

Words Can Heal: Evaluating the Implementation of Personalization or Obscurity in Poetry Therapy Among Teens Experiencing Feelings of Abandonment

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Abstract

Poetry is becoming a prominent form of observational therapy in a variety of contexts and is proven to be effective in multiple ways, especially in contexts of family discord. However, with this form of therapy, therapists must consider the preeminent factors while selecting poems used in the receptive component in poetry therapy groups. Despite this consideration, an established criterion for poem selection is currently ambiguous, increasing the risk of ineffective treatment towards patients. Leedy and Hynes now have outlines for poem selection criteria. Leedy and Hynes argue that personalization should be avoided in poetry therapy as it may decrease feelings of relatability. On the other hand, skeptics contend that without personalization, clients may feel a lack of sensitivity. Both sides of the argument do not have substantial empirical evidence; thus, this study aims to provide empirical evidence for whether or not personalization is more effective in poetry therapy. The focus group of this research study was teens experiencing feelings of abandonment. Through utilizing a deductive coding mechanism, I examined the effectiveness of a poem by analyzing its responses collected from an online communicative platform displaying multiple aspects of receptive poetry therapy. The success level of a poem was dependent on its conformity to the therapeutic factors inventory, a common evaluator for the success of poetry therapy. My findings reveal that obscure poems were more effective than personalized poems, supporting Leedy and Hynes' current points of criteria.

Keywords: poetry therapy, abandonment, personalization, obscurity, RES model, receptive component, therapeutic factors inventory

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Feelings of abandonment are progressively becoming more prominent in modern society, and its implications are taking a toll on both the self and family units. According to the most recent U.S. census, about 18.6 million children reported living with only one parent (Census, 2021), suggesting that single-parenthood affects a quarter of all children in the country. Single motherhood is the second most common living situation for American families, with cases doubling in the past fifty years (Census, 2021). Additionally, inflicting about 40 to 50 percent of married couples in the United States (APA, 2020), parental separation is one of the most common child adversities, with over one million children experiencing divorce each year (Amato, et. al, 2001). It is a "long and problematic process" (Bolkan, 2013) that risks children's mental health and interpersonal relationships, requiring a gradual period of adjustments (Amato, et. al, 2001). This stage is when adolescents encounter a multitude of developmental tasks biologically, psychologically, and socially. They must "negotiate puberty and the completion of growth, take on sexually dimorphic body shape, develop new cognitive skills (including abstract thinking capacities), develop a clearer sense of personal and sexual identity, and develop a degree of emotional,

personal, and financial independence from their parents" (NCBI, 2005).

Due to the preeminent rates of divorce, there is already an abundant amount of evidence explaining turnout behaviors among children who have experienced physical or emotional abandonment. It is a field of research that has immensely evolved theoretically and methodologically, deviating from models that view abandonment only as a single event (Furstenberg and Kiernan, 2001). In an attempt to model constructive intervention programs, researchers strive to understand the short and long-term effects of parental detachment and physical or emotional negligence on young adults. Some common findings are that children with insecure attachment styles acquire weaker scores in reflective functioning and mentalization and risk experiencing long-lasting trauma, social impairment, emotional lability, and chronic stress (San Cristobal, et.al, 2003).

Literature Review

Introduction to Poetry Therapy

There are different forms of expressive art therapy, such as dance, music, drama, poetry, and bibliotherapy, and they have been recognized as essential in therapy options by many medical institutions. Although history has known of the healing power of poetry, it was not until the 20th century that poetry therapy started to become a firmly established professional organization. Therapists finally began linking poetry with

therapeutic experiences. Therefore, poetry therapy, the "use of language, symbol, and story in therapeutic, educational, and community-building capacities" (Gorelick, 2005), remains relatively new in the medical field compared to other therapeutic forms and is currently employed in many rehabilitative, psychotherapeutic and instructional institutions (Heimes, 2011).

Not only is poetry utilized in medical works, but it is also increasingly becoming crucial in social work. Therapists use poetry to analyze their clients' actions through their semantic and syntactic applications in their writings. Based on the National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations (2004), the main goals of poetry therapy include "developing an understanding of oneself and others through poetry and other forms of literature, promoting creativity, self-expression, and greater self-esteem, strengthening interpersonal and communication skills, expressing overwhelming emotions and releasing tension, and promoting change and increasing coping skills and adaptive functions."

The Standardized Model of Poetry Therapy

Mazza (2003), a leading force in the National Association for Poetry Therapy, has developed a tripartite, multi-dimensional practice model for poetry therapy through an online survey answered by a multi-disciplined group of therapists. From his results, Mazza was able to articulate a bodywork of several literature-based methods in poetry therapy called the RES (R/P, E/C, S/C)

model, a three-component design that includes receptive/prescriptive, expressive/creative, and symbolic/ceremonial methods. The R/P component examines already-existing poetry that incorporates validity and self-disclosure. In contrast, the E/C component requires the patient to actively express through poetry. Lastly, the S/C component utilizes metaphors and symbols as a means to encourage a gradual transition process (Wroclaw 2016).

The components R/P and E/C can be seen functioning in a case study led by Gorelick (2005), working with patients by implementing poetry as a source of healing. One of her clients was Amelia, who faced emotional disconnections with her mother and an anonymous father. She had suicidal thoughts in which she wrote a poem about:

"Dark, emptiness, void are my only experiences. . . . Everything reeks of death, end, finality. . . . I want to die, disappear, evaporate in thin air" (Gorelick, 2005).

Amelia's self-written poem portrays the expressive component where she is actively and directly involved in the poem's formation. Later, Gorelick wrote a creation of an exhausted Phoenix who receives powers from those surrounding her:

"the ability to hibernate, the skill of burying and locating nuts, the knack of making a home by felling trees, the ability to curl up and dream" (Gorelick, 2005).

Then in response, Amelia wrote,

"Outside / a group of pine trees give shelter / In the middle / a mound of pine needles / on the mound a ring of muck / white summer mold / Surprise / a live thing that shoots sparks and multiplies / Disgust / an infection that needs to be destroyed" (Gorelick, 2005).

The phenomenon here illustrates the receptive component in poetry therapy. The patient reacts and responds to a poem given by the therapist, just how Amelia had reacted to Gorelick's prompt. My study focuses on the receptive component where patients observe and respond to poems given by therapists based on a selection process.

The Emphasis on the Selection of Preexisting Literature

Poetry is a powerful tool for therapists in understanding clients through multiple methods. Some are having patients retell their story, re-evaluate both their obstacles and obligations, or break the silence of disregarded problems (Hoek, 2005). It is a process facing one's self and allows the client to analyze their thoughts and feelings. (Bolton, 1999). However, if not used expertly by therapists, poetry can potentially exacerbate problems instead of healing. Therefore, it is crucial for therapists to carefully select fitted poems that may best promote healing and developmental growth for their assigned group.

Although poetry therapy is evident to be an effective mental coping mechanism and healing art, it still carries multiple drawbacks causing unintended consequences. According to Bowman

(2004), four situations are involved with negative turnouts (these may also be applied to all forms of narrative therapy): evoking or imposing, changing self-image, attention to grief and trauma, and person/context. First, when evoking or imposing a patient, a therapist must be able to balance the provocative nature of the client. It may be dangerous if a client expresses unnurtured emotions that the client may not be capable of managing. Second, a therapist must be careful of changing a patient's self-image and establishing the person or context as providing "new pictures" of clients may unwillingly erode their past. Lastly, bringing attention to traumatic materials or grief realities can cause a dilemma for clients who are not yet prepared to accept their current state. These situations reveal that overall, poetry therapy is a risky process, including several factors of dubiety. In contrast, if a solidified poem selection process is carried out, it may increase the success level of poetry therapy. As in Asner-self and Feyissa's poetry group with multicultural-multilingual clients, Asner-self and Feyissa assert that once poems were appropriately selected, "immigrant clients explore the past, present, and future; aids in developing an appreciation of life's wonders; bolsters the clients' coping capacity when faced with life's potential barriers; and leads to an acceptance and embracing of diversity while instilling hope, confidence, and a zest for life" (Asner-self and Feyissa, 2002).

Discrepancies in the Current Criterion of Poem Selection

When conducting through the receptive model, several methods and theories maximize effective poem selection in poetry therapy, many of which differ in multiple aspects. Therefore, the employment of certain practices varies across poetry therapists. It also depends on the goal and state of the client(s) that help determine the style of poem selection.

Gorelick (2005) outlines thirteen factors denoted in the selection process, which include universality, intensity, depth, rhythm, images, metaphors, accessibility of language, clarity of idea, honesty, tone, power of language, openness, and relevance of the subject. Surrounding these points of consideration are two conventional guiding models for poem selection developed by Jack Leedy, Arleen McCarty Hynes, and Mary Hynes-Berry. These individuals, also known as the "pioneers of poetry therapy", wrote the first textbooks of the field, including Arthur Lerner, Gil Schloss, and Molly Harrower. Such texts are standardized in the modern field and are necessary for acquiring credentials as a poetry therapist (Brooke, 2006).

First, Leedy's framework is a concept that has already been equipped in music therapy known as the isoprinciple (Leedy, 1969). First introduced into music therapy, the guidelines consisting in the isoprinciple were fruitful in Leedy's conjectures of effective poem selection. He generally claims that "poems that are close in

feeling to the mood of the patient" while containing an element of hope are most constructive towards the client (Leedy, 1969). Furthermore, he suggests that poems should be avoided in the process when they:

- Offer no hope or that might increase the depth of the depression
- Increase guilt feelings
- Imply that God, father figures or mother figures forsake people, seek vengeance and cannot be relied upon in times of crisis
- Encourage, glorify, or even mention suicide
- Are confused, defeatist, homicidal, vulgar or debasing
- Encourage silence and discourage vocalization, particularly of feelings of hostility
- Are persistently pessimistic with self-destructive love and a fearful hatred of life (Olson-Mcbride, 2009)

Leedy's guidelines were rooted in the idea of universalization in common concerns that provide feelings of relatability and acceptance (Brooke, 2006). Following Gorelick's (2005) thirteen criteria points, Leedy proposes that poems with greater universality and a hopeful tone enhance their effectiveness during poetry therapy.

Similar to Leedy's framework of poem selection is Hynes and Hynes-Berry's (1994) criteria for choosing effective literature in poetry therapy, which specifically evaluates a piece's thematic and stylistic dimensions. Stemmed from Leedy's assumptions, Hynes and Hynes-Berry also believe a poem is most effective when it contains

universal and positive themes. Hence, poems that are personalized or negative are not recommended. Some desirable stylistic dimensions are compelling rhythm and striking imagery. As a result, stylistic choices of cacophonous rhythm and abstract imagery are to be avoided according to Hynes and Hynes-Berry's guidelines of poem selection (Hynes and Hynes-Berry, 1994).

Leedy, Hynes, and Hynes-Berry's outlines for proper poem selection are common in that all suggest avoiding the use of personalized poems - poems using a *persona* to describe the situation in a more specific and dramatic manner. Instead, they support the use of obscure poems - poems containing more abstract concepts to portray a message that gears away from specific topics. This thematic choice undertakes in the depth component of Gorelick's (2005) thirteen points of criteria in that according to both frameworks, poetry therapists must avoid poems that go too far in-depth, meaning that personalization should be avoided. However, there are discrepancies in this claim. Some believe that avoiding personal contexts in poetry may lead the client to "reflecting the clinician's lack of sensitivity to the depth of client despair" (Mazza, 1999). Specifically, in the poetry group of teens suffering from feelings of abandonment, it is unknown whether poem selection should bind to the frameworks of Leedy or Hynes-Berry. This leads to my research question: Is personalization or obscurity more effective in prompting beneficial responses among teens suffering from feelings of abandonment?

An Ambiguity of Poem Selection in Postdivorce-based Interventions for Adolescents

The emphasis on selecting fitting poems per subject group is immense, and therapists must consider several standards. However, the criteria in poem selection among teens experiencing feelings of abandonment seem way too broad or are unaddressed at all.

Poetry therapy is acknowledged as one of the many coping strategies for adolescents, post parental split. It allows clients role examinations and gives life meaning to the clients and "address the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of experience through emotional expression and integration, cognitive restructuring and experimenting with new behaviors" (Hoek, 2005). Hoek (2005) experimented with poetry therapy among adolescent girls from divorced homes (16 to 18) at a high school in Bloemfontein, where they were exposed to poetry group interventions. Hoek's objective was to improve adjustments and encourage emotional stability and self-esteem. Using the Personal, Home, Social, and Formal Relations Questionnaire, which pertains to their intrapersonal and interpersonal adjustment before and after the intervention took place, Hoek implemented the program for eight weeks. According to the facilitator of each group, the poems that the group needed to respond to and discuss were based on the theme and perceived mood of the group (Hoek, 2005). Hoek's intervention program of implementing poetry therapy in girls post parental divorce fails to

acknowledge a careful selection of poems, and thus cannot be determined whether the facilitated poems were entirely effective on the subject group. The only criteria mentioned by Hoeke was that the poems were of a similar mood to the group. However, this is entirely broad, and more research on setting rigid criteria on poetry selection among children postdivorce must be carried out.

Additionally, there is currently no empirical evidence supporting Leedy and Hynesberry's theory that more obscure poems are beneficial, nor is there empirical evidence from skeptics who say that personalization is essential in the receptive component of poetry therapy. Therefore, my study aims to partially fill in this void of ambiguous and uninvestigated criteria for poem selection.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

The main objective of my study is to gather empirical evidence supporting either side of the argument - personalization or obscurity- and to determine which poem is more effective as a whole. Through this research, I hope to enhance the efficacy of poem selection and thus further supplement the benefits of poetry therapy on teens encountering negative symptoms from feelings of abandonment. A two-part research design was conducted to achieve this purpose, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative segments. Through a mixed-method process, including both a quantitative and qualitative segment, will allow a

deeper understanding of the research question that a one-component design cannot accomplish itself (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Using qualitative analysis may further justify the statistical results of the quantitative portion that examines the average compatibility to the TFI scale for both poem types - personalized or obscure.

The specific methods chosen under this approach were quota sampling and a deductive coding mechanism. A quota sample was established for reducing the samples to a fixed theory. This allowed me to focus the samples towards the target group. Then, a deductive coding mechanism was conducted to evaluate the success level of each poem.

Data Source and Instruments

The samples utilized in this study were borrowed from [Family friends poems](#), a social network that allows individuals to share their poetry, specifically covering subjects related to family complications and comment on personal stories or thoughts. This site strives to curate a safe platform for people to discuss several life stressors as means to heal individuals undergoing social adversities. Not only does this align with the arch purpose of my research study, but it also reveals its comparability to a receptive therapy session that aims to have clients better analyze and understand their current situations. The online users are represented as "patients" in poetry therapy in the context of my study. Accordingly, the poems used in the study represent the poems given by poetry

therapists in the receptive component of poetry therapy. Additionally, the site's editors make sure to maintain only the best of their authentic poems that are written by the FFP Poetry Forum of eligible poets. They also develop work according to the viewers' feedback. When a poem is reported insufficient to meet the site's goals, the poems are removed from the network. This shows the credibility of these poems in that they prove considerably effective in a reader's perception. In other words, these poems aren't merely illiterate or random.

To examine the extent of the successful treatment during the receptive therapy process, the Therapeutic Factors Inventory was utilized. Devised by Corsini (1995), Rosenberg (1995), and later Yalom (2020), the concept of therapeutic factors was developed to provide an understanding of clients' perceptions of the effectiveness of group psychotherapy. This inventory consists of "mechanisms of change that occur through an intricate interplay of varied guided human experiences" containing 12 therapeutic factors generated from Yalom's group questionnaire: altruism, cohesion, universality, interpersonal learning input and output, guidance, catharsis, identification, family re-enactment, self-understanding, instillation of hope, and existential factors (Yalom, 2020). Such factors are widely accepted as potent mechanisms that bring positive impacts in group therapy in general. Therefore, I evaluated the success level of poems used in this study based on the Therapeutic

Factors Inventory and Yalom's definitions for the including factors.

In my study, however, I have adjusted the inventory to only seven factors (see table 1) with Yalom's respective definitions, which have been investigated as the most valued therapeutic factors across multiple studies of adolescent groups. I also referred to Lese and MacNair-Semands' sample items for the TFI scales (see Appendix A) throughout the study to better understand what these factors look like in the teen's responses in my study.

Table 1

Therapeutic Factors Inventory (Revised): Yalom's Definitions

Therapeutic Factor	Definition
Acceptance	Feeling of belonging and comfort within a group
Altruism	Efforts to support, help, or reassure others in the group
Guidance	Reception of information/advice/suggestions of general/personal content
Instillation of hope	Sense of optimism about one's (potential) progress
Self-disclosure	Revelation of important personal information
Self-understanding	Learning something significant about oneself
Universality	Recognition that one's experiences and problems are shared with others

Sample Collection

Due to the massive amount of poems on the communicative platform, I mainly selected poems from two categories provided by the website: "abandonment" and "divorce." The poems were heavily chosen based on my observations, determining whether the poem seemed personalized or obscure. Examples of one personalized and one obscure poem used in the study are located in Appendix A.

Several delimitations were established before collecting responses to their respective poems to narrow the subject pool specifically to my target group: teens suffering from feelings of abandonment. First, the comments must have explicitly stated their age or at least presented in a way where I can accurately infer their age. This can mean mentioning their grade level, providing timelines of their experiences, etc. Second, the comments must directly claim that they are currently suffering mental conflict after facing abandonment. Although many comments have revealed similar feelings one would face post feeling abandoned, I did not want to make erroneous personal speculations on this aspect, so it must have been stated directly. Lastly, I did not include reply comments in my study, meaning that comments referring to other comments were excluded. This is because reply comments simply respond to others, not the poem itself.

Procedures

First, potential responses were collected based on certain delimitations mentioned earlier. Second, each comment was analyzed using the

Therapeutic Factors Inventory in seven different categories (acceptance, altruism, guidance, instillation of hope, self-disclosure, self-understanding, and universality) through a deductive coding mechanism. If the comment contained that particular factor, it was labeled sufficient only for that category. For example, if a comment expressed feelings of acceptance, the comment was marked sufficient for only that specific factor. This process was repeated for every comment responding to each poem.

Data and Results

The total number of samples for both poems and comments after collection are presented in Table 2, with fewer samples under "obscure" overall (The poems implemented in the research process are listed in Appendix C). However, the imbalance in the number of poems and comments between personalized and obscure would not have significantly affected the results; only the average conformity to the Therapeutic Factors Inventory was calculated; therefore, the sample size does not equate to much significance.

Initially, there were 231 comments under the 15 personalized poems and 256 comments under the 14 obscure poems. However, the sample size for my study was reduced to 95 comments under the personalized poems (about 41% of all comments) and 74 comments under the obscure poems (about 30% of all comments).

Table 2

Collected Samples

Personalized	Obscure
8 poems	8 poems
67 comments	32 comments

As shown in Figure 1, both obscure and personalized poems brought about responses that expressed acceptance in the group of online users 100% of the time. This was the only factor evident across all comments. Another noticeable pattern is that more responses to obscure poems expressed the therapeutic factors with average conformity to the TFI scale of 66.29%. In comparison, responses to personalized poems had average conformity to the TFI of 48.14% (see Table 3). The therapeutic factor levels between responses in both obscure and personalized poems especially diverge in altruism, guidance, and instillation of hope by 49%, 53%, and 56%, respectively.

Figure 1

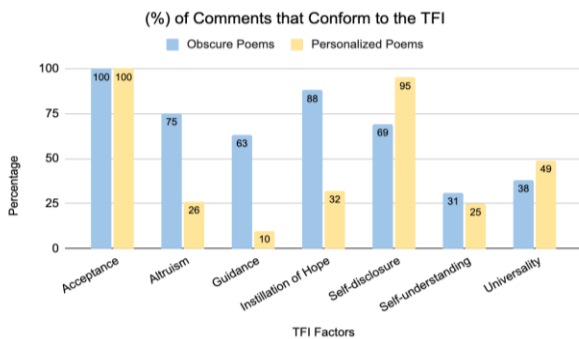


Table 3

(%) Average Conformity to the TFI

Poem Type	M	SD
Obscure Poems	46	33.99
Personalized Poems	59	18.83

Furthermore, responses to obscure poems were more potent in the categories of altruism, guidance, instillation of hope, and self-understanding. However, more responses to personalized poems contained the therapeutic factors of self-disclosure and universality.

Discussion

Fulfillment of Gaps in the Research

As both Figure 1 and Table 3 illustrate, obscure poems, on average, better conformed to the Therapeutic Factors Inventory. Therefore, my results empirically substantiate the two prominent frameworks of poem selection given by Leedy and Hynes-Berry, claiming that the implementation of personalization is less effective than obscurity in the receptive component of poetry therapy. My results also clarify the current discrepancy in criteria for poem selection in poetry therapy, which has debated whether personalization should or should not be implemented in poetry therapy. As a whole, my research supports the idea that personalization should be less implemented in poetry therapy; that is to say, obscurity should be incorporated in more poems to optimize the success of the therapy.

Limitations in the Research

There are a few points to consider when regarding the validity of my research project. First, my project incorporates a broad group of teens suffering from feelings of abandonment, underlying nearly every adversity faced. According to Leedy (1969), the process of poem selection may depend on specific factors of individuals. In other words, certain poems may prove effective for some while they may be entirely ineffective for others. Therefore, the results of my study are nowhere near applicable to all teens suffering from feelings of abandonment. Rather, it strives to curate only a brief part of the poem-selection criteria for this large subject group.

Second, it is important to note that the responses analyzed in my study may not entirely account for the entire group of teens suffering from parental divorce. As mentioned in the Methods section of this paper, I only incorporated comments that explicitly stated their age. Therefore, there could have been much more comments that truly represented the population, however, were not able to be used in the study due to uncertainty in age. If more comments explicitly stated their age, it would have better represented the subject group and may have shifted results.

Lastly, a false correlation between the responses and their poems may exist to the extent that personalization is not the sole factor in determining beneficial responses. There are many other factors involved as outlined by Gorelick (universality, intensity, depth, rhythm, images, metaphors, accessibility of language, clarity of idea,

honesty, tone, power of language, openness, and relevance of the subject) may have influenced the responses. As a result, it cannot be concretely concluded that responses conformed to the TFI scale only because of the implementation of obscurity or personalization; other factors could have generated such responses.

Implications of the Research

When used in poetry therapy, the criterion for the selection of poems has been too broad and did not account specifically for every therapy group. In matters of teens who have experienced feelings of abandonment, there has been no empirical evidence explaining which poems most successfully affect a patient in the therapeutic context. Therefore, my study contributes to solidifying the criterion for poem selection by revealing that obscure poems are more effective.

Furthermore, the discrepancy between claims for criteria is apparent: some believe poems must be personalized to reach a level of understanding, while others suggest that obscurity should be implemented in poems. In an attempt to evaluate which outline is most suitable in the context of abandonment, I have computed results that coincide with Leedy and Hynes-Berry's argument - one already referenced by many poetry therapists. This may influence poetry therapists to continue utilizing Leedy's or Hynes-Berry's criteria for poem selection in poetry therapy.

Additionally, current therapists may apply my findings to their current therapy sessions by

establishing more rigid criteria for poem selection among poetry groups of teens suffering from feelings of abandonment. Implementing obscure poems in poetry group sessions may increase the beneficial impacts of poetry therapy as a whole. As a result, poetry therapy may have the potential to further alleviate mental adversities faced by teens suffering from parental divorce.

Lastly, through applying the concept that obscure poems conform more to the Therapeutic Factors Inventory, I was also able to create my own obscure poem titled "Sinking Emerald" (see Appendix D) in hopes of providing comfort to teens currently suffering from parental divorce. The poem's content mainly portrays a teenager encountering feelings of isolation while she wishes to break free from such a moral state.

Proposals for Future Research

As my research is subject to only a specific website, *familyfriendpoems*, this method must obtain more empirical support in other contexts of poetry therapy, especially in the professional field. This would examine if my results apply to a broader extent or if it merely pertains to only the samples used in this research project.

Additionally, I hope this study will be reconducted in the future with a more variable-controlled study including active participants. This way, ages and circumstances would be specified, thus precisely focusing on the targeted sample. This is one aspect my study partially failed to carry out. The responses utilized in my study

were from people who varied across a multitude of situations, mental states, well-being, etc. Thus, if a group of participants suffering similar consequences and symptoms is studied, this can increase a more controlled sample that introduces less randomized results.

Broadly speaking, more research must take place to establish proper criteria of poem selection in regards to teens suffering from feelings of abandonment. My research only answers a small part of the bigger picture. This study only circumferences the category of "personalization versus obscurity," and there must be other evaluations for the current outlines of poem selection. With more accurate criteria for poem selection, the receptive component in poetry therapy interventions may increase efficacy, providing comfort to millions of teens who can relate with the subject group.

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Appendix A

Sample Items for TFI Scales (Lese, et.al, 2000)

Scale	Sample items
Altruism	It has impressed me that people in my group can be so kind and giving to one another.
Catharsis	Helping others in group makes me feel better about myself. I can "let it all out" in my group.
Cohesiveness	I can't express my feelings here. We cooperate and work together in group.
Corrective reenactment of primary family group	Even though we have differences, our group feels secure to me. I have found myself playing the same role in the group that I played in my family at times.
Development of socializing techniques	In group I've really seen the social impact my family has had on my life. Group doesn't teach me anything about how to have good relationships.
Existential factors	Group helps me learn how to be more clear and direct with other people.
Imitative behavior	In group I have learned that I am responsible for my own improvement. This group helps empower me to make a difference in my own life. I learn how other people act in group and imitate them when it is appropriate.
Imparting information	I keep my eye on what other people do in group so I can try different things. In group I get "how-to's" on improving my life situation. We share ideas about resources in group.
Instillation of hope	I don't think group helps me feel any better about the future. Seeing others change in my group gives me hope for myself.
Interpersonal learning	I learn in group by interacting with the other group members. Expressing myself in group has not freed me to express myself better in my outside life.
Universality	We have little in common in my group. In group I have a sense that we all share similar feelings.

Appendix B

Obscure Example Poem

A Broken Family Tree

© Lori McBride

I am one of many
Small branches of a broken tree,
Always looking to the ones above
For guidance, strength and security.
One little branch trying
To keep the others from breaking away.
Who will fall?
And who will stay?
Now I stand alone,
Looking at the earth through the rain,
And I see the broken branches I knew
Scattered about me in pain.
There are those who have taken an ax
To the root of our very foundation
And who have passed this destruction
Down to every new generation.
If I could take that ax,
I would toss it deep into the sea,
Never to return again
To harm the generations that follow me.
I am one of many,

Personalized Example Poem

Flowered Heart

© Maeghan P.

When you left me
I was too young to see
I was too young to tell
how much pain you would make my heart dwell

I cry almost every night
because I know my daddy won't be here tonight
He left me some years ago
Nothing can ever make me feel this low

I never saw them together because at the time of divorce I was just two
but I have to say Daddy, it was all because of you
You told her you didn't love her
How could you do that to my mother

The woman that loved you more than you can ever know
A woman who is still waiting for your return at the window
I am 15 1/2 now, Dad, it's a shame you aren't here to help
me fill my life support bag

You missed out on band competitions
That we even won first place in
You miss out on my first overnight camp
There I made so many new friends

My softball games are the funniest by far
I hit that ball so hard one time I could have sworn it hit a star
But Daddy, enough with that,
I have on question that is hanging on my back

Where'd you go, Daddy?
The peelings on my heart are making a pretty big stack

Appendix C

Poems Utilized in the Study

Obscure Poems:

- Holding on (By Keshia)
- You will never see me fall (By Joyce Alcantara)
- A Broken Family Tree (by Lori McBride)
- Tears (By Jordan)
- A Lonely Star (by Mikayela Dzenowski)
- Solitude (by Ella Wheeler Wilcox)
- Hurt and pain (by Lora)
- The decision (by Lisa Willbur)

Personalized Poems:

- A Lost Promise (By Jacqueline Uvalle)
- What Did I Do? (By Krista N. Davis)
- Why Mom? (By Gabriel P. Castillo)
- Daddy's Little Girl (By Emma R. Sims)
- Daddy, I'm still your Kid (By Veronika J.)
- You Left Me for No Reason (By Hannah Smallwood)
- A Letter to my Dad (By Destiny)

Appendix D

My Own Obscure Poem

Sinking Emerald

She sits in the bathroom stall, for her a land of
milk and honey.

Knees to chest and arms the same.

The tiled floors - a rink of her wetting salts.

Salts which drain her weakness, shame.

Burden squirms her body, hands shaking
like a jolted sky.

O how she pictures the walls of such a riverside -
clutching her to the wind flows, breathing swift
assurance.

Taking her away far, far, far...

Swallowing whole numbing scars

'Please water take my soul'

'where my mind may wander in bubbles at horizon'

'My body thawing in the sun till only my heart
remains - glistening

In the moonlight, whatever time of day.'