The Up-Lifting Effects of Poetry

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Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of
Holos University Graduate Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

The work reported in this thesis is original and carried out by me solely, except for the acknowledged direction and assistance gratefully received from colleagues and mentors.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has progressed from a dutiful task assigned as a communication to verify a field of study ultimately evolving into a rediscovery of the incredible effect that the poetic expression has on my life, and I am grateful to all those who guided me through the process.

As I reflect on the persons who inspired me to undertake this project and to continue through to its completion, I immediately see the sturdy and yet majestic foundation in pantheon of poets who word by word like bricks in a wall built the foundation on which this study must rest from Shakespeare to Donne and Blake, Yeats, T. S. Elliot and Stanley Kunitz. And yet, these are but a few of the many who could be named in illustration of that wall on which I stood in search of the answers to the questions this study asks and which lie on the other side of its poetry.

It is with most heartfelt appreciation that I first thank Patricia Norris, chair of my dissertation committee. Without her steady hand and infinite patience, my weariness and frustration may have overtaken my desire to complete this document. I have, in jest, often said that should I have the opportunity to change places with another human being strictly because of the superior nature of that person's parents, it would be Pat. I am certain their having walked the planet has made it a better place, as does their beautiful daughter Pat's. Her consistent and quite consciously positive stance in life has provided me, over and over again, a sense of leveling that enabled my clearing the respective hurdle at hand. Her capacity for love is staggering. I go forth with her invaluable words of wisdom and guidance, "we all work out of the image we hold of ourselves," remembering that to forgive oneself is first and foremost.

his brother. At HU, gone were the desks in rows with a professor at a podium in front of the class; I had stepped outside of my academic comfort zone.

Both my BA and MAT studies and subsequent career were in the field of English. Having taken many, many literature courses and taught on both the high school and college levels, had afforded me the distinct pleasure of living my days surrounded by and immersed in the study of literature and poetry. However, when I became interested in discerning "something beyond the surface"[1] and ultimately became a student at HU, a shift occurred in the way I viewed and taught poetry. When I learned that the great poets knew that everything everywhere is inseparably connected to everything else, I began to realize that poetry has the power to move people not only intellectually but to a deeper level of connection as well. I was fortunate enough to earn a teaching fellowship at Boston College and remember so vividly a conversation I had with my mentor and then department chair regarding the affective response to literature. Because I knew the value of my own emotional responses to poetry, I argued for its insertion into the curriculum. She on the other hand insisted that the purpose of literature was solely to make students think, she adamantly denied the value of the emotional response.

I am so grateful for the teachers at HU, for they are not only aware but live in the truth of the power and value of poetry and all art. The field of subtle energy and energy medicine somehow attracts those folks who live in the fullness of both sides of their brain. At HU, poetry goes quite nicely right alongside statistics. Where the trend elsewhere is toward rote learning and the spitting back of facts, HU works to nourish the whole human being. My teachers at HU have been a life-changing gift to me. I am terribly grateful for each class I took, every book I read and every conversation I had,

which led me to this dissertation and the expression of what I have discovered on my

journey to this degree. In each teacher who guided me and in each experience to gather

as colleagues at the various HU campuses, I found something extraordinary. I am a

different person, and I hope a better one for them all.

Thank you to Bill Schul. He was a gentle spirit, generous and kind and because

of this he was an inspiring teacher. He was a most favorite teacher, and I have had many

incredible teachers. His thoughts on poetry are every bit as wise as those of the great

poets from any literary age, but they are especially akin to those of the Romantic poets

Wordsworth and Coleridge. In an email to me he wrote:

> Just some thoughts as to the roles poetry can play in our lives.
>
> We are constantly making sense of ourselves and our surroundings, using our senses to maintain and develop our material and aesthetic needs. Experiences come to us in the light of half-remembered events, of mental and sensory constructions. Poetry can reveal how those experiences can be profoundly meaningful. This also is true, of course, of other forms of art. Whatever the form, art is not only the expression of emotion or even of the creative impulse; it arises from the interaction of many things. And whatever its medium, Poetry - read, spoken, sang - it draws its life from the cultural life of the community. There is no one settled interpretation, and the greatness of the expression may lie in its appeal to many different groups and societies…

Please refer to Appendix J for the entirety of his remarks.

Thank you to Mary Charlotte Shealy, our dear Chardy. I stayed in her guest

house several times and enjoyed wonderful conversations with her as we journeyed to

and from the airport or the grocery store or as we walked on the Shealy's beautiful farm.

For me, Chardy was a woman of individual power, a model I shall keep in my heart

forever.

Catherine Boivert, my statistician, was invaluable. So too, Michael Holupka, a

student at Medway High School and fair computer wiz, taught me, among other handy

tools for computer use, how to manipulate into the template the tables and figures

Catherine created.

ABSTRACT

The Uplifting Effect of Poetry: a study of adults ages 18 to no limit in age and their response to one, three-part intervention with poetry or to information about poetry.

The purpose of this study was to show that following an interaction with poetry adults 18 years and upward would demonstrate measurable improvement in their feelings of well-being as measured by the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and in self-actualization as measured by the Personal Inventory Index (POI). A pretest, post test, control group design was employed. Sixty-five randomly chosen subjects were randomly divided into two groups. All participants completed one measure of mood, (STAI) and one measure of self-actualization, (POI). The experimental group then participated in a three-part interaction with poetry and the control group read academic information about poetry. Following the interventions, participants repeated the STAI and the POI. For the experimental group, the STAI measure indicated statistical significance in change in the State aspect of the test (p< 0.015). Change in the Trait aspect was measureable but not statistically significant. The POI indicated that the experimental group experienced small increases in the categories of inner-directed independent and self-supportive attitudes, existentiality, feeling reactivity, self-regard and self-acceptance. The control group experienced increases in inner direction, existentiality, feeling reactivity, self regard, nature of man constructive, synergy, acceptance of aggression and capacity for intimate contact. The study suggested that interaction with poetry did have the power to significantly increase feelings of well-being at that moment and to increase several categories of self-actualization.

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a report of a study on the power of different interactions with poetry to positively influence feelings of well-being and of self-actualization.

Background and Statement of Problem

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are upgathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

<div align="right">William Wordsworth</div>

The modern, post colonial world with its anxiety-ridden, overworked populous, looking for some surcease through materialism from its self-created predicament, seems to be hitting the wall, and the English Romantic Age poet, William Wordsworth, saw the writing on the wall years in advance of the Industrial Revolution. Some have tagged this The Age of Anxiety, as is evidenced in its obsession with youth, its enormous number of insomniacs, its escapism into drugs, sports, TV and the internet. So it's work, work, work all week and buy, buy, buy on the week-end in hope of filling the void left from a life of "getting and spending." Consumerism has made the lives of humans look like

little more than mice aimlessly running round and round on Skinner's tread mill. Treadmills, interestingly, were once used as punishment for prisoners. As in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, ironically, inhabitants of today's world seem oblivious to their own imprisonment. For their survival, world-wide economies depend in great part on the incessant purchasing of goods and services, greed has been set loose and hard-working common folks feel the brunt of the failings of the system. Capitalism has run amuck, a certain meanness is afoot and governmental factions seem too self-absorbed to comprehend the dangers. Faith in our institutions is gone, families are disconnected and broken, new age gurus encourage leaving the family tribe for a more meaningful relationship with the universal. Right wing conservatives, who espouse to uphold the most important values, strangle whatever compassion for others remains in their followers. The result of all this is that children are being brought up in broken, materialistic homes disconnected from nature and anything the least spiritually elevating that could turn them from the course set for them as consumers. The middle class, once seen as something to be nurtured, is now something to be devoured by the greedy pushers of materialism. In the 1960s, Ray Davies of the pop group Kinks wrote the song "20th Century Man" in which he voices the uncertainty and alienation of the disenfranchised.

> This is the age of machinery,
> A mechanical nightmare,
> The wonderful world of technology,
> Napalm, hydrogen bombs, biological warfare
> This is the twentieth century,
> But too much aggravation
> It's the age of insanity,
> What has become or the green pleasant fields of Jerusalem.

The consequences of the acceleration of science, technology and commercialism and the loss of faith in the ideals of the past can be seen in all quarters. Certainly,

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consumerism has engulfed the medical field. Help for every ailment involves one or more drugs, ads for drugs permeate every media venue, new diseases are being invented for the sale of drugs and billions are being harvested. Drug companies with their powerful lobbies seem to have a strangle hold on Western medicine, and they have set their eyes on China. Humans may finally have pushed the health of the planet to a dangerously precarious place, and still there are those in power who adamantly refuse to admit that ecological dangers to the planet exist and who condemn those who do foresee disaster as "wacko environmentalists." The minute the price of gas went below $2.00 a surge in the purchase of SUVs took place. People simply are not being informed. An enormous percentage, perhaps as large as 80%, of all investigative reporters are no longer employed for the largest news agencies, and today the news is all too often opinion on a given political stance rather than informative, objective and factual. Institutions world-wide seem to be floundering; "[w]e have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!"

In education, the emphasis on logical left brain thinking diminishes students' right hemispheric activity. More and more emphasis on math and science and less and less on literature, philosophy and the fine arts prevents students from developing their imaginations and from being spontaneous and diminishes free-thinking. A new push can be felt from certain sectors to teach even poetry from a scientific stance, investigating the science of the brain as it interacts with poetry rather than embracing the wisdom offered by the poet. That poetry has the capacity to affect the brain is certainly important, but what cannot be lost is the process required to let poetry do its work. The affective response has for many years been maligned, and now it seems that even the rather cerebral process of intellectually taking the poem apart (as if it were a machine) into its

literary elements, analyzing them and reassembling the poem again to glean its theme is not technical enough. A strictly scientific approach does not work for poetry study. Never having been taught or ever having been encouraged to use any intuitive processes or to affectively interact with poetry, leaves students unsatisfied, frustrated and wondering what it is in poetry that others have historically found so transcending. Budgets for creative writing, art, music, photography, wood working and the like have been slashed and more and more Advanced Placement classes in math and science are being added. The presence in the classroom of a cultural bias toward the mechanistic rational and against the more feminine, emotional response is the norm and all in the name of readying students to compete in a technological world. The consequence of this emphasis is that students then begin to distrust the validity of the information gained through the affective, intuitive response and develop an overriding need to be concrete, objective and rational, as if the only true knowledge worthy of being gained were from the rational brain – imagination is to be mistrusted.

One half century after Wordsworth, William Butler Yeats wrote "The Second Coming." In it he shares an image of the modern world far more menacing than Wordsworth's concerns over the loss of rural life and "getting and spending." Yeats predicts that

> Surely some revelation is at hand;
> Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
> The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
> When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
> Troubles my sight: a waste of desert sand;
> A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
> A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
> Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
> Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds.
> The darkness drops again but now I know

> That twenty Centuries of stony sleep
> Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

All hope is not, however, ever lost. Although it appears we are hovering precariously near the precipice and the possibility of disaster besets the world on many sides, if one cares to listen, the sound of a small voice can always faintly be heard over the din of the "desert birds." As in other historical periods, certainly the Age of Reason, when humans discredited information from other than the rational brain, today amidst the bad news hopeful signs can yet be seen peaking through the cracks in the pavement. In education, progressive thinkers hold fast to their belief that real truth and beauty sustain us far more than the latest purchase of the newest technological advance. The realization is taking root in some quarters that holding teachers and students accountable through state mandated tests, like Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System and the age old and quite biased SAT, is ineffectual. All too often, unable to make the sweeping changes required, short-sighted bureaucrats hurl yet another test at the problems inherent in education. And yet in spite of this response, and the fundamentalism and abuses all too often found in educational institutions, a sense of compassion for the real needs of students, society and the planet can, if sought, always be found. William Wordsworth tells us that "The child is father to the man." Children in their innocence and purity thrive in the realm of the affective, the imaginative, the intuitive. Encouraging it is that standing toe to toe with the MCAS is the Massachusetts set Smith College, a most progressive institution and long-time proponent of a liberal education, which has eliminated the SAT as part of its acceptance process.

The harbinger-of-spring with its small white flowers that bloom early after winter's chill can be seen even in the deeply ingrained tenets of allopathic medicine. Calls for the inclusion of more holistic approaches are heard every day, medical schools are teaching nutrition, poetry has made its way into traditional therapy and yoga is being taught at the most macho gyms.

Both Rudolph Ballentine's *Radical Healing* and Richard Gerber's *Vibrational Medicine for the 21st* provide discussions on the shift from Newtonian to quantum physics and on how this shift impacted the progress of Western medicine. To be able to fully appreciate the implications of this study on poetry, an understanding of the shift from Newtonian physics where we are considered to be like machines with replaceable parts and with no connection between these parts to the holistic, integrative and spiritual notion that we are energy beings is essential. Without the shift to a post-Newtonian paradigm, the question, what are the effects of a stirring of the heart, cannot be asked. Poetry can uplift; and the process requires neither surgery nor drugs. An alternative, subtle mind-body connection takes place where thoughts have the power to change feelings of well-being. Where once the idea that humans are responsible for their own health was seen as blaming the victim, many have come to see it as the most empowering and essential truth to glean. Gerber speaks about Western medicine as standing on an "outdated model" upheld by a "kind of cultural bias, a scientific ethnocentrism, which sees newer information and techniques as better than older belief systems."[1] Ballentine sees healing as "personal evolution," which "depends on self-awareness."[2] This is very much different than the pill as panacea or the surgery to remove the ailment where patients take no responsibility for their wellness and the doctor is the great father and

where "we lay waste our powers." Ballentine goes on to say that "Healing is about getting past the ego, though that is what our culture is built on" and that "[h]ealing oneself is an indispensable piece of the healing of the whole planet – our darkness is a part of the net that holds us all captive," culminating with the idea that "[h]ealing is the purpose of our lives."[3]

Alfred Crosby, in *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society*, explains the process of how the West became so commercial and so number identified. At the time of the Renaissance, Westerners, like Copernicus and Galileo and the artisans, the cartographers, the bureaucrats and entrepreneurs, were poised to accept a newly emerging quantitative model leaving behind the ancient qualitative one.[4] Enter commerce, The New Model, with its attendant nouveau rich, seemingly as distasteful then as now, and Europeans of old were off and counting. "Western Europeans evolved a new way, more purely visual and quantitative than the old, of perceiving time, space, and material environment."[5] Vision, Crosby says, became more important than all the other senses because of its "compatibility with measurement."[6]

In practical terms, the new approach was simply this: reduce what you are trying to think about to the minimum required by its definitions; visualize it on paper, or at least in your mind, be it the fluctuation of wool prices at the champagne fairs or the course of Mars through the heavens, and divide it, either in fact or in imagination, into equal quanta. Then you can measure it… Visualization and quantification: together they snap the padlock – reality is fettered.[7]

The New Model, visual and quantitative, is one antidote for the "nagging insufficiency…of traditional explanations for the mysteries of reality."[8] In today's

world, this can account for Western society's focus on and bias for math and science in schools and against poetry and art.

Although most cultures around the globe criticize the materialism of the U.S. and other developed countries, when the choice is offered them they enthusiastically emulate it. China has made a study of the workings of British colonialism and is now in the process of stripping Africa of its natural resources just as Britain did in the last century. Bicycles have been prohibited from the city of Shanghai with its urban population of 20 million to make room for the huge explosion in the number of automobiles being purchased by the burgeoning Chinese middle class. One can only hope that the many thousand year old Chinese medical practices will not be abandoned in the name of profit for drug companies. In *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine*, Shigehisa Kuriyama discusses the reasons why Chinese and Western medicine were at such variance. Vast are the differences in the perceptions of touching, seeing and being the body and in Chinese doctors' understanding of the limitations of an anatomical only view.[9] This is important information to know, but so specific in regard to this researcher's study is their idea that truths can be lost in differences in language; China and Europe used words differently, and "styles of speaking relate to styles of knowing.[10] Unlike Westerners who desire clarity and prize "sober rational precision,"[11] the Chinese love the fanciful, imaginative and symbolic even in medicine. In our search for a quantitative Eden, fear of perceptions crept in; we wanted clear understanding. When Western doctors found confusion in the language of pulse-taking for example, they resorted to counting beats. The Chinese found no such dilemma. Words did not matter for the Chinese; they were just labels. Westerners sought meaning in pulse and in

numbers, no confusion there. Fact was separated from perception, and words became consideration for just the cerebral arena.[12] And poetry became something superfluous because it lives outside of the rational and instead in the imaginative.

Ecstasy, Ritual, and Alternate Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic World speaks to the human desire to build more and more huge cities and to the movement to become less and less connected to anything of the natural world and less connected to the essential value in beauty and art.[13] Caught up in the rational mind, westerners deny the existence of an alternate reality. But though it is denied, it cannot be destroy; it will not go away. It is inherent in the human being. As a species, humans cannot tolerate a separation from alternate reality for long. And that is why this researcher is convinced that humans created poetry even before they could write it down. The Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth, and certainly modern ones like Gerard Manley Hopkins teach that humans are divorced from our natural habitat and from the experience of its wonders. Today, too many see nature as a distant and often hostile force, something to be overcome, dominated and even destroyed if it gets in the way, yet nature is a teacher on a grand scale. Poets through the ages have spoken of nature as the impetus for experiences with alternate reality, but many think about and interact with poetry much as they do nature; they neither enjoy nor truly experience it.

As flawed as it might be, one of the most promising new developments is the new age movement with its adherents' thirst for the spiritual. New Age book stores and health food stores are cropping up even in the most conservative of places. So too, in light of present day abuses and the divisiveness of Christian America the movement toward a sense of connectedness as is seen in the teachings of esoteric Christianity is re-emerging.

In *Esoteric Christianity*, Annie Besant, ever tolerant in her thinking, states that each person, regardless of their place on the evolutionary path, must be accounted for, provided for.[14] Varied and graduated teachings such as meet the needs of every person and help each person in his/her own place is the pearl of esoteric teachings and so varying from the blind disconnection and searing judgment that permeates much of organized religion. Most participants in this study were Christians but not adherents of esoteric Christianity, most were adherents of Western medicine and not of energy medicine; thus, it was interesting to learn that even in some small way poetry had the power none-the-less to impact their feelings of well-being and of self-actualization. Evelyn Fox Keller, in *Refiguring Life: metaphors of twentieth century biology*, proposes that language is not just description but action as well, and that the effect of language can be profound regardless of one's specific beliefs.[15] In light of both Keller's and Besant's thinking, this study used the works of several mystic poets from several different living religions and of varying levels of complexity to inspire and possibly be responsible for creating a reduction of anxiety.

One further note about the time in which this study was conducted is necessary. For a variety of reasons, the recruitment process for this study was indeed a most fascinating and challenging experience. To begin, people today are just plainly very busy, and people are tired. In these difficult economic times, employers seem to expect more of the average working person who often has to compensate for those co-workers who have been laid off, the price of most necessities has sky-rocketed and ???? A certain constant anxious activity seems to permeate the lives of so many, resulting in a level of fatigue and a sense of dissatisfaction that leaves people wanting, but they know not for

what. This void is more often than not filled with reality television, sports and ?? , not poetry. In fact, a number of both men and women indicated to the Principle Investigator with little or no hesitation their strong dislike of poetry. The words "I hate poetry" were unabashedly used. A surprising number of people view poetry as unpleasant because they think of it as an impenetrable enigma and therefore as intimidating, making it ultimately frustrating, and as a consequence, people do not allow it into their lives and resist any opportunities to interact with it. Poetry requires a certain amount of concentration and time; something people just do not want to expound. Are people not aware that most religious writing is in poetic form, that the American songbook is poetry, and that … Certainly people read the poems in *The New Yorker*, or it could be that they just pass over them. As a consequence of this dislike, few responses were received from any of the advertising on the study. In the final analysis, people's fears needed to be assuaged. People said things like, "I'm not very good with poetry" or "I don't understand poetry." They voiced concerns such as, "Will I have to read it aloud"? The Principle Investigator explained the intended procedure of the study and its non-threatening and positive nature.

Research Questions

1. Does an interaction with poetry create a measurable improvement in feelings of well-being and self-actualization?

2. How does the possible uplifting effect of poetry fit into the field of Transpersonal Psychology?

3. Why are the POI and STAI measures effective in this study?

4. What does the latest research indicate about the personal and social benefits of poetry?

Hypothesis

A single interaction with poetry can show a reduction in stress and a stronger feeling of well-being and self-actualization as measured by the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Transpersonal psychology endeavors to promote healing through the interaction of the conscious self, subconscious self and super-conscious or higher-self. Allowing information from the subconscious mind to emerge allows us to make connection to that of which we are not readily conscious, of which we do not consciously realize or intend. The contents of the subconscious mind, likened by Robert Bly to a big black bag into which we throw all the things we do not like about ourselves, all the hurts we have sustained in life and all the aspiration we were discouraged to fulfill, lurks beneath our conscious mind influencing all that we think, feel and do.[16] Access to its contents is helpful if one is to lead a more rich and fulfilled life.

So too, the higher-self, which can also be seen as an internal wise advisor, contains the record and wisdom of our total experience"[17] and has much to offer by way of engendering health and happiness. "As we become more conscious of our connection with the Higher-Self, creative information and the energy of Spirit flow more easily."[18] As is true for accessing the conscious and subconscious mind for its contributions, accessing this wise advisor has a wealth of benefit, for it can be enlisted to aid in releasing the experiences and re-wiring the memories that keep us stuck in constantly repeated patterns of unhappiness and anxiety. With its connection to the universal, the wise advisor sends information different from that of either the conscious or

subconscious minds. This information, overlooked in traditional psychology, is an essential element in the newer holistic psychologies. So named holistic for the incorporation into it the totality of our beings, for this is the only way to effect real change in our health and consequently in the quality of our lives. This movement is away from the doctor as father figure who cures ills with pills and surgery. Transpersonal modalities encourage us to be actively involved in our own well-being, encourages our striving for self-actualization through communication with all dimensions of ourselves.

This study, on the possible up-lifting effects of poetry, aligns itself with the thinking inherent in transpersonal psychology. A deep and personal interaction with poetry brings one beyond the conscious mind. Surely, the poet in the creation of poetry accesses other than just the conscious mind and encourages us to enter this same space in our own experience of it. Poets are often said to be in transpersonal states when they write, and deeply and profoundly spiritual experiences are captured in the images, figurative language and symbols that they create. Poetry, although accessible on a purely literal level, calls to us to go deeper into ourselves, to use all of ourselves. Even if a poem seems to be about nothing more than a visit to a field of daffodils, it is inviting us to connect with nature on a deeper, more imaginative and spiritual level. William Wordsworth's "I Wondered Lonely as a Cloud," from the vantage point of the speaker on a cloud, images field after field of daffodils, yet because these daffodils are "Continuous as the stars that shine,/And twinkle on the milky way" they offer a glimpse at their connection to the universal and vicariously through theirs our own. Much of what we feel, and know and write emerges from this space.

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Feinstein's and Krippner's *The Mythic Path: Discovering the Guiding Stories of Your Past - Creating a Vision for Your Future* proposes that the investigation of our self-fulfilling personal myths will bring relief from our personal sufferings, which are harbored in the beliefs inherent in our myths.[19] For this reason, incorporated into this study was an experience where the participants in the experimental group wrote a personal response to the poetry they heard and read and also wrote an original poem, in the hope that this activity would in some sense bring them to a deeper understanding of the poems and by extension of themselves.

Beyond the physical confines of the brain to the notion of mind as mediator and catalyst, this study encouraged participants to allow their interaction with poetry to be one in which they were open to listening for the voice of the poet's higher-self and then of their own. This researcher wondered if indeed the child within is not in some way connected to that voice, and if poetry could be approached as a child would, without fear or judgment, would that not perhaps coax the human heart, as Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem "The Windhover" states, "out of hiding." Built into this study was the opportunity for participants to set aside the rational mind of the adult and to access the playful mind of the inner child.

In asking the question, does an interaction with poetry create a measurable improvement in feelings of well-being and self-actualization, this study dealt with language, all the creative ways in which to use it and their deep and profound psychological effect on humans. Certainly, on the negative side, ethnocentricity speaks to the way in which humans are terribly protective of their individual language. Some deep and personal connection to who we are and how we are valued is mixed in with

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concerns about language as is evidenced around the world in the judgments that are made on language. The United States, more than any other place on the earth, should be multi-lingual, but it is not. However, in spite of the ethnocentricity, it is universally acknowledged that language enables us to reach out and to connect – this is its greatest gift. The connection that poetry makes can work on many levels. It can speak to us on a literal level and convey the experience and feelings of the speaker with the denotative meanings of its words; it can speak to us on a metaphoric level as it departs from the denotative and attempts to communicate truths that the literal level cannot; it can speak to us on the symbolic level, which scholars like Jung and Joseph Campbell tell us comes from deep within us, from that connection to the universal and which intimates and evokes and thus sends us deeper into the wisdom being offered by the poet.

An example of this is. William Carlos Williams' poem "This is Just to Say." On a literal level it is but a brief and seemingly simple poem written in every-day language, but on the metaphoric and symbolic levels this poem offers up for the reader an eternal and piercing question.

> This is Just to Say
> I have eaten
> the plums
> that were in
> the ice box
> and which
> you were probably
> saving for breakfast
>
> Forgive me
> they were delicious
> so sweet
> And so cold

The speaker has eaten the plums that someone else was saving for breakfast, but the plums become a metaphor for all the delicious things to eat and all lovely experiences the world has to offer. The experience then becomes a symbolic action for carpe diem – seize the day, live now and enjoy each moment to the fullest. Humans tend to bemoan the past, be anxious about the future and forget the present moment. Although this poem speaks about enjoying a few delicious plums, so too, it reminds us of a deep and abiding truth set forth by every wise soul who has walked the planet – be here now. The present moment is the only one we have, and if life is lived in the present moment it is not fraught with fear and anxiety. To be conscious is to be in the present moment, even if it is just to enjoy some plums.

Evoking the five senses, poets create pictures with words, images that convey meaning, but more, images that ask us to leave the rational and to instead imagine. The poet, through imagery, asks us to use the mind's eye, the third eye. Images engage our sense of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste, and all by means of our imaginations. Poetry speaks to every part of us. Shelley in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" argues that the unheard melody is more beautiful than the one that is heard, for the unheard melody can be heard only through the imagination. Through its mood, speaker and tone, figurative language, through its sound and rhythm and rhyme, through its use of symbol and irony, poetry works on us, every part of us.

The power the language of poetry exerts over us is deep and profound. It beckons us. It sings to us. It connects us. It cradles us and pushes us off the edge into the unknown. Can it improve feelings of well-being and of self-actualization? Yes, it can.

This study of the up-lifting effects of poetry makes a contribution to the understanding of the power of language and to the knowledge that an eternal connection exists between humans, nature, the universe and our fragile attempts to understand them.

Overview of Methodology

A pretest posttest design was used. Randomly chosen participants were divided into two groups, an experimental group and a control group. On the day of the study, the control group interacted with information about poetry and the experimental group with poetry. The measures used on both the pre-test and post-test and by both groups were the State Trait Anxiety Inventory and the Personality Orientation Inventory.

Overview of Measures

This study used The State Trait Anxiety Inventory and the Personal Orientation Inventory. Both the POI and the STAI are well-known and highly regarded as measures. Both were chosen to determine the power of poetry to create a measurable improvement in feelings of well-being and self-actualization. Both were also chosen for their easy administration and for their reliability.

The State Trait Anxiety Inventory for adults, a self-evaluation questionnaire, is a measure of mood. A measure that was uncomplicated and quickly completed was deemed preferable for this study because the interaction with poetry set between the pre and posttests was demanding as was the second measure, the POI. Energy and enthusiasm was needed for the interaction with poetry; thus, it was deemed sensible to reduce the possibility of frustration or fatigue.

The second measure, the Personality Orientation Inventory (POI), was developed to measure factors related to self-actualization. It was deemed worthy of administration because, even though the POI is a more challenging measure, the information it would afford would be worth the time and energy of the participants.

Overview of Statistical Analysis

Before the analysis could be undertaken, each participant's scores on each measure were determined. The scoring of the two measures used in the study was a rather long and task-intensive process undertaken by the Principle Investigator. Each answer sheet for the POI measure was processed with 14 individual stencils through which participants' answers had to be gleaned, counted and logged. One of the stencils alone had over one hundred possible opportunities for an answer – counting and configuring them required time and precision. The score from each of the 14 categories also had to be charted on a graph, and all this needed be done twice for each of the 65 participants. Although certain numerical choices participants made had to be converted to a different number and although each participant completed both the Y-1 and Y-2 versions of the measure for both the pre-test and the posttest, the scoring of the STAI was less time-intensive.

The findings of this study and the analysis of the findings will be discussed at length in later chapters. How scores differed from one another were computed and analyzed by looking at individual scores, mean and median scores and standard deviation. Both measures were analyzed within and between groups. Although most scores indicated change from the pre-test to the post-test as a result of the interventions, the Y-1

STAI was statistically significant, indicating that poetry does have the power to decrease feelings of anxiety and increase feelings of calm at that moment.

A list of tables and figures, a review of literature, chapters on research methods and research findings, and a comprehensive bibliography are included in this document.

Delimitations and Limitations

On Sunday, January 31, 2010, the study on the possible uplifting effects of poetry was conducted with 65 participants in attendance ranging in age from 18 to 90 years of age. In the experimental group, there were 34 participants and in the control 31. The experimental group had 7 males and 27 females and the control had 17 males and 14 females.

The size of the sample was to be 75, and although 75 participants were recruited, 65 participated. An attrition rate of between 10 -15% was afforded for in the initial plans for the study, so having 65 participants was considered acceptable. However, although 65 participants took part in the study, three were partially eliminated for not completing the POI posttest. They were, therefore, not included in the analysis of the POI, but these three participants remained in the analysis of the STAI. In other words, the analysis of the results of the STAI will include 65 participants and the analysis of the results of the POI will include 62 participants. The POI can be considered by some to be a challenging measure because it takes approximately 30 minutes to complete; however, in this study several participants, especially those who were older in years, took considerably longer to complete it. Those participants who were younger, especially those students who were 18 years of age, completed it with relative ease. After having completed the two pretests (one of which was the POI) and the interaction with poetry or information about poetry,

two participants (ages 88 and 73) simply did not attempt the POI posttest. Another participant did not complete 15 or more of the items on the POI posttest; thus, this measure also had to be considered invalid. The elimination of these three participants brought the number of participants for the POI analysis down to 62. The STAI analysis includes the full 65 participants.

The setting of the study presented specific challenges. Variables such as fear of failure and negative experiences associated with poetry in school had to be overcome in order to avoid any old emotions stored in the unconscious from interfering with an unencumbered affective response to the poetry. To obviate any negative associations with a school experience, a setting as least like a school as possible was chosen. A sunlit and welcoming building was chosen and no researchers took the stance of a teacher. Participants were informed in the initial mailing of information about the study (see Appendix c) and then reminded on the day of the study that no grades or judgments were to be associated with their interaction with poetry (see Appendix E).

As an experimental research design, the choice of the pretest-posttest was a very solid one. Its strengths are many, but it is not perfect; therefore, we had to consider some of the obstacles inherent in this design. The pretest presented the main concern. What the design does not control for is the possibility of an interaction of the testing and the intervention, "pretest sensitization effect" (Kazdin, 2003, p.163). The intervention may have the effect it does because the pretest sensitizes the participant to the intervention. If so, this would mean that the results of the study would generalize only to subjects who receive the pretests. In the case of the poetry intervention, the question needed be asked if the STAI and the POI taken before the poetry intervention would affect the final STAI

and POI reading. The pretest-posttest design itself does not allow for the assessment of pretest sensitization. When the assessment and the intervention are so closely administered as they were in this study, the probability of pretest sensitization is increased. The pretest was also administered at the same site as the intervention increasing the possibility of pretest sensitization; however, this frailty in the design was deemed minimal in regard to the overall effectiveness of the design.

It was also deemed minimal because the pretest-posttest design is strong   in reducing threats to internal validity. Giving the pretest only moments before the intervention had a positive effect as well. Randomization and the brevity of the intervening time reduce possible threats to internal validity such as history, maturation and instrumentation. With the reduction of the possibility of threats to internal validity, the results can more confidently be attributed to the intervention. The differences in time for all subjects between the pretest and the posttest were so minimal, thus, reducing the possibility of threats like history and maturation. The measures remained unaltered, as did those administering them, thus, reducing threats to instrumentation. Just the two pretests were administered; thus, threats to internal validity through multiple testing were reduced. In   reference to the concern that the pretesting and the intervention would be conducted at the same site, it was decided that a varied enough space was provided thus allowing the administration of the pretest and posttest in the large room and the poetry interventions in the smaller adjacent rooms.

The information gained from the pretest also permitted evaluation of the effect the three separate interactions with and information about poetry had on the results of the intervention. The Hypothesis of this study was that the poetry interactions would

produce enough of an effect on stress and feelings of self-actualization that it could be measured by the posttests. It was assumed that some change could be detected in the control group, but the experimental group was hypothesized to have a stronger reaction to their intervention. According to the null hypothesis (poetry interactions would not produce enough of an effect on stress and feelings of self-actualization to be measured by the posttests), no measurable or significant difference in feelings of well-being or of self-actualization would be measured. The hypothesis, on the other hand, indicated a three-fold interaction with poetry can show a reduction in stress and a consequent strengthening of feelings of self-actualization as measured by the STAI for adults and the POI. Thus, the different levels detected on the posttest could be used to determine whether the intervention varied in impact as a result of the initial levels on the pre-tested measure.

The strengths of the design outweighed the weaknesses. The information obtained about subjects prior to the intervention, the possible use of this information to evaluate change, and the statistical advantages outweighed its limitations.

Because volunteers were solicited for this study, this led to some small concern with external validity. The question, would the results generalize, had to be addressed. Volunteers, or in other words self-selected participants, in a study, may affect external validity because research has shown that volunteers are a category unto themselves quite unlike the general population. They tend to be more intelligent, educated, sociable, interested in religion, desirable of approval, more often females, more often in a higher socio-economic status and more. These factors could have proven to be a threat to external validity because not all people are like this. The concern was that if, indeed,

volunteers are different than most people, to whom would the study generalize? However, it was determined that the population in this study represented enough of a cross-section of the population that this threat was deemed minimal at best.

To control for both the experimental and control groups to meet the criteria of a true experimental design, all poems, information and instructions remained the same for each participant. Participants were blinded in regard to which of them would receive the poetry interaction or the poetry information. All participants were told about the study was that they would take a pretest and a posttest between which would be an interaction with poetry. When they completed the pretest, they were asked to choose a number (either a one or a two) from a box. If a one was chosen, they became a member of the experimental group. If a two was chosen, they became a member of the control group. To control for statistical conclusion bias, it was determined that the poetry interactions (independent variable) would relate to changes in stress and well-being levels (dependent variable). In this study of the effects of an interaction with poetry or information about poetry as measured by the STAI and the POI, the Principle Investigator was able to detect variations in the levels in direct relation to the use of poetry.

To control for a rival hypothesis accounting for the changes, a control group in conjunction with an experimental group provided a group against which the reaction of the experimental group could be measured. The control group experienced everything the experimental group did except the nature of their intervention; thus, the threat to validity was minimal to non-existent.

Neither age nor cohort confounded the results. By selecting participants born in varying time periods and by keeping the study very brief, both were controlled.

The control group helped to assuage any concerns about statistical regression. Any changes due to statistical regression would have been evident in the control group as well as in the experimental group and would also have provided a starting point for evaluating any changes associated with treatment. As long as the sample was randomly assigned and a control group was used, the best was done to diminish threats to external validity.

Stress as a condition had to be considered. Selection had to be mindful of the possible stress levels of the participants. Randomized selection/assignment reduced this threat. The use of a control group, to whom were administered all the testing but not the same level of intervention, controlled for these specific threats to validity. However, the participants were given just that amount of information ethically needed, hoping to diminish their ability to alter the outcome with intent. They were informed only about the procedures and that the study was looking to determine the effect of different types of interaction with poetry.

The recruitment process was indeed most fascinating and challenging. To begin, the number of both men and women who indicated with little or no hesitation their complete disdain of poetry was remarkable. One could conjecture on the reasons why, but each reason could certainly be a study in itself: a study of the society at large and its emphasis on math and science and making money, a study of the repercussions of cutting art, music and creative writing from schools across the country, a study of the influence of foolish television programs designed to dumb down its audiences strictly to save money for producers who do not care to pay for truth and true artists, a study of the results produced from the mentality, so pervasive today, of the quick fix. The list

certainly could go on and on, but the idea that real truths are not actively sought after is most disconcerting. The appreciation and understanding of the gift, if you will, of poetry, as is the case with all true art, requires a certain amount of work. It requires a certain amount of attention, effort, time. Could this perhaps be one of the reasons people turn from it?

Would it not be interesting to discover if a fear of poetry, feelings of intimidation around working with poetry, has always existed in some sectors of American society or if this is a fairly new phenomenon? Let it suffice to say that some find poetry distasteful, others find it an impenetrable enigma and therefore intimidating, and both find it ultimately frustrating and as a consequence do not allow it into their lives and resist any opportunities to interact with it.

Those who voiced their dislike of poetry did not participate, but many of those who did participate needed to be reassured. Thus, the means by which participants were enlisted took a different path than originally anticipated. Handouts were left in libraries, schools, businesses and a senior center. The study was advertised in bulletins and a local radio station was contacted, but no responses from any of these sources were received. Much more of a concerted effort, a human connection and often a physical presence was required. When all was said and done, every person who agreed ahead of time to participate needed to be spoken to personally. Snail mail was superfluous for sending and receiving the forms for the study and only a few were received through email because personal contact with all who participated, save those who arrived unexpectedly on the day of the study, was made.

The use of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) presented minor concerns. The creators of the measure encourage "examiners establish rapport with respondents"[20] before its administration. For this study establishing a rapport with every participant was not possible. However, as mentioned above, the Principle Investigator made personal contact with almost every participant to enlist them into the study. Another concern revolved around participants who may have wanted to look good in the eyes of others and thus may have answered questions on the STAI in such fashion as to appear calmer than they truly were. However, this was on some level obviated by using numbers to identify participants, affording them anonymity. It was hoped that anonymity would assuage fears about others' judgments on the grounds that when a participant knows no one else will see their score that participant would feel more confident to reveal the truth. Those participants who chose to identify themselves by both number and name can be assumed to have been comfortable enough with themselves and their levels of anxiety not to feign a false reporting. Another way in which to obviate participants trying to look good is to offer them the results of their measures, which this study did. When results are offered, participants would generally be more truthful so they might get a truthful gage of themselves. The fact that all participants were volunteers also aided in truthful responses as volunteers are more likely motivated to cooperate. However, to completely obviate the possibility of participants trying to look good, especially to themselves, is a tricky business. All research that utilizes self-evaluation vehicles must contend with a certain amount of uncertainty in this regard. Certainly the scores on the STAI measure, which will be discussed at length directly, reveal no outliers which would indicate that a participant falsified their actual levels of anxiety.

CHAPTER 2:
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Words are seals of the mind, results – or, more correctly, stations – of an infinite series of experiences, which reach from an unimaginably distant past into the present, and which feel their way into an equally unimaginable distant future. They are the 'audible that clings to the inaudible,' the forms and potentialities of thought, which grow from that which is beyond thought.[21]

The Gospel According to John opens with the statement, "In the beginning was the word:/the word was in God's presence,/and the word was God."[22] John's substitution of "word" for Christ sets up a profound connection between divinity, divine knowledge and words. John saw Jesus as the word made flesh, the incarnation of the Eternal Word. Christ and God are one, but so too words and the wisdom that Christ imparted about God take on heightened meaning and therefore power. God and Christ, the revealer of the unseen God, and the word create a circular relationship. God is revealed to us through Christ who uses words, which on some level themselves then take on the power to be divine and to move us toward the divine. Not just Christ, but all of the most beautiful and profound spiritual teachers, philosophers and poets from every corner of the globe have used words, and especially poetry, to impart their understanding of our relationships with one another, nature and the divine. It is little wonder then that humanity has the deep connection to words that it does.

Language is a gift, and it came to us about five million years ago with the dramatic increase in the size of the human brain. After having remained relatively the same size for ten million years, the human brain tripled in size. Along with this increase in brain size, came the loss of body hair, a bent windpipe, which decreased human's breathing efficiency, and a reduction in tooth size, the consequence of which separated us

from the other lower-form mammals. But what it brought most certainly was a gift; it brought "the most highly developed communication system on earth, human language."[23] Interestingly, the human brain did not just increase in size, but, with the increase of the outer layer, the cortex, much of it became "'uncommitted' cortical tissue not needed for basic functions."[24] This uncommitted cortical tissue underlies human linguistic aptitude.[25]

Unlike B.F. Skinner, who believed that all human behavior was merely a reflection of conditioning and experience,[26] linguist Noam Chomsky believes that language "depends upon genetic endowment that's on the par with the ones that specify the structure of our visual or circulatory systems, or determine that we will have arms instead of wings."[27] He insists that "a genetically programmed 'language organ'"[28] exists in the brain. Before Chomsky, linguists, searching solely for mechanical functions, believed that a child's brain was a blank slate, but Chomsky insists that we are preprogrammed for language and that we are also genetically programmed to choose from a "universal grammar menu of grammatical options."[29] Interestingly, humans are not just preprogrammed for language, but for grammar as well. Birds have a system of grammar, and it is well known that dolphins also have a sophisticated communication system. Might not the fact that many living beings having language and an innate grammar also indicate the universal nature of the need to communicate? Chompsky sees language, its form and the desire to communicate as innate. Because it is, one can only wonder if poem-making, too, is not a part of our basic psychological make-up. Jung saw "the creative process as a living thing implanted in the human psyche."[30] Poetry, therefore, no longer seems a choice, but instead a natural, all-be-it required, function.

From the earliest records found of human activity, even before the ability to

produce written language, it is evident that humans have felt the urge to communicate

through poetry their experiences and the thoughts and feelings that accompany them.

"Poetry began when somebody walked off a savanna or out of a cave and looked up at

the sky with wonder and said, 'Ah-h-h!' That was the first poem."[31] Words have magical

power. And it is with this "irrational quality"[32] that poetry with its precision of word

choice and its rhythm, above all other written mediums, communicates so well the

experience of the wonders of existence. Albeit through compressed language, poetry is

merely one person speaking to another, yet even the simplest ditty speaks to a deeper part

of our consciousness. The precious feelings of connection "which reach from an

unimaginable distant past into the present, and which feel their way into an equally

unimaginable distant future,"[33] encountered through poetry transcends the words

themselves, and somehow for some time, a feeling of being transported and ultimately

transformed is experienced. Abraham Maslow explains in *A Psychology of Being* that

this feeling of unity and connection is experienced because "The object is attended to

simultaneously with attention to all else that is relevant. It is seen imbedded in its

relationships with everything else in the world, and as part of the world."[34] "With words

priests and poets make into many the hidden/Reality which is but One,"[35] and humans,

who so thirst for this union, are moved.

This emotional, connective experience that poetry affords can be witnessed in

Gerard Manley Hopkins' "The Windhover." The speaker describes a scene where he

witnessed the beauty of a hawk, and as a consequence of this experience his "heart came

out of hiding." So, too, each time someone reads the poem the opportunity presents itself

for the heart to come out of hiding, for the opportunity to allow beauty to move the soul

and for a feeling of connection to be felt. Ralph Waldo Emerson believed, "The poet has

a new thought: he has a whole new experience to unfold; he will tell us how it was with

him, and all men will be richer in his fortune."[36] Emerson goes on to say,

> All that we call sacred history attests to the birth of a poet as principal even in
> chronology. Man, never so often deceived, still watches for the arrival of a
> brother who can hold him steady to a truth, until he has made it his own, with
> what joy I begin to read a poem, which I confide as an inspiration! And now my
> chains are to be broken; I shall mount about these clouds and opaque airs in which
> I live,--opaque though they seem transparent--and from the heaven of truth I shall
> see and comprehend my relations.[37]

The experience is both connective to the outside world and to the world inside the

individual.

> In these states of being, the person becomes unified; for the time being, the splits,
> polarities and dissociations within him tend to be resolved; the civil war within is
> neither won nor lost but transcended. In such a state, the person becomes far
> more open to the experience and far more spontaneous and fully functioning,
> essential characteristics …of self-actualizing creativeness.
>
> One aspect of the peak experience is a complete, though momentary loss of fear,
> anxiety, inhibition, defense, and control… The fear of disintegration and
> dissolution, the fear of being overwhelmed by the 'instincts,' the fear of death and
> of insanity, the fear of giving in to unbridled pleasure and emotion, all tend to
> disappear…This is a greater openness of perception since fear distorts.
>
> This is another way of saying that he becomes more completely himself,
> idiosyncratic, unique…All his powers then come together in their most efficient
> integration and coordination…much more perfectly than usual…To put it simply,
> he becomes more whole and unified…more ego-transcending and self-forgetful.[38]

The pre-history of mysticism shows that, even without written manuscripts from

ancient mystic sages, the search for that experience of unity is as old as humanity itself.[39]

Scholars of ancient myth tell us of the similarity in religious symbols that appeared self-

generated in cultures around the globe[40] and that seem to come from an "archetypal

memory."[41] This is the well from which ancient and modern poets alike draw their living

symbols. All the great religions from every culture of the world have communicated

their most profound revelations through poetry, and the power of these sacred writings is

in the mysterious and overpowering quality of the words. Consider not only the beauty,

but the poignancy of the symbol of the shepherd in the Biblical 23rd Psalm.

> The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.
>   In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
> Beside restful waters he leads me;
>   He refreshes my soul.
> He guides me in the right paths
>   For his name's sake.
> Even though I walk in the dark valley
>   I fear no evil; for you are at my side
> With your rod and staff
>   That give me courage.[42]

Consider, too, the power of the metaphoric language in this verse from the 13th century,

Sufi mystical poet Rumi.

> When I come to the celebration, He is the wine and the sweetmeats;
> When I enter the rose garden, He is the Beauty
> When I descend into the mine, He is the Diamond and the Ruby;
> When I dive into the ocean, He is the Pearl.
> When I wander in the desert, He is the Flower growing there;
>   When I ascend into the heavens, He is the star.

After having experienced mystical union with the divine, Rumi said that words could not

satisfactorily explain the experience of this union, yet he did not stop writing poetry.

Those who came later are forever grateful, for through the beauty and power of his poems

infused with metaphoric language, this inspired and divinely guided man does much to

open the hearts of his readers and listeners and to bring them closer to the divine.[43] Of

his own and others' poetry, the 20th century poet Robert Frost says that it "begins in

trivial metaphors, pretty metaphors, 'grace' metaphors, and goes on to the profoundest

thinking that we have."[44] Although from such distant times and diverse cultures, Frost and Rumi both understood the power of the word.

Going back even further to an extract from a 3,000 year-old papyrus, we see that metaphoric language was alive and well in ancient love poems.

> She is one girl, there is no one like her.
> She is more beautiful than any other.
> Look, she is like a star goddess arising
>   at the beginning of a happy new year;
>   brilliantly white, bright skinned…
>   her arms more brilliant than fold;
>   her fingers like lotus flowers…[45]

Certainly, the metaphors function to describe her, but "star goddess," "new year" and "lotus flowers" inform of his awe of her. Regardless of the time, the human emotion remains the same[46] and so does the effect of poetic techniques like the metaphor still bring the reader into the experience of the poet and beyond to places universal and healing.

In 1974 and 3,000 years later, Jules Barron reported his findings on the connection between metaphors in poetry and in psychoanalysis. He "suggests an analogy between poetry as creative process and communication that takes place in psychotherapy. Both represent man's efforts to express and integrate the deeper levels of the person."[47] In 2004, at the 24th Annual Spring Meeting of the Division of Psychoanalysis of the American Psychological Association, Henry M. Seiden presented his findings on the same parallels in an address entitled "On the Music of Thought: The Use of Metaphor in Poetry and Psychoanalysis. He stated,

> …clinical exchange in psychoanalysis relies heavily on a process similar to one
> that poets use to find and make beauty… The value of metaphor is that it
> organizes experience without needing, or expecting, to pin it down in any final

sense. Metaphorical language gives us the opportunity to talk about what we need to talk about – knowing (as we should know, now that the postmodern age is upon us) that even as we do this there is nothing final about our statement, no last word…The words we use as clinicians are chosen because they enable transformation of experience through the ongoing process of making and remaking meaning.[48]

Primitive cultures used the power of the word through mantras and chanting, too. "Chanting is like breathing… The chant is a numinous ribbon anchoring the person to the universe, linking the human and divine, an intimate expression of the soul…It is the primal human cry for meaning."[49] Native Americans know the power of the chant as well as the beauty in a spontaneously offered prayer poem. Although Native Americans do not have prayer books, many of their most beautiful prayers are literature. They believe prayers offered "from the heart and soul are effective in transforming one's own spirit, touching the spiritual powers, and getting results."[50]

Song Concerning a Dream of the Thunderbirds

Friends, behold!
Sacred I have been made.
Friends, behold!
In a sacred manner
I have been influenced
by the gathering of the clouds.
Sacred I have been made,
Friends, behold!
Sacred I have been made.

The speaker of this poem, a young brave from the Teton Sioux Nation, spontaneously calls out for others to attend to his momentary exhilaration and to join in the feeling being experienced. As was true for Gerard Manley Hopkins when he witnessed the beauty of the hawk, so is it true here for this Native American. "Such occurrences seem to take place spontaneously and involuntarily, as though triggered by some environmental event in conjunction with the person's mental capability to access such a state."[51]

His calling his neighbors, the common, every-day person to connect to the experience brings in an important point. Certainly, with the mention of the name Maslow, one is reminded of his thinking that a "Peak Experience" often includes self-actualizing creativeness. Maslow's Self-Actualizers, people who routinely have peak experiences, often live in a world of poetry, symbols and beauty, but people in seemingly less conscious levels can, through a connection to and an embracing of the truth expressed in a poem and their reaction to this truth, break through to a higher level of consciousness for a momentary glimpse of the beauty available there. Maslow posited the notion that an experience of this sort could hold within it the "potential for evolution."[52] The creative experience elicits a momentary sense of clarity, which in turn fuels creativity and not just for the self-actualized.

Poems in the Waiting Room (PitWR) is an independent research program committed to exploring the broad socio-economic aspects of poetry in a wide range of communities. Poems are placed in waiting rooms for people to read as they wait to be seen. This study has found that "the scheme has established strong appeal throughout the whole range of social groupings, including strong representation in hard pressed neighborhoods." [53] This study has further revealed that positive reactions to the poetry are being experienced by people across a wide spectrum of social and economic classes, by people with greatly differing economic, cultural and educational backgrounds and by people who have had very little exposure to cultural resources. One enthusiastic person wrote, "What a really lovely idea! Thank you so much for lighting up our doctor's surgery…The day's weather was awful! The atmosphere in the waiting room none too healthy. But your poems are all wonderful – and meaningful…"[54] In an article published

in Poems in the Waiting Room Newsletter Spring 2009, Jungian analyst, Elizabeth Patience, wrote

> When any of us is sitting in a waiting room perhaps feeling anxious or worried about an impending consultation, a poem written in exquisite descriptive language can provide an instant distraction. The clamor in both outer and inner worlds can be transformed almost magically, and the anxiety and worry calmed by reading a poem evoking a person, a place, a thing, nature or season can in our imagination transport us to a different place. It can seem as though we feel the heat, smell the fruit or flower, hear the sounds or observe something which is being minutely described so the our heightened negative feelings become less intrusive and balanced by those which are more uplifting and positive.[55]

Shakespeare's Macbeth captures it yet another way, "Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak,/Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break."[56]

Could the notion that peak experiences are available only to those individuals in higher stages of consciousness be incorrect? Peak experiences, temporary altered states of consciousness, can occur at any level of development. With this idea in mind, this study hopes to encourage other researchers to take the idea one step further and pose the question, can consistent all-quadrant interaction with the arts, certainly poetry among them, permanently awaken a person to a higher realm, possibly to second-tier thinking? In other words, do these temporary states then become traits? This researcher is reminded of the exception taken by playwright Arthur Miller with Aristotle's definition of a tragic hero. Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher and playwright, believed one had to be of the highest social position, a king or queen, in order for a fall to be considered tragic. Arthur Miller believed that the common man's fall, as witnessed in the life of Willie Loman in *The Death of a Salesman*, can be just as tragic. With this in mind, can a parallel not be drawn between the already self-actualized person and the average one? Standing on the shoulders of Percy Byshe Shelley, this study asks future

researchers if momentary glimpses of profound wisdom and truth become permanent

realizations does one's consciousness evolve. If this is the case, poetry has the power to

facilitate evolution, in so doing, it can help to create a more humane society, one in which

the main goal is not the accumulation of material possessions but of social justice.[57]

The archaic techniques of Tibetan shamans include a secret language called the

"tongue of dakini," and North Asian, Malayan and Indonesian shamans have a "secret

language" or "spirit language."[58] The words of these shamans transport them into other

realms of consciousness from where they can perform extraordinary actions. In these

ecstatic, euphoric states, shaman often bring into being spontaneous verbal creations

which have enormous power. So too, they have long-standing poems, which have been

written down and circulated. For example, Manchu shamans have a poem that recounts

the shamanic descent into the underworld to retrieve the soul of a sick human. These

same shamans have songs that accompany their ascending to the sky where, too, the

purpose of their ecstatic journey is to retrieve a soul.[59] In fact, it is through the narratives

of shamans that the subjects of many epics, so beloved in culture after culture, as well as

their characters and such devices as imagery originated. It is also likely that the shamanic

"pre-ecstatic euphoria constituted one of the universal sources of lyric poetry."[60]

> Poetic creation still remains an act of perfect spiritual freedom… The purest
> poetic act seems to re-create language from an inner experience that, like the
> ecstasy or the religious inspiration of 'primitives,' reveals the essence of things.
> It is from such linguistic creations, made possible by pre-ecstatic 'inspirations,'
> that the 'secret languages' of the mystics and the traditional allegorical languages
> later crystallize.[61]

In speaking on poetic inspiration, the 20th century poet Robert Graves

says that poets must trust "whole-heartedly to poetic magic…since the act of composition occurs in a sort of trance, distinguishable from dream only because the critical faculties are not dormant, but on the contrary, more acute than normally."[62] Jung adds that the conscious mind is always influenced by the unconscious mind; thus, the images and symbols used by poets often arise from "outside the range of consciousness"[63] and "should be understood as an expression of an intuitive idea that cannot yet be formulated in any other or better way."[64] Freud agrees that, "Imaginative writers are valuable colleagues… In the knowledge of the human heart they are far ahead of us common folk, because they draw on sources that we have not yet made accessible to science."[65] Freud's contribution to the discussion of course also includes his ideas on the forbidden unfulfilled wish, which permeated all of his theories. He saw the poet as having power to present in disguised form the forbidden wishes repressed into the unconscious by all humans. He believed the reader then enjoys the pleasure of witnessing in fantasy these repressed unconscious wishes,[66] and although quite ordinary he can become a king or a hero. Thus the poet's work "stands for the satisfaction of instinctual wish fulfillment" without the guilt, shame or responsibility ordinarily associated with wish fulfillment.[67] As did Aristotle believe that a catharsis occurs with the release of fear and pity, so Freud saw a release of "the tension which holds one fast to what 'should' or 'must be'"[68] Regardless of the motivation for seeking the unconscious, throughout history the serious thinkers have acknowledged that artistic and poetic inspiration originates there. Adrienne Rich, 21st century poet, captures well the age old thinking that "poems are like dreams: in them you put what you don't know you know."[69] In an article written in 1912 for The *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, F.C. Prescott

speaks of poetry and dreams. He, too, saw the connection between the unconscious

processes of dreaming and the artistic processes activated in the writing of poetry and

states

> …poets and dreamers are somehow alike in their faculty of vision. This relation
> is indicated by the uses of language which often reveals psychological truth not
> otherwise readily observed… Every dream represents the imaginary fulfillment of
> some ungratified wish, which is also the function of poetry… [,]the expression of
> repressed and unconscious desires, the function being to secure mental repose,
> health and well-being.[70]

From the ancient shaman and Aristotle through Freudian and Jungian psychology to the

modern-day poet, poetry stretches its long arm for a continual connection of the past to

the present, and we are forever moved.

Poetry played an integral role in the ancient cultures of Europe as well. In Roman

and Greek mythology, Apollo, among many other things, is recognized as the god of

poetry, leader of the muses and director of their choir. It was for Apollo that Hermes

created the lyre, an instrument long used to accompany poets in their recitations.

Reaching back to the ancients, English Romantic Age poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in his

"Hymn to Apollo" tells us this deity is "the eye with which the Universe/Beholds itself,

and knows it is divine;/All harmony of instrument or verse belongs"[71] to him. And it is

Aristotle who speaks, in reply to a challenge issued by his teacher, Plato, of our "delight

in works of imitation"[72] and of catharsis. In *The Phaedrus* and *The Ion,* Plato addresses

his quarrel with poetry, but it is in *The Republic* through his Socratic dialogue with

Glaucon on the nature of justice that he puts forth his most critical views on poetry. Plato

voices his fears about Homer, about the powerful influence of popular culture and about

the effects of poetry, which he saw as potentially harmful because of its emotional impact.[73]

It must be remembered that Homer, the 8th century BC traveling minstrel, was revered in Plato's time as the father of epic poetry. The influence of his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was far reaching and permanent, stretching certainly into the works of Virgil and Dante[74], and would Plato not have been dismayed to learn Homer's influence continued to be seen throughout history as far as into such brilliant poetry as that of the 20th century's T.S. Eliot?[75]   Plato believed that the emotions aroused by poetry were not in harmony with reason because poets rely on inspiration.[76] In his rebuttal, set forth in *Poetics*, Aristotle contends that poem making is a skill requiring reason to execute and is not, therefore, solely created by inspiration. Any emotions elicited are purified through catharsis, thus, "a psychological healing"[77] is experienced. Socrates, the predecessor of both Aristotle and Plato, stands more with Tibetan shamans and Jung in that he believed "that it was not by wisdom … poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration…"[78] Bringing this idea to modern day, Robert Kennedy Jr. speaks about the death of President Kennedy and that in order to deal with the deep grief around this death his father went back to the Greeks for solace and that very welcome catharsis. Long walks on the beach and hours reading the poetry of the ancient Greeks seemed to elicit the fear and pity Senator Kennedy needed purged.

In the mead halls of Anglo-Saxon England surrounded by fierce warriors, the oral poet, then know as scop, speaking in the distant tongue of Old English, thrilled his audiences with recitations of the epic exploits of their beloved hero Beowulf. For posterity this poet brings to life Beowulf's battle with the monster Grendel, but in so

doing the ancient scop also captures the humanity of these people, their fears, their loves,

their values, and his poetry makes deep connections between them and those on the

planet today, and readers are forever moved, forever connected.

> Then the Geats built the tower, as Beowulf
> Had asked, strong and tall, so sailors
> Could find it from far and wide; working
> For ten long days they made his monument,
> Sealed his ashes in walls as straight
> And high as wise and willing hands
> Could raise them. And the riches he and Wiglaf
> Had won from the dragon, rings, necklaces,
> Ancient, hammered armour – all
> The treasures they'd taken were left there, too,
> Silver and jewels buried in the sandy
> Ground, back in the earth, again
> And forever hidden and useless to men.
> And then twelve of the bravest Geats
> Rode their horses around the tower,
> Of their dead king and his greatness, his glory,
> Praising him for heroic deeds, for a life
> As noble as his name. So should all men
> Raise up words for their lords, warm
> With love, when their shield and protector leaves
> His body behind, sends his soul
> On high. And so Beowulf's followers
> Rode, mourning their beloved leader,
> Crying that no better king had ever
> Lived, no prince so mild, no man
> So open to his people, so deserving of praise.[79]

In a 1956 article in the *Saturday Review*, the brilliant post-modern poet, Robert

Penn Warren, comments that "the poem is a little myth of man's capacity of making life

meaningful. And in the end, the poem is not a thing we see – it is, rather, a light by

which we may see – and what we see is life."[80] Later in 1985 in an article in *The New

York Times*, he commented further on his thoughts about poetry, saying "For what is a

poem but a hazardous attempt at self-understanding. It is the deepest part of

autobiography." Asked in that same interview from what do poems grow, he answered,

"They grow out of your life." [81] And later yet, another critically acclaimed poet, John

Ashbury, when asked in a 2009 interview for *The Boston Globe* why poetry is important,

answered it is important because "it's a way of connecting with our lives in a way which

I don't see any way of doing otherwise. It's not only the daily emotional life but also the

life of our dreams." For those ancient Anglo-Saxons, the epic poem *Beowulf* is

autobiography and a connection to their lives and ultimately to the lives of all humans,

and Beowulf's battles ultimately become metaphors for and symbolic of his descent into

his own unconscious mind where he must face his personal demons, and the modern

reader is invited to attend and do the same.

From other parts of the Viking world, come the Old Norse poems entitled The

Poetic Edda. Written around A.D. 900-1050 by a number of ancient Viking poets and

singers called scalds, these thirty-four poems deal with pagan Germanic gods and

heroes.[82] Contained in these poems, as is true in ancient poems from many, many

cultures around the globe, is their account of the end of the universe. The "Wise

Woman" ironically called "Destiny Articulate" foretells the end.

> The sun turns black, the earth sinks in the sea,
> The hot stars down from heaven are whirled;
> Fierce grows the stream and the life-feeding flame
> Till fire leaps high about heaven itself.
>
> Now Garm howls loud before Gnipahellir,
> The fetters will burst, and the wolf run free;
> Much do I know, and more can see
> Of the fate of the gods, the mighty in fight.[83]

Interestingly, The Prose Edda, completed in Iceland by Snorri Sturluson (1178-1241), is a handbook for young poets.[84] It was important to this culture to preserve their scaldic heritage and thus pass it down through the ages to inform and inspire later generations.

In his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, John Milton uses poetry to "explain the ways of God to men,"[85] and William Blake advanced a society's ability to be more humane through his mystic songs of innocence and of experience, but it seems poetry does not only make connection between the living. Padmasambhava, the 8th century mystic, in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo* created poems to repeat as one maneuvers through the Bardo, here speaking about "the interval of suspension after we die."[86]

> Now when the bardo of dharmată dawns upon me,
> I will abandon all thoughts of fear and terror,
> I will recognize whatever appears as my projection
> And know it to be a vision of the bardo;
> Now that I have reached the crucial point
> I will not fear the peaceful and wrathful ones, my own projections. [87]

Poets from the 18th century had much to say regarding issues of poetics, which has since influenced thought on the function of the art of poetry and of the poet. Especially influential, in countering Plato's criticism of poetry, are the thoughts and words of the English Romantic poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Percy Bysshe Shelley. In his "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," Wordsworth states that poetry should have a worthy purpose, which for him is carried forth through feelings prompted by meditation. He considered poetry to be the "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in moments of tranquility."[88] Poets who obey the impulses of this tranquil meditation "shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in

such connexion with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affection strengthened and purified."[89] Wordsworth lamented the neglect in his time of inspirational writers like Shakespeare and Milton and over what he describes as the "thirst after outrageous stimulation" [90]of his time. He asks, "What is a poet?" and replies,

> "He is … endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul… who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."[91]

He adds that a poet's art, written in the spirit of love is "a[n] homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man" and that it is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." It "is as immortal as the heart of man" and brings to the heart an "overbalance of pleasure."[92]

Coleridge speaks in *Biographia Literatia* about his collaboration with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads* of "two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination."[93] The ideal, perfect poet for Coleridge was one who "brings the whole soul of man into activity" and who "diffuses a tone and spirit of unity" by the use of that "magical power" the imagination, which he saw as the "soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole."[94] Coleridge was to dabble in the supernatural the function of which, he believed, was to "transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that

willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith."[95]

Wordsworth was to

> propose himself as his object, to give charm of novelty to things of everyday, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.[96]

In "A Defense of Poetry," Shelley furthers Wordsworth's and Coleridge's definition of the poet saying that a poet "participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one…."[97] He also adds that "a poem is ever accompanied with pleasure,"[98] for it is the "very image of life expressed in its eternal truth."[99] In this essay, Shelley speaks at length of the effects of poetry. He says that poetry "awakens and enlarges the mind…, provides an identification of ourselves with the beautiful…," and strengthens the imagination, which is the "instrument of moral good."[100] He is so bold as to say that "poetry acts to produce the moral improvement of man."[101]

The English Romantic poets also spoke of the function of poetry directly in their verse. For instance, in the poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn," John Keats speaks of the same "identification of ourselves with the beautiful" as does Shelley in his essay "A Defense of Poetry." Addressing the immutable beauty of the urn, Keats asks the reader to consider the imagination one brings to bear in creating and enjoying art and poetry. On his urn, Keats describes forests and dales, maidens and bold lovers about to kiss, all caught for eternity in that exact moment. But with the use of the imagination the music of the pipers on the urn, for example, is so much sweeter, so much more, so Keats ask his pipers to "play on;/Not to the sensual ear, but more endeared,/Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone."

In the last lines of the poem, Keats addresses the urn, indicating its relationship to the world throughout time.

> When old age shall this generation waste,
> Thou shalt remain, in the midst of other woe
> Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
> Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need know.

Because the imagination is a higher function that connects us to the greater universe, to the immutable, to beauty, to truth, Keats believed that art and poetry with its inherent call for the use of the imagination can lighten our loads, lift the yoke from our shoulders.

> In "Ode to the West Wind," Shelley invokes a "wild spirit" to

> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
> Like wither'd leaves to quicken new birth!
> And by the incantation of this verse,

> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
> Be through my lips to unawakened earth

> The trumpet of a prophecy!

Harkening back to Plato's Doctrine of Ideas, Shelley asks this "Spirit fierce" to unite with his spirit and kindle in him the spark that would ignite the universal wisdom forgotten at birth but that is accessible at times of great creativity. This union would inspire him to be "The trumpet of a prophecy," to be the creator of verse that inspires and uplifts the "unawakened earth." Because he falls "upon the thorns of life" and "bleed[s]," he asks the spirit to "lift" him and, through his verse, the reader. Shelley, too, saw the poet and his verse as powerful influences on humankind, indeed.

The power in the carefully chosen words of a poem is palpable. Although a poem may contain images and ideas, it is made up of words. Language is the medium of poetry, and the exact wording of a successful poem is the chief source of its power. Writers labor mightily to shape each word and phrase to create particular expressive effects. Changing a single word sometimes ruins a poem's effect, just as changing one number in a combination lock's sequence makes all the other numbers useless.[102] Consider the powerful changes in meaning and aesthetic effect Howard Moss is accentuating in his parody of Shakespeare's sonnet "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day." Not only is the power and beauty of each of Shakespeare's word choices in the sonnet lost, but consider, too, the loss of the emotional impact in the carefully created images. No longer is the reader emotionally able to glean the lovers' beauty. Moss's version is plainly less interesting thus involving the reader less. Too easy to understand, too accessible, no effort required seems to mean less good

Shakespeare wrote:

> Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
> Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
> Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
> And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
> Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
> And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
> And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
> By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed.
> But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
> Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st.
> > So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
> > So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Moss's version is from a series called "Modified Sonnets," which was dedicated to adapters, abridgers, digesters, and condensers everywhere."[103]

> > Who says you're like the dog days?
> > You're nicer. And better.

Even in May, the weather can be gray,
And a summer sub-let doesn't last forever.
Sometimes the sun's too hot;
Sometimes it's not.
Who can stay young forever?
People break their necks or just drop dead!
But you? Never!
If there's one condensed reader left
Who can figure out the abridged alphabet,
After you're dead and gone
In this poem you'll live on.

Words cannot be separated from what is being said, for they carry with them not only the meanings but the emotional impact that imparts an integral element of the message of the poem.

If one of the functions of poetry is to ignite the imagination, it is through images it is done. As it is through word choices, through imagery they create the reader is affected in deep and meaningful ways. The old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words is applicable here. The sensory experience, visual, auditory or tactile, inherent in imagery is more than an experience on a literal, physical level; it can be more. Imagery calls the reader to use the mind's eye to picture the scene the poet is painting. The use of the imagination to create a picture brings it not just to the forefront so the reader becomes aware of it, but it brings the ideas presented in the poem onto a more profound and connective level. In what was once a 30 line poem about seeing one lovely face after lovely face as he emerged from the Paris Metro, but revised again and again into the two line poem "In a Station of the Metro," Ezra pound illustrates in a single image the power of the sensory experience to capture the imagination.[104] Pound saw the image as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time…it is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of freedom from

time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest work of art."[105]

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd
> Petals on a wet, black bough

So too, Taniguchi Buson in "The piercing chill I feel" ignites the imagination and calls the reader to empathize with the deep grief the speaker is experiencing at the loss of his wife.

> The piercing chill I feel:
> My dead wife's comb, in our bedroom,
> under my heel…

The function of poetry is to ignite the imagination, but also to elicit emotion. Wilfred Owen an important English war poet who wrote but four poems about his life-changing experience in World War I and who was killed at age 25 one week before the war ended. He touchingly addresses the notion of poem being the emotion. In what would have been the preface to his poems, he wrote:

> "This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honor, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War
> Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.
> My subject is War, and the pity of War.
> The Poetry is in the pity.
> Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poet must be truthful."[106]

Struggling with others' preference for the more traditional form of the old masters and far ahead of his time with the use of free verse and "the free expression of emotion," Walt Whitman, too, had a vision of the poetry of the future. He saw the poetry of the future arousing and initiating emotion, more than defining or finishing it. He says, "Like

all modern tendencies, it has direct or indirect reference continually to the reader, to you or me, to the central identity of everything…"[107] And so it will continue as it always has.

Poetry is everywhere in the modern world – certainly it is studied and written in academic institutions and used to inform and inspire in religious ceremonies, but surprisingly it is beginning to make in-roads in the fields of psychology and medicine. This seemingly unexpected future of poetry for its therapeutic use was interestingly foreshadowed in poetry of the past. As mentioned earlier, Aristotle saw the cathartic function of poetry in the form of drama. So too, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Edgar Allen Poe's short stories reveal the communication between the unconscious mind of the writer and that of the reader.[108] In 1970 at a program in New York where distinguished and prominent people were invited to speak and be interviewed, the poet W.H. Auden said, "The aim of writing is to enable people a little better to enjoy life or a little better to endure it."[109] Other authors who could see literature as therapeutic, such as Rebecca West, Kafka, Samuel Delany, Coetzee and Jonathan Foer, are mentioned in a 2008 article by Robert L. Caserio in the *Journal of Modern Literature*.[110] Emily Dickinson, though, is of especial import in this regard. "Emily Dickinson is a good example both of an artist who uses poetry as therapy for himself and of the artist who does so, is aware of it, and consequently may be employed therapeutically for others."[111] She believed deeply in Aristotle's ideas of catharsis for both the poet and the reader. Knowing we all suffer on some level with the pain and disappointment of human existence and before psychotherapy even existed, she recognized its therapeutic values, which she reveals so beautifully in the following poem.[112]

> The Martyr Poets – did not tell –
> But wrought their Pang in syllable –

That when their mortal name be numb –
Their mortal fate – encourage Some –
The Martyr Painters – never spoke –
Bequeathing rather – to their Work –
That when their conscious fingers cease -
Some seek in Art – The Art of Peace –

She knew "that one's world and one's problems are, to a great extent, the product of

one's own mind."[113]

No Rack can torture me –
My soul - at Liberty –
Behind this mortal Bone
There knits a bolder One –

You cannot prick with saw
Nor pierce with Cimitar –
Two Bodied – therefore be –
Bind one – The Other fly –

The Eagle of his Nest
No easier divest –
And gain the Sky
Than mayest Thou –

Except Thyself may be
Thine Enemy –
Captivity is Consciousness –
So's Liberty.

Certainly Dickinson's poem foreshadowed an article published in *The Journal of*

Humanistic Psychology in 2007 by Shaun McNiff entitled "Empathy With the Shadow:

Engaging and Transforming Difficulties Through Art."[114]

This Researcher's study does not purport to investigate the use of poetry for its

benefits to the mentally or physically ill but instead for its benefit to the ordinary person

on any ordinary day. However, because poetry and both medicine and psychology share

an essential interest in the understanding and advancement of the human being, there is

information and studies that transfer over from its use with the more severely distressed that are relevant to the discourse presented here.

The sheer volume and scope of the interest and research on poetry is shown in the enormous number of articles and studies that have appeared in recent years. The very newly begun *Journal of Poetry Therapy* boasts 170+ dissertation abstracts and an article by M.J. Friedrich entitled "The Arts of Healing," which appeared in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1999, discusses the gathering of over 400 professionals from many fields to share their ideas and research on the power of art, music and poetry to beneficially affect people.[115] A 20 page long review of studies that reveal the use of arts to improve patients' feelings of well-being is presented in "Art, drama, music and poetry are integral to the NHS" in *Nursing Standard* in 2007;[116] thus it is evident that, to many, poetry has become an important vehicle by which to influence health and happiness.

In an article presented at the 35th Annual Congress of the Nordic Educational Research Association in 2007, Ragna Aadlandsvik discusses a study on the potential of poetry to help people with the beginning signs of dementia because "the language of those with dementia is poetry," but it also prefaces all comments on poetry and dementia with a discussion which goes deeply into the thinking of many reputable experts among them two very influential thinkers, Eliot W. Eisner and John Dewey, whose works speak to such notions as art, because it focuses on emotion, is seen in much of today's thinking as somehow "a seductive distraction, a contaminate in the development of intellect," to the notion that our ability to understand depends on our ability to imagine and to the notion that poetry should penetrate our daily lives because it can "illuminate objects and

relations…, can enlighten us." [117] Philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer is also referenced. His belief that modern society is experiencing a disconnect between knowledge and what it is to be human and that the scientific world is "inadequate" to address the whole individual and all its inherent "existential issues"[118] helps to make this study about the power of poetry to influence well-being and self-actualization relevant.

In a study by Nicole Garbarini entitled "Heartbeat Poetry" published in *Scientific American* in 2004, researchers revealed that poetry recitation has an effect on breathing patterns and that reading poetry written in hexameter (verse consisting of six feet) "increases synchronization between breathing and heart beats."[119] With the inclusion of hexameter verse, this Researcher will stand on Garbarini's shoulders in hope of showing the affect this synchronization will have on feelings of well-being and self-actualization.

In "Voice: Challenging the stigma of addiction" published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy* in 2008, Helena Pawinen and Sherrie Bade reveal that after writing and presenting poetry women facing problems of addiction felt a greater sense of pride and confidence.[120] So it is true for soldiers as seen in a 1998 article entitled "Goodnight Saigon: Music, fiction, poetry and film in readjustment group counseling" by Robert B. LeLieuvre in *Professional Psychology: Poetry and Practice*.[121] Although studies about people in greater distress, they lend credence to a look at the possible effects of writing poetry on less stressed individuals.

Many articles have been written and studies completed on the positive effects of poetry. Studies on how poetry helps people move through their own healing processes and the healing processes of other people with diseases as varied as asthma[122] and cancer,[123] on poetry helping with the grieving process,[124] with atonement with a

parent,[125] with self-recovery,[126] with personality development,[127] articles on the specific use of certain poets,[128] and the use of poetry in medicine in general[129] and more. Certainly, because these address the power of poetry to affect illness, they set the stage for this Researcher's study which, although it does not intend to look specifically at any physical or mental ailments, it intends to help reveal the power of poetry to affect feelings of well-being.

At the University of Wyoming in 1915, June E. Downey did two studies called "Emotional Poetry and the Preference Judgment." The first study surveyed her subjects' preferences to fragments of poetry with vivid imagery and the second from fragments specifically chosen for their highly emotional quality. Although not exactly like this Researcher's study, Downey's studies offer interesting information on the intensity of preferences her subjects indicated for the two types of poems. At weekly intervals, subjects were asked to record their mood, rate by preference poem fragments and then to record again their mood. This study did not focus on the reaction so much as it did on the type of poetry fragment that produced it. Ultimately, Downey's studies answered such questions as "What kind of emotional appeal do you prefer? What emotional appeal do you consider most beautiful? Why?"[130] This Researcher's study will focus little on the specific poem and totally on the poems' ability to improve feelings of well-being and self-actualization.

Another study comparing responses to poetry was done by D. Baruch in 1936. Baruch enlisted 148 children of well above average intelligence (IQ ranging from 101 to 170) to indicate their preference for either rhymed or unrhymed poetry. He read five poems each twice to the children and then asked for their responses. 56% of the nursery

school students and 61% of kindergarten students favored unrhymed poetry. 54% of the 1st graders favored rhymed poetry. Baruch attributed this last statistic to their having been exposed to more rhyming poetry through their parents, teachers and books.[131] What this Researcher finds fascinating about this study is that children as young as 4 years of age can enjoy and glean the value of verse that is not intentionally written to capture interest through rhyme. The imagery, figurative language and ideas in the poems and not the catchy rhyme schemes are what captured the children's admiration. At all ages, poetry, quality poetry, draws humanity in.

In 1988, Anne E. Martindale did a series of four studies in which she asked her subjects to make associations between the four elements in Greek theory (earth, air, fire and water) and temperament words and occurrences found in related imagery in French poetry. Martindale saw these elements as "the primary symbols used in imagination."[132] In asking her subjects to group words so that element and temperament words were combined in 4 clusters, Martindale discovered that people are not only aware of element-temperament correspondences they "are aware of the hypothesized correspondence between elements and temperaments at a preconscious and imaginal level." [133] This fact adds to the growing evidence that humans respond to poetry on a deeper level, using the gifts of the unconscious and superconscious minds. The Researcher's study will seek to uncover the uplifting effects this has.

In a 1936 study entitled "Psychological Behavior under Various Types of Literature," researchers C. M. Disernes and T. W. Wood looked at how different types of literature affect different types of individuals. The two-fold purposes of the study were:

1) To ascertain if the physiological functions of respiration and blood volume are differentiated while under the influences of various types of literature

2) To attempt to show such physiological variants as indicative of emotional behavior.[134]

The literature chosen for the study included current literature from *Reader's Digest*, sex literature from *Honeymoon Tales,* poetry from the Atlantic Monthly and *Harper's* magazines and biblical literature from *Manhood of the Master*.[135] The apparatus used was a modified versions of the Lehmann plethysmograph and the Sumner belt pneumograph.[136] Readings were taken before and after interaction with the literature. Among the findings not so valuable to this Researcher were the facts that the abstract thinking type of individual is not readily influenced by sex literature but that active athletic type is. The Jungian introvert type of individual showed an increase in pulse and respiration in reaction to biblical literature and poetry and not a pleasant response to sex literature. However, very interesting to this researcher, the study did find that "literary materials, when properly selected as to length and subject matter, form excellent experimental stimuli for the evocation of emotional phenomena."[137]

In 2004, Amy L. Eva-Wood conducted a study at the University of Washington in Seattle entitled "Thinking and Feeling Poetry: Exploring Meanings Aloud." In her abstract she states,

> What role can emotions play in informing readers' interpretations of poems? This think-aloud study, with an experimental design, featured 10 college freshmen randomly assigned to 2 groups. The think-aloud (TA) group verbalized thoughts while reading 2 poems, and the think-and-feel-aloud (TFA) group voiced both thoughts and feelings. Participants prompted to TFA identified more poetic devices and reported higher interest in the poems than TA participants. On average, the TFA group also made more elaborative comments than the TA group. These responses often demonstrated a deeper understanding of the poems.

TFA readers used 4 different types of elaborations to help them understand poems. [138]

This study discusses the value in and some of the specific benefits of the affective response to reading, reciting and explicating poetry. It also discusses other studies conducted on student approaches to poetry. When approached as simply a "sense-making, analytical standpoint,"[139] less of the depth and beauty is appreciated, thus, validating this Researcher's protocol where subjects will be instructed to think as well as feel as they interact with the poetry. When readers examine their emotional responses to certain words and images, they are better able to determine the meanings in the poem.[140] With this in mind, Eva-Wood gave the following instructions that encouraged they verbalize their feelings to the think and feel aloud group:

> Poetry is about the head and the heart. It isn't simply a fact-finding mission, but an experience with language that involves feelings and associations. Share everything that you are thinking *and* feeling as you read this poem aloud. Pay special attention to feelings you have as they connect to words, phrases, and lines. Turn up the volume on all these feelings as you explore meanings in this poem.

Subjects given these instructions revealed "greater sensitivity to the images and tone of the poems, they also made more astute analytical observations." [141]

For assistance to later researchers, this one among them, in choosing poems to use in these types of studies, Eva-Wood discusses literature's stylistic devices and their power to "challenge readers to abandon prototypical understandings of words." [142]

> The disconcerting process of departing from normal language conventions evokes a range of feelings that, in turn, stimulate personal perspectives and personal meanings…[143]'when everyday routine of text processing is disrupted…factors leading to such disruption do not result in a total breakdown but provoke the reader to attempt to bridge the disruption'…[144]

Eva-Wood opens her study with the following words:

> Poetry intimates, charms, grips, even startles. It unearths the shadowy contours of private experience. It invents and reinvents emotional qualities previously inexplicable, inscrutable. With their masterful word weavings, poets beckon their readers to enter into a verbal labyrinth, to journey and explore, to excavate meaning.[145]

This being said, this Researcher sought the answer to the question, does poetry have the power to affect well-being and found the answer to be yes.

CHAPTER 3:
RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study was an Experimental Pretest-Posttest Design. As an experimental pretest-posttest project studying the effects of poetry as measured by the State Trait Anxiety Inventory and Personal Orientation Inventory, this study compared subjects randomly divided into two groups. The experimental group received an interaction with poetry and the control group received information about poetry to read. Both groups of subjects were tested before and after the administration of the intervention (either a poetry interaction or poetry information). Thus, the effect of the intervention was reflected in the amount of change from the pretest to the post-intervention assessment of the experimental and control groups. Both groups of subjects were randomly assigned following the pretest. The random assignment from the same population reduced the possibility that group differences resulted from selection bias.

Subjects were informed that pretests and posttests would be administered and that the study was interested in learning what kind of effect different types of exposure to poetry would have; their being aware only to this degree diminished the participants' ability to intend an outcome. They were not informed of the nature of the two interventions before the pretest or that one group would receive an interaction with poetry and the other information about poetry.

Setting

The setting chosen for this research project was a bright and cheerful gathering center at a neighboring church. The setting was located approximately 35 miles outside of metropolitan Boston in a small town and was easily accessible to researchers and participants. The center was made available to the researchers before, during and after the research. The study was conducted on a day when no one else save the Principle Investigator and Research Assistants would be in the center. With a reduction in the possibility of distracting noises from others coming in and out of the facility, participants were better able to attend to the pretest, intervention and posttest. The setting provided the subjects an environment conducive to their full participation in the study.

The center consisted of a large circular room in the center of the structure surrounded by smaller rooms of varying sizes. The large circular room in the facility has an enormous skylight allowing for sunlight to brighten the room and for making the sky visible, which contributed to its being a pleasant space. Both the large room and the adjacent smaller ones were equipped with tables and chairs at which the participants completed the pretests, the interaction with or information about poetry and the posttests. To add another dimension to the ambience of the setting, the researchers arrived early to distribute plants and arrange the tables and chairs. Consequently, the center had a pleasant smell and a soothing feel to it. Special consideration was given to creating a calm, serene setting.

After the research was completed, this facility continued its normal activities as usual. As thanks for the use of the facility and for the cooperation and encouragement

received, the Principle Investigator acknowledged the center in the appreciation section of the published research document.

Subjects

Subjects ranged in age from 18 to 90. The preponderance of participants fell into the 36-64 range, with the 18-35 range coming in second and the 85-90 range last. Groups were created randomly. The control group had a few more males than females, and the experimental group had many more females than males. As noted earlier, two older participants had difficulty completing the rather lengthy POI posttest.
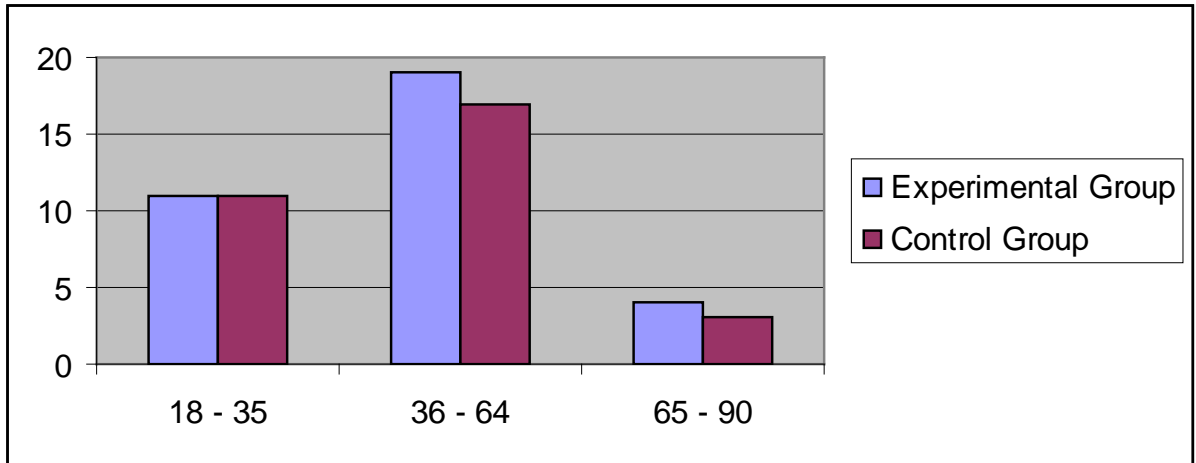
Figure 1. Experiental and Control Groups by Three Age Groups.
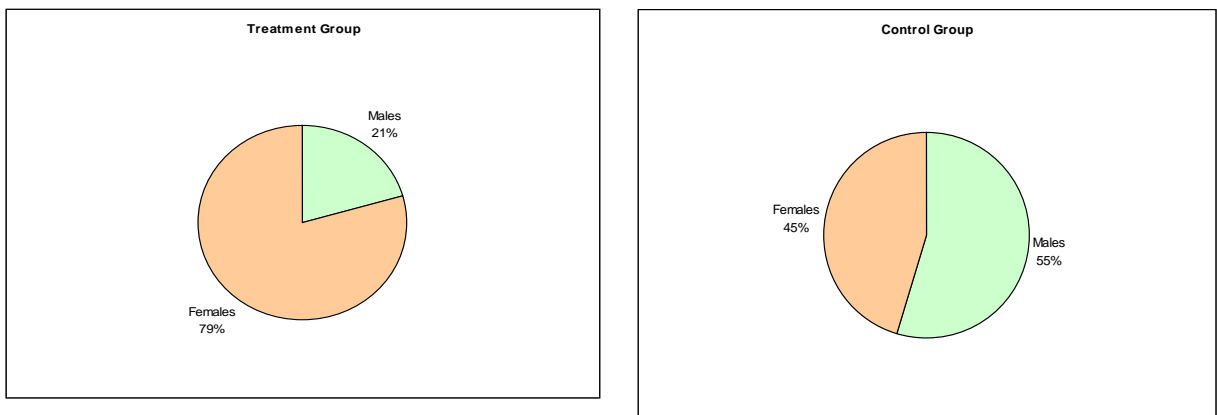
Figure 2. Experiental and Control Groups by Gender.

Selection

Participants were informed of the study through advertisements/handouts in libraries, schools, businesses and a senior center. The study was also advertised in the bulletin of the church where the study was conducted. Emails were sent and visits made to several principals of schools, soliciting for participants. A call and an email were made to a local radio station. However, although curiosity in the study may have been piqued through these methods, many of the 75 participants who were recruited in advance of the study were recruited through personal contact with the Principle Investigator. Responses from advertisements in libraries, businesses and the senior center were minimal at best. The local radio station did not respond. Information and reassurance from the Principle Investigator were required of most participants who agreed in advance of the study to participate. Snail mail was superfluous in the transfer of the forms for the study and only a few were received through email because personal contact was made with most who participated save those who arrived unexpectedly on the day of the study. The goal was to recruit 75 or more subjects, allowing for at least 35 in each group. There was an expectation based upon normal distribution of 10-15% attrition.

Attrition

The duration of this study was brief; from concerted recruitment efforts to study completion was about one month. Nine people who had agreed, before the date of the study, to participate did not arrive; however, ten unexpected arrivals participated on the day of the study. These ten had not agreed to participate prior to the study. When all was said and done, 10-15 % attrition did occur; however, as was hoped for, 65 participants were involved in the study. Random composition of the groups and group equivalence

were only slightly affected by the dropout rate. Statistical conclusion validity was only

slightly compromised by the reduction of sample size. The number of dropouts was too

small to compare them in a statistically sensitive way.

Criteria for Inclusion of Subjects

Few special requirements existed for perspective subjects. Participants needed be

at least 18 years of age. Those who participated in the study ranged in age from 18 years

of age to 90 years. All participants volunteered to participate; no remuneration was

extended for participation. No requirement regarding education, socioeconomic status,

gender, place of origin, and age were set in place. This study welcomed a divergent

population in hope of proving that a single interaction with poetry could show a reduction

in stress and a stronger feeling of well-being and self-actualization as measured by the

STAI for adults and the POI. Intelligence, need for approval, sociability, conventionality,

authoritarianism, adjustment and conformity were discounted as likely to cause bias;

therefore, these threats were deemed not particularly relevant or critical.

This research did not look to study those people with a particular ailment. It did

not, therefore, target persons for example with cancer or high levels of anxiety or having

experienced a death of a loved one. This study was designed to test the hypothesis that a

swatch from the general population of people with perhaps a wide variety of ailments, but

no one specific ailment or concern common to all, would feel less anxiety and experience

more of a feeling of self-actualization through an intervention with poetry. Although this

study is concerned with levels of anxiety and of self-actualization, the Principle

Investigator did not recruit persons who believed themselves to be or had been diagnosed

as specifically more anxious or less self-actualized than the average person. To reiterate,

this study was interested in looking at the possible up-lifting effect poetry has on a population chosen directly from the general population.

Please note that several studies that do look at the effect poetry has on people with specific concerns are discussed in the Literature Review of this study.

Criterion to participate was based upon the ability to participate at the appointed time and place and a willingness to participate in the procedures of the study. An exclusion criterion was illiteracy or any other physical or emotional condition that would interfere with one's ability to interact with poetry or to read academic information about poetry. Although for the experimental group the study included listening to two poems read aloud, it was deemed that the ability to solely listen would be an insufficient interaction with poetry to be included in the study. Participants' vision would have to be such that they could read. The materials for the study did not include poems or information about poetry in Braille; therefore, a second exclusionary criterion was severe sight impairment or blindness. This study did not include persons who were blind.

As a prerequisite for participation in the study, each subject was required to complete and sign a consent form, acknowledging that they had been informed of what the study would involve, what was to be required of them, and that they had received a copy of the Consent Form (see Appendix B), the Information Form (see Appendix C) and Research Survey (see Appendix D).

No criteria were set in place for the division of participants into groups. Picking a number out of a box randomized subjects to groups.

Brief Information

Information gathered regarding gender, education or occupation may be used for future examination, but no attempt was used to randomize by these factors.

Measures and Materials

The materials used in this study included one measure of mood, the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) for adults. This is a self-evaluation questionnaire developed by C.D. Spielberger, R. L. Gorsuch and R. Lushene. This questionnaire consists of twenty questions relating to *state,* or how the subject feels in the moment, and twenty questions relating to *trait*, or how the subject usually feels. There is a four-point scale for answering each question. These rank from one point for *not at all,* two points for *somewhat*, three points for *moderately so*, and four points for *very much so*. The participants score can range between twenty points at the low end of the anxiety scale and eighty points at the high end of the scale. The same scale was used for both the twenty questions relating to *state* and the twenty questions relating to *trait*. This questionnaire was chosen for several reasons. It is an easily administered test. It takes little time to complete and it has been shown to be highly reliable. To lessen paper shuffling in the process of administration, which helps to make for ease of administration, the STAI Y State Anxiety and Trait Anxiety scales are printed on opposite sides of a one page test form. All participants in the study completed both the STAI pretest and posttest

The other pretest measure used was the Personality Orientation Inventory (POI), which was developed to measure factors related to self-actualization. Based on the concept of the actualizing person, a person who is more fully aware of what is potentially possible and lives a more fulfilled life than does the average person, the Inventory

provides a measure of one's level of positive mental health. This measure consists of 150 two-choice value and behavior items and is scored for 2 major scales plus 10 sub-scales. Its range is high school, college and adult, and its form is standard. The time required to complete the measure is approximately 30 minutes. This measure was also chosen for its easy administration and reliability and for its ability to gage how the interaction with poetry would affect feelings of self-actualization. It helped to determine if a person can feel more motivated to maximize their abilities and to determine their life path after an interaction with poetry. It helped answer the question, does poetry have the power to make people feel more like they are capable of achieving their full potential. The connection to others, nature and the universal is ultimately that which poetry affords and which can enliven one's desire for self-fulfillment. If indeed, poetry does act to produce the moral improvement of humans, they have been self-actualized and the POI measured to what extent.

The material used in the study consisted of pencils, tables and chairs upon which the pretest and posttest were completed as well as the writing section of the poetry interaction and folders for each participant. Each participant was given a folder into which was placed their pretest, posttest, study number and the information disclosure form (see Appendix H). A second set of folders were also used. Each participant in the experimental group was given a folder containing a large variety of poems from which to choose to read and a handout with a set of suggestions for their three-part interaction with the poems (see Appendix E). Folders also were created and disseminated to participants in the control group of the study, containing information about poetry and suggestions about their interaction with this information (see Appendix G).

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Procedures

On January 31, 2009, the study on the possible uplifting effects of poetry was conducted. The two research assistants and the Principle Investigator arrived at Sacred Heart Parish Hall in Hopedale, MA at 11:00 am to prepare for the study. The first participants arrived at 1:30 pm and last departed at 4:30 pm.

Those participants who were recruited by the Principle Investigator prior to the study answered eight initial questions (see Appendix A) to help determine the number of people interested in participating and to help determine necessity of further recruitment.

All participants in this study were informed that they would complete two measures before and two measures after they experienced different types of exposure to poetry. They were provided the time and date of their participation in the study. They were given two consent forms: one consent form for their own records and one for the Principle Investigator's records (see Appendix B). All participants also received an Information Form (see Appendix C), a Research Survey (see Appendix D) and a request to arrive prepared to spend three hours at the allotted time at the site. Those who required it also received directions to the study site.

The Principle Investigator verified that each participant who had agreed to participate prior to the study had completed a Consent Form. Those participants who arrived at the study and had not agreed to participate prior to the study had to complete all forms before they were admitted into the study. The Principle Investigator and assistants carefully filed all forms.

Several discussions to determine the best procedures for the protocol of the study took place between the Principle Investigator and research assistants prior to the study. A

brief training session was also conducted by the Principle Investigator for the Research Assistants on the day of the study and prior to the arrival of the study participants.

When participants arrived, the Principle Investigator and Research Assistants met and guided them through the process. Working from a master list, the PI and Research Assistants verified the arrival or failure to arrive of each participant on the list.

To expedite the initial orientation process on the day of the study and prior to the study, participants were randomly assigned a number. Participants arrived in the main hall to find numbered tables with folders arranged on them with cards placed on top of the folders. On one side of the card was written the name of the participant and on the other side the random number they received for purposes of confidentiality. Inside the folders were copies of and answer sheets to the pretests. It had been decided by the Principle Investigator that it would be best not to wait until participants arrived to hand out the cards because it would have been too time consuming and could have added unnecessary time delay and confusion. As participants arrived, they received their table number and were directed to locate their table and to sit. Everything was pre-arranged to begin the pre-tests immediately, which expedited the process and obviated confusion, which helped to maintain the peaceful atmosphere sought by the Principle Investigator. Participants went immediately to their assigned tables where they found their folder, card and a pencil with which to write.

Those participants who had not assented to be in the study prior to the date of the study and who had to complete all the forms before they were admitted to the study created some momentary hectic activity, which the Principle Investigator and Research Assistants, although would later be very grateful for, had not anticipated. Because the

most advantageous atmosphere for this study was a rather emotionally peaceful one, the advent of ten new participants presented a situation that had to be expedited with as little disruption as was possible. Forms had to be distributed, filled out, monitored and filed. Cards had to be filled out with the participants' name and a number, and the new arrivals had to be seated at tables originally designated for those who failed to arrive. It was, therefore, gratifying that all materials were in place and nothing had to be done for those who had agreed to participate prior to the study date.

When all participants were seated, they were all given the same information describing the basic procedure that would unfold. The instructions for the completion of the STAI and POI were then given by the Principle Investigator. It was emphasized that the first page of the STAI was to be completed according to how the participant was feeling *in the present moment* and the second page was to be completed according to how the participant feels *in general*. Participants were informed that the POI consists of 150 two-choice value and behavior items and that it would take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Participants were instructed that after the pretest they were to leave their folder on the table in the place where it had originally been located and to return to this exact seat after their interaction with poetry or after reading about poetry where they would then complete the posttests. Participants were informed that they would be given the opportunity to freely use the restrooms. Water was provided them.

For reasons of confidentiality, as stated above, a number was to become the mode of identification for each participant. Their individual number, not their name, was to be used to identify them on the pretest and posttest. However, many participants, seemingly

unconcerned about remaining anonymous, wrote both their name and number on their measures score sheets. This presented no validity concerns for the Principle Investigator was not made aware of this until after the completion of the pretests, intervention and posttests

After completion of the pretest, participants were randomized to groups by drawing a number. Subjects were selected for the experimental or control group by selecting a piece of paper from a box. The numbers 1 or 2 were written on squares of paper, which had been placed in the box. Those selecting an odd number were in the experimental group and were directed to enter any one of several small rooms designated with the number 1 on the door. Those with an even number were in the control group and were directed to one room designated by the number 2 with chairs placed in three concentric semi-circles.

As they drew their number, participants were instructed to save the number and to place the number they had drawn in their folders after their interaction with poetry or information about poetry. To be doubly certain that the names of the participants in each group was correctly recorded, as each participant left the study, one research assistant recorded into which group each participant had been randomized.

Both the rooms for the interaction with poetry and the reading of poetry were prepared ahead of time. Folders with poetry or information about poetry, instructions, paper and pencils were placed on tables or chairs so that participants could complete their assigned tasks immediately and with a sense of ease after completing the pre-tests.

For the experimental group, one packet was placed on tables for each participant inside of which were poems and instructions (see appendix E) for three separate

interactions with the poems. These participants were encouraged to work chronologically through the handout and to follow the suggestions for each interaction with poetry. However, no one checked to verify if participants were interacting with the poetry exactly as directed on the handout. The handout was created merely as a guide and did not have to be followed exactly. This study strove to create the possibility of a personal response to poetry; therefore, it was deemed best to leave room for the possibility of spontaneity in participants' interaction with it. Each participant was free to read as many poems as they chose and to read each poem as many times as they chose. To eliminate any pressure from time constraints or performance anxiety, no time frame was imposed. So too, participants were informed on that, "No judgments will be made and no grade will be assigned; this experience is meant to be enjoyed. The study is designed to make you as comfortable as possible and the experience with poetry as pleasant and positive as possible. You will not be asked to share your thoughts; the steps in your interaction with poetry have been structured for your personal response alone" (see Appendix C).

The first interaction for the experimental group consisted of both listening to and reading poems. A research assistant read two poems aloud, and then the subjects read poems of their own choosing from a group of poems varying in type and length provided them by the Principle Investigator. Certain poems were chosen for their accessibility and their uplifting content others for their depth and challenging nature. Poems consisting of only several lines and others much lengthier were included. Poems of varying types (lyrics, sonnets, dramatic monologues, sections of epic poems) were among those from which participants could choose. Among the poems chosen by the Principle Investigator were poems to do with nature and our connection with it in the hope of their eliciting

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from the reader a sense of calm connection. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth and "Peonies" and "Wild Geese" by Mary Oliver" were among those chosen. One example of a more challenging poem, which was read by the research assistant, was "The Windhover" by Gerard Manley Hopkins. (Please see a list of poems included in the study in Appendix I) As they were leaving the study site at the close of the study, several participants indicated their enjoyment of the poems and asked for copies, which were provided them.

Participants were encouraged to read each poem slowly as many times as they chose, to allow for the poems simply to wash over them and to allow for what images the poems created in their imaginations to emerge. They were encouraged to read a chosen poem line by line then sentence by sentence and finally straight through as a whole and to allow themselves to empathize with the experience of the speaker. Each participant in the experimental group was then instructed to look specifically at the images in their chosen poem, allowing for any emotions to surface and also for possible meaning inherent in them to emerge. However, participants were free to look at the images in more than one poem, in as many poems as they wanted. Finally, participants were encouraged to write 10 to 15 statements about what they had discovered in and/or experienced from their poems, from which they created an original poem. Although participants were informed that their interactions with the poetry and their written work was strictly their own and would not to be seen or judged by others, several participants left their written work in their folders. Because they are so charming and after asking their permission, the Principle Investigator included seven in Appendix F.

The control group was given information about poetry to read. Among the information about poetry was included information about several literary periods where poetry flourished, about the lives of several poets, and about the use of figurative language in poetry. Participants were encouraged to read whichever selections appealed to them, to find information that interested them. They were encouraged to read as much of the information as they choose and for as long as they choose, but to consider reading for at least 30 – 60 minutes.

Although this information was chosen for its rather academic appeal, several participants from the control group mentioned as they left the study site that they had enjoyed the information, that they had read all of it, and they unexpectedly asked for copies, which were provided them.

Each activity had been performed before the study, so it was known that approximately one hour was required to complete the tasks. No time limit was imposed, but as was expected of most participants the approximate time for the completion of these activities ranged from just under one hour to 75 minutes.

Participants had been instructed to return, at the end of the poetry interactions with poetry or information about poetry, to the large room where they would be given the posttests; therefore, most participants did not need to be escorted from one activity to the next. The initial instructions were enough; however, a Research Assistant and the Principle Investigator were available for those requiring direction. Participants completed their pre-tests at such varying rates, so it was determined on the spot that it would be best, rather than to disturb those who were still completing their pretests by visiting their tables to distribute the posttests, rather to have all participants retrieve their

posttests from the head table. Thus, as participants emerged from their respective groups, after their interaction with poetry or information about poetry, they were instructed to pick up their second set of answer sheets from the head table and then proceed to their originally assigned seat where they again located their original folders. Because the pretests and posttests would be stored in the participant folders, to obviate confusion, each post-test had been identified by the Principle Investigator as such.

Participants were encouraged to take a bottle of water with them to hydrate after having participated in the study.   They were thanked for their participation.

The Researcher's Role

The Principle Investigator was present for the entirety of the study, participating in every step of the process. The Principle Investigator's participation ranged from advertising the study, recruiting participants, keeping track of participants' forms, choosing and photocopying the poems and information that went into and creating the packets for the control and experimental groups before the day of the study to transporting everything to the study site, arranging tables and chairs, numbering tables and placing the packets on tables the day of the study. Because participants arrived unannounced on the day of the study, the Researcher also assisted in their acclimation to the study.

After the study, the Principle Investigator hand scored both sets of the pretest and posttest measures, plotted the profiles, transferred all data into the computer and met over a period of months with the statistician to complete the findings. For each participant, the Principle Investigator photocopied their answer sheets and scores on the STAI and the

profiles from the POI along with explanations of how to interpret each measure and hand delivered or mailed them.

Data Collection

On the day of the study, when participants completed the posttests, they put their answer sheets into their respective folder, which also held their pretest answer sheets, the card with their name and confidentiality number and the slip of paper indicating their group assignment, experimental or control. As they brought their folder to the head table before leaving the study, each folder was carefully checked to make certain everything that would be needed to complete the study was inside. Forms were made available to and collected from those participants who were interested in receiving the results of their measures and of the study in general. All completed folders were very carefully filed.

The data collected for the use of the statistician was recorded by the Principle Investigator in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. After scoring each participant's individual pretest and posttest measures for the POI and the STAI, the PI recorded each score on an individual Excel spreadsheet for that measure. Spreadsheets were created for both the control group's scores and the experimental group's scores on the pretest and posttest for both the POI and the STAI.

Ethical Considerations

The protocol for the study of human subjects was followed. Prior to commencing the study, Holos University Graduate Seminary was contacted for the necessary protocol for a study on human subjects. The Principle Investigator submitted the protocol for the study for review and was given permission to proceed. This study was considered equitable in that it did not reflect or support discrimination based on age, ethnicity,

gender, sexual orientation, social class or disability. This study was also considered to be

honest and open; participants were not deceived in any regard. Although an emotional

response to poetry was expected, the study was humane and was not meant to require or

result in emotional or physical pain for participants.

Were any participant to experience emotional distress in the course of the study,

the protocol for risks and benefits was to be put into place. The Principle Investigator

was available for support, and if necessary the participant was to be referred to a

professional and/or Patricia Norris the Chair of the Study. This information was included

in the consent form (see Appendix B) and thus made available to each participant who

then had to read and sign the form.

CHAPTER 4:
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Information on State-Trait Anxiety Measure

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) measures for anxiety states which are "characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry, and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system."[146]   Anxiety states are often changeable; they can be affected by outside forces – in this case different interactions with poetry.

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory includes two separate sections, both of which will be discussed here. The first section of the STAI measures for state anxiety. The State Anxiety scale or S-Anxiety scale is reported by respondents on STAI Form Y-1. The State Anxiety scale consists of 20 statements that evaluate how respondents feel right at this moment, right now. The S-Anxiety scale has been found to be a "sensitive indicator of changes in transitory anxiety."[147] Scores on S-Anxiety scale increase with stressful and decrease with calming experiences thus a valuable indicator of influences such as an interaction with poetry.

The Trait-Anxiety scale or T-Anxiety scale is reported by respondents on STAI Form Y-2. The Trait Anxiety scale consists of twenty statements that assess how respondents feel in general, most all of the time.

Trait Anxiety (T-Anxiety) refers to relatively stable individual differences in anxiety-proneness, that is, to differences between people in the tendency to perceive stressful situation as dangerous or threatening and to respond to such situations with

elevations in the intensity of their state anxiety (S-Anxiety) reactions. T-Anxiety may also reflect individual differences in the frequency and intensity with which anxiety states have been manifested in the past, and in the probability that S-Anxiety will be experienced in the future. The stronger the anxiety trait is the more probable that the individual will experience more intense elevations in S-Anxiety in a threatening situation.

State and trait anxiety are analogous in certain respects to kinetic and potential energy. S-Anxiety, like kinetic energy, refers to a palpable reaction or process taking place at a given time and level of intensity. T-Anxiety, like potential energy, refers to individual differences in reactions. Potential energy refers to differences in the amount of kinetic energy associated with a particular physical object, which may be released if triggered by an appropriate force. Trait Anxiety implies differences between people in the disposition to respond to stressful situations with varying amounts of S-Anxiety. But whether or not people who differ in T-Anxiety will show corresponding differences in S-Anxiety depends on the extent to which each of them perceives a specific situation as psychologically dangerous or threatening, and this is greatly influenced by each individual's past experience.

Persons with high T-Anxiety exhibit S-Anxiety elevations more frequently than low T-Anxiety individuals because they tend to interpret a wider range of situations as dangerous or threatening. High T-Anxiety persons are also more likely to respond with greater increase in the intensity of S- Anxiety in situations that involve interpersonal relationships and threaten self-esteem. In such situations, S-Anxiety many vary in intensity and fluctuate over time as a function of the amount of stress that impinges upon

the person, but the individual's perception of the threat may have greater impact on the level of S-Anxiety that the real danger associated with the situation.[148]

This study measured the participants' anxiety levels directly before the interaction with poetry or information about poetry and then again immediately following their interaction with poetry or information about poetry. This study utilized both the Y-1 and Y-2 forms of the State-Trait Anxiety Index in the administration of both the pretests and posttests.

Discussion of Findings

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory

The null hypothesis in this study states that there is no difference between the means for the pretest and the posttest, that poetry or information about poetry has no effect on feelings of anxiety. This study chose the setting level of risk or level of significance associated with the null hypothesis at 0.05. The level of risk or Type I error is 0.05, which indicates that the probability is greater than 5% on any one test of the null hypothesis that the two measures differ from one another.

Control Group STAI Findings

STAI scores can range on the low end from 20 to on the high end of 80. A score as low as 20 indicates extremely low levels of anxiety; whereas, scores as high as 80 indicate extremely high levels of anxiety. The control group Y-1 (State Anxiety) pretest scores ranged from 20 to 50, indicating at the outset of the study and before the interventions were administered a range of 30 points, which is relatively small in light of a possible 60 point range. The mean was 32.19, the median was 30.00 and the standard deviation was 8.04. The Y-2 (Trait Anxiety) pretest scores for the control group ranged

from 21 to 55 with a mean of 34.55, a median of 33.00 and a standard deviation of 8.41. Participants indicated that their Trait Anxiety levels were slightly higher than their State Anxiety levels.

The posttest measure for the control group on the Y-1 ranged from 20 to 40 with a mean of 28.68, a median of 28.00 and a standard deviation of 6.87. When the control group Y-1 pretest mean is compared to the Y-1 posttest mean, the p-Value is 0.069. The difference between the level of significance associated with the null hypothesis of 0.05 and the score of 0.069 is 0.019, just shy of statistical significance, indicating a trend.

Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y - 1 Pre, Y - 1 Post - Control Group
Two-sample T for Y - 1 Pre_2 vs. Y - 1 Post_2
Difference = mu (Y - 1 Pre_2) - mu (Y - 1 Post_2)
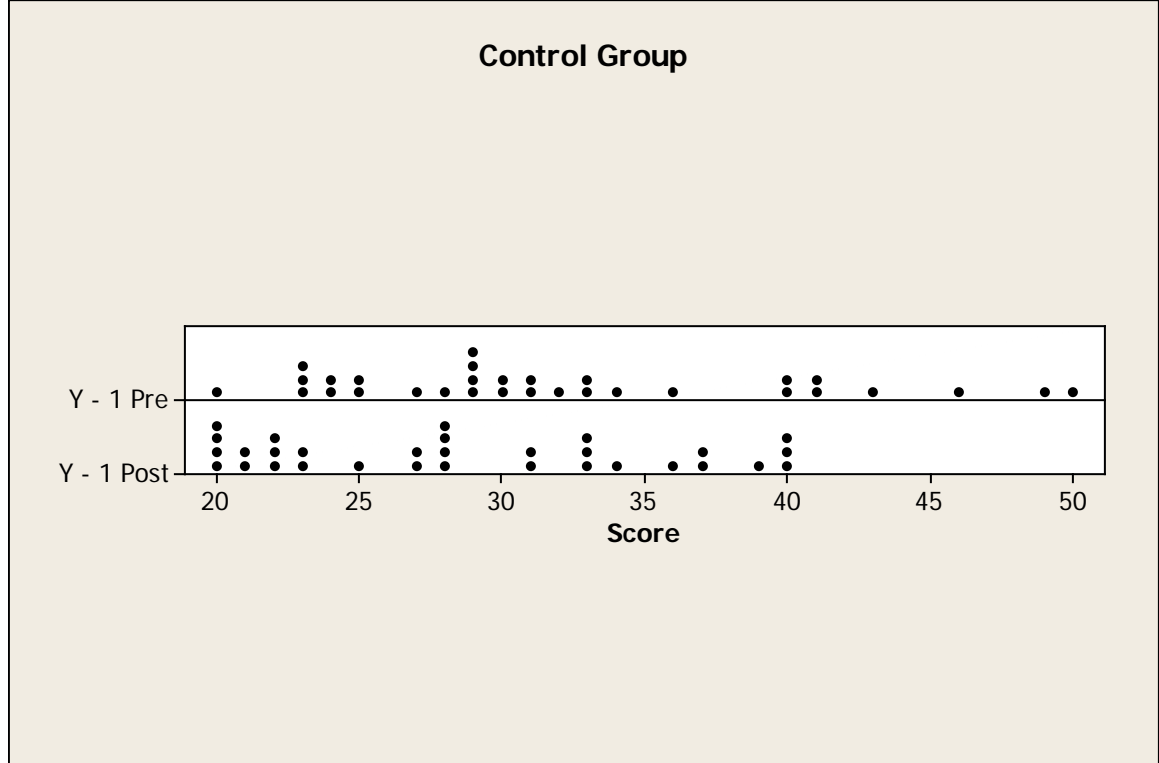Estimate for difference: 3.52
95% CI for difference: (-0.29, 7.32)
T-Test of difference = 0 (vs. not =): T-Value = 1.85 P-Value = 0.069 DF = 58

_____

	Number of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	SE Mean
Y-1 Pretest	31	32.19	8.04	1.4
Y-1 Posttest	31	28.68	6.87	1.2

Table 1. **Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y - 1 Pre, Y - 1 Post - Control Group**

Figure 3. STAI Y-1 Control Group Pretest Post Results

The posttest measure for the control group on the Y-2 ranged from 20 to 50 with a

mean of 32.26, a median of 29.00 and a standard deviation of 8.58. When the control

group Y-2 pretest mean is compared to the Y-2 posttest mean score, the p-Value is 0.293.

On the Trait Anxiety scale, although a reduction in anxiety was evident, participants did

not indicate a reduction in anxiety levels for the differences to be considered statistically

significant.

Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y - 2 Pre, Y - 2 Post - Control Group
Two-sample T for Y - 2 Pre vs. Y - 2 Post Control Group
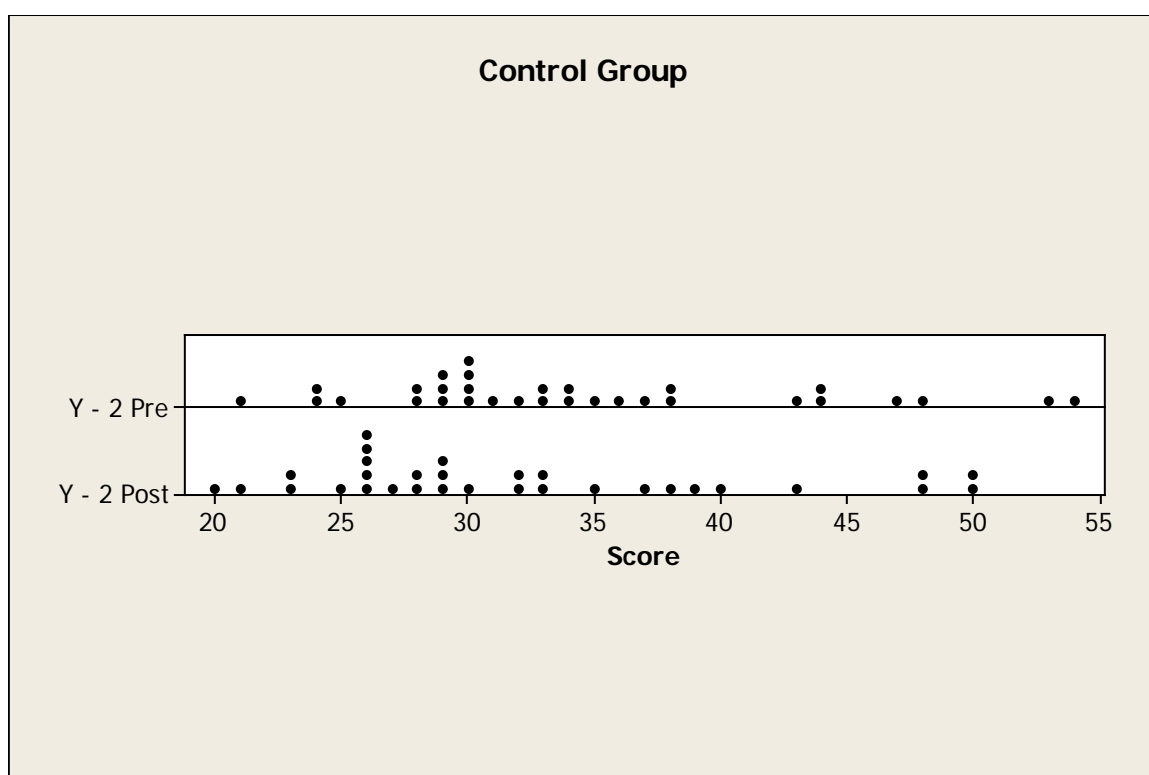Difference = mu (Y - 2 Pre_2) - mu (Y - 2 Post_2)
Estimate for difference: 2.29
95% CI for difference: (-2.03, 6.61)
T-Test of difference = 0 (vs. not =): T-Value = 1.06 P-Value = 0.293 DF = 59

	Number of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	SE Mean
Y-2 Pretest	31	34.55	8.41	1.5
Y-2 Posttest	31	32.26	8.58	1.5

Table 2. Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y - 2 Pre, Y - 2 Post - Control Group

Figure 4. **Y-2 Control Group STAI Pretest and Posttest Scores**

Experimental Group STAI Findings

At the outset of the study and before the interventions were administered, scores

for the experimental group on the Y-1 (State Anxiety) STAI pretest ranged from 20 to 49,

which is a range of 29 points. The mean for the experimental group was 34.29 and the

median 33.00, indicating the levels of anxiety were on the lower half of the scale on the

pretest. A standard deviation of 8.67 indicates that most scores were close to the mean.

There were no outliers, indicating there were no extreme feelings of anxiety.

       The Y-1 posttest for the experimental group presented a special and interesting set

of data. The range of scores spanned from 20 to 63 with a mean of 29.82, a median of

26.00 and a standard deviation of 10.73. The interesting data that the results of this one

measure offers is that 29 of the 34 participants scored, on the STAI spectrum of 20-80,

below the mid range of 40, 23 participants scored below the 30 and 5 participants scored

on the lowest score of 20. These scores indicate the interaction with poetry lowered

anxiety levels. Three participants' anxiety levels increased slightly; however, one

participant scored 63. This score of 63 on the Y-1 posttest for this participant was up

from a score of 32 on the Y-1 pretest, which is a considerable increase. This statistic

caught the attention of the Principle Investigator who contacted that participant. The

Principle Investigator felt comfortable contacting this participant because she provided

her name on the measures' answer sheets and had requested her scores and the results of

the study in general. When interviewed by the Principle Investigator in regard to her Y-1

posttest score, she indicated that the poem "The History Teacher" by Billy Collins had

upset her.

          The History Teacher

   Trying to protect his students' innocence
   he told them the Ice Age was really just
   the Chilly Age, a period of a million years
   when everyone had to wear sweaters.

   And the Stone Age became the Gravel Age,

named after the long driveways of the time.

The Spanish Inquisition was nothing more
than an outbreak of questions such as
"How far is it from here to Madrid"?
"What do you call the matador's hat"?

The War of the Roses took place in a garden,
and the Enola Gay dropped one tiny atom
on Japan.

The children would leave his classroom
for the playground to torment the weak
and the smart,
mussing up their hair and breaking their glasses,
while he gathered up his notes and walked home
past flower beds and white picket fences,
wondering if they would believe that soldiers
in the Boer War told long, rambling stories
designed to make the enemy nod off.

As is evident from the poem, the speaker is concerned with telling the truth to

children. As a teacher and grandparent herself, this participant was also concerned; in

fact, the poem, in the vernacular, "pushed her buttons." She described her response to the

poem as follows:

> After completing the questionnaire, I went to a room to read as well as listen to poetry. I came across "The History Teacher" by Billy Collins which I have read in the past. This time however, the meaning of the poem took me by force; tranquility had been replaced with an overwhelming sense of anxiety.
>
> Looking at Collin's poem from the perspective of a teacher and grandmother, I was reminded of the responsibility I have to my students and grandchildren. How does one have an honest dialogue, truthfully discussing past events without scaring that child?   What tools does each child need in order to successfully navigate through life? These were the thoughts that kept reverberating in my head as I contemplated the poem.
>
> I filled out the second questionnaire having this feeling. Evidently, this feeling of apprehension was reflected in my answers.

Her score, as an outlier, affected the findings of this section of the study, the Y-1

experimental group posttest.   The mean for the experimental group pretest was lower

than the mean for the posttest; however, the hypothesis tests for the mean at the 0.05 level

suggests that the experimental group mean, which includes this very individual and

unusual score of 63, is not low enough to be statistically significant. Because the mean is

sensitive to extreme scores, this one participant's posttest Y-1 score of 63 skewed the

mean so that this section of the study was not statistically significant. When this one

participant is removed from the analysis of the STAI Y-1 measure, the pretest mean

becomes 34.36 and the posttest mean becomes 28.81. The standard deviation changes to

8.79 on the pretest and to 9.12 on the posttest. P-Value becomes 0.015, which implies

that the pretest and the posttest are significantly different at the 0.05 level of significance.

Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y - 1 Pre, Y - 1 Post Experimental Group without Participant #4
Two-sample T for Y - 1 Pre vs. Y - 1 Post
Difference = mu (Y- 1 Pre) - mu (Y - 1 Post)
Estimate for difference: 5.54545
95% CI for difference: $(1.13815,\ 9.95276)$
T-Test of difference = 0 (vs. not =): T-Value = 2.51 P-Value = 0.014 DF = 63

	Number3Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	SE Mean
Y-1 Pretest	33	34.36	8.79	1.5
Y-1 Posttest	33	28.81	9.12	1.6

Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y - 1 Pre, Y - 1 Post Experimental Group with Participant #4
Two-sample T for Y - 1 Pre vs. Y - 1 Post
Difference = mu (Y - 1 Pre) - mu (Y - 1 Post)
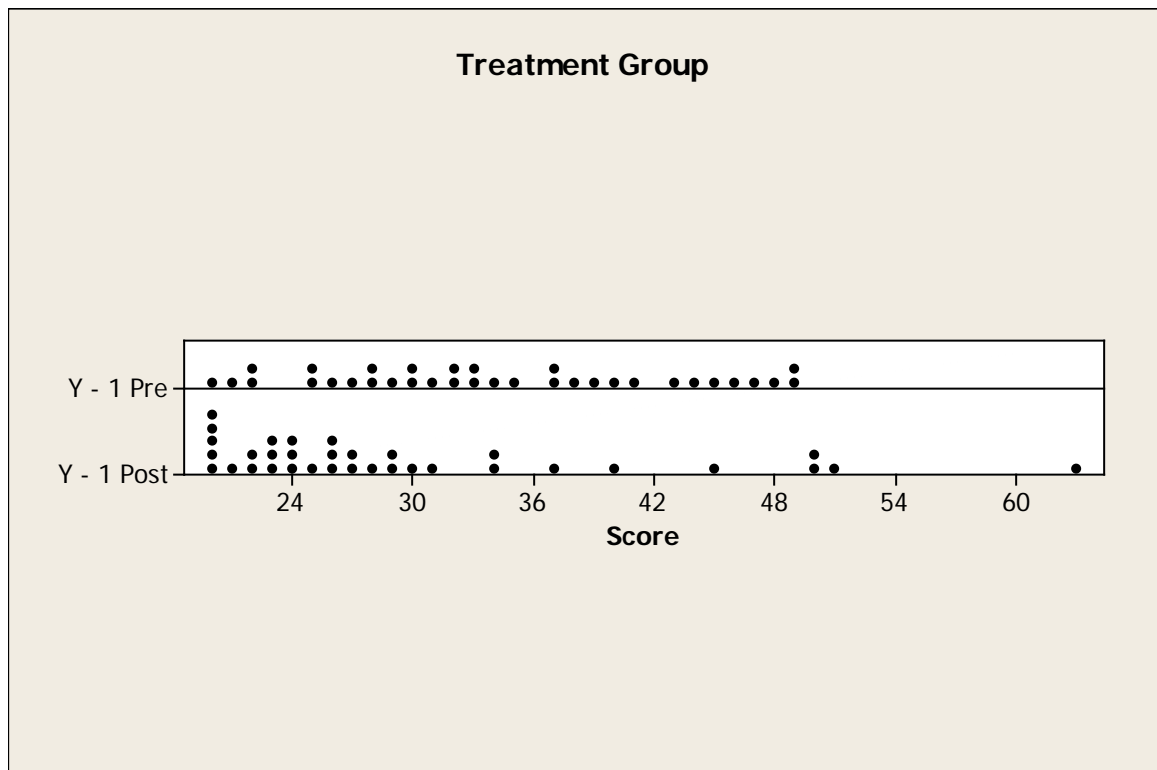Estimate for difference: 4.47
95% CI for difference: (-0.26, 9.20)
T-Test of difference = 0 (vs. not =): T-Value = 1.89 P-Value = 0.063 DF = 63

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	Number Parti6ipants	Mean	Standard Deviation	SE Mean
Y-1 Pretest	34	34.29	8.67	1.5
Y-1 Posttest	34	29.8	10.7	1.8

Table 3. Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y - 1 Pre, Y - 1 Post
Experimental Group without Participant #4

Figure 5. Y-1 Treatment Group Pretest and Posttest Results with
         Participant #4

Scores for the experimental group on the Y-2 (Trait Anxiety) STAI pretest ranged from 21 to 56, indicating at the outset of the study and before the interventions were administered a range of 35 points, which although is 7 points higher than the Y-1 pretest range, is still relatively small in light of a possible 60 point range. The mean for the experimental group Y-2 was 36.24, two points above the Y-1 mean score, and the median was 35.50, which is 2.5 points above the Y-1. Where 9 participants scored above the midway point of 40 on the Y-1, 11 scored above 40 on the Y-2. The standard deviation for the Y-2 measure was 9.52 just about one point higher than the Y-1.

The posttest measure for the experimental group on the Y-2 ranged from 20 to 53 with a mean of 33.29, a median of 33.50 and a standard deviation of 9.66. When the experimental group Y-2 pretest mean is compared to the Y-2 posttest mean, the p-Value is 0.211. Participants on the Trait Anxiety did not indicate enough of a reduction in the levels of anxiety they feel most of the time for the differences to be considered statistically significant.

Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y – 2 Pre, Y – 2 Post – Experimental Group
Two-sample T for Y – 2 Pre vs. Y – 2 Post
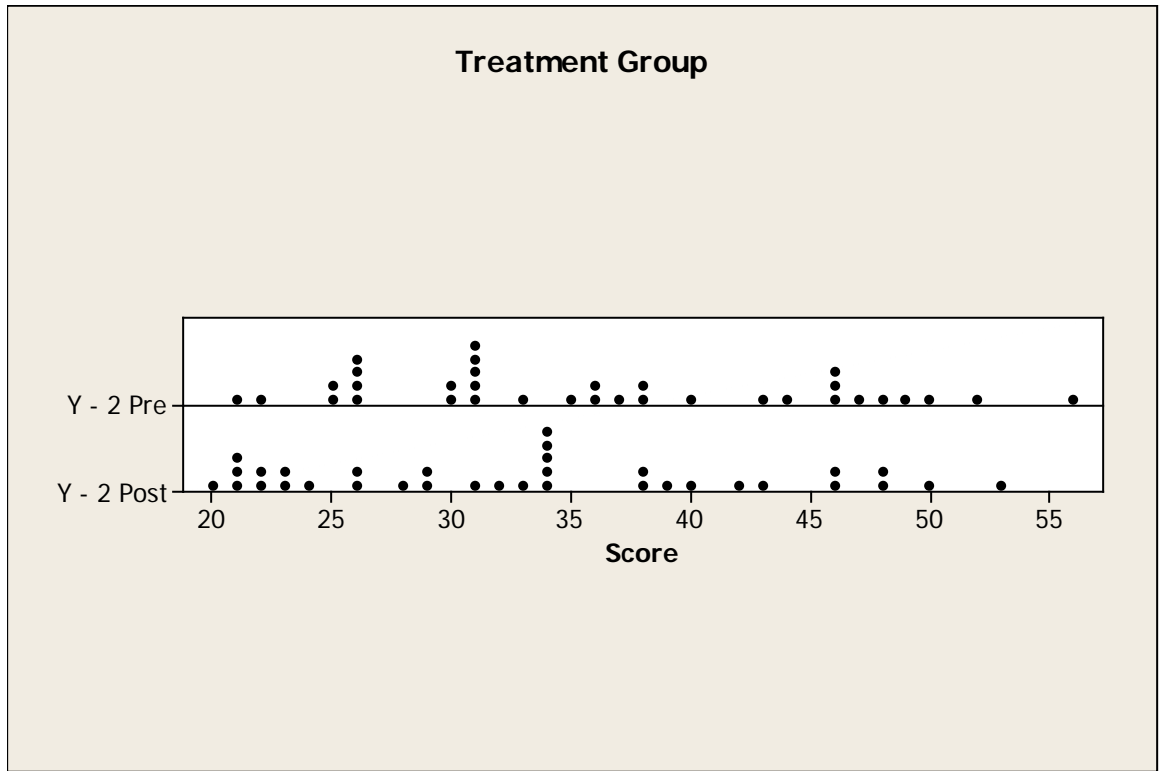Difference = mu (Y – 2 Pre) – mu (Y – 2 Post)
Estimate for difference: 2.94
95% CI for difference: (-1.70, 7.59)
T-Test of difference = 0 (vs.. not =): T-Value = 1.26 P-Value = 0.211 DF = 65

	Number of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation	SE Mean
Y-2 Pretest	34	36.24	9.52	1.6
Y-2 Posttest	34	33.29	9.66	1.7

Table 4. Two-Sample T-Test and CI: Y – 2 Pre, Y – 2 Post –
Experimental Group

**Figure 6.** Y-2 Treatment Group Pretest and Posttest Results

The following tables offer comparisons between the experimental/treatment group and the control group. Because the findings on the STAI for the control group, which read information about poetry, and for the experimental group, which interacted with poetry, indicate a decrease in anxiety levels for both groups, visuals comparing the two groups may be of interest.

STAI Statistics

	Y - 1 Pre Test		Y - 1 Post Test	
	Treatment Group	Control Group	Treatment Group	Control Group
Mean	34.29	32.19	29.82	28.68
SD	8.67	8.04	10.73	6.87

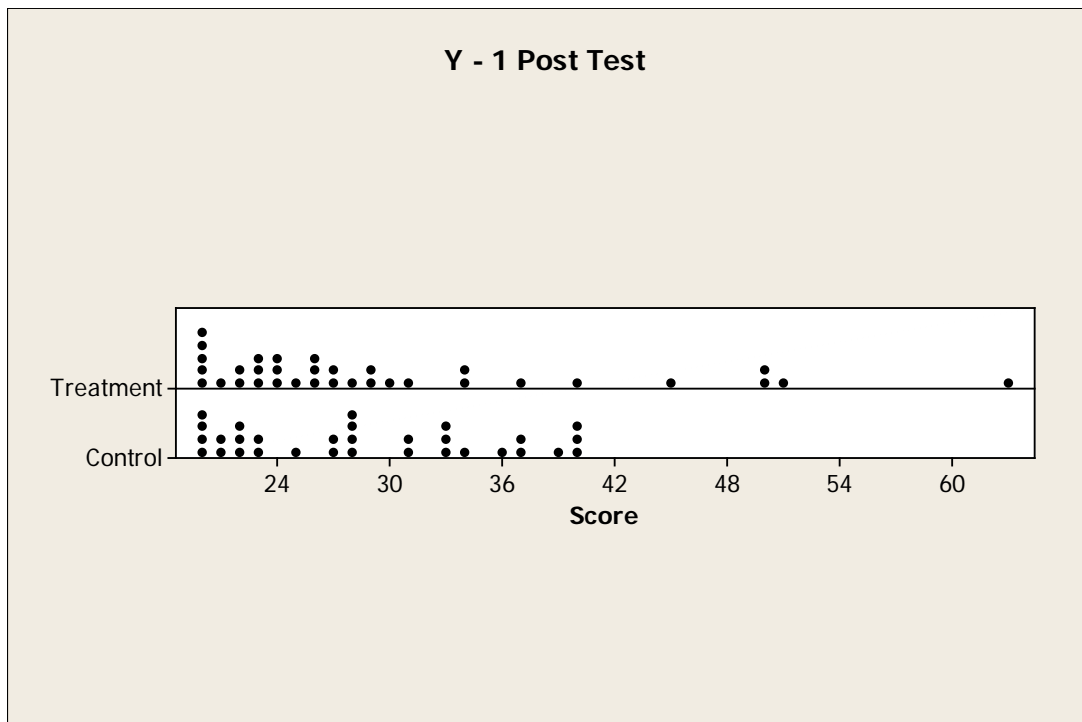|	Y - 2 Pre Test		Y - 2 Post Test	
	Treatment Group	Control Group	Treatment Group	Control Group
Mean	36.24	34.55	33.29	32.26
SD	9.52	8.41	9.66	8.58

Table 5. Comparisons of Experimental and Control Groups.
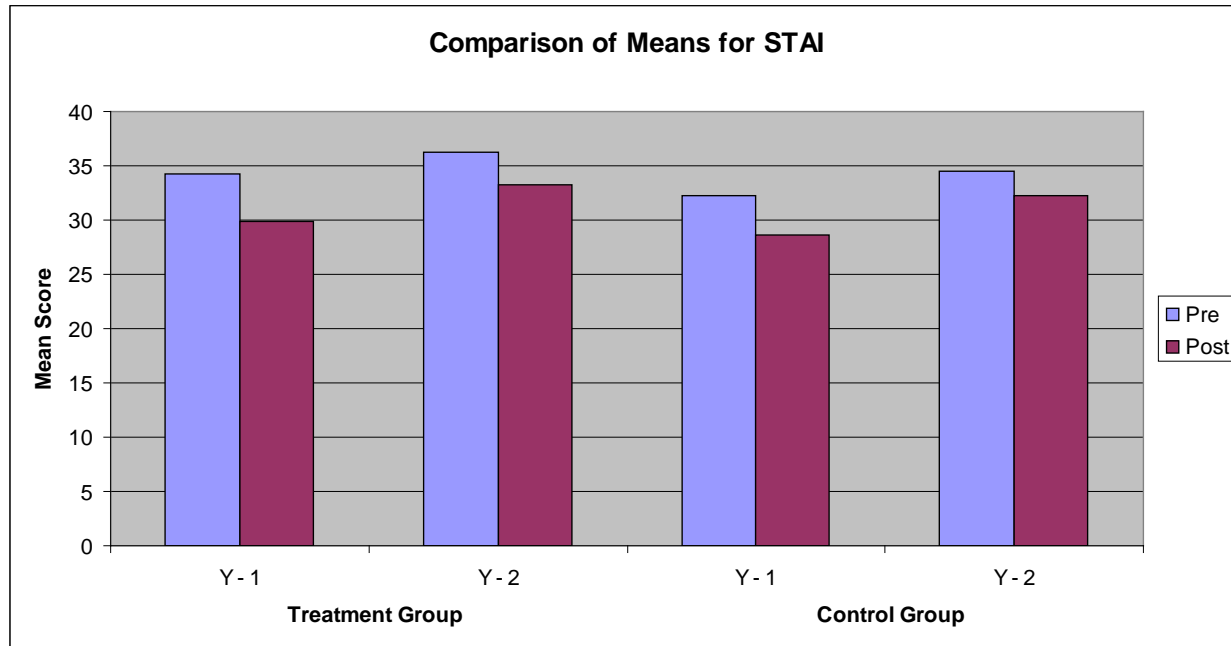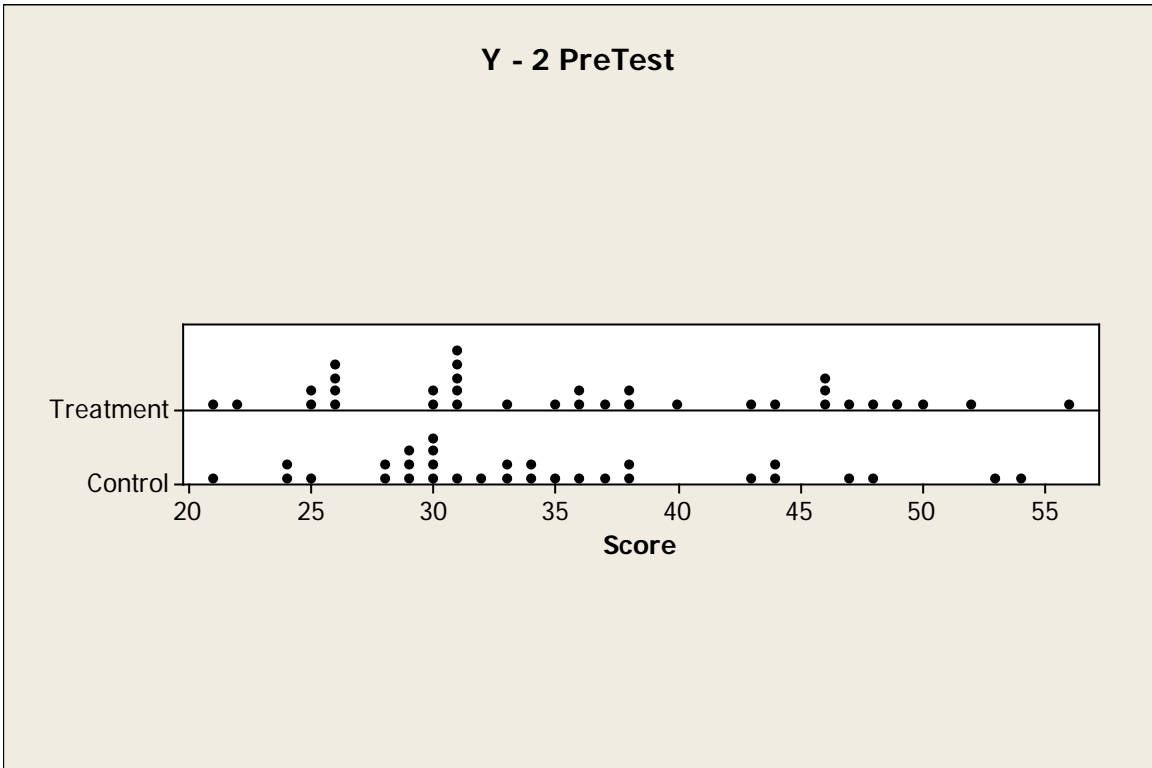

Figure 7. Comparison of STAI Means Control and Treatment Groups
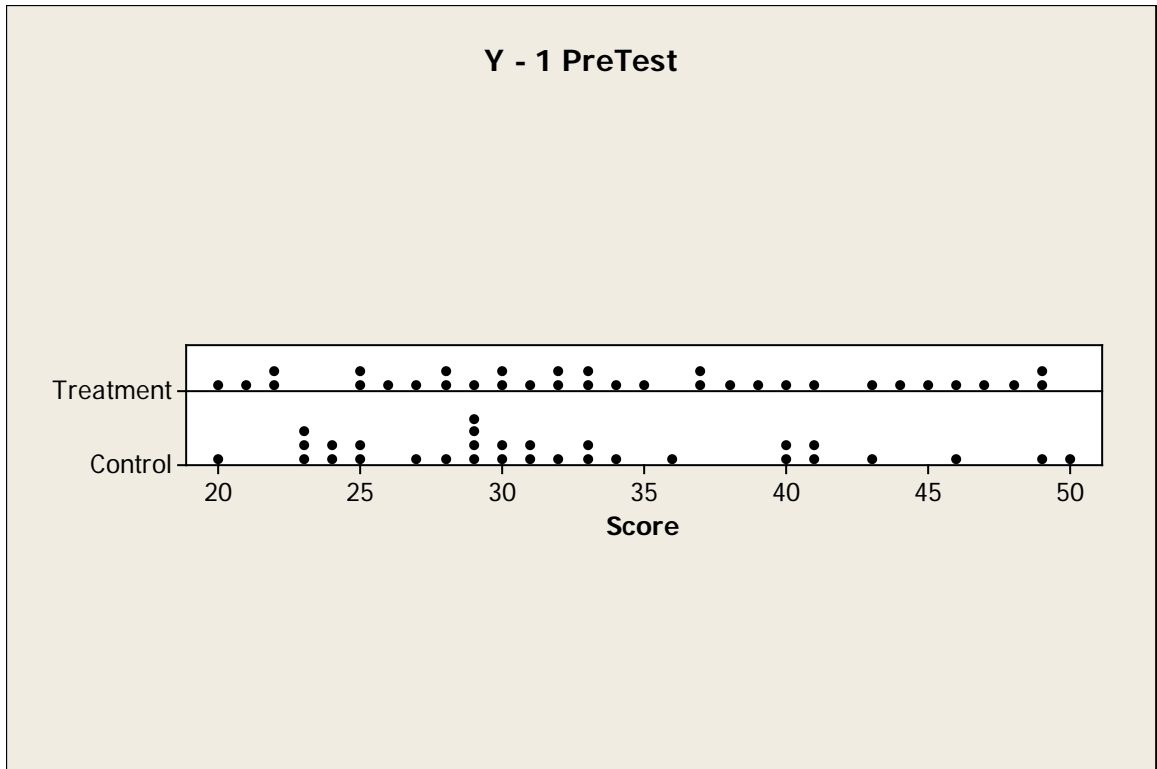
Figure 8. Comparison of STAI Y-1 Pretest Scores Control and Treatment
Groups

Figure 9. Comparison of STAI Y-1 Posttest Scores Control and Treatment
Groups

Figure 10. **Comparison STAI Y-2 Pretest Control and Treatment Groups**

Figure 11. Comparison STAI Y-2 Posttest Control and Treatment Groups

Discussion of Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) Statistical Findings

Information on Personal Orientation Inventory

Maslow (1954, 1962, 1967) "developed the idea of the self-actualized person who is more fully functioning and lives a more enriched life than does the average person. Such an individual is seen as developing and utilizing all of their unique capabilities, or potentialities, free of the inhibitions and emotional turmoil of those less self-actualizing."[149] This study used the POI to access how self-actualized participants were before and then after the intervention.

The analysis of the Poi includes a discussion of the scores of the Experimental and Control Groups on each of the 12 scales measured presented in order as they occur in Figure 1. Interpretation will also take into account the "overall profile elevation."[150] The mean standard score for each scale is 50, with a standard deviation of 10; therefore, on any given scale about 95% of the population at large will, in theory, fall between standard scores of 30 – 70. On the scale of scores from 20 – 80, the more scores over the mean standard score of 50 and the further near the top half of the standard scores indicates the more self-actualized the individual is.

All mean scores for both the control and experimental groups, save the control groups' posttest score for the scale self-acceptance, which fell just slightly outside the score of 40, fell within the 40 – 60 range, indicating the individuals in this study before and after the interventions were, as is the case with the overall general population, right in the middle.

If the Time Competence and Inner-Directed Scores or most of the scale scores fall above the mean standard score line based on the normal adult sample, the probability is that the person is one who is functioning relatively effectively and is comparatively competent in development towards a self-actualizing person. If most scores are below this mean, it may be that the individual is experiencing difficulty in personal effectiveness and that changes in value orientations would be beneficial in facilitating further personal development toward an actualizing individual. [151]

The profiles plotted in Figures 10 and 11 below illustrate those of both the pretests and posttests for the Experimental and Control Groups as compared across groups.   The pretests are indicated by a broken red line and the posttest is indicated by a solid red line.
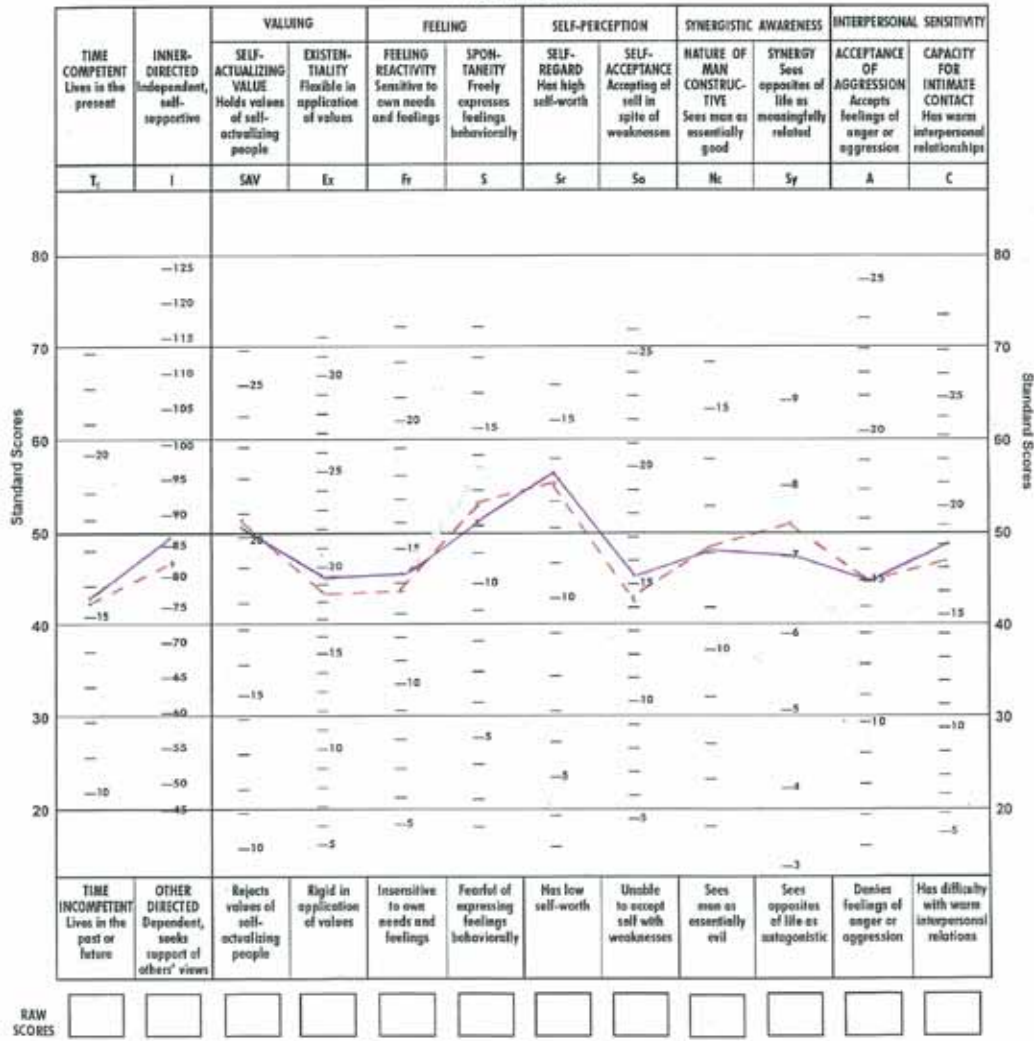
Figure 12. Experimental Group POI Pretest and Posttest Scores

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Figure 13. Control Group POI Pretest and Posttest Scores

POI Pretest and Posttest Scores Within and Between Groups Analysis

As Figures 10 and 11 indicate, most changes which took place within both groups on the POI between the pretests and the posttests were relatively small. The study indicates that to move one's deeply ingrained ideas on life, ideas created and reinforced by events over a life time, seems to take more than one three-part interaction with poetry and more than reading information about poetry once.

Analysis of Time Competence and Inner-Directed Scores

The support scale is designed to measure whether an individual's mode of reaction is characteristically "self oriented" or "other" oriented. Inner, or self, directed individuals are guided primarily by internalized principles and motivations while other directed persons are to a great extent influenced by their peer group or other external forces. The time scale measures the degree to which the individual lives in the present as contrasted with the past or future. The time competent person lives primarily in the present with full awareness, contact and full feeling reactivity while the time incompetent person lives primarily in the past, with guilts, regrets, and resentments, and/or in the future, with idealized goals, plans, expectations, predictions and fears. Scores on each of the ten subscales are intended to reflect a facet important in the development of the self-actualized person. [152]

Time Competent

The mean for Time Competence on the pretest for the Experimental Group was 15.469 and the standard deviation 3.058. For the same group on the posttest the mean was 15.563 and the standard deviation 3.015. The p-Value for the experimental group was 0.902. For the Control Group on the pretest for Time Competence, the mean score

was 16.067 and the standard deviation 3.279. On the posttest the mean was 16.000 and the standard deviation 2.936, resulting in a p-Value of 0.934.

When comparing the mean for the experimental and control groups, the p-Value for the two groups on the pretest was 0.462, and the P-Value for the two groups on the posttest was 0.565.

The mean standard score of 50 falls between 17 and 18 on the Time Competent scale of 10 - 23, indicating that the participants in both the Experimental Group and Control Group fell below the mean in being "present" oriented. Non-self-actualizing persons are comparatively the most time incompetent; thus, the participants of this study can be said to be more time incompetent than time competent, and that they were not more or less so because of the intervention.

Inner Directed

Inner-directed persons, because their parents and later authority figures have influenced them thus, are independent. Internal rather than external forces guide these people; an inner core of principles, not the principles of forces outside them, guides their lives. Other-directed persons look outside themselves for guidance and approval, and because of this they often invest their time and attention to eliciting from others what they lack inside themselves, appearing fearful and in need of reassurance of other's love. Self-actualized persons score between the extreme other and inner-directed person. [153]

Because both inner-direction and other-direction are begun early in life and assimilated deeply into the psyche, they too seem to be less susceptible to change from one intervention of either poetry or information about poetry. The mean standard score of 50 falls on about the 87 on the Inner-Directed scale, which ranges 45 – 125.   The

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experimental group pretest mean was 82.97 with a standard deviation of 10.3, and the posttest mean was 86.31 with a standard deviation of 9.92; this indicates movement toward being more inner-directed. The p-Value was 0.191, indicating that a positive change took place. Some interesting individual scores were seen in this scale. In the experimental group, 10 participants moved 6 or more points toward inner direction. One participant, in fact, moved from 75 to 92, and another moved from 77 to 91. This scale, Inner-Direction, was more susceptible to change than most other scales in the POI. Participants' posttest scores came very close to statistical significance. Again, it can be concluded that if a one hour interaction has a positive effect one can only imagine what might be the result if poetry became an integral part of the daily lives of people. Individuals may be moved to realize that life is best lived when one takes direction from within rather than being directed by outside forces.

The control group mean on the pretest was 83.77 with a standard deviation of 10.0, and the posttest mean was 85.80 with a standard deviation of 11.2, indicating movement toward being more inner-directed. The p-Value for the control group was 0.461, which is less positive change than for the experimental group whose p-Value was 0.191; thus, it can be said that an interaction with poetry encourages people to be more directed by their own thoughts and values than information about poetry.   Poetry could possibly be beneficial in that it could help one to be independent and self-supportive and not dependent on or seeking support from others.

Self-Actualizing

This scale seeks to discover whether or not individuals hold and live by the values of self-actualized people. High scores indicate an acceptance of these values and low

scores indicate a rejection of them. The mean standard score of 50 falls just slightly above 20 on the Self-Actualizing scale of 10 – 26.

The mean for the pretest for the experimental group was 20.9, and the mean score for the posttest was 20.75 creating a p-Value of 0.775, indicating no statistical significance. The mean score for the control group pretest was 20.77, and the mean score for the posttest was 21.00 with a p-Value of 0.727, indicating that an interaction with poetry had about the same effect as did information about poetry. Interestingly, most scores moved only by a point or two. 12 scores went up and 12 scores went down; all others stayed the exact same. The standard deviation for the experimental group pretest was only 2.305 and on the posttest only 2.048. The control groups' standard deviations were 2.344 and 2.779.

With a mean score for the control group pretest at 20.77 and a mean for the pretest for the experimental group at 20.91, a p-Value between groups of 0.814 was created. The mean score for the control group posttest was 21.00 and the mean for the posttest for the experimental group was 20.75, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.690. Both groups remained relatively the same, indicating that the interventions neither reinforced the values nor dissuaded people away from them.

Existentiality

This scale measures one's flexibility in applying the values and principles of self-actualizing persons into one's life. In other words, it measures one's ability to use good judgment in application of values. High scores indicate flexibility and low scores indicate a rigid stance to values, an inability to reassess and change values.[154] The mean

standard score of 50 falls between 21 and 22 on the Existentiality scale, which ranges from 5 - 32.

The mean score for the experimental group on the pretest was 18.66 and the posttest mean was 19.69, creating a p-Value of 0.340. The pretest standard deviation was 4.389 and the posttest was 4.192. More than half of the scores went up; 15 participants' scores went up by 1-3 points, one score went from 7 to 11, another from 18 to 22 and another from 12 to 24. The mean for the control group pretest was 18.83 and the posttest was 19.23 with a p-Value of 0.732 and standard deviations of 4.542 and 4.462. Both groups were similar in this regard.

The mean score for the control group pretest being 18.83 and the mean for the pretest for the experimental group being 18.66 created a p-Value between groups of 0.877. The mean score for the control group posttest at 19.23 and the mean for the posttest for the experimental group at 19.69 created a p-Value between groups of 0.682.

Interestingly, the scores on both the pretests and posttests for both groups, although still very close to the mean standard score, were among those which were the furthest from the self-actualized person, indicating that these persons were more rigid than the average person. This remained relatively the same, before and after the interactions, indicating that one interaction is not enough to move a person to become more or less flexible or rigid in applying their values.

Feeling Reactivity

High scores indicate sensitivity to one's own feelings and needs. Low scores show insensitivity to one's own feelings and needs. The mean standard score of 50 falls

between 15 and 16 on the Feeling Reactivity scale, which ranges from 5 - 23. The participants in this study tended to move toward being more sensitive.

The experimental group pretest mean was 13.94 with a standard deviation of 2.539, and the posttest mean was 14.28 with a standard deviation of 3.466, creating a p-value of 0.653. For the control group the pretest mean was 14.50 with a standard deviation of 3.224, and the posttest mean was 15.50 with a standard deviation of 3.655, creating a p-Value of 0.250, indicating no statistical significance for either group.

The mean score for the control group pretest was 14.50 and the mean for the pretest for the experimental group was 13.94, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.451. The mean score for the control group posttest was 15.53 and the mean for the posttest for the experimental group was 14.28, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.172.

Spontaneity

This category measures freedom to react spontaneously or to feel comfortable in being oneself. High scores measure the ability to express feelings in spontaneous action, and low scores indicate that one is fearful of expressing feelings in spontaneous action.[155] The mean standard score of 50 falls between 11 and 12 on a scale of 2 to 18. Pretest score for the experimental group was 12.53 with a standard deviation of 2.214, and the posttest score was 12.12 with a standard deviation of 2.311, creating a p-Value of 0.475. Pretest mean for the control group was 12.53 and a mean for the posttest was 12.60 with a p-Value of 0.931 and small standard scores. The people in this study were closer to the scores of the self-actualized person in the category of Spontaneity both initially and after the interventions. The experimental group scores stayed just about the same from the

pretest to the posttest, as did the control group scores, indicating that although this group of people generally were moving toward self-actualization in Spontaneity the intervention itself did not move them either closer or further away.

The mean score for the control group pretest was 12.53 and the mean for the pretest for the experimental group was interestingly also 12.53, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.997. The mean score for the control group posttest was 12.60 and the mean for the posttest for the experimental group was 12.12, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.502.

Self-Regard

The scale measures one's positive feelings of self because of worth or strength. High scores indicate the ability to like oneself because of one's strength as a person. Low scores reflect feelings of low self-worth. The mean standard score of 50 falls slightly under 12 on a scale of 3 to 16.

The highest score on the profile sheet is 16; thus the most self-actualized person scores 16 at the highest. The pretest mean for the experimental group was 13.41with a standard deviation of 1.998 and a posttest mean of 14.4 with a standard deviation of 1.601, creating a p-Value of 0.631. The pretest mean for the control group was 13.30, and the posttest mean was 13.53 with a p-Value of 0.690 and standard deviation scores of 2.292 and 2.209.

The mean for each group indicates that participants in this study in terms of self-regard were close to self-actualization. Some participants, nine in the experimental group and ten in the control group, had scores as high as 15 or 16 in self-regard, which is considerably self-actualized. They changed very little as well. These higher scores may

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indicate that these participants were functioning well in terms of self-regard. Because these scores were quite high to begin with, it is not surprising that one interaction with poetry did not move them higher and certainly not surprising that it did not move them away from their positive feelings of self-regard. However, on the lower half of the scores of the profile, one participant from the experimental group scored 8 on the pretest and moved up to 10 on the posttest. Another participant from the experimental group scored an 8 and moved to a 12. So, although the amount of change for the entire group was not statistically significant, participants with a lower sense of self regard improved their feelings through their interaction with poetry.

The mean score for the control group pretest was 13.30 and the mean for the pretest for the experimental group was 13.41, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.847. The mean score for the control group posttest was 13.53 and the mean for the posttest for the experimental group was 13.62, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.319.

Self-Acceptance

High scores reflect an acceptance of one's self in spite of one's weaknesses or deficiencies. Low scores reflect an inability to accept one's weaknesses. The mean standard score of 50 falls just slightly above 17 on a scale of 5 to 26.

The mean for the experimental group on the pretest was 14.4 with a standard deviation of 2.772, and on the posttest it was 15.37 with a standard deviation of 3.480, creating a p-value of 0.224. The pretest mean for the control group was 14.27 with a standard deviation of 4.017, and for the posttest it was 12.83 with a standard deviation of 2.925, creating a p-Value of 0.120.

The mean score for the control group pretest was 14.27 and the mean for the

pretest for the experimental group was 14.40, creating a p-Value between groups of

0.326. The mean score for the control group posttest was 12.83 and the mean for the

posttest for the experimental group was 15.37, creating a p-Value between groups of

0.003. The changes in the scores of the experimental group compared to those of the

control group were statistically significant. The mean for the control group actually went

down indicating the interaction with information about poetry lessened participants'

feelings of self-acceptance, where the experimental groups' mean increased indicating

the opposite.

These scores are interesting in themselves as they are so far removed from

participants' scores on self-regard. Throughout the entirety of the POI, participants

scored most like self-actualized persons on self-regard and the furthest from self-

actualized persons on self-acceptance. Interestingly, the control group posttest score of

12.83 on self acceptance measure was the furthest away from the scores of self-actualized

persons throughout the entire measure. This group of people, both the control and

experimental groups, were unable to be accepting of their weaknesses but at the same

time had a fairly high sense of self-worth. The question then can be asked, does this data

seem to imply that on the one hand they over evaluate themselves, and on the other hand

they deny weakness to themselves.

Nature of Man

High scores reflect one's belief that humanity is essentially good and "can resolve

the goodness-evil, masculine-feminine, selfishness-unselfishness and spirituality-

sensuality dichotomies in the nature of man. A high score, therefore, measures the self-

actualizing ability to be synergic in understanding of human nature."[156] Low scores indicate one's belief that humanity is essentially evil. The mean standard score of 50 falls just the slightest bit above midway between 10 and 11 on a scale of 6 to 16.

The pretest mean for the experimental group was 12.12 with a standard deviation of 1.540, and for the posttest 12.16 with a standard deviation of 1.526, creating a p-Value of 0.935. For the control group, the pretest mean was 11.97 with a standard deviation of 1.671, and the posttest mean was 12.37 with a standard deviation of 1.752, creating a p-Value of 0.369.

The mean score for the control group pretest was 11.97 and the mean for the pretest for the experimental group was 12.12, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.700. The mean score for the control group posttest was 12.37 and the mean for the posttest for the experimental group was 12.16, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.617. Neither the interaction with poetry nor the information about poetry had a significant effect on the way participants view humanity.

This data has some interesting aspects, however. The highest self-actualized score is 16. Both groups in the study scored below the standard score of 50; in other words, they saw humanity as tending toward being more evil than good. As a group, they held themselves in fairly high regard, but saw humanity in general as less good.

Synergy

This category measures the ability to rise above dualities of life. High scores indicate the ability to see opposites as "meaningfully related"[157] and not antagonistic. When one is synergistic one sees that work and play are not different, that lust and love, selfishness and unselfishness, and other dichotomies are not really opposites.[158]

The mean standard score of 50 falls about 1/3 of the way between 7 and 8 on a scale of 3 to 9. Experimental groups' pretest mean was 7.41 with a standard deviation of 1.132, and the posttest mean was 7.19 with a standard deviation of 1.09, creating a p-Value of 0.434. The control groups' pretest mean was 6.87 with a standard deviation of 1.224, and the posttest mean was 7.03 with a standard deviation of 1.159, creating a p-Value of 0.590. The highest score for the self-actualized person is 9. The participants in the experimental group scored 7.4 and 7.1, just above the standard score of 50, which correlates on the scale for synergy to about 7.3.

The mean score for the control group pretest was 6.87 and the mean for the pretest for the experimental group was 7.41, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.077. The mean score for the control group posttest was 7.03 and the mean for the posttest for the experimental group was 7.19, creating a p-Value between groups of 0.592.

Acceptance of Aggression

A high score indicates one accepts the natural feelings of aggression that arise in life, and low scores indicate a denial of these feelings. The highest score for a self-actualized person is 25 with and the lowest is 6 with the standard score of 50 falling at about 16.5.

The experimental group pretest mean score was 15.03 with a standard deviation of 3.641, and the posttest mean was 15.0 with a standard deviation of 3.641, creating a p-Value of 0.454. The control group pretest mean was 14.77 with a standard deviation of 4.049, and the posttest was 15.47 with a standard deviation of 4.175, creating a p-Value of 0.512.

The mean score for the control group pretest was 14.77 and the mean for the

pretest for the experimental group was 15.03, creating a p-Value between groups of

0.788. The mean score for the control group posttest was 15.47 and the mean for the

posttest for the experimental group was 15.03, creating a p-Value between groups of

0.262. Both groups fell below the middle standard score, indicating participants were

less able to accept feelings of aggression, and that the interventions did not change that.

Capacity for Intimate Contact

Making contact may be defined as the ability to develop and maintain an "I

Thou" relationship in the here-and-now and the ability to meaningfully touch another

human being. We know that intimate contact seems to be encumbered by expectations

and obligations. Thus, it can be said that the climate to establish good contact is best

when the individual does not over-respond to, nor does he utilize, inter-personal demand

expectations and obligations. Other measured dimensions which facilitate contact are the

ability to express vs. impress, being vs. pleasing, and the ability to relate intensely to

another person either aggressively or tenderly.[159]

High scores indicate the ability to relate meaningfully to other human beings, and

low scores indicate difficulty relating meaningfully to other human beings.

The pretest mean for the experimental group was 17.19 with a standard deviation

of 3.771; the posttest was 18.09 with a standard deviation of 3.880, creating a p-Value of

0.347. The control group pretest mean was 16.80 with a standard deviation of 3.836; the

posttest mean was 18.07 with a standard deviation of 3.895, creating a p-Value of 0.210.

Some small positive change took place in both groups.

CHAPTER 5:
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations

Were future researchers wanting to duplicate this study, the recommendation would be for the principle investigator to widen the range of the search for participants. A relatively small radius was covered for this study, and perhaps had it been wider the possibility of locating more individuals with less apprehension of and more appreciation of poetry would have increased. The area solicited for participants for this study covered a small suburban area about 35 miles outside of Boston. Were participants also recruited closer to and inside the cultural centers of Boston, perhaps a greater appreciation for poetry would have been found.

So too, were a more significant lessening on feelings of trait anxiety and an increase in being self-actualized to be sought more than a single interaction with poetry would be recommended. This study indicated a positive change in feelings of anxiety and in several categories of the POI positive change feelings of self-actualization are enhanced by one interaction with poetry. Therefore, should a series of interactions be conducted, the possibility of further positive movement may be increased. It is suggested, therefore, to those who would either duplicate this study or take it further, that consistent interaction with poetry over a period of time may move lessen participants' trait anxiety and move them in the direction of self-actualization.

The recruiting process of this study revealed that some people are intimidated by poetry. Therefore, future studies might reconsider requesting participants in the experimental group pay attention to the images in the poems, listen to the particular voice speaking out of the poem, write down their thoughts and reactions as they read the poems and then to create a poem from their reactions. Having participants simply read and enjoy the poems and nothing else may provide a different outcome in that it may prove less stressful for participants. This is conjecture, but participants may have felt a bit like they were back in the classroom with a teacher asking for results.

It may be interesting to note here that because participants in the experimental group were specifically asked to be aware of their feelings during the intervention, one hypothetically could have expected their interaction with poetry to have caused participants to become more aware of their own feelings and thus more susceptible to changing their views on them. In other words, even though participants in the experimental group were asked for a heightened awareness of their feelings in response to poetry it did not influence them to become more sensitive to them in general. This Principal Investigator asks if there could have been a disconnect between their perception in real life and that which they perceived in the moments of their reading and interacting with poetry. They did not allow the task at hand, feeling for the speaker, images and ideas in the poems, to influence their sensitivity to their own needs and feelings. This data is very interesting because the poems created indicate their having allowed themselves to feel. Please see Appendix F for the poems created by the experimental group.

The time frame for recruiting participants needs to be more than two weeks. The recommendation would be to allow at least a month solely to gather participants. Time is needed to carry out such activities as visiting local radio stations and conducting informational talks at local libraries, schools and community centers. Calm and confidence should permeate each aspect of the study; therefore, the alleviation of stress around acquiring the hoped-for number of participants as the date for the study nears would be optimal.

Another recommendation would be to have a sufficient number of research assistants in every aspect of the study. Several people need to be involved with recruitment. Having just the principal investigator recruit is not enough manpower for the amount of time and effort required to secure the recommended 75 participants. Although the principle investigator must have input in all aspects of the study, a research assistant, rather than the principle investigator, should be available for the more mundane tasks such as buying the pencils for participants to complete the measures. A certain positive affect would be gained by allowing others to help more.

In retrospect, the Principle Investigator either would have machine-scored the results of the measures or delegated the process to research assistants. For the working person who is also pursuing a doctoral degree to do all the scoring by hand is a not an effective use of time.

Conclusions

In the final analysis, the STAI and the POI measures from this study provided important information on the power of poetry to affect levels of anxiety and self-actualization. Statistical significance was achieved in the STAI Y-1 measure for the

experimental group, indicating that a single interaction with poetry has a significant effect on one's level of anxiety at that moment. Sitting down and reading poetry (perhaps keeping in mind the person who is speaking from the poem and the images or word pictures created to bring to life the ideas being presented and perhaps even writing a few lines of poetry in response to those poems read) can bring a sense of calm.

Experimental group participants indicated feeling less anxiety on the State Anxiety than on the Trait Anxiety. In other words, participants felt less anxiety at the moment than they perceived themselves to feel in general or most of the time. This may be credited to many variables, but certainly the setting and the initial actions required of participants in the study did not incite anxiety and may have dissuaded participants from feelings of nervous anticipation and obviated any feelings of fear.

Participants had volunteered and may have felt good about themselves for helping in the study. Certainly that most participants fears had been assuaged by the Principle Investigator, may also have contributed to feelings of calm. The calm of the church meeting hall after all services were concluded and the organized and smooth transition into the study may have contributed. The momentary activity that ensued as a result of participants arriving unannounced did not seem to create anxiety either in them or in those participants who had joined the study well beforehand.

The control group findings also indicate reductions in State-Anxiety levels. This is not only interesting information, but it is also surprising. The experimental (without #4) group's p-Value was 0.015, and control group's p-Value was 0.069, which is just shy of statistical significance. Both groups experienced large

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reductions in State-Anxiety. It can be said then that reading information about poetry and poets, information about literary eras and their characteristics seems also to elicit feelings of calm. Just sitting down, perhaps in a pleasant, sunlit room for an hour, and reading, even if the material is somewhat academic, can elicit feelings of calm at that moment. This information could be helpful to the stress-ridden masses in our midst. This study set out to see if poetry lessened anxiety, and it did that. But this study also discovered that sitting quietly and reading also lessens levels of anxiety.

On the Y-2 measure of the STAI, most participants also moved away from their pretest scores toward feeling less anxious. Although they did not move enough for statistical significance, most none-the-less indicated a decrease in anxiety. The experimental group moved further than the control group here, but again the findings indicate that reading both poetry and information about poetry has a calming effect. This finding is also important because it indicates that one's perception of their general state of anxiety can also be impacted by interaction with poetry. Were people to read poetry on an ongoing basis, incorporate it into their lives, they may potentially reap the benefit of feeling less anxiety and thus perhaps over time perceive their general anxiety levels as considerably lower. As all the great poets have indicated through the ages, poetry is a special gift to be welcomed into our lives as such.

A word further on the experimental group STAI Y-2 posttest scores is in order. As stated above, most scores indicated a reduction in anxiety, but several individual scores are interesting. Of the 34 participants 24 showed a reduction. One participant's score dropped by 12 points, another's by 15 points and still another's by 19 points; these

all indicate a decrease in their perception of their feelings of anxiety in general. All other participants in this group of 24 experienced reductions in trait anxiety between 1 and 9 points. A reduction in anxiety is a reduction in anxiety – it's all good, indicating poetry can lower one's anxiety level. From this data, it can be assumed then that poetry can, for some individuals, reduce feelings of anxiety after an interaction with poetry.

Although the p-Value (0.293) for the Y-2 posttest for the control group was not statistically significant, it can be conjectured through the contrast of the p-Value (0.069) for the Y-1 post test for the control group which is very close to being statistically significant, that were people to sit and read more consistently they would be calmer and perceive themselves as such at that moment and also perceive their overall, long-term feelings of anxiety lessen as well. Sitting and quietly reading for an hour on an on-going basis in life could reduce anxiety and elicit calm.

In the final analysis, this study also found that one interaction with poetry changes only slightly the feelings and skills measured by the POI. So deeply ingrained are these, one interaction with poetry has less impact. However, as measured by the STAI Y-1 scale, State-Anxiety, being a more transitory feeling, was more readily affected by a single interaction with poetry. This finding was also born out in the scores on the Y-2 STAI where participants evaluated their states of anxiety in general. More like the POI, the Y-2 measures perceptions over a longer period of time, asking participants to evaluate what their anxiety levels are most of the time; thus, participants felt that one interaction with poetry was not sufficient to significantly alter their long term perceptions of anxiety.

This is not to say that poetry does not have the power to affect levels of Trait-Anxiety or of self-actualization. This is to say that one interaction alone has the power to

significantly move anxiety levels felt at that moment. It is also fair to say that interacted with on a more permanent basis poetry may have the power to make long term anxiety levels diminish and increase feelings of self-actualization. However, other studies are needed to determine the degree of effect poetry has on self-actualization. As this study shows, small changes were detected; perhaps, as is the case with Y-2 anxiety, changes in self-actualization would require interaction with poetry over a longer period of time.

Certainly, these findings are important today. With the busy pace of modern life, it is little wonder that many, many people complain of high stress levels. Everywhere, in all walks of life, people are not only rushing, pushing and being pushed, but they are reading less and less. The culture of sitting down to enjoy a good book or putting one's feet up after a days' work to read the newspaper is on the way out. People are moving too fast, and when they do slow down it is only long enough to listen to news that focuses on the most sensational and often dreadful events, creating yet more anxiety. News full of sound bites, mistruths and mean rhetoric does not a calm society make, but perhaps a society that read more and certainly that interacted with poetry more would be a calmer one.

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APPENDIX A
Initial Interview Questions

1. What is your full name?
2. Are you available on _____ from _____ to_____ o'clock?
3. Do you have transportation to _____ on _____?
4. Do you have difficulty seeing or hearing?
5. Are you able to read and write in English?
6. Are you interested in participating in this research study to gather information on poetry?
7. Do you prefer to be contacted by email or regular mail?
8. What is your email or regular mail address?

Holos University Graduate Seminary supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to assist you in your decision whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

The Researcher is interested in studying the possible emotional effects of poetry as measured by the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and the Personality Orientation Inventory (POI).

This study will require one visit and about 3 hours of your time. The visit will involve the completion of two measures designed to gather information before and after your interaction with poetry. Following the study, you have the option to receive a copy of the data gathered about your interaction with poetry.

Your interaction with research assistants will be minimal, in order to maintain the best scientific conditions. However, were any subject to experience any distress, the protocol for risks and benefits will be followed. The Principle Researcher will be available for support, and if necessary the subject will be referred to a professional and/or Patricia Norris the Chair of the Study.

Your participation is solicited although strictly voluntary. The interview questions will be recorded, compiled and analyzed by the Principle Researcher along with the results of the pretest and posttest. However, your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. You will be randomly assigned a number and only this number will identify your information.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is complete, please feel free to contact the principle researcher by phone, mail or email. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact the Holos University Graduate Seminary Dean of Academic Affairs at (888) 272-6109, 5607 S. 222nd Road, Fair Grove, Missouri, 65648.

Sincerely,

Linda Matondi	Patricia Norris, Ph.D.
Principal Researcher	Faculty Supervisor
23 Westcott Road	27660 Poppy Drive
Hopedale, MA 01747	Willits, CA 95490

508 478 0897   707 456 9968

With my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Participant: _____

You have volunteered to take part in an experimental study regarding the possible effects of different interactions with poetry.

On the day of the study, you will be administered two pretests, will interact with poetry and finally be administered two posttests. The purpose of this study will be to determine the effect the interaction with poetry has had.

No judgments will be made and no grade will be assigned; this experience is meant to be enjoyed. The study is designed to make you as comfortable as possible and the experience with poetry as pleasant and positive as possible. You will not be asked to share your thoughts; the steps in your interaction with poetry have been structured for your personal response alone.

The study will identify you only by a randomly assigned number, to maintain your privacy. Other information, such as your age and occupation, is for statistical purposes only.

You are free to leave the study at any time if you choose and will not be penalized for it. Research Assistants will be available to you as you go through the process. If you have any questions, Research Assistants will be there to answer them for you. We expect you to have an interesting and pleasant experience, and thank you for your help.

The following information is designed to supply information that will help The Researcher in the process of conducting the study on the effects of an interaction with poetry.

Please fill out the questions below and return the form to the Principle Researcher. This information will be used only for data recording purposes, or to contact you if necessary.

Name:_____ Phone:_____

Email _____

Age:_____ Gender: Female_____ Male_____

Married_____ Single_____

Occupation _____

What is the last grade you attended in school? _____

Do you enjoy reading, if so what? _____

_____

Have you experienced any significant life stresses in the last 3 months? Yes_____ No___

For example: Divorce_____ Loss of a job_____ Death of a loved one_____

Other _____

Over the last 3 months have you experienced: Anxiety_____ Insomnia_____

Depression _____

Do you have any major health issues? Yes_____ No_____

Please explain briefly_____

Please return this form to the Principle Researcher as prearranged either in the stamped, addressed envelope provided or by email. You will be given further instructions by phone or email.

Thank you!

Welcome to this study on poetry. RELAX!   ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE!

It is meant to be enjoyed, so take a deep breath and allow yourself the pleasure of a very personal interaction with poetry.

Inside this folder, you will find a selection of poems to read. You are free to read as many or as few as you choose. Find ones that appeal to you. Read them *slowly*, as many times as you wish, line by line, sentence by sentence.

Poems are meant to be read again and again.

Enjoy the language, letting the words just wash over you. Allow whatever images the words create in your imagination to emerge.

Try to imagine the person in the poem who is speaking out to you.

Welcome any emotions that surface and allow for possible meanings inherent in the poem to emerge.

When you have read as many poems as you wish, using the pencil and paper provided, write 10 - 15 statements about what you have discovered in or experienced from the poems. Perhaps there is one that you especially like or that especially speaks to you. What images does it create? Do any thoughts or emotions emerge? Write them down. All thoughts and emotions are worthy.

From your ten or so statements, create an original poem.
Not to worry – no one will ever see it, unless you choose to share it.

When you have completed your poem, return to the main meeting area to complete your second two measures.

If you are interested in the results of either your own personal measures or of the over-all study, please complete the enclosed form and leave it with The Principle Researcher.

Thank you so much for your participation.

Original poems created by participants in the experimental group.

Poem # 1

Be yourself first
and then you will really see others
Treat yourself like your best friend
and then you will be treated with love
Find others who love you for who you are
and you will find true happiness

Poem # 2

Longer days are gone.
Time is marching on.
I must have skipped a step or two
But I can't slow it down.
I don't want to now.
Another year is already through.
My old sandals are busted.
My old shades are rusted.
I've lost my tan from the year before.
But what I've lost in skin tone
I've made up for in time alone.
Now another year is on the door.

Poem # 3

Track

I run track.
To bad speed is what I lack.
I have fun,
but can't wait until I'm done.
When in a meet,
I always trip over my feet.

I thought I was fast
though I usually finish last.
The question I ask
Why do I do track?

Poem # 4

I Remember

I remember the day I came in
second place in the spelling bee –
how proud I was in my almost-perfect
accomplishment

I remember the day I hit my first
homerun – how I felt as my
cleat confidently graced each base

I remember when I met my first love –
how my heart raced and my
mouth was an eternal …

And I remember when I
got into college – how I knew
that all my hard work was worth it

Now, as I look back on it all,
I cannot help but smile, for
I am beyond ecstatic at the thought
of the Spelling Bees, baseball games,
relationships, and college acceptances
that my future has I store for me.

Poem # 5

How could I ever be happy forever?
I love you but I am scared to feel secure in your love.
Everything dies.

Poem # 6

who is this girl?

- I see a girl who wants to be
  just as free as she can be,

- what stops her I do not know,
  will she ever let it show?
- She loves to make others happy
  And never treats them like she's snappy,
- She loves the warm weather outside
  And even enjoys the different tides,
- Who is this girl? What does she think?
  Maybe I'll know if we have a drink,
- Does she have courage? Is she nice?
  I can already tell she is not like ice,
- Maybe I will say hello,
  she just may find me a fine fellow,
- Perhaps the two of us will be
  just as free as she wants to be.

Poem # 7

Looking forward to growing old
Only worrying about myself
God has given me many gifts
Learning from the past has strengthened my future
Live life, celebrate life

APPENDIX G
Control Group[Instructions

Welcome to this study on poetry.

RELAX! ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE!

It is meant to be enjoyed, so take a deep breath and allow yourself the pleasure of an interaction with information on poetry.

Inside this folder, you will find several selections to read about poetry. You are free to read whichever selections appeal to you. Find information that interests you. Read as much of the information as you choose and for as long as you choose.   Consider reading for at least 30 – 60 minutes.

When you have completed the reading, return to the main meeting area and complete the posttests.

If you are interested in the results of either your own personal measures or of the over-all study, please complete the enclosed form and leave it with the Principle Researcher.

Thank you so much for your participation.

APPENDIX H
Study Results

If you are interested in the results of this study, please provide the requested information and return this form to The Researcher.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

_____ I am interested in the results of my personal measures.

_____ I am interested in the results of the over-all study.

Thank you.

APPENDIX I
Poems for Experimental Group

Naomi Shihab Nye
   "Famous," "The Art of Disappearing,"

Rita Dove
   "Lady Freedom Among Us," "The Island Woman of Paris," "The First Book,"
   "Canary"

Sekou Sundiata
   "Blink Your Eyes (Remembering Sterling A. Brown)"

Rudyard Kipling
   "If"

Marge Piercy
   "To Be One of Us"

William Wordsworth
   "I wondered Lonely as a Cloud," "There was a Boy"

Walt Whitman
   From "Song of Myself," "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer"

William Shakespeare
   "Sonnet 29," "Sonnet CXVI,"

William Stafford
   "Five A.M."

Elizabeth Bishop
   "Five Flights Up"

Philip Schulz
   "Why"

Thomas Gray
   "Hymn to Adversity"

Dylan Thomas
   "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night"

Erica Funkhouser
    "The Accident," "Harvest Mouse"

Emily Dickinson
    "In a Library," "Wild Nights-Wild Nights," "The bustle in the House," "Hope is a Thing with Feathers"

Matthew Arnold
    "Dover Beach"

Gerard Manley Hopkins
    "The Windhover," "Pied Beauty"

George Herbert
    "Hope"

Lord George Gordon Byron
    "She Walks in Beauty, Like the Night"

Robert Penn Warren
    "Heart of Autumn," "Evening Hawk"

Christine Craig
    "The Chain"

Donald Hall
    "Affirmation," "Ox Cart Man"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning
    "How Do I Love Thee"

William Stafford
    "Fifteen"

Robert Browning
    "To His Last Duchess"

Adam Zagajewski
    "Blake"

William Blake
    "Eternity," "The Lamb," "The Clod and the Pebble"

Samuel Taylor Coleridge
    "The Eolian Harp"

Billy Collins
        "Introduction to Poetry," "The History Teacher"

Robert Frost
        "The Most of It," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," "For Once, Then,
        Something"

William Carlos Williams
        "This is Just to Say"

Wislawa Szymborska
        "Some Like Poetry"

Archibald MacLeish
        "Ars Poetica"

Jenny Joseph
        "Warning"

Ted Hughes
        "To Paint a Water Lily"

Mary Oliver
        "Peonies," "The Journey," "The Swimming Lesson," "Wild Geese"

Hafiz
        "It Felt Lonely"

John Keats
        "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Andrew Marvel
        "A Dialogue Between Soul and Body"

APPENDIX J
Bill Schul's Thoughts on Poetry

Just some thoughts as to the roles poetry can play in our lives.

We are constantly making sense of ourselves and our surroundings, using our senses to maintain and develop our material and aesthetic needs. Experiences come to us in the light of half-remembered events, of mental and sensory constructions. Poetry can reveal how those experiences can be profoundly meaningful. This also true, of course, of other forms of art. Whatever the form, art is not the expression of emotion or even of the creative impulse. it arises from the interaction of many things. And whatever its medium, Poetry - read, spoken, sang, it draws its life from the cultural life of the community. There is no one settled interpretation, and the greatness of the expression may lie in its appeal to many different groups and societies. All art has form, but that form is not something unchanging and abstract, but the way the work gives organization to experience.

But art does somehow involve emotion and - perhaps to modify Plato's condemnation of the pernicious effects of poetry - Aristotle introduced his famous "kartharsis." The term means cleansing, removing the bad and leaving the good, and by its associations includes ritual purification, medical purges, and bowel movement. In Aristotle's view, an audience is brought to feel fear, pity, and even frenzy in public performances, coming away with heightened emotion and sharpened aesthetic judgments. But cartharsis from the first has been a troublesome term. Since Aristotle did not describe art in terms of emotional expression, he perhaps meant only that art raises emotions in an intense and justifiable form. Raising or releasing them? The two are very different. And cannot poets raise emotions without personally espousing them?

We are beginning to realize that poetry - written, spoken, sang - can play an important role in therapy. The word Therapy comes from the Greek "therapeia," meaning to cure through involvement in one of the expressive arts: dance, song, drama or poetry. Poetry as therapy uses the traditional techniques of poetry - rhythm, sound, metaphor, etc. but the focus is the person writing. Amateur poetry is only a means to an end, therefore, though an important one, which in the growth of selfhood and emotional awareness through self-expression.

Healing enters into every art, in its appreciation and creation. Freud, Adler, Jung and other psychiatrists have all learnt from the poet's insight into the unconscious and its inner workings. Genius and madness are near-applied, a fact recognized in the self-healing through writing that has been prescribed for centuries in the treatment of the mentally ill. Such approaches have received serious study only in the past fifty years or so, however, with guidelines issued, courses offered that lead to certification in poetry therapy, and so forth. Poetry workshops also have their scattering of the emotionally disturbed, as their organizers know only too well, and it must be admitted that a significant percentage of good poets do need professional care from time to time.

Perhaps no one is entirely well, not to psychiatrists or the emotionally honest. Poets may well feed off their difficulties, perhaps even nurse them, so that the many tens of thousands who turn to poetry as a means of exploring issues that are painful and/or deeply buried are only pursuing paths that lead to the greatest of human achievements. Poetry as an art goes further - much further - but poetry as therapy is not to be ignored even by the professional poet. it unlocks the doors of creativity, and is always prescribed in beginner's course. it sustains the seasoned writer through the penury and disappointment of rejection slips, and it helps the serious writer not to lose touch with an innermost being, which is the greatest disaster, that no amount of skill or professionalism can hide.