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Evaluating the prevalence and dimensions of poetry interventions to enable change and transformation in organizations

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**EVALUATING THE PREVALENCE AND DIMENSIONS OF POETRY
INTERVENTIONS TO ENABLE CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN
ORGANIZATIONS**

A Research Project

**Presented to the Faculty of
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management
Pepperdine University**

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

In

Organization Development

By

Elizabeth Kathleen McGraw

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This research project, completed by

ELIZABETH KATHLEEN MCGRAW

Under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, it has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Faculty Committee

Committee Chair, Kent Rhodes, Ed.D.

Committee Member, Ann Feyerherm, Ph.D.

Deborah Crown, Ph. D., Dean
The Graziadio Business School

Abstract

Today, organizations and their employees operate in times of increased complexity, ambiguity, and constant change. Traditional methods for enabling change and transformation are no longer sufficient to generate alignment and shared understanding to create adaptive ways of working. Organizations must identify new tools when engaged in change and transformation. Poetry, a time-honored practice, is an unconventional choice for organizational interventions. Still, it may be a solution for organizations seeking to unstick, reframe, and pivot quickly toward a new and shared reality. This study evaluated the practice and dimensions of poetry interventions used by change practitioners when enabling change and transformation in organizations.

The literature review explored the history of poetry to demonstrate its enduring value across time, cultures, and languages. It explored the practical components of poetry, the power of storytelling, and its ability to move and evoke an emotional effect in humans. Also, it examined the modern-day change in the corporate world and the role of sensemaking amid change. Finally, it explored the intersection of poetry and the modern corporate world.

This study used a qualitative method design and gathered data across nine interviews with change practitioners. This method explored an intervention's characteristics, conditions, and results. Engagements with interview participants covered ten core questions. Key themes are organized around intellectual, pleasure, emotional, and awe-inspiring aspects that can be attributed to the aesthetic experience (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). There is a cognitive experience for those who engage with poetry that can be attributed to poetry's construct and the human system.

Poetry can be a pleasing exercise for its audiences leading to active listening, engagement, and diverse thinking. An emotional response can be a natural reaction to poetry, and this study's interviewees recounted an emotional experience for their intervention participants and themselves. Finally, the sense of awe. The aesthetic experience is described as transcendental and applies to a poetic experience, according to this study's research. A summary of the study is offered, including recommendations, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future studies.

I am good at seeing opportunity where others see mayhem.

—Chef Jose Andres, Founder, World Central Kitchen, Ukraine, 2022

A Self

I am an oversized top that has only been partially erected.

A tall pole with a tent and its four corners stir dust as they swing.

I am not a maypole that seeks to be choked by her loose ends.

I require stakes to drive into the ground.

My purpose is to be still, reach my intended shape, and provide shelter for the circus.

—Beth McGraw, MSOD candidate, Gainesville, FL, 1995

Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and imagination is the similitudes of things. Reason is to the imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance.

—A Defence of Poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
List of Tables	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Purpose of the Study	2
Study Setting	2
Significance of the Study	2
Organization of the Study	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
Poetry, a Kind of History	4
How Poetry Works	6
Change and the Corporate World	9
Sensemaking During Change	10
Poets in the Modern Corporate World	12
Summary	16
Chapter 3: Research Methodology Methods	18
Research Design	18
Sample	20
Protection of Human Subjects	20
Instrumentation	21
Data Collection	22
Data Analysis	22

Limitation of Research Approach.....	22
Summary.....	23
Chapter 4: Results.....	24
Data Analysis and Research Findings.....	24
Results.....	24
Interview Participants	24
Key Themes	25
Summary.....	34
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Results, Recommendations, Limitations, and Future Studies...	35
Conclusions and Results	35
Recommendations.....	36
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study.....	39
Recommendations to Practitioners	40
Summary.....	42
References.....	43

List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Characteristics.....	37
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Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time.

—A Defence of Poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley

Chapter 1: Introduction

Poetry has been a proven and enduring modality for centuries (Ferguson et al., 2018). It can reveal what resides below the surface and invites individuals to envision new possibilities (C. Morgan et al., 2010). It sets the course for a profound connection with the self and can create a new, different vision for the future (Whyte, 1996). If poetry can move the individual, it can impact teams and organizations. During difficult and tumultuous times, poetry can ease the most acute fears and anxieties and help build a path to ensure progress.

This study explored the prevalence of poetry as an intervention in organizations. It sought to identify the dimensions of a poetic intervention, explore best practices, and establish a baseline for future change practitioners. Qualitative interviews examined the prevalence of poetry as an intervention and if the practice can transfer across practitioners and organizations.

What is old is new again. Imagine leveraging unconventional but proven models and tools to inform highly humanistic interventions that tap into human qualities across individuals, teams, and organizations to act as a catalyst for change and transformation. This study focused only on poetry and acknowledged that many other literary devices are also available to practitioners. In conclusion, this study describes the relevancy of this

approach given the increased complexity, ambiguity, and the prospect of continuous change.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the role of poetry in enabling change and transformation in organizations. Two research questions are explored:

- **RQ1.** What are the characteristics and conditions of poetry interventions in organizations?
- **RQ2.** What are the results of poetry interventions in organizations?

Interviews were conducted to identify standard practices, key themes, and exceptional examples.

Study Setting

Ten interview questions were issued to change practitioners throughout nine interviews in English across North America and the United Kingdom, leveraging a conversational interview style and open-ended questions.

Significance of the Study

While not prevalent, poetry is used with intention in corporate settings. This study explored the literature and the application of poetry as an intervention in organizations engaged in change and transformation. Although poetry may seem exclusive, it can also be simple, highly accessible, and intersects with life at every level (Pitsis, 2014).

Today, change in the corporate world is not a mere event but constant (Berger & Johnston, 2016; Cummings & Worley, 2014). Legacy tools and methods may need to be revised to address emergent and incessant change (Candelon, 2022; Cummings & Worley, 2014). Therefore, organizations must identify and implement new techniques for

enacting change to elevate performance, increase alignment, modernize capabilities, and navigate complex problems (Cummings & Worley, 2014).

The researcher believes poetry is a viable tool for organizations seeking new change and transformation interventions and examined the conditions and practices of leveraging poetry in organizational development, change, and transformation. This study characterized the dimensions of poetry interventions, elevated the importance and power of poetry interventions in organizations, and minimized barriers for practitioners to adopt poetry intervention practices.

Organization of the Study

This chapter captured the study's purpose and significance. Chapter 2 reviews the literature leading to poetry interventions. Chapter 3 outlines the methods used in the research. Chapter 4 shares the results, and Chapter 5 reflects the key findings.

But poetry in a more restricted sense expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty; whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man.

—A Defence of Poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The study looked at the dimensions and results of poetry as an intervention in enabling change and transformation in organizations. This chapter offers an overview of today's literature that makes a case for poetry as a modality to enact change. The literature that explicitly discusses the intersection of poetry and organizational change is limited (Buswick et al., 2005); however, an abundance of content exists on the power of poetry to capture life's disruptions (Archambeau, 2012; Burrell, 2014; Cohn, 1972; Kou, 2022; Whyte, 1996,) and the rapidly evolving needs of the transforming organization to adapt to internal and external conditions (Berger & Johnston, 2016). Therefore, the study examined poetry as a legitimate and democratized instrument for change practitioners, the conditions of change in organizations, the role of sensemaking in enabling change, and the potential of poetry to assist the change and transformation process.

Poetry, a Kind of History

Poesis in Greek means making or "the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before" (Wikipedia Contributors, 2023). Poetry is an expression of the human condition that can be traced through the ages from ancient times (3000 BC-500 AD) to the modern era (1850-Present) (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). Through the ages, poetry captured the human experience by making the most concrete concepts abstract and new and making known the barely notional (Buswick et al., 2005).

Ancient poetry consisted of songs, chants, and rituals (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). It focused on the most epic tales and heroes' journeys. Aristotle (384—322) reflected on poetics in the few remaining fragments of his Poetics essays (Aristotle & Janko, 1987; Butcher & Poetics, 2021). Aristotle and Janko explored the underlying laws and principles in verbal works of art (Aristotle & Janko, 1987).

The Middle Ages or Medieval (500-1500) saw wars and plagues (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). In the East, poetry became so integrated into society that the "fude 賦得" style became a part of the venerated Chinese civil service examination (J. K. Liu, 1986). Later in this period, in the West, you see long narrative poetry emerge from renowned masters such as Dante (1265) and *The Divine Comedy* (1308–21) and the distribution of *Beowulf* (8th century), whose author is unknown (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). Rumi (1207-1273), the Muslim poet, emerged, and his poems of loving, longing, and loss are still widely quoted today (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999).

The Renaissance period (1400-1700) is widely known as a golden age of literature in the West, including William Shakespeare and John Donne (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). In this period, the earlier material reflected the end of the Middle Ages and became satirical, sonnet driven, and touched on love in a new way (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). It is followed closely by the Neoclassical period (1660-1800) and the Romantic Period (1798-1850) (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). In 1820, an English novelist, Thomas Love Peacock, published an essay, *The Four Ages of Poetry*, and praised the virtues of science and technology while announcing the demise of poetry at a time that marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Brett-Smith et al., 2010).

A year later, Peacock's contemporary, the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1821), responded in his essay, *A Defence of Poetry*. Shelley does not ask one to choose technology over the humanities or vice versa. Instead, he invites one to embrace the complexity across reason and imagination (Shelley, 1903). Shelley's response is often cited as the beginning of the romantic period in poetry (Brett-Smith et al., 2010).

The Modern Era (1850-Present) is extensive. During this time, the modern English department came into being because of T.S. Eliot and his contemporaries (Archambeau, 2012; Lentricchia & McLaughlin, 2010). The prevailing belief was that literature and poetics warranted a place of study apart from the history, psychology, and social sciences, a topic highly debated among the ancient Greeks (Archambeau, 2012; Aristotle & Janko, 1987). For some, poetry was a high-minded cultural activity designed for elite thinkers, while others, like I.A. Richards, believed poetry could create order in a chaotic world and had the potential to replace religion and philosophy and heal society's ills (Cohn, 1972).

Underlying both perspectives was the devout belief that literature and poetic experience are accessible to everyone (Archambeau, 2012; Lentricchia & McLaughlin, 2010). Over the next 50 years, we see a proliferation of English and creative writing departments, and poetry publications increase at a rate never seen before (Lentricchia & McLaughlin, 2010). The prevalence of poetry across the ages implies a remarkable association with the human experience (Cohn, 1972; Wassiliwizky et al., 2017).

How Poetry Works

What does poetry entail, and what is its effect on people? Poetry highlights possibility and a modality in the literature domain that can convey an idea or a story in a

manner that can be devised from structure, meter, and possibly rhymes (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). Like a paragraph in prose, a stanza in poetry acts as a container for a specific idea or concept, letting the reader know that as a stanza ends or begins, so does the notion (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). The spacing of a poem, like grammar in prose, can indicate how a poem ought to be read, accounting for pause and breath (Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). Poetry takes many forms: narrative poetry, sonnets, limericks, ballads, soliloquies, and modern hip-hop (Chang, 2005; Ferguson et al., 2018; E. Morgan, 1999). So, what effect does poetry have that allows it to resonate for so long and across many cultures?

Stories can enable change and transformation (Duarte & Sanchez, 2016).

Consider Jonathan Haidt's famous metaphor for the human condition using the elephant (the emotional side) and the rider (the rational side) (Haidt, 2021). By only appealing to the rational side in enabling change, behavior change (highly influenced by emotions) becomes more difficult, if not impossible (Haidt, 2021).

Poems bridge the gap between knowing and perceiving because they use the highly differentiated, logic-driven structures of language to point to the undifferentiated arena where emotions hold sway. Poems put down their roots in the no-man's-land between thinking and feeling., the borderland where logic shades into the non-logical, where a world defined and delineated by language gives way to the more diffuse territory of what psychologists sometimes call the feeling state. (C. Morgan et al., 2010, p. 65)

When we use stories to engage our audience, we tap into the emotional side where empathy, sympathy, compassion, care, and connection reside (Barraza et al., 2015, Haidt, 2021). When we connect with our audiences emotionally through the power of stories, we are more likely to see them lean into the story with a desire to learn more, and the listener starts to see themselves in the context independent of the presenter and increase

recall (Haidt, 2021). It all leads to a higher likelihood that the audience will act (Duarte & Sanchez, 2016; Haidt, 2021). When this happens in a group setting, collective effervescence occurs. According to Rimé and Páez, Durkheim (1912) coined collective effervescence to describe what happens when a group gathers under a common purpose and focuses on a shared goal (Rimé & Páez, 2023). For some, it is described as magic.

The aesthetic experience of humanity engaging with beautiful things, including poetry, music, and the visual arts, is described in the book, *The Art of Seeing – An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter*, by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990). Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson explore the dimensions of the aesthetic experience and devise a quantitative approach to test and measure beautiful experiences' power on an individual (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). For an experience to be considered aesthetic, according to Monroe Beardsley, five themes must be present, including:

(i) object focus: the person willingly invests attention in a visual stimulus; (ii) felt freedom: he or she feels a sense of harmony that preempts everyday concerns and is experienced as freedom; (iii) detached effect: the experience is not taken literally; (iv) active discovery: the person becomes cognitively involved in the challenges presented by the stimulus and derives a sense of exhilaration from the involvement; (v) wholeness: a sense of integration follows from experience, giving the person a feeling of self-acceptance and self-expansion. (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p. 7)

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson continue the conversation and compare Beardsley's aesthetic criteria with the experience of flow and conclude that they are essentially the same experience, one being the philosopher's description and the latter coming from the psychological sciences (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990.). An individual's engagement with poetry, and other artistic modalities, is like the person involved in a passion project or an athletic endeavor in that they are singularly focused on the experience for the sake of the experience alone

(Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). To evaluate the aesthetic experience, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson propose four criteria for evaluation: cognitive, perceptual, emotional, and transcendental (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990).

The emotional power of poetry can be described at the psychological and neural layers (Jacobs, 2015; Wassiliwizky et al., 2017). This is a practice well developed in understanding the impact listening and creating music has on the brain but remains a more recent endeavor as it relates to poetics (Wassiliwizky et al., 2017). Likewise, music is well regarded as an international and cross-cultural tool that enables shared emotional journeys regardless of country of origin or native spoken language (Gaba et al., 1998; Wassiliwizky et al., 2017). Less regarded, poetry offers the same, if not more than music, as an instrument of emotional communication and expression (Wassiliwizky et al., 2017). Wassiliwizky's research shows that poetry elicits an emotional response and triggers the brain in areas of primary rewards. Through poetry, there was evidence of the brain's ability to engage in predictive and hypothetical thinking in the context of rewards when exposed to poetry (Wassiliwizky et al., 2017).

Change and the Corporate World

The Henderson Institute at Boston Consulting Group (BCG) explains that the future of work will require an entirely different skill set because routine, methodical activities, from bus driving to copy-editing, will be automated with artificial intelligence and machine learning (Candelon, 2022). Human qualities such as empathy, ethics, and creativity become essential to the progress of our organizations and society. Skills like cooperation, creative and empathic work, inspiring the workforce, and enabling

continuous transformation are critical in the automated world (Berger & Johnston, 2016; Candelon, 2022). This invites organizations to reconsider how they will move and change toward a new reality (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Now and for the foreseeable future, change work will focus less on cause and effect and standard change efforts because the implementation becomes less manageable, and the goals are not always well understood (Berger & Johnston, 2016; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This represents a complex environment. To enable change in complex environments, where change is not linear, and interventions should be iterative and designed to enable local change that is not always predictable (Berger & Johnston, 2016; Cummings & Worley, 2014).

This vision for change is established based on the available information and constantly reevaluated as new learnings are derived, and new unknowns arise (Cummings & Worley, 2014). The work direction may adapt to the new circumstances as more information is learned (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This can be done through collaboration and continuous feedback loops in an agile environment (Berger & Johnston, 2016). Course correction becomes critical, and the system's response to change is emergent and unpredictable (Berger & Johnston, 2016). This agile and iterative approach to complex change in complex times warrants new ways for formulating understanding quickly across an organization (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Effective sensemaking, always central to enabling change, becomes critical (Weick et al., 2005; Weiser, 2021).

Sensemaking During Change

Sensemaking is making sense of an environment (Colville et al., 2016, Cunliffe, 2002; D. A. Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Weick, 2005). This is achieved by organizing

knowable data until the environment is understood well enough to enable reasonable decisions. Sensemaking evolves the longer we engage in narration and communication (Colville et al., 2016; Shaw, 2003). The dialogic approach shapes how we live and interact, creating a mutually known reality (Cunliffe, 2002). Sensemaking is necessary, should precede action at any stage, and is created through language (Colville et al., 2016; Weick et al., 2005). It occurs when organizational circumstances are turned into words and knowledge (Gioia et al., 1994). Unknowns are resolved, and the objects of new experiments or actions are clearly targeted (D. A. Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Perhaps sensemaking is strengthened under scrutiny and less about correctness and more about diverse thinking and enduring ideas (Weick et al., 2005).

Compared to sensemaking, sensegiving focuses on how individuals make meaning (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) and is critical to understanding how shared realities or meaning are created among teams in organizations (Weick, 1995). Sensegiving can be further distilled into two parts, authoritative and expansive (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Authoritative and expansive sensegiving can appear when organizations are engaged in strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Sensegiving seeks to describe the alignment required in organizations beyond just intellectual alignment and moves into the exchange of feelings and diverse interpretations or understanding (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Authoritative sensegiving leverages leadership's influence and language to shape the change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). This is often described as a top-down approach. An example might be when leaders communicate the vision to the broader organization setting the tone and aspirational direction (Cummings & Worley, 2014; Kotter, 2022).

Compared to expansive sensegiving, which is the less prescribed approach that allows for impacted teams to see themselves in the change and encourages something more self-directed (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weiser, 2021).

Poets in the Modern Corporate World

Choosing poetry as a modality can create a choice for those engaged (Buswick et al., 2005; Whyte, 1996). Poetry invites the participant to spend time within a limited language paradigm and explore it with emotional and intellectual autonomy (Buswick et al., 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). It is less about being right and more about how the self interfaces with the poetic material without judgment (Y. Liu & Liu, 2015; Whyte, 1996). The tenets of expansive sensegiving seek to enhance the participants' awareness from the unseeing to the newly seen, demonstrate instead of telling, and draw attention towards something instead of leading another to the goal (Hernes & Maitlis, 2010; Y. Liu & Liu, 2015; Whyte, 1996).

Like expansive sensegiving, poetry offers a structure to shape reality but does not prescribe a correct form (Ferguson et al., 2018; Whyte, 1996). It assumes equifinality in illuminating a shared experience (Ferguson et al., 2018; Whyte, 1996). It also has the potential to realize collective effervescence. Poetry may also represent the closest thing we can get to a common truth. Percy Bysshe Shelley said,

[Poetry] awakens and enlarges the mind by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand apprehended combinations of thought. Whatever strengthens and purifies the affections, enlarges the imagination, and adds spirit to sense, is useful (Shelley, 1903, p. 100).

From sensemaking and sensegiving, poetry offers a particular lens for exploring an individual's journey to create meaning in a community, a powerful accelerant for change. At this point, poetry and the language of business begin to intersect.

Epstein (2015) wrote his essay entitled, *Who Killed Poetry?* and examined the conditions that resulted in a perceived decline in public appreciation for poetry while at the same time, the number of poems published had increased. Academic sanitization of poetry emerged, and a generally diminished appreciation of the arts minimized poetry's relevancy (Epstein, 2015).

Several years after Epstein's essay, Dana Gioia asked, *Can Poetry Matter?* in the *Atlantic Monthly*, a periodical founded by such lauded poets as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes (The Atlantic, 1991). Despite the proliferation of poetry, poetry criticism was lacking, and the poetry community became insular and self-serving as it retreated from general society and the everyday experience of life (Boening & Gioia, 1993). By the 1990s, poetry experienced an identity crisis and was again under an existential threat.

Over the years, there has been a rise in storytelling and the power of narrative to influence and persuade others (Duarte & Sanchez, 2016). Whether in a corporate boardroom, a town hall, or a project status meeting, organizations are eager for an intervention that enables collective meaning and understanding (Buswick et al., 2005). However, poetry rarely emerges as a contender. As one moves upstream in the change process away from implementation, the work becomes more ambiguous (Cummings & Worley, 2014). The solution still needs to be discovered, and the underlying problem may remain unclear (Cummings & Worley, 2014).

Organizations seek opportunities to evolve and avoid diminishing value (Shaw, 2003). The poet and philosopher David Whyte met an executive who approached him with an unusual offer. He invited the poet to meet with his executive team because the

language they used needed to be revised to meet the emergent demands of the business. With that, a new body of work is born (Whyte, 1996). In 1994, Whyte's book, *The Heart Aroused, Poetry and The Preservation of The Soul in Corporate America*, provides a lifeline for poetry in a soulless corporate America and for the lost, soulful individuals who toil there. Poetry meets the modern organization.

Through the application of poetry, we engage in a transcendental process (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). "Novelty and coherence, form and structure, collapse and destruction... we participate in creation..., yet the form could evolve and surprise us" (Shaw, 2003, p. 104). Similarly, individuals in an organization engaged in a task continually create and improvise, even in the most stable environments (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). For these reasons, poetry is empowering as it ties the rational to the emotional to enact change (Haidt, 2021).

In her book, *What Poetry Brings to Business*, C. Morgan (2010) explores the intersection of poetry and business in partnership with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG). The underlying belief is that reading and discussing poetry in a business setting can assist organizations working in ambiguous environments where the optimal decision may not entirely be clear (C. Morgan et al., 2010). In this example, poetry is explicitly used to increase alignment quicker and improve executive decisions that benefit the organization (Buswick et al., 2005). For C. Morgan et al., they select a poem to facilitate a discussion about complex decision-making. The poem seeks to model the decision-making processes in an organization and help participants surface that good decisions must account for more than just facts (Buswick et al., 2005). The poem selected for the exercise was:

Traveling Through the Dark
by William Stafford.

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason –
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all – my only swerving - ,
then pushed her over the edge into the river. (C. Morgan et al., 2010, pp. 59–60)

Poetry, like complex decision-making, can present multiple layers of meaning across beliefs, abilities, and sentiments at the same time (Buswick et al., 2005). In the same way, there is no right interpretation of a poem. Decisions are rarely 100% correct, are made with incomplete information, and encounter competing priorities. Morgan's poetry interventions provided executives the space to think creatively and innovate less linearly and logically than they were accustomed to. The results included better decision-making capabilities (Buswick et al., 2005).

Bringing people together to gather is a deliberate choice informed by underlying reasons and has the power to inform how we see the world and one another (Parker, 2018; Rimé & Páez, 2023). In these gatherings, we make sense of the world (Rimé &

Páez, 2023). In Parker's (2018) book, *The Art of Gathering*, she explores the dimensions of an influential event beyond the title and addresses aspects of the attendees' experience. She writes about the need for a new model to inform how we gather in response to the dynamic changes in how we converse, so much so that we can no longer presume heterogeneity and a shared understanding of rituals and ceremonies.

Instead, Parker starts with intentionality in the invitation and exclusiveness over-inclusiveness on the invitee list (Parker, 2018). Parker suggests that gatherings must be informed with a strong sense of purpose, that the environment plays a critical role, and that the facilitator must demonstrate a strong command of the setting and act as a trusted guide. Her insights apply to social and corporate gatherings with a promise for more meaningful outcomes and results (Parker, 2018; Rimé & Páez, 2023).

Summary

It would be impossible to account for the entire history of poetry, but what is remarkable is its journey to arrive at the doorsteps of our corporations, organizations, and the individuals employed there. Over centuries, poetry emerged as a tool that is both art and utilitarian. Poets cannot foresee the future but perhaps know something about turbulence and change and the capacity of humans to endure and even thrive.

Like jazz music, poems have the potential to enable change. They do this by disrupting, enabling continuous learning through trial and error, creating a context for mutual understanding within structures, providing for energetic alignment, collective sensemaking, and the performance of roles one might play in the reading of a poem – a reader, a listener, and community sensemaking together (Gaba et al., 1998).

Today, organizations require a more creative response due to work's complex and ambiguous nature so that they not only endure but thrive. At the organization's center are the people who make sense together by leveraging techniques to tap into a collective understanding. The frameworks and tools are abundant for enabling change; adding poetry as a device to the brave practitioner's toolkit can have rich results.

A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth... poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted.

—A Defence of Poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley

Chapter 3: Research Methodology Methods

This study examined the role of poetry in enabling change and transformation in organizations. Two research questions were explored:

- **RQ1.** What are the characteristics and conditions of poetry interventions in organizations?
- **RQ2.** What are the results of poetry interventions in organizations?

This chapter focuses on the research design, sample, protection of human subjects, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures. In conclusion, the chapter offers a summary.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative method design and leveraged the inductive logic of research (Creswell, 2014). The study sought to confirm the prevalence and dimensions of poetry interventions among change practitioners, enabling change and transformation in organizations. Open-ended questions were presented to nine participants seeking to identify common themes, best practices, and exceptional experiences for facilitators and participants. The conversations were transcribed, and the data was coded for common characteristics in the environment, facilitator, participants, and the results of the poetry interventions.

Research participants were selected from communities of change practitioners, including Organizational Development networks, change management networks, and change agents actively engaged in storytelling techniques. The goal was to recruit and

interview ten practitioners leveraging poetry. The study successfully recruited and scheduled nine interviews.

The principal investigator came to the research with experience in leveraging poetic interventions when enabling change and transformation but did so without the benefit of the literature and an emerging community of poetry practitioners working in organizations. Interviews were conducted with a presumption of positive intent by the interviewees, and after the first interview, the expectation of a positive experience was established.

Data analysis for the qualitative research was done during the same time as the interviews (Creswell, 2014). The transcripts were reviewed and coded leveraging software. The original codes were devised based on the expected questions. Secondary codes were developed to capture emergent concepts and novel practices. The coded data results were analyzed, themes were extracted, and the principal investigator interpreted their meaning.

The qualitative data collection and analysis method helped to inform the use of poetry as an intervention to enable change and transformation and the interventions' characteristics, conditions, and results. The results of the interviews were coded and evaluated for common themes in addition to the interview participants' feelings, insights, and reactions to the questions. The format of the interviews was conversational, and the questions were relatively open-ended and designed to evoke an emotional response in addition to an objective answer. Participants in the study were selected from an adult population, identified as change practitioners, and leveraged poetry to enable change and

transformation. Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board approved the principal investigator's research and completed the required training.

Sample

The principal investigator sought research participants through existing professional networks, including LinkedIn, professional affiliates, and personal networks. In the end, 10 change practitioners volunteered to participate, seeking to share how they leveraged poetry as an intervention to enable change and transformation. Nine out of 10 successfully participated in 60-minute interviews conducted in May and June 2023. They ranged in tenure and expertise. Less tenured participants were employed 10 or fewer years and worked in internal change roles formally and informally. More tenured participants were self-employed or identified as the CEO of their practice and had practiced and enabled change for decades. This diversity allowed the principal investigator to capture diverse perspectives across age, tenure, and seniority.

Protection of Human Subjects

Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board approved the study on April 20, 2023. Additionally, the researcher completed the MSOD Human Subjects Research Participants web-based training course on November 20, 2021.

A social behavioral adult participant informed consent form was issued to each participant and explained the research study and voluntary nature of participation. Participants' consent to partake in the study was implied by joining the scheduled call and permission to transcribe the conversation for research purposes only. Participants faced no apparent risks or costs and received no financial incentives for participating in the study. The only inconvenience to participants was the time involved in the interview.

All participant responses were kept confidential, and participants were not obliged to state their names for the transcription. Only aggregate data were reported in this study and any subsequent analysis or future publication of the results. All research data are stored securely in the researcher's password-protected online file during the study and will be kept in this location for five years following the study. After this time, they will be destroyed.

Instrumentation

This study focused on understanding poetry interventions' characteristics, conditions, and results. Ten open-ended research questions were presented to the participants:

1. Tell me about a time when you leveraged poetry as an intervention to enable change and transformation.
2. How would you describe the environment where you practice poetic interventions?
3. How would you describe the participants you facilitate?
4. How would you describe how you leveraged poetry?
5. What attributes would you use to describe yourself as a facilitator?
6. Where in the change process do you believe poetry interventions reside?
7. What are the results of your poetry interventions? How do you know?
8. What else do you believe the community would benefit from to further facilitate leveraging poetry in organizational change and transformation work?
9. Is there anyone else whom I should engage as part of this research study?
10. Is there anything else we have not discussed that you believe to be pertinent?

The interview style was conversational, and the principal investigator followed up on the interviewee's responses seeking pertinent details relevant to the study.

Data Collection

The questions were presented equally across participants regardless of tenure or experience with change. These questions sought to understand the characteristics of a poetry intervention and the results or consequences. At the time of publication, nine of 10 interviews were completed. Each interview was conducted one-on-one in a virtual environment. The questions were open-ended, and the style of the interview was conversational. Several core questions were presented to each interview participant: the poetry intervention described, the qualities and characteristics of the facilitator and intervention participants, and the results. Secondary follow-up questions were emergent and dictated by the level of the principal investigator's understanding of the problem and context of the interview participant (Creswell, 2014). The duration of the interviews did not exceed 60 minutes. Qualitative data were collected using interviews and transcription services to record the responses.

Data Analysis

The principal investigator followed the data analysis for qualitative research methods outlined by Creswell (2014). After each interview, the recorded transcript was saved, anonymized, coded, and analyzed to detect common themes and emergent practices better.

Limitation of Research Approach

There were three limitations in the research design. First, a qualitative approach may be less generalizable research. Second, there was potentially a biased sample

because this study's research engaged with individuals who self-identified as change practitioners who deploy poetry interventions. Third, the scope was narrowly defined to only research poetry and not the broader term of poetics. Also, there may have been retrospective bias.

Summary

This chapter described the method used to capture the prevalence and practice of leveraging poetry as an intervention in enabling change and transformation in organizations. This study used a standard set of interview questions across the interviewees to collect qualitative data related to their experience of leveraging poetry as an intervention to enable change and transformation. The principal investigator analyzed the data to identify common themes and exceptional or emergent practices. Chapter 4 reports the study findings.

A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why.

—A Defence of Poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Chapter 4: Results

Data Analysis and Research Findings

This chapter summarizes the qualitative data from interviews with change practitioners who leverage poetry to enable change and transformation. Chapter 4 will present the themes that surfaced across the interview questions, emergent practices, and unique ideas utilized by the final nine interview participants.

Results

The data gathered throughout the interviews are presented according to the questions posed to interviewees. This study focused on understanding poetry interventions' characteristics, conditions, and results. This chapter explores the interviewees, the interview approach, key themes, and exceptional practices. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Interview Participants

The interview participants represented segments of change practitioners. A hundred percent identified as consultants or employees engaged with change and transformation. Close to 60% of the majority are leaders or founders in their own practices. Less than 20% have direct reports and oversight. Nearly 30% were internal

change practitioners leveraging poetry. 80% of the poetry practitioners had more than 10 years of experience.

Key Themes

Overall, poetry, an aesthetic experience, brings the abstract idea into the language (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990), making it available for dialogue and connection with another person. Key themes across the poetry interventions leverage the aesthetic model and are intellectual, pleasure, emotional, and awe-inspiring (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). An emerging attribute for consideration is the concept of connection which is also addressed here.

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) describe the cognitive experience as exhilarating during an aesthetic experience because of the torrent of human experience encapsulated in a single intellectual exchange. To better understand the human experience encapsulated in a poetry intervention, the interviews focused on select questions designed to describe a single experience, the environment of the intervention, characteristics of the facilitator, participants, and measured or perceived results.

Intellectual focuses on the cerebral experience in poetry interventions when enabling change. On some level, the change practitioner understands this and must design an intervention to bring the intellectual aspect into a room. Personal preference, experience, and instinct inform choice.

Each poetry intervention described was unique, with only two participants occasionally leveraging the same methodology. The interventions' business purposes were highly varied, from contract negotiations to micro-interventions, where the poetic

language was used to move individuals on a team towards a more humanistic perspective.

One interviewee said,

They were there to get to know each other, and the premise was that if we knew each other better, we could solve problems together. We can, you know, when we get to the contract table, we will be more respectful of each other, and even though we will still have to have the hard conversations and negotiate, we will be less likely to do that in a way that harms.

And process reviews and creativity training.

It could be innovation and creativity training. It could be things that have to deal with specific process reviews. So, it is very it is variable.

All the interventions were related to change.

Your invitation to people with those transformation projects is very holistic. So, the topics are a transformation of the person and organization. So, we work on individual and organizational choices for transformation. Moreover, we create conversations resulting in choices and possibilities for individuals, teams, and organizations to embrace and create change.

At the same time, there were similarities in their experiences in response to the interview questions.

Poetry interventions were reported as broad in their design and inclusive of the audiences they can reach. While the literature focused on poetry interventions in the early phases of a change cycle and with executives and leaders, practitioners said that it could be applied at any point in the change process and apply to all job levels across industries. They identified moments where poetry was applied in the early stages of change when the challenge and solution were poorly understood and as a memorable anchor in the concluding phases.

One interviewee shared why the beginning of change is a beautiful opportunity for a poetry intervention.

The earlier, especially if we are working on projects that deal with transformation, organizational life, in the old times, we used to call it the ecology of work life.

The earlier you wake up people's hearts and souls; the deeper dives you can take through the process.

Then, a reflection on a poetry intervention implemented as a concluding event.

It can create inspiration, a heart connection, and a kind of adventure. Off-we-go-together spirit at the end. It is this lovely celebration of what look at what we did. Oh, God, you know, I cannot believe we did this together, and a poem can put that exclamation point on the beautiful work that was done and creates, in a way, kind of a Soul Memory then, because at that point, if all goes well, emotions are high, and when emotions are high, the brain is most susceptible. To you know, deep memory, deep memory. Thus, with the poem, we can lock that in with the words a poet uses that are so beautiful.

Research participants differed in their poetry acumen. Some strongly suggested memorizing poems to improve the intervention and shared their process. The more tenured and experienced interview participants stated that memorizing a poem was essential to connecting with the audience and enabling spontaneous poetry interventions.

One interviewee said,

I have all kinds of poems memorized, and as I was riding up in the elevator, all buttoned up and ready for a team of lawyers. Suddenly, I heard this tiny voice say, 'You know, you must recite poetry, right?' I was like, no, no, no, no, no, we're not. We are not doing that here. We do that in a lot of other places. However, we're not doing that here. And this little, small voice said, yes, here.

Most of the time, when I use poetry, it is on the spur of the moment. Moreover, yes, poetry should be memorized. Why? Because the more I am reading off something, it does not show that it comes from that. It is within my heart and soul as well.

Other, equally experienced practitioners admonished any presentation of poetry by the facilitator lest it makes it more about performance than the audience's personal experience with the poetry material of their choice.

I want to focus less on myself and more on them. I could recite a poem, but I do not want it to be about me. I want to de-emphasize reading it a certain way, the right way, or the dramatic way. I can see value in that. I have gone to poetry, but what I am doing is less about me.

I wish I could memorize poems, but it is not required in the experience I am creating. I am clearing the space and getting people to reflect.

Practitioners at all experience levels were more inclined to recite their poems.

Some with less tenure leveraged alternative poetry devices such as metaphors, memes, and even mad-lib style interventions. They described small-scale poetry interventions and often performed as internal change practitioners compared to their tenured counterparts who were more likely to be operating as external consultants, leaders in their practices who were brought into organizations for targeted interventions.

An interviewee reflects on a poetry micro-intervention on behalf of their team.

Trying not to move forward with just the head but focus on the heart and the impact of what just occurred, and the emotional experience as opposed to what work wins did, we gain. Because if we only focus on what the head is telling us ... I do not want to create a legacy of pain around this. It understands the people, some degree of safety, and the idea that we're all going in the same direction. I think that safety and using alternative language, poetic, and spiritual expression comes from knowing that I am safe and that what we're trying to do is something alternative and how to help us get there together.

Upon leveraging an alternative poetic device, an interviewee describes poetry as a tool to provide levity. One interviewee said,

I wanted to freshen up the conversation. I was concerned that I would get some passive resistance to the opportunity to play, and so I was very pleasantly surprised at the swiftness and the willingness with which people responded.

The door to leveraging poetry in a change intervention is wide open and only as narrow as the practitioner's imagination. New poetry practitioners might use alternative poetic devices to test, learn, and adapt their approach. High poetic prowess is not required to begin, and memorized poems may never become a preferred tactic.

For nearly all engaged in poetry interventions, poetry had a broad connotation. For some, it was reciting a poem written by someone else; for others, it was reading their

poem; for others, it employed metaphor and poetic language to engage an audience. Poetry as an invitation was how many characterized their poetry interventions, respectful of the uncertainty of how it might be received, perceived, and experienced. Many noted that poetry is more than just a one-size-fits-all solution. At the same time, they were encouraged by the outsized impact it had on the individuals and teams who were found to be receptive.

Pleasure represents the gratifying experience of poetry on its participants, which might be attributed to an individual's innate desire for order (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). The interviewees also acknowledged that poetry was not for everyone and that you could not predict who would be moved and changed by the intervention.

With its structure, form, and patterns, poetry can provide the order humans seek when engaged with ambiguous and changing conditions. Moreover, a positive aesthetic experience comes from providing a structure to a seemingly amorphous idea and the feeling of comfort and pleasure to its audience. Aesthetic experiences benefit mental health and general well-being (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). Compared to the cerebral experience of engaging with poetry, the rhythm and rhyming in some poetry can have a pleasing effect on the audience. This is another aspect of the poetry intervention. To achieve this in a corporate setting, poetry interventions are best performed in environments conducive to trust. Creating a space where the participants and the practitioner felt psychologically safe was critical.

I decided to surrender. It is just surrendering. I invited some people, a small group, to come and sit in silence with me and see what emerged. I wanted a certain level of trust and vulnerability in that environment.

One interviewee focuses on creating a safe space for the team and keeping it about the audience.

There is an element of them trusting me so that they can open up. It is a safety thing. I think about their relationships with each other, not so much about me. It is about them and how they are with each other, but I need to let them know that it is going to be okay.

Psychological safety is possible in both virtual and in-person engagements. Most preferred an in-person experience, but the realities today make that rare. One interviewee reflected on leveraging poetry in a virtual environment.

I created a new word in my mind: Digi intimacy. It is possible to create intimate spaces in Zoomland. Also, I am under no illusion. It is not the same. Online, I was collaborating with another person, and she said, the thing that you do not know about me; she said, I have never had feedback like that ever. She said the thing that you do not know about me is that I am crippled, and I am in a wheelchair. Virtual environments can have surprising results.

A reflection of the in-person experience is below.

There is a sense of building a sense of team. I've seen it build trust. I know because I am a part of it and sensing what is happening. In the neurophysiological sensing in the room, you can see and sense people's shoulders dropping, people moving closer, leaning in, and facial expressions changing. That is just the sensory experience of in-person.

The pleasing part of poetry is made possible by creating safe spaces for more transcendental and emotional events to occur.

The Emotional aesthetic experience has been studied for its correlation to an individual's sensual self, personal qualities such as introversion and extroversion, previous traumas, and underlying emotions (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990). Poetry interventions can be emotional for the facilitator and participants. Facilitators of poetry interventions used words like brave, vulnerable, and humble to describe themselves. Few

self-identified as poets. All believed in the power of poetry to facilitate change by getting in touch with not only the intellectual side but also the emotional side (Haidt, 2021).

At some point, you get beyond those titles and those roles. You get to, you know, this is a lot of what my work is ultimately about is trying to get beyond titles and roles and get to humanity, the human side of things, and poetry is a great way of just getting to hear some universal stuff and human. So, you know, blue-collar guys, water treatment operators, are humans. Still, if it feels right at some point, I will do it. And if it will help the individuals in the team or group understand each other whenever they are together. So, safety is a big part of that, just figuring out when it's safe, and that could be as risky with executives as it would be with blue-collar guys.

One of the participants started crying. Afterward, she shared that she had written many poems, constantly tearing the papers and throwing them away. I know they will have an impact because they are positioned in a senior position in OD in a critical institution in the region. They will have an incredible community impact with poetry because their poem can be taken and used in many of the interventions in the OD group and in that organization.

A couple of people cry, you know, it's prevalent. Poetry cuts through defenses, and people will get emotional. And so is it safe to be emotional is there's so I want to do a pulse check, you know, on the group before I did something like that.

The change not only occurs with the intervention participants, but it can also happen with seasoned practitioners too. In one interview, when asked what they wished the principal investigator had asked about and not already addressed, they responded with the desire to be asked how participating in the discussion felt. This question was carried forward through the remaining interviews with similar but varied responses.

For some, there was the expression of a lightness, a feeling of effervescence that had not been previously felt when coming into the interview space. For others, they had a mirroring experience during the interview process and felt witnessed. While others said to be in a state of flow in their reflections, felt gratitude, and expressed appreciation for the time spent together. Flow is described as, "Attention centered on activity, no awareness of past and future, loss of self-consciousness, skills adequate to overcome

challenges, and does not need external rewards, intrinsically satisfying” (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p. 8). Finally, there was an appreciation of the questions to conduct a fresh, internal inquiry on a topic that was previously presumed to be well-understood for them.

Awe is a common theme in poetic interventions. In her book *Atlas of the Heart*, Brene Brown describes the difference between wonder and awe. Wonder seeks knowledge and increases a person’s desire to learn more. Compared to awe which lets the occurrence or experience expand and become incandescent (Brown, 2021). In a group setting, it can be described as collective effervescence. Awe in an aesthetic experience is the process of bringing to the surface those concepts that were previously repressed by an existing system and the potential to reveal a new, imagined future (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990).

Few measured their target audience’s poetry experience, per se. Instead, practitioners focused on the intervention process, business objectives, and qualitative feedback on how it made them and their participants feel. Some had disdain for attributing a metric to a poetic device. At the same time, the language used to describe the results of the poetry interventions was vivid and highly aspirational.

Connection is a new theme to describe the aesthetic experience. Poetry interventions have the potential to manifest connection and relationship-building with the self and with others. One interviewee shared their experience.

Poetry resonates and stimulates something, provokes something to connect bits of ourselves.

Another interviewee reflected on the relationship-building aspect of poetry,

Results are strengthening relationships. Strengthening connection-building bonds of trust and identification. That is, it says there is a mutuality that poetry brings. It

is the naming of that shared human experience. It is related to our reality of being alone in our thoughts within our experience of a poem and yet connected to humanity through the experience of a poem because a poem is generally naming something universal or, you know, quite common.

They continue the theme of connection and bonding.

So, there is that connection and identification that happens and a sense of bonding, particularly if we move beyond listening to receiving a poem to discussing or sharing and dialoguing or co-creating even.

One interviewee spoke about the binding effect that occurs.

Poetry has this wonderful binding effect because you hear everyone's perspectives, which magically creates this convenient community effect.

Another interviewee believes poetry has the power to create a sense of choice through connection.

Poetry does invite people to connect. The most important thing within that environment is waking up and creating choice.

At the same time, another interviewee admits that, like everything, there are no guarantees.

There is no guarantee. We do not guarantee anything because we are not there to take risks *for* our clients. We are there to take risks *with* our clients, and when they make choices, they know they are accountable for the choices that they're making.

While another interviewee wonders how one might go about measuring the results of poetry interventions at all.

How do you measure increased trust and some of that stuff, you know, increased bonding, relationship, and support?

The four key dimensions of an aesthetic experience apply to the poetry intervention as it applies to art and other modalities. Intellectual, pleasure, emotional, and awe are aspects of the poetry intervention utilized by practitioners engaged in change and transformation.

Summary

Chapter 4 outlined the key takeaways of the research and summarized the primary themes in the data. Chapter 5 will conclude the principal investigator's study, further exploring the research's key takeaways and how well it supports the literature on poetry as an intervention. The principal investigator will identify implications for future practitioners and share the study's limitations and recommendations for future exploration.

A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause.

—A Defence of Poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Results, Recommendations, Limitations, and Future Studies

This study examined the role of poetry in enabling change and transformation in organizations. Two research questions are explored:

- **RQ1.** What are the characteristics and conditions of poetry interventions in organizations?
- **RQ2.** What are the results of poetry interventions in organizations?

This chapter provides a forum to discuss the results, conclusions, recommendations, study limitations, and suggestions for future study.

Conclusions and Results

Conclusions were designed around the research questions and results in the data. The literature review focused on the history of poetry and the structure and physiological effects to set the context for the enduring quality of poetry as a device to communicate and explore in a community. Then the literature explored how change happens in organizations today and the critical aspects of sensemaking when engaged in change. Finally, there is the intersection of change, organizations, and poetry.

The research proved that poetry remains relevant, particularly during the turbulent times organizations are currently engaged in. The world is volatile, uncertain, and constantly changing. Organizations must contend with this new environment and prosper while meeting the needs of the individuals who will help them do so. Far from being

dead, poetry has found a new life in organizations by meeting its audience where they are. Intuitive practitioners are harnessing the power of poetry and are tapping into ancient ways of communicating and understanding oneself and those whom we are surrounded by with outstanding results that are more perceived than measured at this time.

Practitioners engaged in sensemaking in an organization who seek to explore unorthodox techniques that motivate and inspire teams toward a better understanding with depth and speed should consider adding poetry to their toolbox because the conditions for poetry interventions are highly conducive to sensemaking.

Recommendations

Poetry is a complementary tool that fits into a practitioner's preferred process and framework and can be adjusted to their style. Poetry is inclusive and has the potential to address the needs of every individual, regardless of hierarchy, in an organization. The following sections include recommendations for implementing a poetry intervention to achieve authentic and meaningful results.

Poetry interventions are available to anyone seeking to transform a gathering to create an experience with enduring results. The characteristics, conditions, and impact of the engagement are equal to the material presented. Poetry has the power to be highly impactful in helping others understand themselves and understand others (see Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of Characteristics

Characteristics, Conditions, & Impact	Description	Key Message
Poetry as an Invitation	Be present in the room, give yourself time to know your participants, and give them time to know and understand you. Be brave and take the moment you are given and step into the vulnerability in the same way you are inviting the audience to.	“I invited people to think and dream in a different way than they were accustomed to. Offering it as an invitation, sensing the energy, even if it was in a virtual room, and inviting people to go on a thought experiment. Inviting people to go on a journey with you, as opposed to setting a direction and sort of trying to leverage positional authority. It was phrased as an invitation. While it may feel uncomfortable, because it's certainly possible, someone declines with regrets, your invitation. At the same time, it opened their minds and their hearts to try something new. I think it feels paradoxical maybe to us because we would like to be able to say I'm putting myself out there to do this thing. But on the contrary, I think using that tentative language, inviting people to participate instead of telling them their participate. It opens them up in such a way that they derive meaning out of a poetic intervention.”
Trust and Safety	Create a space that makes everyone, including you, feel safe and apart from the daily routine. Know that trust is the bridge to the poetic experience.	“Because I think that like some of the safety and using alternative language poetic, spiritual expression comes from knowing that like, like I'm safe and in what we're trying to do so I can introduce something alternative and how we get there.”

Characteristics, Conditions, & Impact	Description	Key Message
Human-Centered	Put your audience at the center and invite them to engage with poetry or the poem of their choice. The facilitator acts as a guide for the experience, trusts their process, and is less focused on the outcomes knowing they will come.	“What we're describing is divergent experiences and divergent reactions. But I think one of the things that lends itself to is the idea that there are multiple truths, that my truth isn't the same as your truth, isn't the same as somebody else's truth. That, within the process of sharing both words and experience in poetry, we can look at commonalities and perhaps common truths.”
Experiment	Become knowledgeable about the diversity of poetic voices, but do not wait for mastery. Explore the enormously varied human experience to better understand others and create integrated experiences. Know that poetry interventions are more than just poems.	“And one of the beautiful things about poetry is that the result will also be diverse. You may have somebody who focuses on one subject. You may have somebody who focuses on one style. You may have somebody who writes a haiku, you may have somebody who writes a long poetic prose piece, and you're doing it about them, then you inherently have diversity there. Because there's a diversity of experience.”
Poetry Interventions all the Time	Poetry is not precious and poetic interventions can happen every day. Do not wait for an event or a ceremony to use your poetic power to intervene when creating a more human organization.	“Most of what I've done recently has been pretty like informal or interpersonal interventions.”
Facilitator	Know your own journey. The power to transform others through poetry comes from the power to understand how poetry has transformed you.	“I think a lot of people may not consider themselves poets or poetic but the idea of saying, my narrative is my humanity is incredibly poetic.”

Characteristics, Conditions, & Impact	Description	Key Message
Impact	The power of one. Do not underestimate the power to transform a single person. Helping just one person step into their more poetic self can have the power to transform them, the team, and the organization where they work.	“It's a shift of language of narrative of social agreements. Hopefully, if I get one or two interested in hearing about it, I will think the richness of that was tremendous.”

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

This study had many limitations and opportunities to explore the topic in future studies. This section will focus on the limitations and suggestions for future studies. This study focused on the existence and standard conditions for poetry interventions in North America and the United Kingdom. This was not a quantitative nor an extensive study and did not capture the prevalence of interventions across the same region or in other regions across the globe. For example, the number of individuals who leverage poetry as an intervention still needs to be better understood. It also needs to be understood the number of individuals interested in poetry as an intervention but have some trepidation in how to begin. Although the literature demonstrates that poetry is a universal capability, this study primarily focused on Western, English-speaking communities.

Also, this study provided the inputs to developing a standard working model for practitioners; a model and framework is a natural next step. This would be followed by testing and measuring the model across audiences and practitioners. Further, the study focused on practitioners who self-selected for the study and specifically utilized poetry to enable change. It did not consider a broader community that might consider poetry too limiting and leverage other literary devices to achieve similar goals.

More efforts should be made to understand the intersection of poetry interventions and the underlying neuroscience to provide greater credibility to the results. Furthermore, future studies may want to expand the scope and include the more ambiguous term, poetics, to understand this device's role in enabling organizational change.

Recommendations to Practitioners

Contained here is a series of recommendations by the principal investigator to support current and future poetry practitioners, including planning, self-knowledge, target audience, entry and exit experiences, and developing a standard for measuring results.

First, begin with the detailed planning of your intervention. It was observed that spontaneity emerges from experience and choice. Ensure poetry as a device is designed to meet clear business outcomes. Rarely do the desired results feel good, so be clear on the objectives of the intervention and how it fits into a larger strategy for the organization. This will inform either the poetic device; the poem selected, or the cadence of its delivery. The environment where the facilitator shows up best may result in better outcomes. The ability to influence the facility, location, aesthetic, or even the location of the chairs could be an advantage.

Second, the facilitator must understand their gifts and limitations in offering poetry as an intervention and employ the technique that suits the context and themselves. Poetry intervention practitioners demonstrate courage and humility when bringing a room into this space; knowing how and where to hold the space is critical to its success. Credibility, trust, and authenticity are common qualities to ensure the audience permits the facilitator to begin. How the audience feels, the safety in the room, and the revelations achieved inform the facilitator's ability to hold their attention. This is almost always done

by putting the audience at the center of the intervention. The research showed that poetry can be leveraged both with an audience new to the facilitator and an audience whom the facilitator has collaborated with for years. In the end, it is a judgment call by the facilitator where they might begin to employ poetry as a device.

Third, let go of the notion that poetry is only for a predetermined audience. Poetry can strike anyone and emerge as transformative at any time. It is also only for some. When seeking to move an audience, focus on something other than 100% buy-in. Instead, consider the collective and assess success on the ability to move the group, even if not every voice within. Know that the most critical aspect of the intervention is your precious time together, and moving even just one person towards a new, greater goal is impactful.

Fourth, treat the opportunity to leverage poetry as an invitation. With all invitations, an element of vulnerability is involved with the knowledge an audience may choose to engage. Once the invitation is accepted, however, one must not be a casual facilitator but guide the audience through the limited time together with intention. This is where creative planning becomes critical because an overly rigid plan will not permit the audience to fully engage with the material in a manner that reflects their needs and understanding. A goal without any structure loses sight of the business objectives and may be unduly influenced by the whims of a few. A structured and flexible plan is compatible and necessary for a poetry intervention.

The fifth and final recommendation is to measure results. This is counterintuitive for most poets but can be a meaningful tool when devising an intervention.

Understanding the possibilities of the poetry intervention can help one design around

poetry, include poetry as an additive technique, and persuade a reluctant buyer when the recommendation confidently references previous experiences and outcomes.

Summary

Chapter 5 concluded the principal investigator's study, further explored this study's research and themes, and how well it supports the literature on poetry as an intervention. The principal investigator identified implications for future practitioners and shared the study's limitations and recommendations for future exploration.

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