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Poetic Writing Research: The History, Methods, and Outcomes of Poetic (Auto) Ethnography

Abstract: This chapter reviews recent developments in the use of poetic writing as a research method to explore lived experience. While this approach has roots in literacy, qualitative, and arts-based research, poetic (auto) ethnography is most closely related to phenomenological research paradigms and offers a very specific way of eliciting, analysing, and presenting lived experience. Three main forms of poetic (auto) ethnography research are described: (a) *Poetic Inquiry* – facilitated group poetry writing exploring personal experience; (b) *Poetic Ethnography* – the presentation of life narratives in poetic form; and (c) *Poetic Autoethnography* – the use of written poetry to explore the writer’s own experiences. Empirical studies of the processes of poetry reading and writing are reviewed to present a model of the ways in which poetic (auto) ethnography functions in allowing access to personal experience.

Introduction

“The poetic representation of lives is never just an end in itself. The goal is political, to change the way we think about people and their lives and to use the poetic-performance format to do this” (Denzin, 2014, p. 86).

Historically, researchers in the field of the scientific study of literature have been more interested in the systematic effects of poetic reception than in the processes of poetic writing. Two recent developments have changed this situation. First, conceptual and methodological developments in the fields of scientific study of literature, applied linguistics, psychology, neurolinguistics, and composition studies have resulted in increased scientific approaches to the study of poetic and creative writing (Disney, 2014; Hanauer, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2016; Hanauer & Liao, 2016; Iida, 2012; Liu, et al., 2015; Nicholes, 2016, 2017; Nelson, 2013; Kroll & Harper, 2013; Peskin & Ellenbogen, 2019). Second, forms of poetic writing are increasingly being used as research methodologies in their own right (Furman et al., 2006; Hanauer, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2019,

2020; Iida, 2016, 2018; Leggo, 2005; Park, 2013; Prendergast, 2009; Prendergast et al., 2009; Richardson, 1990, 1997, 2003a, 2003b).

This chapter focuses on an aspect of this second development: current developments in the use of poetic forms for the exploration of human experience. Under the heading of poetic inquiry or poetic (auto) ethnography, poetry writing is being used to further the understanding of individuals' experiences and to promote critical social change through access to those experiences. This chapter presents the history, methods, and evidence for the psycholinguistic processes of poetic (auto) ethnography.

Phenomenology and Poetic (Auto) Ethnography

While poetic (auto) ethnography as a research method has a history of development within literary conceptualizations of poetry and the written arts-based research movement, it is conceptually closely related to a family of research approaches under the heading of phenomenology. What poetic (auto) ethnography and phenomenology share is an interest in “an individual’s lived experience in the world” (Neubauer et al., 2019, p. 90) and a set of methodologies designed to allow explication and access to this experience. Historically, phenomenology is situated within the philosophical tradition of Husserl as an attempt to reorient scientific descriptions toward what he considered to be the real object of inquiry: the way in which phenomena are experienced in the individual’s consciousness (Giorgi et al., 2017). The methodology proposed by Husserl functioned through a process of delimiting personally accepted beliefs and assumptions (termed bracketing, or the *epoché*) while aiming, through iteration, to reach the underlying essence of the phenomenon under investigation (Hopkins, 2010). Through close but personally distanced and delimited observation of human consciousness, the aim was to achieve a clearer unbiased understanding of the essence of the lived experience. Heidegger (and later Gadamer), in a critique of Husserl’s methodological assumptions, added a hermeneutic approach to this process of observation (van Manen, 2007). Husserl’s assumption of the ability to bracket one’s beliefs and assumptions was questioned in this later hermeneutic phenomenology on the basis that one could not ever escape the situatedness of being in the world (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). As such, bracketing was not possible. From a hermeneutic perspective lived experience was an interpretive process situated in the lifeworld of the individual. To replace bracketing, hermeneutic approaches to phenomenology proposed an iterative process that moved from explication of assumptions by the researcher to

description of how meaning is projected and then revised in a series of cycles. Thus, reflection by both the researcher and the participant is part of the interpretive process. Sequencing through a holistic understanding of the experience to an analysis of the parts that comprise the experience and back again to the whole was designed to fulfill the aim of providing an understanding of the essence of the phenomenon under investigation (van Manen, 2016).

Qualitative researchers have extended and deepened the conceptual and methodological components of earlier philosophical positions on phenomenology. There are several variations of current qualitative phenomenological research, including Lifeworld research (Ashworth, 2015), Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2009), Post-Intentional Phenomenology (Vagle, 2014) and Micro-Phenomenology (Petitmengin, 2006) or Neurophenomenology (Petitmengin, 2017). While there are clear differences in methodological and analytical approaches between these phenomenology variants, they all share an interest in explication of the individual's lived experience. They diverge from earlier explications of phenomenology in that they do not look for a transcendent essence but rather the "embodied socio-historical situated" (Eatough & Smith, 2017, p. 196) lived experience. In this sense, the qualitative research paradigms of phenomenology are idiographic and exhibit a focused interest in the individual case. The methodologies that emerge from this focus tend to involve extended (and often repeated) interview techniques with a careful detailed interaction around felt and perceived experience. Analytical procedures explicate multiple levels of experience and how it was experienced by the individual, focusing analytically on profound moments or "gems" that encapsulate the meanings of the experience under investigation (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Importantly, both the elicitation and analytical techniques aim to bring the participant back to the experience itself and the way it is experienced. As expressed in the micro-phenomenological interview technique, the "aim is to enhance insight into the 'felt sense' and the cognitive processes of the experience," using "a questioning technique in which the interviewer brings the interviewee back to 're-live' an experience" (Steenberg, 2019, p. 204). Poetic (auto) ethnography fits into this set of phenomenological research paradigms by offering a very specific way of eliciting, analyzing, and presenting lived experience while keeping many of the same phenomenological research aims. Indeed, poetry has been used within the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (Spiers & Smith, 2012). However, it was only with the development of arts-based research methodologies on the outer edges of qualitative research that poetry as a methodology for the exploration of personal experience really evolved into a methodology in itself.

A Brief History of Poetry Writing as a Research Method

The specific use of poetry writing as a research method has a longer history than is often recognized. In 1938, Muriel Rukeyser wrote *The Book of the Dead*, an ethnographic poetic description of West Virginia miners dying of lung cancer (Kaufman & Herzog, 2005). This book of poetry was a response to one of the worst industrial abuses of workers in the U.S. – the Hawk’s Nest Tunnel disaster – in which 1,000 miners, predominantly African American, died from silica dust-induced lung cancer. Rukeyser traveled to the site of the disaster and interviewed victims, overseers, and managers of the mine before writing her poetic response. Her resultant book of poetry, designed as form of activism, evocatively described the horrors of this historical incident. For Rukeyser, poetry was the most fitting medium through which to present her investigations into the experiences of these dying workers and thus generate understanding and empathy towards the victims. This book is heralded as the first written poetic inquiry (Prendergast, 2009).

Perhaps the best-known proponent of poetry writing as a research method is Laurel Richardson. In a series of publications and conference presentations mainly relating to women’s issues, Richardson spearheaded the use of poetry writing as a way to present interview data (Richardson, 1990, 1997, 2003b). Richardson’s use of poetry was conceptualized as a response to the crisis of representation within sociology during the 1990s. Utilizing both poststructuralist and feminist critiques of research writing, Richardson argued that research prose was an interpretive extrapolation from the type of qualitative data used in sociology and, as such, suspect and limiting. Her argument for poetry was that it explicitly addressed and made transparent the constructed nature of this form of re-representation of sociological data, was a closer representation of participants’ thoughts and words, and had the option of generating empathy for the people and lives being presented. In her work, interview data was used as the basis for writing poetic representations of the same data. In this sense, it was a different approach to Rukeyser’s earlier work and involved ethnographic interview data being transformed into poetic form for presentation to audiences.

Rich Furman, working within the context of social work, further developed the use of poetry writing as a research method by extending its application across the research process (Furman, 2004, 2006; Furman et al., 2006; Langer & Furman, 2004). While previous uses of poetry had been primarily as a means of representing sociological, ethnographic data produced using accepted research data-collection methods, Furman (2004a, 2005) used poetry writing as person-

al-source data for exploring his father's cancer and the death of a companion animal. For Furman (2004, 2005), the poetry written was the data that was used for the presentation and analysis of the experiences under investigation. Thus, poetry writing became a source of autoethnographic data. Langer and Furman (2004b) also used poetry writing as a data-analysis tool when they analyzed the poetry they had written describing a woman's biracial-indigenous experiences. In this case, the data and analysis utilized poetic approaches.

In 2009, in response to the increasing presence of arts-based poetic research, Prendergast et al. (2009) published the first collection of poetic inquiries. In her introduction, Prendergast (2009) conceptualizes poetic inquiry as involving three different types of authorial voice: *Vox Theoria* – poems written in response to literature or disciplinary scholarship; *Vox Autobiographia/Autoethnographia* – poems written from a researcher's field notes, journal entries, or autobiographical writing; and *Vox Participare* – poems written from participant interview data and/or constructed with the participant. An interesting aspect of the collected poetic inquiries in the Prendergast et al. (2009) collection is the importance they assign to the aesthetic qualities of the poetry produced and the abilities of the poetic researcher as a poet. While previous approaches had emphasized the methodological aspects of writing poetry as a research method, this collection reminds readers of the importance of the poetry writing itself.

David Hanauer (2010), an applied linguist and literacy researcher, further extended poetic inquiry by establishing a writing class protocol for the long-term group collection of poetic ethnographic writing. Modifying science education approaches to facilitate undergraduate research experiences (Hanauer et al., 2006; Hanauer et al., 2017) over a period of 6 years, Hanauer (2010) transformed a multilingual writing class into an extended poetic-inquiry data-generation and data-collection process. As an aspect of each of his classes, students were involved in producing books of autobiographical poetry addressing significant moments of their lives and their experiences in a study-abroad program. All poems were put into a database with adjacent student reflections on their understandings of their experiences. Hanauer (2010) used this database to describe the diversity of experiences encountered in a study-abroad experience. Hanauer (2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2019, 2020) later went on to develop a systematic approach to both poetic autoethnography and poetic ethnography in which he explored the Holocaust, war, mourning, and combat experiences.

The Methods of Poetic (Auto) Ethnography

As described in the last section, and as might be expected from an arts-based methodology, research poetry writing consists of a broad spectrum of approaches. These range from the personal writing of autobiographical poems to systematic protocols of poetry data collection from groups of participants. This section presents those approaches that have systematic descriptions of the methodological approach through which research poetry is constructed.

Previous research on poetic auto-ethnography suggests three distinct methodologies: (a) *Poetic Inquiry* – an approach within which the researcher facilitates a process of poetry writing with a group of participants defined by their personal experience of a particular phenomenon of interest (Gallardo et al., 2009; Hanauer, 2010; Iida, 2018; Prendergast et al., 2009); (b) *Poetic Ethnography* – an approach in which a focused life narrative (usually based on epiphany moments) is elicited from a participant chosen for her/his specific life experience of interest, followed by a thematic analysis and poetic graphic representation as a poem (Elbelazi, 2017; Hanauer, 2012, 2013, 2014); and (c) *Poetic Autoethnography* – an approach that uses written poetry as data to explore a past experience of the researcher-poet (Elbelazi & Alharbi, 2019; Hanauer, 2012, 2020; Iida, 2018). All three of these approaches share underpinning components.

Hanauer (2010) explains that what underpins each approach is a particular understanding of the object of inquiry that poetry research writing addresses, as well as the qualities of poetry. He argues that the object of inquiry in poetic research writing is the “individual, subjective, emotional, linguistically-negotiated understanding of personal experience”; as such, poetry writing “can produce a deliberative account of the writer’s autobiographical experience that involves multisensory, emotional information that reconstructs for the reader the experience of the writer” (p. 137). The methods of poetry research writing consist of ways of eliciting detail-rich memories of an experience and then accurately transmitting these memories in poetic form.

The elicitation of detail-rich memories of experience across all three approaches to poetry research writing is based upon the autoethnographic approach to research (Adams et al., 2017) and is reminiscent of the interpretive phenomenological emphasis on relived, sensory moments of experience (Eatough & Smith, 2017). A core methodological aspect of the autoethnographic approach is the emphasis on epiphanies (Bochner, 1984; Bocher & Ellis, 1992; Couser, 1997; Denzin, 1989; Hanauer, 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Zaner, 2004). An epiphany, in the sense used in autoethnographic research, addresses a perceived

and retained moment of experience in which a person's life trajectory has been affected. This could be a moment of crisis or an intense traumatic experience, but it could also be a recurrent memory of a person or place. The central issue is that a memory has been encoded in a way that makes it salient when one is asked to recall a certain set of personal experiences. The salience of the memory signifies its importance for the person remembering. This autoethnographic definition of epiphany is different from the modernist perception of epiphany which addresses the sense of awe elicited by a particular form of deeply striking expression (Schindler, et al., 2017). The methods of poetic (auto) ethnography direct participants to recall, in a relatively open manner, memories in relation to a particular experience that they have had (such as studying abroad, living through a tsunami, or being a U.S. soldier in the Second Iraq War) or from a period of their life (such as growing up as a woman in Libya). As exemplified in the sample interview prompts in Appendix A, this process involves two basic stages: The participant is asked to remember a set of experiences and write down a name for each; then, for each memory, the participant is asked to "re-live" the experience in their memory and is asked to describe in some detail what the memory consists of. The first stage provides an overview of the set of experiences that stand out in the mind of the participant in relation to the experience being explored. The second stage directs the participant to provide detail about the experience itself.

There are some differences in the manifestation of this memory-elicitation process among the different approaches to poetic (auto) ethnography. For poetic inquiry, especially when a large group of participants is involved, the work is done in peer dyads with participants fulfilling the roles of both interviewee and interviewer. The prompts are the same, but the work is done by multiple pairs in the same room. For poetic ethnography, the researcher functions as a life-narrative interviewer of a participant with a set of life experiences. Once again, the same prompt is used, and all data are audio-recorded and then transcribed. For poetic autoethnography, it is assumed that the poetry written about a personal experience is the expression of a significant moment of life. The poem is read as a prompt to elicit further recall of and insight into the experience being explored. In poetic autoethnography, a poem written in the past is used to activate memories and then to explore what these experiences mean.

The process of producing a poetic representation of elicited detail-rich memories is different for the three forms of poetic (auto) ethnography. For the poetic inquiry, the process of poetry writing is conducted by the participants themselves. As seen in the example poetry writing prompt in Appendix B, the participant is directed to choose a specific image and moment that represent the whole of the experience being expressed. This prompt focuses on images

and expresses the most salient part of the participant's memory by focusing on the most salient image in that recalled experience. The poems that emerge from this process tend to be short, focused, and imagistic (Hanauer, 2010). Once the poem has been written, the participant dyads discuss each of the poems and try to explore the range of potential understandings of the experience that it might include. Since the poems tend to include only a limited set of images to represent a more complex experience, the poem itself can be understood in different ways, creating a conceptual space within which additional meaning can be explored. Through discussion with the dyad partner, the complexity of each poem-memory is explored, and often new understandings of the experience emerge. At this point, each participant writes a reflective understanding of their experiences that contextualizes presented memories. Ultimately, the data of the poetic inquiry is the set of poems produced by the participant and the reflective understanding of that set of experiences (Hanauer, 2010).

For poetic ethnography, the process of producing a poetic expression of participants' experiences involves distinct stages: transcription, thematic analysis, poetic graphic representation, and member checking and revision. Once the audio data of the narrative life interview have been transcribed, the first stage of poetic transcription consists of conducting a thematic analysis of the life experiences. The aim of the analysis is to understand the set of experiences that needs to be presented in the poetic ethnography. This first stage of producing a poetic representation based on collected interview data is designed to help the researcher understand what sections of the interview need to be included in the poetic representation of participants' life experiences. The thematic analysis involves the following levels:

1. *Basic Aspects of the Experience*: Initially, one needs to fully understand the basic aspects of the experiences being described: the who, what, how, why, and when of the described experience. Within each experience, one must consider the people being described (Who are they? What are they like? What are they doing? What interaction is happening? What emotions are present in this interaction? What is happening to the participants?). This initial stage is designed to help the researcher understand how the participant is constructing the scene of the event.
2. *Understanding Event Contingencies*: The second level of thematic analysis involves considering the specific contingency of the event (Where is this happening? When is this happening? What else is happening during this time? What is the site like? How does this particular time and place contribute to the meaning of the events?). The aim of the second level of thematic analysis is to get a sense of the context of events described.

3. *Participant Positioning*: The third level of analysis aims to understand participants' personal positioning in relation to described events (What is the participant's position in relation to this event? Why is this event significant to the participant?). The aim is to understand the participant's position and response and to explain their feelings and manner of responding. At this level of thematic analysis, the researcher is both explicating and empathizing with the position of the participant.
4. *Community and Academic Positioning*: The final level of analysis deals with how the types of experiences presented by the participant are understood within social discourse and academic scholarship (How would this experience be understood in the broader community? Is there scholarship that relates to events and experiences of this kind? What does the scholarship show or explain in relation to similar events?). The aim of this analysis is to understand the ways in which the experiences are shaped and presented within the broader society in which they occur and what academic scholarship has investigated in relation to them. This level of analysis is particularly important in that it allows the poetic researcher to understand the places at which the participant's experiences interact with the ways in which society is presenting them. This is the point at which divergence and nuance in relation to personal experience can emerge.

Once the poetic researcher has conducted all four of these stages of thematic analysis, the participant's narrative interview is divided into sections, each presenting a significant developmental moment in the participant's experiences. To help with poetic presentation, a provisional name for each described experience is assigned to each of the sections of the narrative interview that will be used.

For the poetic researcher, the outcome of thematic analysis of a participant's interview data should be sensitivity to salient components of the experiences to be expressed. This sensitivity is crucial for the process of poetic representation of the interview data. Poetic representation in a poetic ethnography utilizes poetic writing techniques of graphic representation. Using line breaks, short lines, and stanza structure, a process of literary foregrounding is introduced into the reading process. The basic principle of this process is that graphic form helps the reader focus on moments and words in the interview important for understanding and experiencing the events, feelings, and thoughts presented. Poetic graphic form is the mechanism by which the reader is made to focus on those sections of the experience important to the overall interpretation and understanding of the participant's position. Scientific research into the role of graphic form has shown that this component is particularly effective at

directing attention to specific words in the text (Bruhn, 2018; Davis, 2008; Hanauer, 1997, 1998b; Koops van't Jagt et al., 2014). Poetic lining with short line breaks changes eye-movement reading patterns with more eye regressions before a line break and increased reading time for words following the break (Koops van't Jagt et al., 2014). Poetic lining slows down reading time and involves directing greater attention to specific words in the text (Hanauer, 1997, 1998b). Neurolinguistic data has also shown increased attention to specific words as a result of lining practices (Davis, 2008) and a more active role in constructing and integrating meanings for the displaced word (Keidel, et al., 2013; Thierry, et al., 2008). Furthermore, poetic graphic form has been shown to increase levels of sympathy and empathy of readers (Hanauer, 2018). Based on this knowledge of the mechanisms of poetic graphic representation, the poetic researcher graphically reformats the transcription of the participant's interview. The researcher reads through the transcript and, line by line, decides where the emphasis of that section of experience lies. Once an important moment or word is found, it is emphasized by placing it at the end or beginning of a line break. Particularly important moments are graphically highlighted by a "hanging" word (or phrase) which is in a line by itself, graphically differentiated from the rest of the text. Line breaks and word positioning are directly related to the importance of the statement being highlighted within the whole of the expressed experience. Importantly, at no point are words added; producing the poetic form of the experience involves a process of graphic reorganization.

Once the process of poetic graphic representation concludes for the whole transcript, the complete text is reread by the poetic researcher to evaluate flow and points of emphasis. This rereading ensures that each experience receives accurate points of emphasis and that the text evokes the desired moments of interaction with events described. Once the researcher is satisfied that a full draft version of the poetic representation of the participants' experiences has been written, the final stage of the process has begun. To be complete, the ethnographic poem must be validated by the participant. Member checking may involve several additional meetings with the participant. The basic process is one in which the researcher provides the participant with a copy of the poem and then reads the poem aloud, section by section, to and with the participant. After each section's reading, the researcher needs to ask the participant if the poem accurately reflects their memory of the experience expressed and whether they would like to change anything. Changes proposed need to be discussed with the aim of deeply understanding the participant's positioning in relation to the poem. Notes are taken for all changes, and the meeting should be audio-recorded. After the reading and revising of the whole poem, changes presented by the participant should be made and an additional meeting with the participant

arranged. The subsequent meeting follows the same pattern as the first, and this continues until the participant confirms that the poem is finished and is an accurate representation. The result of this long process is a text that presents a participant's remembered experiences in the form of a poetic representation that has been validated as accurately representing the participant's memory.

Poetic autoethnography is slightly different from other forms of poetic inquiry in that it utilizes existing autobiographical poetry written in response to lived experiences. In this sense, a poetic autoethnography considers poetry written in the past as a form of historical documentation through which personal experience can be investigated. It is an aspect of the genre of poetry that it is often best suited to respond to a variety of personally significant experiences. The process of poetic autoethnography consists of collecting these historical poems and then entering a process of thematic analysis and contextualization. The analysis follows the same guidelines as those presented above in relation to the interview data collected for a poetic ethnography. The basic aspects of the experience, its contingencies, the way in which the speaker in the poem positions herself, and the academic and social contextualization of the experience, are explored. The aim of the analysis is to contextualize one's own experience and perhaps see new options for interpretation. It is helpful to have a discussion partner for this form of work and to attempt to move beyond the initial response to the experience. The poetic autoethnography consists of the original poetry and extensive recontextualization of the experiences described. Thus, the thematic analysis and the written poetic text together are the poetic autoethnography.

The processes of writing a poetic autoethnography reviewed here, while specific to using poetry writing as a research method and research presentation genre, build upon what is known about the processes of writing poetry. While there is not a wealth of empirical research on the writing of poetry, the research that has been done is very consistent in its findings. The central stages of poetry writing seem to consist of two sets of processes: an initial creative-associative stage of poetry generation and a second stage of controlled revision (Armstrong, 1984, 1985, 1986; Gerrish, 2004; Hanauer, 2010; Liu et al., 2015; Peskin & Ellenbogen, 2019; Schwartz, 1983). These two processes are recursive and repeated in a cyclical manner moving from the generation of the poem to its revision using aesthetic and communicative criteria. Importantly, a product of this two-stage process is the sense of discovery that emerges from the associative generation of a poem and its more careful consideration for revision (Hanauer, 2010; Schwartz, 1983). The reduction of cognitive control in the generative stage and the return of this control in the revision stage create a situation in which new

connections are made and reflected upon (Liu et al., 2015). In this sense, poetry writing is a process that leads to internal discoveries about the self.

For all three forms of poetic (auto) ethnography, the processes of poetry writing are relevant. In the personal writing characteristic of poetic inquiry and poetic autoethnography, poetry writing is used for self-discovery. Poetry writing research has documented personal experience as one of the activating sources of writing poetry (Hanauer, 2010; Peskin & Ellenbogen, 2019) and we can assume that the process of poetry generation and subsequent revision and reflection facilitate the discovery process. For poetic ethnography, the process of revision and reflection is situated in the social process of shared member checking in which the participant is a reader and editor of the emergent text.

Poetic (Auto) Ethnographies

The claims about the value and uses of poetic ethnography include that it fulfills the critical social role of allowing access to the personal experiences of oneself and of others and thus counters oversimplified and potentially biased accounts and interpretations of experience prevalent in society (Adams et al., 2015; Denzin, 2014; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holman Jones et al., 2013; Hanauer, 2010, 2013, 2014; Hoppes, 2014; Lapidus et al., 2013; Liao, 2018; Park, 2013; Richardson, 2003b). The object of inquiry in poetic research writing projects is an expression of the ways of being and the sense of consciousness of individuals who have been marginalized or misrepresented in societal discourse. This misrepresentation can result from the presence of powerful shaping discourses propagated by a majority population, or even ignorance of the ways of being of others. In any case, the role of poetic representations is to provide access to the thoughts, experiences, and lives of others. The emphasis is on the individual life and consciousness. The assumption is not that individuals represent groups but rather that individuals' living personal experiences are influenced by the legacies and social constructs into which they have been born and to which they have been exposed.

There are several examples of this research practice. In an early, powerful poetic ethnography, Maria Cristina Gonzalez (1997) used poetry to express and explore the experiences of a range of people "who gradually rejected their everyday ways of life in favor of an "Indian" life style, transforming their living environments, adjusting their schedules, and altering their personal relationships in order to live in accordance with how they perceived the native American spiritual traditions they were learning and practicing" (p. 486). This poetic

ethnography which emerged from observation, discussion, field notes, and member checking of poetic representations, carefully tracks the double perspective of the people who adopt and appropriate native American practices and, at the same time, the responses and sensibilities of the native Americans who lead these practices. The feelings of violation and imposition combined with misguided good intentions and personal gain are intertwined in this set of poems, which explicates the complexity of intercultural communication and the nature of identity within the Lakota people.

Turning to researchers peering inward, Gallardo et al. (2009) used poetic autoethnography to explore personal depression and the experience of living with a person suffering from depression. In a series of poems and narrative reflections, the authors present poetry that reflects the consciousness and emotions of depression and the destructive effect these have on partners' lives. Central to these experiences is the mismatch between the actions presented and the emotions underlying them for the participants involved. As explored in the poems, the experience of depression and its behavioral outcomes are associated with pain and personal and relational damage for all involved.

In three poetic studies, Hanauer (2012a, 2012b, 2020) explored the Kindertransport-Holocaust experience of his father and the legacy of this experience in his own consciousness. Using poetic ethnography, Hanauer (2012a) explored John Hans Hanauer's Kindertransport experience in the attempt to explicate this lesser known Holocaust experience. A central theme of this difficult experience was the moment of parting from his parents at the age of 9. A sense of helplessness and longing permeate the poetic presentation but it is coupled with unexpected positiveness. Next, Hanauer (2012b), using his own poetry written in the 1980s, explored his response to a family legacy of the genocide. This study explores the experience of growing up in a family which has a Holocaust survivor as a parent and the ways in which the difficult legacy of the murder of grandparents and the silence of parents led to nightmares and dreams as points of contact with an unspoken past. This poetic autoethnography marks a recognition of the pain and grief transferred between members of a family. Finally, following the death of his father, Hanauer (2020) conducted a poetic autoethnography on his own processes of mourning and attempts to address the legacy of the Holocaust.

To answer questions pertaining to education, Iida (2016, 2018) used poetic research writing to explore his students' and his own experiences and responses to the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Using a poetic inquiry method, Iida (2016, 2018) facilitated a process of poetry writing about students' individual responses to the earthquake, subsequent tsunami, and collapse of the nuclear power plant. Students expressed shock, disbelief, and grief at un-

folding events. Next, Iida (2018), using a poetic autoethnography approach, presented his own responses to the tragic events in Japan. Poetry written while in the U. S. far from his family and homeland during the events of the earthquake unfolded. The difficulties of distance, the worries of not knowing, and the sense of guilt involved in being apart from the events emerge through the poetry and the provided contextualization. As presented by Iida (2016, 2018), cultural and societal trauma are experienced uniquely as each individual responds.

In addition to being used to explore individual, powerful events, poetic researchers have also explored social systems. For instance, Samah Elbelazi (2017) used a poetic ethnographic approach to explore the lives of three generations of Libyan Muslim women from one family. Collectively, these women had lived through monarchy, dictatorship, and revolution in Libya. Narrative life interviews in Arabic were collected from all three generations of women, and then poetic representations of their life experience were written. These were shared and member checked with the original participants. The resultant poetry shows the ways in which large macro-political events interact with the lives of individual women who, under all three regimes, faced marginalization and oppression. Resilience and the struggle to have their voices heard are themes of the study. Importantly, for many of the participants, this was the first time they presented their stories and life experiences.

Additionally, Hanauer (2014) used poetic ethnography to explore the experiences of a U. S. soldier involved in the Second Iraq War. This poetic ethnography, part of a project involving soldiers' war experiences in different settings, follows the development and psychological difficulties faced by one soldier as he participated in the Second Iraq War. The poetic ethnography documents the witnessing of war crimes as a response to the near incomprehensibility of the situations this soldier faced. The experiences expressed stand in stark contrast to simplified descriptions of soldiers in the Second Iraq War. In a second study from this data set, Hanauer (2019) explored the experiences of an individual with a pacifist orientation who was nonetheless drafted against his will into the Israeli Defense Forces. The study explores the ways in which agency was enacted in a situation of forced enlistment by an individual who ethically disagreed with the military. Agency was enacted through a specific strategy the participant called "subversive, unannounced non-compliance" under the most restrictive social circumstances. This poetic ethnography diversifies the types of experiences that are associated with soldiers and offers an approach for other people faced with the requirement to act against ethical beliefs.

Other work using poetic autoethnography has explored the situatedness and marginalization of language teachers and students with diverse backgrounds. Park (2013), using a poetic autoethnographic approach consisting of

previously written poetry and narrative contextualization, explored her childhood migrant experiences coming from Korea to the U.S. and the ways in which her experiences directed her to her later career as a language professional. The educational and career trajectory of this narrative is intertwined with the issues and difficulties of motherhood. The piece leads to meaningful cross relations between personal history, motherhood, and a teaching career. In another teacher-orientated study, Elbelazi and Alharbi (2019) explored the experience of being an English instructor at a predominantly White U.S. higher educational institution while being a Muslim woman wearing the Hijab. Using a poetic autoethnographic approach, their paper presents the fear and alienation that is part of everyday interaction in White society when a person wears the Hijab, even in supposedly enlightened frameworks of higher education.

What characterizes the above poetry writing studies is the critical social intent they embody. While the specific contexts explored differ, poetry writing techniques provide access to life experiences of people who feel marginalized within broader societal discourse. As stated by Denzin (2014), the aim of these poetic representations of life experience and consciousness is political in that the desire is to change societal perceptions of the other and to lead to a more inclusive society.

Audience Reception of Poetic (Auto) Ethnographies

As seen in the studies synthesized above, the aim of poetic (auto) ethnography is to change minds and direct a process of increased acceptance within society of a wide range of life experiences. In many ways, the aims of poetic research writing are like that of literature in general. Mar and Oatley (2008) have claimed that the reading of literature enhances an individual understanding of self and society. Kidd and Castano (2013) have argued that literary reading that activates theory of mind responses leads to increased social critical abilities. Meanwhile, Hakemulder (2000) has contended that narratives function as a form of thought experiment in which one gets to experience another's positioning. Importantly, more recent research has questioned Kidd and Castano's (2013) claims that literary reading elicits higher theory of mind responses (Panero et al., 2017). Interestingly, the reanalysis and replication of Kidd and Castano's (2013) data pointed to the lack of difference between literary reading and the reading of non-fiction, with both outperforming the reading of popular fiction

on the Reading the Mind in the Eyes (RMET) theory of mind test (Panero et al., 2017). In other words, fiction and non-fiction elicited significantly higher theory of mind responses than popular fiction. While this questions broader claims about the unique function of literary fiction, it is very much in line with a poetic auto ethnography that has the form of literature and the content of non-fiction. Accordingly, this particular hybrid form might be even more successful at eliciting theory of mind responses. More broadly, there is an overlap for poetic (auto) ethnography with both the social aims of literary reading and the processes involved in literary reading.

To date, only one study directly uses poetic research writing texts for empirical investigation of reader responses (Hanauer, 2018). However, a 25-year history exists within the empirical study of literature explicating the poetry-reading process, including how different textual features of poetry function and direct the reading process. In relation to the construction of poetic autoethnographies, the central textual features used involve graphic poetic techniques. Reviewing the scholarship on the way graphic form directs poetry reading informs also the process of reading poetic representations of life experiences.

Graphic form moves the reading process in two broad directions: (a) the graphic form of short lines and stanza structure can activate the genre-specific features of reading a poem and (b) graphic form can directly interact with the psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics of the reading process (Davis, 2008; Hanauer, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998a, 1998b; Keidel, et al., 2013; Theirry, et al., 2008). Both mechanisms change the way a text is read.

The categorization of a text as a poem is facilitated by the graphic form of short lines and stanza structure (Hanauer, 1996, 1997, 1998a, 1998b). Once this happens, all relevant reading strategies known to the reader are applied to the reading of the text they have categorized as poetry. As outlined by Culler (1975), these can include the conventions of: (a) distance and deixis, which direct the reader to redefine the contents of the poem as idiomatic statements about the human condition and behavior; (b) organic wholes, which direct the reader to seek coherence and unity among all the components of the text and pay attention to the linguistic and semantic patterns that appear in the text; (c) theme and epiphany, which direct the reader to believe that the text has within it significance and importance and as such should be read carefully; and (d) resistance and recuperation, which direct the reader to expect the poem to be complex and involve additional levels of meaning beyond the usual reading process, leading to a slower, more intricate reading of the text. Together, these conventions direct the reader to approach a text that has the form of a poem in a different way from that of a prose text. Empirical evidence for the genre-specific features of poetry reading has shown that readers pay more attention and

recall the specific words used in the poem, read the poem at a slower rate, and consider the text to be more difficult than when reading a prose text (Hanauer, 1998a). Since it has been shown that a text can be defined as a poem even if the content is not fictional or literary, we can assume that these conventions of reading may come into play during the reading of a poetic representation of life experiences (Hanauer, 1995).

Considering the psycholinguistic aspect of poetic graphic form, analyses of reading eye movements have explored the specific processes involved with poetic lineation. Koops van't Jagt et al. (2014) found significant differences in eye movement reading patterns for texts arranged with the graphic form of a poem and the same text arranged as a prose paragraph. Line breaks in the poetic format involved increased eye regressions before a line break and increased reading times for words after the break. Overall, with the poetic graphic form, words were found to involve longer reading times and increased eye movement regressions. These results suggest that the graphic form of short lines and stanza structure involve increased levels of attention to specific sections of the text, specifically before and after a line break. Neurolinguistic studies further show that lining effects can increase attention to specifically displaced words and enhance the degree to which the reader is required to be actively involved in integration of the displaced word into the evolving meaning (Davis, 2008; Keidel, et al., 2013; Thierry et al., 2008).

The hypothesis that poetic graphic form increases attention to specific words in the text is also supported by research into surface information recall. In studies of verbatim recall of specific words within a poetic text, graphic form increased specific word recall (Hanauer, 1996, 1997, 1998a). Additionally, specific word information is retained for longer periods in poetry than in prose formats (Tillman & Dowling, 2007). The hypothesis underpinning increased verbatim recall is that increased attention is directed at words in the poetry-reading condition.

Evidence also suggests that the graphic form of a poem directs the interpretation process. In a recent historiometric citation-analysis study, Bruhn (2018) found a relationship between poetic lineation and the sections of a poem that professional literary interpreters choose to interpret. There was increased critical interest and discussion of poetry at points of retrospective enjambment. This data suggests, once again, that the graphic form of a poem draws attention and interpretive interest to sections and words in a poem.

Finally, from the perspective of the role of graphic form in directing the reading process and its outcomes, a recent study found a relationship between poetic graphic form and the outcomes of empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective taking (Hanauer, 2018). These measures, usually associated with

theory of mind responses in literary reading, may be key to understanding the process through which poetic research writing has critical social effects. In this study, which used poetic ethnographic texts, texts with poetic lineation elicited significantly higher levels of empathy and sympathy for characters and situations when compared to a prose version of the same text. This result suggests a role for poetic graphic form in enhancing the emotional interaction with the people and events portrayed in a poetic format.

Further supporting the hypothesis that the genre of poetry is associated with increases in emotional response is a study that involves physiological, neuroimaging, and behavioral measurements of exactly this phenomenon (Wassiliwizky et al., 2017). In considering a range of responses to the reading of self- and researcher-chosen poetry, Wassiliwizky et al. (2017) demonstrated through neuroimaging and behavioral analysis that poetry elicits emotional responses. Of interest in this study is that the two mechanisms specified as having a role in eliciting these emotional responses – positions of closure in a poem (graphic form) and social cognition (addressing people in a poem) – are both central to poetic research writing. The ends of lines, stanzas, and poems involved increased emotional response, as did points at which people were addressed.

Beyond the general emotional response to poetry, there is direct evidence that readers empathize with the emotion presented in the events and situations described in a poem. Lüdtke et al. (2014) investigated the hypothesis that mood empathy presents itself between the reader and an associated mood portrayed in a poem. Results demonstrated that readers temporarily recreated in themselves the mood of a character and the atmosphere of the scene portrayed in a poem. A correspondence arose between the emotional valence of the poem and the reader.

In a study that directly used poetic ethnographic texts in poetry and prose formats, Hanauer (2018) explicated a psychological process which might explain the ways in which poetic research writing can achieve its aims. Framed within the Neurocognitive Poetics Model of Jacobs (2011, 2015a, 2015b), Hanauer (2018) proposed the reading of poetic research writing functions through two pathway models. The first model, parallel to Jacobs' (2011, 2015a, 2015b) slow route of processing, involves the activation of a literary reading process through the presence of poetic graphic form. The graphic form of a poem increases the literary quality rating of the text which, in turn, elicits increased empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective taking in relation to the characters and events portrayed in the text. This is a slow route in that increased attention is directed toward the form of the poem – which then elicits the theory of mind responses towards the characters portrayed in the poetic text. Increased empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective taking should result in increased understanding

of the life events of the person portrayed. The second model, parallel to Jacobs' (2011, 2015a, 2015b) fast route of processing, deals with the factual nature of the information presented in a poetic autoethnography. The presence of factual information was assumed to involve fast processing of the explicit narrative aspects of the events and characters portrayed in the poem. The factual nature of the poem was found to activate the theory of mind responses of empathy, sympathy, and cognitive perspective taking. Evaluation of the fit statistics for these two models supported the first model and, to a much lesser degree, the second model. However, evidence from the factorial design in this same paper suggested that poetic graphic form elicited significantly higher ratings for empathy and sympathy than prose forms and that the factual basis of the poem elicited higher cognitive perspective taking ratings than fiction formats.

Overall, based on the findings of Hanauer (2018) and the processes relating to the role of graphic form in poetry reading, a provisional set of hypotheses can be proposed about the way in which poetry research writing functions. The presence of poetic graphic form directs the reader to address the text as poetic. On one level, this can activate the types of reading strategies used when reading a poem; on another level, the graphic form of the poem has psycho- and neuro-linguistic effects on the reading process. The direct outcome of these levels is a slower reading process, with increased focus on poetic closure points (ends of lines, stanzas, and poems). This, in turn, affects the degree of emotional interaction with the characters and events portrayed in the poem. Specifically, increased empathy and sympathy for characters and events occurs. The factual basis of the poetic autoethnography increases cognitive perspective taking and prevents dismissing the events as fictional. Together, the factual basis of the text and its poetic graphic form should direct a process of increased understanding of the life experiences presented. This in turn should lead to increased social critical understanding of the other.

In relation to poetic autoethnography and poetic inquiry, the scholarship on expressive writing may offer some insight into personal benefits of this type of individual expression. Using versions of a simple writing prompt developed by Pennebaker and Beall (1986) requesting that participants write about traumatic experiences for 15 minutes on three consecutive days, over 400 studies have demonstrated the positive physical and psychological benefits of this activity (Frattaroli, 2006; Pennebaker & Chung, 2007). While there is some variation in the results of this intervention, expressive writing involving the disclosure and discussion of traumatic events has been shown to enhance psychological wellbeing as evidenced by a series of behavioral measures such as fewer visits to health care facilities (Kovac & Range, 2002), reduced work absence (Francis & Pennebaker, 1992), and reduced grief (Kovac & Range, 2000), anxiety

and depression (Graf et al., 2008). As seen in Frattaroli's (2006) meta-analysis of 146 randomized studies using the expressive writing method, there is agreement that this writing intervention is effective.

Several psychological theories have been proposed concerning how expressive writing achieves these outcomes. Pennebaker (1993) proposed a cognitive-processing theory which postulated that the positive effects of expressive writing resulted from enhanced insight into the experience. His theory was backed by explicit statements from participants who claimed that through writing they had a better understanding of their own experiences. Conceptually related to this theory is a different explanation of the positive effects of expressive writing. Under the heading of self-regulation theory, Lepore et al. (2002) proposes that expressive writing gives writers a sense of control over the experiences they are expressing and the associated emotions that these entail. The writing and expressive process enhances a sense of self-efficacy over their ability to regulate their emotions and, producing positive psychological effects. A social integration model offers yet another approach to explaining the effects of expressive writing. Pennebaker & Graybeal (2001) propose that, following the process of expressive writing, participants are more likely to speak to others about their experiences. Evidence for this consists of writers stating that they told others about their experiences and received increased support from their social networks (Heffner, 2002; Pennebaker & Graybeal, 2001). Finally, Park et al. (2016) have proposed that expressive writing involves a process of self-distancing from the described events. This self-distancing allows the participant to emotionally process the experiences described, thus reducing their aversiveness and allowing new meanings and understandings of the events to emerge.

On one level, the techniques of poetic (auto) ethnography, which involve writing about the epiphanies of one's own life, can be seen as related to the scholarship on writing disclosure presented above. Both are writing processes that involve the expression of personally significant events using written language. To the degree that written disclosure is the active component of expressive writing, we can assume that similar positive psychological outcomes may occur for the writer of autoethnographic poetry. But there are both methodological and genre-based differences that are worth considering. In poetic (auto) ethnography the revision and discovery components of poetry writing may enhance the effects described in relation to expressive writing. The process of revisiting the experiences described and linguistically negotiating their communication in poetic form inherently involves reflecting on the experiences themselves, carefully expressing the emotional contents of the experience and discussing them. The psychological mechanisms of self-regulation, enhanced self-efficacy concerning the emotions expressed, self-distancing, and enhanced

social integration are more directly part of the process of poetry writing than the original forms of expressive writing. Furthermore, the processes of poetic (auto) ethnography directly involve extended personal and social interaction with the poetic expressions of personal experience. Whether it is member checking, as in poetic ethnography, or shared community discussion, as in poetic inquiry or poetic autoethnography, the deliberative discussion and reflection on the poetic experience is a central part of the process that produces the poem. Based on the specific genre and procedural aspects of poetic (auto) ethnography, there is reason to believe that personal psychological well-being derives from this form of expression of personal experience.

Future Directions

The use of poetic research writing for exploring sociological questions and expressing marginalized voices within society is on the rise. While a marginal practice for most of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, over the last decade, in conjunction with the development of a range of arts-based research methodologies, there has been a surge of studies of this kind. Currently, respected journals such as *Qualitative Inquiry* regularly publish poetic writing research, and there are dedicated conferences in which poetic ethnographies are presented. The field of the scientific study of literature has much to offer in terms of knowledge and methodological rigor in relation to this direction of research. Currently, we lack empirical evidence on many of the aspects relevant to poetic research writing. Further research is required on the writing of these types of factual poems, on the personal benefits of writing these types of poem, on the reception of these poems, and on the ability of this type of writing and reading to change critical-social positions. This should enable us to understand – and then utilize – the critical-social potential of poetic research writing for the writer and for society at large.

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Appendix A: Detail Rich Memory Elicitation Prompt

Meaningful Life Interview Prompt

“Think about the significant moments and experience that you have had in your life. Think of those moments that truly made an impression on you. Close your eyes for a few moments and think back across your lifewhat stands out to you? What were the moments that really influenced your life?”

Please make a list of 10 of the most important moments in your life. Please just give each a short name and list it here”

Experience Elicitation Prompt

“I want you to think very carefully about this moment. Close your eyes and try to relive the moment and experience you are thinking of. Try to see, smell, hear, touch, and taste the experience. Now, if you can try to describe this moment to me. Could tell me everything you remember about this event.”

- “Could you describe that a bit more for me?”
- “What did it look (smell, taste, feel, or sound) like?”
- “You don’t need to explain it to me. Please just describe it to me so that I can see what is in your mind”

Appendix B: Poetic Inquiry Poetry Writing Prompt

“With your partner try to decide what is the quintessential aspect of this significant moment from your childhood. Try to pinpoint the central feeling that accompanies this significant moment. Try to find a scene, object or action that summarizes the meaning of this event for you.

Write a succinct, focused, sensory description (not explanation) of the quintessential moment of the childhood experience you have chosen. Describe just one thingthe most important image of that whole experience. Try to capture through that one moment the personal meaning of the whole experience. You do not need to tell the whole story. This poem is about choosing an image and a moment that represents the whole of the experience.

An image is a sensory description (a sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste) A poem can consist of a single meaningful image that summarizes a whole experience For example it could be just a description of your mother’s hand that summarizes your relationship with her or a description of the smell of the sea that summarizes your sense of being home.”