, help him process the world around him.

"Could Supersurfer swim?"

In the intervening weeks, Spring break has occurred, and Mr. Allegro's class has experienced the impacts of state testing, administered in April. During this time, workshop has been reduced from two days to one day per week, as various district assessments must be completed. Holding workshop once per week means that sustaining writing momentum is more challenging, but Shaun has nevertheless continued to build his superhero storyline. Keeping his work organized from week to week has been a struggle, as various sections of the story are written on different pieces of paper, and episodes from one week to the next may or may not link up. In mid-April, my notes read: "Shaun now has four pages with substantial writing, plus the prologue pages, but it's not clear how they all go together or even what order they should follow."

Overall, however, I've been struck by Shaun's continued energy for his superhero writing world and by the fact that he now needs little encouragement to write during workshop. My main worry is that Shaun has bitten off too much narrative—that he won't be able to pull the pieces together.

May 19

Shaun is working toward an ending for his Aquaman story. With my help, his papers are in order. He has written a paragraph in class and is now specifically trying to determine how Aquaman will select a "sidekick" superhero to defeat Destructo. Shaun is taking the sidekick selection quite seriously. He has designed four sidekick options: "Blazer," "Aqualad,"

"Supersurfer," and "Fire"—complete with an illustration of each potential character. In the paragraph he wrote today, he has described each one's powers. He is engaged, moving around inside his story-world and elaborating imaginatively on it (Wilhelm, 2016), well beyond what will presumably be written into his formal draft.

Conferencing together, Shaun and I talk about how Aquaman will team up with his sidekick to defeat Destructo. Shaun decides on a basic final story sequence, which I write down as he talks:

      1) Aquaman will select his sidekick
      2) They make plans to attack Destructo
      3) The final battle

Under each of these I add a few planning details as Shaun brings them up. For example, Shaun decides that for selecting his sidekick Aquaman will break into the four superheroes' hideout to test their abilities. I leave Shaun to work on this part. He seems highly connected to this part of the story and tells me he wants to share today.

Unfortunately, as the period winds down, we have only five minutes at the end, and Shaun is not picked to share. Carter and Mercer show off their new publication and read what Carter calls the "funniest part." Monica and Valerie act out a dialogue from their story, "Dog-Boy." As class ends, Shaun turns to tell me he's disappointed he wasn't picked; he was hoping to poll the class on who the new sidekick should be.

After class about six students stay in to write. Shaun stays too and asks if he can poll these remaining students. His peers are engrossed in their own work. I suggest he start by asking Erik, who is sitting directly behind him.

Shaun asks Erik, "Can you help me decide my sidekick?" Erik turns around slowly and offers a smile. The prospect seems to intrigue him. "OK," he says.

Shaun launches into a detailed description of the four options.

Taking this in, Erik pauses, then asks Shaun: "What are Aqualad's powers?"

Shaun replies: "Same as Aquaman's but without white magic." He continues, "Oh, and I should tell you that Fire is Aquaman's brother."

Erik thinks, then asks: "Could Supersurfer swim?" Shaun says yes, and says he also makes things float. He shows Erik an illustration he has already drawn of Supersurfer.

The intentness and focus of the conversation is impressive. Erik finally says he thinks Supersurfer is the best choice: "Because he can go in water like Aquaman but also has different powers." In other words, these superhero partners will not be restricted from being in the same aquatic environment, which would be a problem with Blazer and Fire, but Aquaman and Supersurfer also have diverse skill sets. Shaun likes Erik's logic and decides on Supersurfer as the sidekick. Shaun's agreement surprises me, since he had told me earlier about a possible story ending that involved Aqualad.

As I get up, I say to Shaun, "Erik's a good consultant for you." Shaun turns and puts an arm on Erik's shoulder with a smile, "He's my pal."

Commentary

Shaun's motivation to write, as emerging in workshop, continues to be deeply social and relational. He creates four sidekick characters—investing significant writing time in their depiction—with the express purpose of "polling" the class about which to eventually include in the narrative. He composes drafts of writing for his friends—less, it seems, to be read in finished form and more as tools for interaction, for shaping a social space for

imaginative problem-solving. Here, texts mediate engagement, mutual cognitive play, and relationship building. The final product is less the point. The immediate payoff is having peers enter into his imaginative world—taking his characters, and by extension Shaun himself, seriously.

Indeed, working with Eric, Shaun enters into a powerful exchange of ideas—a detailed conversation about character traits and how a sidekick character might relate to and complement a superhero. The boys think carefully about this, and the interaction enhances their friendship bond. To my surprise, Shaun changes his mind in selecting the sidekick, based on Erik's argument and astute reasoning. Partly, Shaun may still be unsure of his own writing choices; in seeking external validation, he may fear that his own decisions will not work out. In this respect, I suspect that Shaun is working on a kind of writer confidence – yet he does so by taking up a carefully determined collaborative stance, gaining support and validation from a trusted source. The trust draws upon shared writing experience—i.e., Shaun's sense that Erik understands and values superhero narratives and is also writing a superhero story. Most centrally, Shaun appears to be forging a way to not exist "alone" as a writer—to write individually yet also within a companion space. Such relational space gives Shaun a route forward, and the process has taken months to accomplish.

Discussion

"Relational Narrating" is a term I use to describe the rich interaction, in Shaun's literacy development, between the practice of composing a story and a need for social recognition, belonging and membership. Participating as a meaningful member of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1998), where both one's self and the content of one's writing are seen, heard, and valued by others—indeed, where one's imaginative creations and characters thrive in the imaginative worlds of one's peers—is highly engaging and powerful for Shaun. It brings him back to his writing over and again, motivates him to experiment in new ways, and sends him forth to share and solicit feedback—to gradually trust himself and his audience. Trust does not come easily—there are bumps and setbacks on the way. Yet, relational narrating forges a situation where Shaun is not left isolated as a writer—i.e., completing an individualized project and at the mercy of impersonal forces (e.g., grades, rubrics), around which Shaun's reluctance rises and his morale drops significantly. Particularly for disaffected learners, whose skills are often subject to standards they are not yet equipped to meet, we might acknowledge how "alone" the act of writing must be, perhaps even in workshop settings.

> **"Relational narrating forges a situation where Shaun is not left isolated as a writer – i.e., completing an individualized project and at the mercy of impersonal forces (e.g., grades, rubrics), around which Shaun's reluctance rises and his morale drops significantly."**

Given a choice-oriented, relatively flexible writing context, Shaun not only locates his own footing as a writer, he gradually develops a relational mindset—i.e., one open to feedback and interaction, intrigued with audience input, and less given to defensiveness, rigidity, or writing despair. This mindset provides Shaun with tools for resilience as a writer—for testing out ideas, working through struggles or blocks, and for gaining energy with his writing. In the process, Shaun is learning both to experiment and to revise his thinking—two dispositions that grow from trust in the environment. For Shaun, a community of writers is not about simply completing writing tasks in the

vicinity of others, nor wholly focused on the writing outcome itself. It is not merely a process of giving and receiving feedback, moving through a checklist, or following a writing process. The core ingredient for his growth involves a kind of imaginative co-investment, in selective ways, in the writing worlds of others.

What implications flow from these observations? For one, this case suggests the importance of situating writing practices within active social settings – where students' imaginative worlds, social contexts, and relationships have space to interconnect. Dyson (1993) proposed the notion of a "permeable" writing curriculum—open to, and fed by, the shaping forces and initiatives of students. Shaun's story puts more flesh on this notion. Shaun's writing, even about a fictional superhero, is not separated or removed from immediate experiential concerns—social dynamics, personal insecurities, friendship relationships and hierarchies. In other words, social and emotional learning (SEL) is relevant to his writing experience and perhaps has not been taken into account enough, as "processes" of writing have been enumerated for children. Indeed, these SEL dimensions influence and shape Shaun's writing in real and immediate ways. Forms of inclusion and exclusion are present – and Shaun's navigation of these forces inform his writing and provide context for experimentation and growth. Shaping a writing context less tied to compliance and form, rigid timelines, and an idealized final outcome (Dyson, 2013; Genishi & Dyson, 2012; Hamel, 2017; Kuby & Gutshall Rucker, 2016) may give writers like Shaun a way to locate the imaginative co-investments needed to build energy, take writing risks, and experience growth.

Specifically, teachers may need to create and center opportunities where young writers, and particularly disaffected writers, do more than listen politely to peer writing or edit another's draft—but instead have agency in connecting substantively and personally

with the imaginative content of (some) peer writing. Such writers need less isolation and more opportunities to connect social worlds, imagination, and writing content – enough "flex" (Genishi, 2016) that students' imaginative worlds can find each other. To be sure, this is not about placing "struggling writers" together—a kind of low tracking of writers. Eric and Shaun's writing confidence and technical abilities differed significantly; yet they shared productively and powerfully by engaging overlapping genres (superhero narratives). Teachers may need to consider not only writing confidence/output and personality/disposition in pairing students but possibilities for shared affinity spaces – where genres, story worlds, and overlapping imaginative concerns can motivate learners and create the grounding for idea generation, experimentation, relationship, and risk-taking.

The importance of close and careful listening with a student like Shaun cannot be overstated. The focus of such listening usefully includes both the dynamics of Shaun's social context and the story worlds and characters that most intrigue him. Writing companions might be invited to share and compare initial story ideas, drawings, characters, and settings—to enter another's world and contribute ideas. Students might be asked to consider especially interesting overlaps and distinctions with their own writing—as a way of engaging openly and meta-cognitively about their writing world and processes. This is not to suggest that writers should never experience writing that is significantly different from their own; our writing workshop regularly gave students access to a wide range of writing through author's chair sharing. But the focus here is on experiencing trust—that one's own writing is a safe space for exploration.

A final point involves the central role of multiple modalities and literacies in Shaun's writing growth. Part of our goal in workshop involved expanding the

definition of literate practice—redefining "what counts" as writing (Cook & Sams, 2018; Dyson, 2013; Kuby & Gutshall-Rucker, 2016; Leander & Boldt, 2012; Wohlwend, 2013). This included validating and supporting Shaun's reliance on visual images and popular media to gain a foothold with the process of textual representation. Shaun relied not only on superhero story structures, as mediated through popular culture, but especially on visualized images of characters to drive his thinking and eventual writing. He worked meticulously on his early drawing of "Destructo," Aquaman's villain, in getting a storyline off the ground – a visual he used socially, walking around the room, showing it to peers, and actively comparing his villain with the characters of others. Visual drawings created a mediating point between Shaun and his peers—generating meaningful talk, energy, and story elaboration. Seen most dramatically in Shaun's idea generation around a "sidekick" character—where he drew four separate characters, only one of whom would eventually make its way into the story—visual representations became tools of social interaction, problem-solving, creativity, and textual production. Shaun's writing is thus a reminder that visual images are not simply appendages to written text (created as "illustrations" after something is written)—but, especially for students who are struggling with text production, are constitutive to communication itself and to the development of thinking, confidence, and writing.

The shared co-investment in an imaginative world, and its inter-relationship with the complexities of social life in a fourth-grade classroom, is what I found fascinating about Shaun's case—a writer who initially showed great reluctance to participate in writing workshop. Shaun's gradual and eventual growth (he ended up "publishing" his complete Aquaman story for the classroom library at the end of the school year) was mediated by a practice of "relational narrating"— where one's writing emerges in the confidence that someone you trust is doing something similar, is inhabiting a similar kind of world—and that one is not alone in the process. With adult support, this self-driven and socially-driven practice created space for significant change in Shaun's desire and ability to compose, experiment, engage collaboratively, seek out an audience, revise his ideas, and take and receive feedback as a writer.

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Appendix A
Snapshot of Activity

To give a picture of the decentralized space in operation, I offer this excerpt from my notes from one of our early workshop days in the same year I worked with Shaun:

As workshop begins, and I notice kids getting up, moving to sharpen pencils, looking at magazines, gathering around Mr. Allegro with questions, sitting and thinking, and meeting with partners in the idea center. Erik sits by himself at first, seemingly without an idea but contemplating. Maria starts reading through a few published stories from last year, which we've laid around. After a while she has written down the word "saphire" on paper and then after a few moments holds it out in front of her, saying aloud: "Does anybody want to use the word sapphire?"

One boy comes up to me to say he's writing a story at home, and he's in the middle of chapter 2. He says he'll try starting chapter 3 here at school and will fill in the rest of chapter 2 later. After this revelation, he goes back to his desk, intent on his work.

Jerry, sitting near the front whiteboard, shows me a cartoon dog he's traced, which he refers to as Superdog. I sit with Jerry, watching him draw a dog tag under Superdog's neck, writing SD on it. I encourage him, building on the visual. "Does the dog tag have super-powers?" He replies: "Oh yeah, it could be a laser that makes something small." We continue working with our dog associations and soon are talking about whether Superdog has a leash. Jerry decides that the leash could be Superdog's "evil nemesis." As he looks at his drawing, he returns to the dog tag, saying, "Maybe it's a boomerang."

Maria keeps reading student stories from last year's workshop. At one point, she calls out, holding up a classroom publication: "Anybody want to read 'The Mystery of the Golden Spatula'?" Another boy is writing about an iguana independently. His story has many misspellings. The first sentence includes the color of the iguana: "saphire" (see Hamel, 2017, pp.16-17).

Appendix B
Writing Process Guide (Blue Sheet)

Writing Workshop

Topic or Story _____

What are you working on?	Date	Sign
STORY IDEA (think, draw, talk, read, etc.)		
FIRST DRAFT—SKIP LINES Write up to two pages, then hold a peer conference. Attach this sheet to your piece.		
PEER CONFERENCE (before you move to your third page or sooner) Choose a peer. Share your writing so far. Complete peer conference review (on back). Make sure your peer conference partner signs ➡		

ADULT CONFERENCE (sign up after your peer conference)
 	
Bring your writing, this sheet, and a pencil.
Rate your writing piece—how interested are you in working on it?
    1 = I feel finished with this piece now.
    2 = I would like to work on it just a little more.
    3 = I like this piece and want to keep working on it.
    4 = I'm very interested in this piece and want to keep developing it.
    5 = I like this piece a lot. I'll keep working on it for publication.
Continue conference on the back of form.		

FINAL COPY FOR PUBLICATION Conference process is finished. Adult signs ➡️ Type or write neatly.		
OPTIONS FOR FINAL COPY Illustrations, Dedication, Author page, Production (play, puppet show, cartoon, etc.), Binding your final copy.		