AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Title: The Effect of Videotaped Poetry Readings on Students' Responses to Poetry

Abstract approved:

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This research study focused on the ways that reading poetry in print differs from viewing poetry in performance and the effect this had on comprehension and appreciation. Videotaped poetry readings provided students with opportunities to experience poetry in performance. Because very little had been researched in this area, a grounded theory study was used. This qualitative methodology provided a first look at both students' comprehension of and responses to videotaped poetry performances. Participants included two groups of students from an Introduction to Poetry course taught at a community college. Data sources consisted of participants' in-class written responses to videotaped poetry readings. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with some participants.

Results of this study indicated four main factors that contributed to increased understanding of poetry when viewing videotaped poetry readings: contextual comments made by the poet, audience cues, the appearance of the poet, including

movement, and the voice of the poet. One of the results that viewing poetry in

performance had was that it enabled participants to more accurately identify the tone

of poems, one of the most difficult tasks when reading poetry. Without exception,

participants' understanding increased as a result of viewing videotaped poetry

readings. No participants reported a decrease in appreciation or enjoyment as a result

of their increased understanding about a poem. However, viewing poets perform their

work did occasionally lead to a decrease in appreciation/enjoyment for other reasons.

Some of these reasons included unmet expectations about how a poem should sound

or what participants perceived as annoying mannerisms of the poet. Theory resulting

from this study made clear that viewing videotaped poetry readings contributed

positively to participant understanding and, in most cases, to participant appreciation

and enjoyment as well.

The Effect of Videotaped Poetry Readings on Students' Responses to Poetry

by

Donna J. Bernhisel

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Donna J. Bernhisel, Author

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

My Research Focus

During the spring of 2003, I taught my first Introduction to Poetry (ENG 106) course at a local community college. I had taken poetry courses as a graduate student in English, and I had taught poems briefly as a part of other literature courses, but poetry had never been the sole focus of my teaching. As with teaching any new course, it was a daunting task to think of ways to engage students with the content through activities and assignments. In addition, I worried about the students' responses to poetry; feeling adequate to the task of reading and understanding poetry is often a challenge. I knew that the composition of the poetry class would consist of students who loved poetry and probably wrote some of their own, as well as students who claimed to hate poetry because of past negative experiences in school, etc. In the Introduction to Poetry class, I wanted to assist students in developing the skills necessary to feel that they could engage with poetry confidently. I wanted them to be able to read any poem, ask questions, talk with others about it, and feel that they could join in the conversation about the poem. I hoped to help them make the experience of reading poetry meaningful.

As we started the term, I found that students often had questions about the poems. One common source of frustration was their inability to really "know" the poet, (e.g., what his or her intent might have been in writing a poem a certain way,

placing it a certain way on the page, or choosing certain images). In my effort to bring the poems to life for the students, I went to the local library and checked out a collection of compact discs (CDs) of poets reading their work. Not every poet we read during the course was represented in the collection, but many were, and we listened to poetry readings by the poets themselves as often as possible. The students looked forward to these encounters with the poets, and they always had very vocal opinions about how a particular poet had lived up to their expectations or not. Usually the response was positive; listening to the poet had reinforced what they had "heard" in their own minds prior to hearing the poet, or the poet's reading somehow made the poem clearer. A reading by e.e. cummings (2001) of "anyone lived in pretty how town" proved especially helpful. The class had been struggling with the poem, and they agreed that his rhythmical reading with his emphasis on particular words helped them to understand the poem more fully. Reactions to the recorded readings were not always positive, however. A reading by W.B. Yeats (2001), with his dramatic, exaggerated style, was almost universally rejected. His reading of his poem wasn't anything like they had expected! Despite how any particular poet was received, I believe the CDs of the poets' voices enriched our understanding and appreciation for the poetry we read and discussed together.

The experience of using audio versions of poetry in the classroom was positive, but I had used the CDs only as a supplementary activity. Often the poems we read in class were not available in audio format, and we listened to the poets that were available only after discussing the poems thoroughly beforehand. I never asked the

students to respond to the audio versions of the poetry in any way. We simply listened, chatted a bit, and moved on.

The following year, I took a Pedagogy of Literature course. For my final project in the class, I chose to explore issues related to the pedagogy of teaching poetry and the use of videotaped poetry readings in the classroom. My research and writing on this topic became the springboard for this doctoral research project which incorporates several videotaped poetry readings produced by the Lannan Foundation (Griggs, 1993, 1995; MacAdams & Dorr, 1989, 1991) into the Introduction to Poetry (ENG 106) course that I teach at a local community college. My students' responses to both written poetry and the same poetry being read by its authors on videotape have helped me explore the ways in which these two experiences with poetry might be different or similar for readers/viewers.

The videos I used for this research project show poets reading their poetry at readings, as well as discussing their poetry, including how they write and the influences on their work. I am confident that showing my students these videos allowed them to have a richer experience with poetry than they would have had by simply reading poems from the page, but the use of these videos also stemmed from several important questions I had as a teacher. How should videos of poets in performance be used in order to provide students with the best opportunities for learning? When in the process of interacting with the poetry on the page, should the videos be incorporated? What should students do while they watch? As a teacher, I work hard to help my students feel able to read and make meaning from the text of a

poem. We discuss tone, image, rhythm, and meter and read lots of poetry in the process. Is a video of a poetry reading to be approached just as a written text would be approached? How are the two experiences different? How are they alike? Are poems in performance like written texts? And if so, what skills would students need in order to best understand the "text" of a poetry reading? With the continually increasing use of technology in the classroom, poetry readings will only become more accessible to students, and the answers to these questions may become an important part of an eventual pedagogy of close listening to poetry. My doctoral research has become a first step in answering some of these questions I had as a teacher of poetry. As I sought to develop theory about the differences that do or do not exist between reading poetry on the page and viewing the poet in performance, I hoped to better understand the relationships between readers and texts, including both written poetry texts and poetry readings.

My interest in theory about the different modes of receiving poetry--through reading and listening and viewing--is based on several assumptions. First, theories exist about the reading of written texts that can influence pedagogy and facilitate student understanding and appreciation of literature. Second, poetry listened to or viewed in performance can be viewed as analogous to written texts, and third, there is value in hearing a poet's own voice reading his or her poetry rather than simply reading the poem on the page.

A Reader-Response theory of reading (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978) is at the heart of my own teaching practice. This approach emphasizes the

essential role of the reader in creating meaning from a text, rather than the Formalist view that meaning resides within a text, waiting to be discovered. Reader-Response theory informs and illuminates many practical concerns for teachers--how we help students read well, how we help students make connections to literature and become aware of the transactional nature of that process, and how that process can enrich students' experiences with literature. I believe that Reader-Response theory, which focuses mainly on written forms of literature, can easily connect to the study of poetry in performance as literature.

But why muddy the waters of literature study with poetry readings? Why worry about bringing the poem to life through the poet's voice when we have words on the page? I believe the answer to these questions lies not only in the oral roots of our literature, but in the very human need we have to connect to others. Literature, of which poetry readings are a part, can fill that need. Langer (1995) focused on how readers make sense of what they read and summarized the role that literature can play in our lives:

> Literature makes us better thinkers. It moves us to see the multi-sidedness of situations and therefore expands the breadth of our own visions, moving us toward dreams and solutions we might not otherwise have imagined. It affects how we go about learning in academic situations, how we solve problems at work and at home. And it moves us to consider our interconnectedness with others and the intrinsic pluralism of meaning; it helps us become more human. (p. 145)

The richer our experience with poetry, the more we gain from it in many of the important ways that Langer mentioned.

Poetry that is read on the page and seen in performance allows us as readers to connect more closely to it as a text. That dual experience might allow for more insight, richer connections, and more understanding than would be possible with the written text alone. Thomas (1998) wrote of the importance of the written text of poetry as well as the spoken word of poetry in reaching out to people to make it more accessible:

> All poetry is incomplete until it is read aloud . . . the poem printed on the page is effective when it functions as a memorandum to excite the reader's recall of a previous performance, or serves as a score for future vocal reproduction. If the poet has done the job of preparing that alphabetic transcription well, she can be sure that the poem will live. (p. 320)

Thomas focused specifically on poetry from the Black Arts Movement during the 1960s and 70s, poetry created primarily for oral presentation that subsequently was written down in a way that would reflect its orality. He emphasized the point that poetry truly lives when it is both spoken and heard.

The essential nature of hearing another's voice through poetry and responding to it, whether with understanding or appreciation or any other form of engagement, meets an essential human need we have to know about and connect with others. Fenton (2002) described the unique nature of poetry and the ways that it traditionally connects a speaker and listener:

> Poetry is language to which a special emphasis has been given, whether by paring it down and arranging it pleasingly on the page, in lines whose length may be baffling to all but the poet, or by the traditional means which include: raising the voice in order to be heard above the crowd; raising the voice in order to demonstrate its beauty and power; chanting the words; reciting the words rhythmically; punctuating the units of speech . . . (p. 10)

Fenton continued with a story of one of his own poetry readings that took place next to

a noisy bar. In order to be heard he was forced to raise his voice.

> I turned what I had imagined to be a meditative poem into a full-volume
> declaration of identity: this is who I am, I seemed to be saying; here I stand, I
> can no other! Somewhat, but only somewhat, to my horror, the poem appeared
> to go down very well. (p. 11)

Fenton's (2002) experience illustrates the compelling nature of the poet's

voice. There is an immediacy that cannot be duplicated solely by the written word.

Fenton continued to discuss the social, communal, and practical roots of poetry

presented orally. He argued that it is easy to appreciate the oral nature of much poetry

and that:

> . . . poetry itself begins in those situations where the voice has to be raised: the
> hawker has to make himself heard above the market hubbub, the knife-grinder
> has to call the cook out into the street, the storyteller has to address a whole
> village, the bard must command the admiration of the court. . . (p. 7)

The communal nature of poetry that is read aloud was explained in a

discussion of performance poetry, a genre of poetry primarily disseminated orally

during readings (Breeze, Agbabi, Tipene, Harrison & Bertram, 1999). Harrison (as

cited in Breeze et al.) wrote about the pleasure she got from performing her poetry:

> . . . It's communal, it's bringing people together, it stops the isolation, and it's
> saying that poets are actually out there within communities, with audiences,
> making contact with people, because the dominant perception of poetry is of
> the poet as isolated, and the reader as isolated . . . (p. 40)

The sound of poetry matters, and it has the power to convey meaning in ways that are

not possible through reading.

Pritchard (1994) wrote about the importance of hearing poetry, even arguing

that when the poem is on the page, the best reading takes place when we "hear" the

poem in our heads. He quoted Robert Frost, who he relied on for much of his own philosophy of the reading of poetry:

> *The ear does it*. The ear is the only true writer and the only true reader. I have known people who could read without hearing the sentence sounds and they were the fastest readers. Eye readers we call them. They can get the meaning by glances. But they are bad readers because they miss the best part of what a good writer puts into his work. (p. 5)

This 'best part' is the sound of writing, the sound of poetry. If the sound can be "heard" through reading silently, how much more effective would hearing the poet reading aloud be? The ways in which poetry in performance can potentially enhance the meaning one makes of poetry on the page is at the heart of my own research questions.

Jones (2002) emphasized the opposite process as he explored the relationship of written text to oral performance in his study of Black American jazz poetry. Jones argued that despite the traditionally oral nature of Black poetry, and jazz poetry in particular, the visual text was also important and should be studied. Jordan (as cited in Jones) summarized the interrelationship between sound and written text. ". . . poems are voiceprints of language; they are soulscript" (p. 66). Jones's emphasis on the necessity of listening well to a poet's voice in performance as well as having that poetry to read as text reinforced my own stance. Both the voice of the poet in performance and the poem on the page are important sources of meaning for the reader/listener.

Some would argue against the need for poetic performance by the author, arguing for the primacy of the written word. Others worry that poetry in performance

translated to a written text may become concretized or constrained in a way that betrays the nature of poetry readings. Quartermain (1998) discussed what he saw as an excessive zeal for getting texts 'just so' in print and the perceived need to document poetry concretely. He referred to:

> . . .[the] twentieth-century practice of tape-recording poets reading their own poems . . . to provide an authoritative and authentic register of the poem's sound--how it *should* be said in order to keep the meaning straight. Such practice congeals an interpretation and defines a voicing that . . . severely limits available responses to the poem, in effect closing it down. (p. 223)

Does listening to a poet's voice in performance limit its potential meaning for the reader? Quartermain continued by questioning the potential danger of constraining the sound or voicing of a poem, a situation in which "the poet's own voice gains the status of Authentic Source" (p. 225).

The assertion that hearing a poet's voice in performance limits the reader's possible engagements with the poem has many weaknesses as an argument. A poet plays multiple roles in the transmission of meaning when he or she reads a poem aloud, and that meaning is not static. In *The Poem's Heartbeat*, Corn (1998) explored the variability of the ways that poems can be read. In his comparison of poetry to music, he found similarities--the use of accents, meter, and rhythm--but fundamentally they differ because poetry lacks a prescribed pitch. In poetry, pitch becomes the sound of the poem. Corn wrote, "Poetry prescribes the pitch of its component sounds not at all; different persons performing a poem aloud will use different pitches as they read it (p. 2). Poets themselves read poems differently on different occasions. Given the variations of speech and oral reading, making the sound of a poem concrete is not

possible. Each reading of a poem will be different and will reflect something about the reader. Listening to a poet's voice as he or she reads does not limit the listener's experience with the poem, but allows one more means of knowing and understanding the poem. It creates a clear engagement between the reader, the text of the written poem, and the "text" of the poet's voice.

In many ways, theories related to image and visual culture (e.g., video recordings, movies, and plays) can also inform our understanding of the performance of poetry. Borkhuis (2002) analyzed the "role of the image in innovative contemporary poetry" (p. 127), mainly focusing on the traditional idea of images created in poetry through language. However, he believed that an image can be a rich and vital means of communicating all on its own. He stated that by the poet's refusal "to simply reduce the image to the word, [the poet creates] the *critical image*, a bridge between language and silence, the visible and the invisible, the presentable and the unpresentable" (p. 128). Images within the poetry are important, but images of a poet reading his or her work are, perhaps, even more powerful. Viewing a poet in performance can create bridges toward greater understanding, increase connections to a poem, and provide insight about the author's intent for the reader/ listener/ viewer.

Authorial intent is a subject discussed by Probst (1988), as he focused on the teaching of literature and the importance of creating communities of readers and interpreters of texts. In his work on the interpretation of literature, Probst acknowledged the struggle between different views of the importance text and self

play in interpreting literature. He wrote:

> We cannot be satisfied, then, with the submission of self in which, through suppressing or forgetting ourselves, we are assimilated into the world of the text—such a view shows too little regard for the reading. Nor can we accept the submission of text to self, for which the governing principle is "It's my opinion and I'm entitled to it." Such a view betrays indifference to the literary work. (p. 20)

Within this balancing act, he acknowledged that ". . . inferences about authorial intent are only one piece in a larger mosaic" (p. 20), but anecdotally, I see this as an important piece of the interpretive mosaic for students. There seems to be an innate curiosity about the source of literature—the authors—and why they do what they do.

Iser (1978) argued that any focus on authorial intent or the intended reader that the author had in mind is much less important than the relationship between any given reader and the text. He wrote:

> Clearly, the historical qualities which influenced the author at the time of writing mould the image of the intended reader—and as such they may enable us to reconstruct the author's intentions, but they tell us nothing about the reader's actual response to the text. (p. 33)

For Iser, text and reader and the immediacy of that interaction were most important (Irwin, 2001).

But authorial intent is of interest to at least some readers, and it can provide one additional way of making meaning from a text. Maybe in the truest sense, we can never fully understand authorial intent, but our interpretations of authorial intent can be a revealing and enlightening step in our literary interpretations. Probst (1988) wrote, "The question of author's intent is not negligible, then, nor is it the most important question. Rather, it is an issue that enables us to identify more clearly

where we stand" (p. 21). Increased connection and analysis of authorial intent

provides opportunities for response and can help us as readers become more self-

aware of that response and our own ideas as we engage with the author. Probst stated:

> The entire process--responding, correcting errors, searching for the sources of
> the response, speculating about the author's intent, and weighing the author's
> values and ideas against one's own--culminates in a sharpened, heightened
> sense of self. (p. 21)

Experiences such as listening to an author's voice reading his or her work allow for

increased connections with the words, ideas, and voice of the author.

Bernstein (1998), editor of a volume of essays focused on the relationship

between text and performance of poetry, asserted: "Close listening may contradict

'readings' of poems that are based exclusively on the printed text and that ignore the

poet's own performances, the 'total' sound of the work . . ." (p. 4). He offered an

additional perspective on the performance of poetry as one of the essential ways of

understanding poetry. He stated that he wanted to "overthrow the common

presumption that the text of a poem--that is, the written document--is primary and that

the recitation or performance of the poem by the poet is secondary and fundamentally

inconsequential to the 'poem itself'" (p. 8). He used as his argument the multiple

facets of poetry (e.g., differences in written versions that an author may produce and

differences in how a poet may perform a poem on any given occasion). Rather than

seeing a performance of poetry as excessively limiting, he viewed it as one of many

ways of seeing the poem itself. He wrote:

> A poem understood as a performative event and not merely as a textual entity
> refuses the originality of the written document in favor of 'the plural event' of

> to any one graphical or performative realization of it . . . [the poem] has a fundamentally plural existence. (p. 9)

The poem, then, is more than the text on the page, more that the poet's voice. Bringing these two manifestations of a poem together for a reader allows for a richer experience with the literature, the potential for deeper understanding, and a clearer vision of the relationship between reader, author, and text. Discovering how to help students listen well to poetry and how to incorporate that sense experience into their understanding of a poem is the challenge.

Why concern myself with potential theory related to the reading/ listening/ viewing of poetry? Because as the sounds of poetry become more accessible, we have the opportunity to make poetry more meaningful for our students. Poetry readings are becoming increasingly commonplace in communities, and technology such as videotapes, DVDs, podcasts, and multiple online sources of video (e.g., YouTube.com) are making the opportunity to hear poets reading their work increasingly more possible. Crown (2002) acknowledged this rising trend in the performance of poetry and the fundamental human connections it allows between speaker and listener:

> The recent groundswell of poetry in public locations--spoken work, underground, and performative--testifies to a popular demand for a return to "voice" and "presence" as fundamental principles of lyric poetry. In new venues such as cafes, bookstores, churches, and community centers, poetry is inextricably bound up with *bodies*--not just that of the audience--and thus with *voice*, which belongs to the body and is produced by it. Poetic voice in these locations is public, exoteric, material, human, and fully embodied. (p. 216)

To be able to hear a poet in performance, to listen to the words of the poet in his or her own voice, is a privilege. To have the chance to connect with an author,

even through a videotaped performance, makes the experience of engaging with poetry more human. We can read the text of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, but think of how much more power is communicated from speaker to listener when we hear his actual voice. I believe that if a poet were to come to our community for a poetry reading, we would do our best to encourage our students to be there. Why? Because poems are written by real people with voices and ideas that can be heard and understood in ways that cannot be achieved by words on the page. When we can connect with the ideas of a poem as well as with the voice of the poet, the potential for meaningful thinking and learning increases.

Study Rationale

Access to poetry in performance is becoming increasingly easy given the availability of online resources and visual media in general. Mention of poetry in performance is virtually nonexistent in major poetry textbooks in the U.S., and poetry readings have been ignored in most research and pedagogical discussions. Still, poetry readings are a valuable resource for teaching about poetry and more should be done to incorporate them into the classroom in ways that enhance learning and enjoyment. Understanding how to make the most of poetry readings in the college classroom is the impetus behind my research question: How might videotaped poetry readings affect one's understanding or appreciation of poetry or the poet?

My Epistemology: Part of Who I Am

Who I am affects the kind of research I conduct. I come from a set of parents that stressed, from my earliest memory, the importance of getting an education as a means of obtaining freedom. I realize now that I am an adult, just how unusual they were. Both of my parents are from Oklahoma and moved to California during the Dust Bowl era. We have yellowed snapshots of a truck so overloaded, my family looks like the Joad's poor relations. My father finished high school and worked at the same job maneuvering water through the dry San Joaquin Valley orchards for 49 years. My mother, because her family needed her to work, only stayed in school through the eighth grade. I think my parents always felt limited somewhat by their circumstances. They wanted better for me and my four sisters, and that manifested itself in many ways. One of the most meaningful for me was the access I had as a child to books. We did not have a lot of money; we probably were considered poor. But I could have books. I checked them out from our local one-room library on an almost daily basis. In summer I'd run fast from shade patch to shade patch, my bare feet pressing into the hot asphalt on the sunny stretches, trying to get there for more books. And sometimes I would get to buy a book. I can remember going into a bookstore in the next town over and my mother letting me buy *any* book I wanted. I was astounded. I chose *Alice in Wonderland* for the beautiful cover. It's still beautiful.

Both sides of my family migrated to the same farming community in California from the same small town in Oklahoma. The result was a tangle of family

members that kept pretty close tabs on each other. When I left home for a college three states away, my leaving was seen as a radical thing to do by some family members. College, if you needed it at all, could be had at the local community college, or if really necessary, at a California State college. Leaving was a little uppity. Given that family environment, I have to admire my parents for encouraging me, for as long as I can remember, to do well in school, work hard, and go to college-- even one far away. It was my ticket out, and they made it clear that I was to do the same for my children one day.

These experiences, these values that I hold, are part of who I am. My beliefs in the power of learning and the freedom that can come through education influence my research. I think educational research can make a difference. But I also have a healthy coursing of practicality and pragmatism in my veins. Fancy-sounding ideas with no real practical application are, as my mother would say, "talkin' to hear your own head rattle." My research focus addresses real issues and needs of teachers. I want and need to feel that I am contributing something practical and useable to the body of knowledge about the teaching of poetry.

Postmodernism and Pragmatism

The freedom that the postmodernist outlook allows us as learners and researchers appeals to me. Multiple ways of knowing and sharing that knowledge fit closely with how I see my role as a teacher and learner. Richardson (2000) explained that "Postmodernism *suspects* all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural, and political struggles" (p. 928). However, I believe that

the postmodern struggle with the ambiguities and unknowability of truth must be taken with more than just a grain of salt. Constas (1998) wrote, "To claim that our activities are beyond our own coherent understanding borders on nihilism and does little to promote critical dialogue that must remain the cornerstone of all inquiry, postmodern or not" (p. 41). Being immobilized by our inability to really know what is true is a luxury. Any truthful scientist would tell you that every theory based on research findings is merely that, partial truth--maybe no truth at all. But it is the best thing going, and until a better, more accurate, more workable truth comes along, what is "known" is used to inform not only theory, but our everyday lives as well. The intricacies of the A.I.D.S. virus are not truly understood, but the best information we have is used to save as many lives as possible for now.

Likewise, I believe educational research can and should yield practical results, despite its flaws, imperfect ways of knowing, and potentially oppressive results. Educational research is messy business, but in the struggle to know and communicate and listen and understand, I believe the process can yield something positive and better. Ellsworth (1992) wrote about this struggle to accomplish genuine communication at the classroom level. I think this can be seen as a microcosm of some of the same issues that have affected my educational research. Ellsworth wrote:

> Right now, the classroom practice that seems most capable of [finding] . . . a commonality in the experience of difference without compromising its distinctive realities and effects . . . is one that facilitates a kind of communication across differences that is best represented by this statement: 'If you can talk to me in ways that show you understand that your knowledge of me, the world and *the Right thing to do* will always be partial, interested, and potentially oppressive to others, and if I can do the same, then we can

work together on shaping and reshaping alliances for constructing
circumstances in which . . . difference can thrive. (p. 115)

Work can be done despite its imperfections; our realities can be communicated and understood as best we can. Research can make things better for teachers and learners. As Richardson (2000) wrote, "Having a partial, local, historical knowledge is still knowing" (p. 928).

Constructivism and Qualitative Research

Primarily, I believe that both my students and I are works in progress and that the search for understanding is a collaborative process. The real power for learning and change comes from the diversity of experiences and perceptions that all students bring to the classroom. Each student brings insight to the classroom in ways that allow all of us to learn. My role as teacher is to tap into this resource of experience and provide students with the chance to learn from each other and build on their current understanding.

Sometimes I think students are a little taken aback by my interest in their lived experiences. A year ago I had a student who was a cook at the federal prison. I was fascinated! Before and after class we would talk about his experiences, how the prisoners responded to him, to his lasagna, everything. Prior to that, he served in the Navy as a chief cook on a nuclear submarine. He would talk about how the smell of chocolate chip cookies would waft around the submarine. He would make enormous batches of dough because there wouldn't be much left to cook by the time all the officers thought up an excuse for coming into the galley, swiping chunks of dough out of the huge mixing bowl on their way through.

What a wealth of experience this man had--and it proved an invaluable resource in our classroom. In a World Literature course I taught, we discussed the concept of honor while reading about Sir Gawain, one of King Arthur's knights. Who better to speak to the idea of living up to the high moral ideals represented in this text than this man who had dedicated part of his life to the service of his country, and who now worked in a prison amid people who were categorized as less than honorable. His prior knowledge helped us find meaning in the works we read, and his contributions to the discussion heightened the learning experience for us all. His is only one example. My students do more than enrich the classroom beyond measure-- they make learning possible. Just as I try to do for my students, making room for the perspectives and ideas and stories of real people, taking a qualitative approach is important to me as a researcher.

Centering learning on the students and helping them make connections to the experiences and understanding they already have forms the foundation of my constructivist outlook as an educator. This perspective, held since my first English education coursework as a preservice teacher, still fits my way of seeing the world. I believe strongly that all learners need to find meaning in content by thinking, reading, writing, discussing--involving ourselves in as many ways as possible with new ideas so that we find ownership and insight in the connections we make. This takes a lot of energy; passivity obstructs learning. Stories matter. Individual points of view are part of the mosaic of understanding that will inform my research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

My research explores the possible differences, similarities, and influences upon each other that exist in the experiences of reading poetry on the page and seeing poetry performed by the poet. By trying to better understand the relationship between these two experiences, I hope to inform my own practice as both a reader and teacher of poetry. My research is founded on my beliefs about how readers make meaning from written texts and that both reading and experiencing poetry in performance are valuable ways of making meaning from poetry texts. This chapter explores research and writings that clarify my theoretical foundations about the relationship between readers and texts, that explore the text-like nature of poetry in performance, and that illuminate both related research and the gaps that exist in this field of inquiry.

Theoretical Foundations: Texts and Readers

Clarity about the relationship between texts and readers is essential to much of the literature relevant to my research. Several theories and theorists provide the foundation of my own theoretical stance about the relationship between readers and texts, as well as the foundation for related research reviewed later in this chapter. The most important of these theories include Rosenblatt's (1978) Reader-Response theory, Wilhelm's (1997) observations on readers' conceptions of authors, Langer's (1995) concept of envisionments, and McCormick's (1994) discussion of readers and their ideological contexts.

The best reading, and hence, the best learning, takes place when both the reader and the text are acknowledged as vital components of the reading process. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reading is at the root of many reading theories and pedagogies. She differentiated between text, the "printed signs in their capacity to serve as symbols," and what she terms the 'poem,' which "presupposes a reader actively involved with a text and refers to what he makes of responses to the particular set of verbal symbols" (p. 12). For Rosenblatt, the interaction between reader and text was essential. She explained:

> The poem, then, must be thought of as an event in time. It is not an object or an ideal entity. It happens during a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text. The reader brings to the text his past experience and present personality. Under the magnetism of the ordered symbols of the text, he marshals his resources and crystallizes out from the stuff of memory, thought, and feeling a new order, a new experience, which he sees as the poem. (p. 12)

Rosenblatt's (1978) Reader-Response theory can be used as a jumping off point for thinking about its possible applications to non-written texts. In her discussion of what constitutes aesthetic reading, a reading experience focused on the text in the moment of reading (versus "efferent" reading, which focuses on the information to be used after the reading), she stated:

> It would be less confusing to use the reading act itself as the general paradigm of the aesthetic experience; it would then become clear that the "object" of aesthetic contemplation is what the perceiver makes of his responses to the artistic stimulus, no matter whether this be a physical object, such as a statue, or a set of verbal signs. (p. 31)

Meaning is created in the interaction of reader and text—in any of its myriad forms.

Wilhelm (1997) provided a practical pedagogy based on Rosenblatt's Reader-Response theory. In disagreement with Rosenblatt (1978), he began with a claim that

readers do not naturally take upon themselves the aesthetic stance, the reading of a text

that is enjoyed or appreciated during the very process of reading. He wrote:

> I became convinced that for most of my student readers, engagement with
> literature through the aesthetic stance did not occur naturally or spontaneously.
> Rosenblatt, like many literary theorists, seems to assume an Ideal situation
> versus the Real situation of the classroom. (p. 22)

One of the important dimensions of Reader-Response theory that Wilhelm

(1997) sought to develop in his students was the idea of the transactional nature of

reading. He wanted his students to know that the meaning they made from their

reading was a product of the relationship between themselves and the text. Part of the

self-awareness he sought to develop in his students as readers was the idea of the

author as an entity to be understood, questioned, and engaged. He described his

students:

> These readers . . . exercised reflexiveness, considering what the processes of
> reading and making interpretations revealed about their personal identities. A
> personal interpretation was sometimes compared to another reader's
> interpretation in a way that revealed a personally characteristic way of being in
> and making sense of the world. Finally, these readers very occasionally
> seemed to consider the ideology or political agenda of the author and text, and
> the implications of such an ideology. (p. 82)

While his students did not naturally consider the impact of author on text, he

discovered that the more students read of a particular author, the more likely they were

to begin thinking of the author as an individual that could be understood, the

transactional nature of the reading process becoming clearer to the students (p. 80).

Thomsen (as cited in Wilhelm) wrote:

> Readers who read several works of a particular type, or especially by a
> particular author, are much more likely to consciously consider the notion of

an author with an individual agenda, and individual interests, styles, and techniques for constructing a literary work of art. (p. 79)

One way, then, that teachers can help students understand the author behind the text, the two-way relationship between reader and text, is by making the author more accessible to the student. When reading poetry, poetry readings by the author can be a way to facilitate this engagement between reader and text.

Other theorists built upon this belief in a necessary interaction between text and reader that Rosenblatt (1978) and Wilhelm (1997) established. Langer (1995) emphasized an essential coming together of reader and text. She used the term "envisionment to refer to the world of understanding a person has at any point in time" (p. 9). Our envisionments are constantly changing as we take in new ideas and interact with others through speaking or writing. In order for real understanding of a literary text to take place then, she believed a teacher should help students build envisionments by providing "support that helps people participate in the discussion, and support that helps people think things through" (p. 80). The more interaction that exists between a text and a reader, the more real understanding takes place and the more potential for making meaning. Langer stated:

> We need to deal with the many forces that create a living reality, including the inseparability of the parts, the gaps, the shifts in perspective and time, the multiple vantage points from which each situation can be viewed, and the many participating voices . . . To live through a literary experience, in both a cognitive and a humane sense, requires that we see it in as much of its totality as our awareness permits. (p. 8)

While Langer specifically referred to experiences inherent in the reading of literature, her premise that the richer the experience, the greater our potential for making

meaning, was an idea that extended beyond the scope of written texts. For example,

reading a poem on the page and seeing it performed by the poet provides a richer

experience than either one of these experiences alone. The more complete and multi-

faceted our experience with literature, the deeper our potential understanding will be.

McCormick (1994) also focused on the relation between text and reader. Her

interactive model of reading "stresses that first, both readers and text contribute to the

reading process, and second, that both text and readers are themselves ideologically

situated" (p. 69). She emphasized the need to recognize a text's "literary repertoire

[which] includes such aspects of the text as its literary form, plot, characterization,

metrical pattern, etc." The text's "general repertoire . . . includes such aspects of the

text as the dominant moral ideas, values, religious beliefs, and so forth" (p. 70).

McCormick elaborated on this idea when she wrote:

> Readers, therefore, must be regarded as inhabitants of particular socio-cultural
> formations, with particular *literary* and *general ideologies*, who appropriate
> from their society, both consciously and unconsciously, their own particular
> *repertoires*. Their repertoires consist of specifically literary matters--
> assumptions and beliefs about literature, their previous literary experiences,
> their strategies of reading literary texts, and so forth--as well as many more
> *general* matters--their attitudes about gender and race, their religious beliefs,
> regional biases, etc. (p. 70)

McCormick (1994) insisted that both readers and texts be seen in light of their

ideologies, which are "characterized by the acceptance of certain ways of living as

natural, and the relative marginalization, rejection, even the incomprehensibility, of

alternatives" (p. 74). The more we know about a text--including the author and the

context in which it was written--the more transparent those ideologies become, and the

more fully we can make meaning of texts as readers. If the text in question is a poem,

how much more aware might we be of the text's ideology if we are given the

opportunity to listen to the poet reading his or her own work?

The potential applicability of McCormick's (1994) theory of reading to the

listening of poetry is also supported by her discussion of "gaps" that exist in texts.

She wrote, "One must always examine the context in which the text is being read, the

way it is being 'used'" (p. 83). She cited Iser's (1978) work as she discussed this

concept:

> For Iser, gaps are something that the author puts into a text, but it is clear that
> gaps are equally something that are produced by a particular reading context.
> One obvious gap occurs between the end of one chapter and the beginning of
> the next in a novel where a reader must use his or her imagination to decide
> what comes next or what comes in between. Another, more subtle, gap is the
> theme of a story, a present absence that is never explicitly stated. (p. 84)

One obvious gap in the reading of poetry in written form is the sound of the poem.

Listening to a poet read his or her work provides an opportunity to fill in this gap, at

least with one interpretation of what the poem on the page becomes when brought to

life by the poet. Poetry in performance becomes both an opportunity for engaging

with the text of a poem and its author, as well as an opportunity for the

reader/listener/viewer to make meaning.

Poetry in Performance as Text

Understanding the relationship between reader and text is the foundation of my

understanding and thinking about poetry on the page and in performance. Viewing

poetry in performance as a kind of "text" that can be "read" by a listener/viewer

allows one to think more concretely about a possible pedagogy of close listening to

poetry. While there is little research in this area, there are theorists whose thinking

provides background and impetus for my own questions.

Quasha (1977) discussed the conundrum of thinking of written and oral as two

different entities, an either-or phenomenon. While distinguishing between oral texts

that have been transformed into written texts, he acknowledged the text-like nature of

any oral performance. He wrote:

> There is the presence of texts that raise the issue of the oral—texts from the past and from the now enormous body of translated material from oral cultures. And there is the presence of the oral modality as performance and as publicly generated "poem"—contemporary "events" that are also in one sense or another texts. (p. 486)

One of the ideas Quasha addressed in his exploration of these two representations of

poetry is our acceptance of and comfort with translating oral "texts" to written texts

and how the subsequent written versions somehow become more legitimate than the

oral. He quoted another poet, Jerome Rothenberg (as cited in Quasha):

> . . . I would like to desanctify and demystify the written word, because I think the danger of frozen thought, of authoritarian thought, has been closely tied in with it. I don't have any use for "the sacred" in that sense—for the idea of book or text as the authoritative, coercive version of some absolute truth, changeless because written down and visible. (p. 489)

Quasha warned against the perceived value given written texts and the challenges

associated with communicating the orality of spoken language visually on the page.

In the process, he acknowledged both the text-like nature of oral poetry as well as the

importance of preserving such poetry as written texts.

Like Quasha (1977), Richardson (2000) addressed the possibilities inherent in

the translation of speech to written text. She proposed that written poetic forms can be

used to accurately represent speech not originally intended as poetry. Tedlock (as cited in Richardson) stated, "When people talk, moreover, whether as conversants, storytellers, informants, or interviewees, their speech is closer to poetry than it is to sociological prose" (p. 933). Richardson continued, "Settling words together in new configurations lets us hear, see, and *feel* the world in new dimensions. Poetry is thus a *practical* and *powerful* method for analyzing social worlds" (p. 933). Her work in translating oral interviews to written poetry is startling in its ability to recreate speech on the page and raises interesting questions about the link between voice and poetry. Quasha and Richardson both advocated new ways of thinking about written and oral texts. They raised important issues about the ways that we value different modes of communication and the limits we set on ourselves by not recognizing either the power of representing oral language as poetry, or its inherent text-like quality.

Economou (1975) went beyond the discussion of the text-like qualities of poetry and speech to explore the relationship between text, poet, and performance. His work responded to a resurgence in poetry readings during the 1960s and 70s, but the relevance of his ideas about the importance of poetry in performance and its link to a listener persists. He wrote of the "prevailing sense of *communitas* and its power to incorporate poets and audience into an intimate, interacting group" (p. 655). He discussed the effect that the ability to record poets in performance has on the poets themselves: "Poets may write with a greater anticipation of reading the poem in public, thereby extending the scope and nature of the audience they have, or are actually creating, in mind while they are writing the poem" (p. 658). If an

acknowledgment of the reader/listener by the poet can affect the creation of the poem, how might an acknowledgment of the poet by the reader/listener affect his or her understanding of the poem as an entity, not static on the page, but one continually needing to be "read"? A subsequent increase in, as Economou stated it, "one's proficiency at listening" (p. 661) might be the result and a worthwhile goal for those involved in the pedagogy of teaching poetry.

Learning to listen to and learn from a visual and oral performance was at the heart of Foreman and Shumway's (1992) writings on the text-like qualities of visual images. While the authors' emphasis was primarily on the cultural aspects of these images, they offered interesting insights that easily inform the study of poetry in performance as a visual text. Referring to visual images, they wrote: ". . . the construction of meaning that takes place when we 'read' [visual images] requires a complex interpretive process, one that decodes the signs of the visual text in much the same way that the letters and word on the page of a document are decoded" (p. 245). Acknowledging that visual images, including poetry in performance, are texts that can be interpreted and understood in ways similar to written texts is an important foundational concept to my doctoral research. Foreman and Shumway went on to illuminate the ways in which they theorized visual textual analysis, including the premise that "our apparently effortless grasp of visual texts depends upon complex interpretive processes" (p. 245). Better understanding these complex processes is one of my goals as a researcher.

The main purpose of this chapter has been to outline the influences and theories that have informed my research on better understanding the experience for readers reading poetry on the page and viewing it in performance. In addition, I have evaluated both how poetry textbooks have addressed the issue of poetry in performance as well as research related to the interaction of texts and readers. These explorations provided me with an important opportunity to think critically about the methodologies and practices of other researchers and teachers of poetry, to learn from their experiences, and to construct and implement my own research.

What the Textbooks Say

In order to better understand current pedagogical issues related to listening to or viewing poetry in performance, I researched these topics in four of the most widely sold college poetry textbooks. Poetry textbooks should provide a valuable insight into current best practices related to teaching poetry, especially how to address the issue of poetry in performance. To test this, I analyzed the following texts: *An Introduction to Poetry* (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007), *The Norton Introduction to Poetry*, (Hunter, Booth, & Mays, 2007), *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology, Instructor's Edition*, (Vendler, 2002), and *Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry*, (Mason & Nims, 2006). While I was not able to read each of these texts completely, I did search for terms related to reading, performance, sound, listening, or viewing in indexes as well as looked for any relevant terms in chapter headings or subheadings that might reveal information about poetry in performance. While there were some minor acknowledgements of the role that listening to poetry can play in understanding

poetry, there was no mention in any of these texts of the impact that seeing a poem being read, as would happen at a poetry reading, might have on a viewer.

An Introduction to Poetry (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007) contained a chapter entitled, "Sound," that mainly addressed the techniques used by poets to convey the sound of words. Each of the four textbooks reviewed contained a similar section. However, unlike the other three, *An Introduction to Poetry* also included a brief section within the chapter on sound entitled, "Reading and Hearing Poems Aloud." This section was written as advice to the reader of poetry and encouraged students to read aloud to increase understanding and suggested that readers practice reading poems aloud before reading them publically, advising about when to emphasize words or rhythms.

In addition, Kennedy and Gioia (2007) encouraged readers to listen to poets reading their poems, warning that "listening to a poem . . . calls for concentration." They advised that "following the text of poems in a book while hearing them read aloud may increase your comprehension, but it may not necessarily help you to *listen*" (p. 168). The authors summed up by acknowledging that "[h]earing recordings of poets reading their work can help both your ability to read aloud and your ability to listen" (p. 168). While there was no mention of poetry readings, viewing poets, or ways to learn from these experiences, at least this textbook broached the subject of listening to poetry and how it can affect one's understanding as well as enjoyment of poetry, encouraging readers to "let your ears make the poems welcome" (p. 168).

The Norton Introduction to Poetry (Hunter et al., 2007) contained no direct references to poetry readings or performance of poetry, though it did acknowledge, in a chapter entitled, "The Whole Text," that "[p]oems are complex wholes that demand various kinds of attention . . ." (p. 290). The importance of hearing poetry read by the poet was only mentioned once in the textbook. The preface, which few people would ever read, stated, "[B]ecause nearly any reading experience can be enhanced by an accompanying *listening* experience, all copies of *The Norton Introduction to Poetry* include a CD audio companion" (p. xxiv). The accompanying CD included 33 audio recordings of poets reading single poems (Hunter, Booth, & Mays, 2002). In addition, there was a website that readers could access that contained resource information about select poets and poems, very little of which was in audio format, and even less in a visual format. With an obvious intent to provide enrichment materials apart from the text, it is interesting that there would not be more evidence and examples of poetry in performance and that there was no mention of how to best learn from or enjoy these experiences.

In Vendler's (2002) *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology, Instructor's Edition*, the author acknowledged in a chapter entitled, "The Play of Language," that "[l]anguage is both spoken and written, and the poet thinks about both aspects: how the poem sounds, how it looks on the page" (p. 165). This was the only hint that Vendler gave in the section of the text intended for students that poets may actually read their poems for a listening audience. However, in the "*Author's Notes for Teaching,*" Vendler encouraged instructors to have students read poems aloud and

that "to have the same poem read aloud by two or three students (always prepared ahead) is to discover interesting differences in intonation, which reveal equally interesting differences in conception and interpretation" (p. 12). Clearly the author values the experience of hearing poetry read aloud, but there doesn't seem to be a corresponding emphasis on hearing or viewing the poets themselves read their poetry.

Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry (Mason & Nims, 2006) offered readers a different view of the importance of sound in poetry as it explored "the physical nature of speech" (p. 147). In this chapter, entitled "Gold in the Ore: Sound as Meaning," the authors went into incredible detail about the mechanics of speech, including diagrams that illustrated the shape the mouth makes when pronouncing particular vowels. However, the focus was on the body, not the poet. The text did have an optional "interactive CD-ROM, contain[ing] 28 author casebooks, annotated texts, [and] video and audio clips . . . " (back cover). There was no mention in the text itself of this CD-ROM or its possible importance to student learning or appreciation of poetry.

In all four textbooks evaluated, there was no direct mention of poetry readings or their possible role in enhancing student understanding. Given the increasing availability of audio and visual resources on the internet and in other digital formats, it is surprising that college-level poetry textbooks neither provided students with these experiences nor offered instruction about how to best take advantage of and learn from poetry readings. Clearly, it is an aspect of poetry instruction that has been neglected, and this neglect is evident in the research arena as well.

Related Studies: Text, Self, and Others

There is very little research to date focused on the interaction between reading written poetry and listening to or viewing poetry in performance. The following studies (Hoel, 1997; Knoeller, 1993; Peskin, 1998; Tompkins, 2002) have been valuable in providing insight into the ways readers make meaning from written texts, whether poetry or prose.

Hoel's (1997) study was based on three years of fieldwork she conducted with her own high school students. As a teacher of Norwegian language and literature, Hoel worked with the same group of students throughout three years. Theoretically, she based her research on the work of Vygotsky (1978), Bakhtin(1981), and Bakhtin and Medvedev (1978), and explored how students make and revise meaning through their interactions with text, teachers, and peers. She was especially interested in Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development and scaffolding and Bakhtin's concept of an ideological bridge between members of a group, in this case, the response groups Hoel used in her classroom to discuss literature.

Hoel (1997) acted as both teacher and researcher in her own classroom. Her research focused on one class of 22 students. The students worked in response groups to discuss their individual written analyses of a poem and then used that information to revise their papers. Hoel used audiotapes of the students' conversations, student notes, student drafts, and final compositions as her data sources.

The concepts behind Hoel's (1997) study are interesting and important. Response groups are such an important part of composition and literature instruction

that they deserve to be explored for their relationship to the well-established theories

of Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981). Better understanding of the communication

that takes place in response groups will be important to informing the practice of many

educators and students. As in my own research, Hoel (1997) acted as both teacher and

researcher in her own classroom. Her exploration of the interactions between text,

reader, and others related directly to my research on the relationship between text,

reader, and poet. She stated:

> 'Meaning' in a text, whether it is a student essay, a student discourse or a
> scientific article, does not lie in the text itself; it is the result of the interaction
> between the text and the reader or listener in an interpreted context. The
> meaning is created through an interpretive process where both the contexts of
> text creation and the context of the interpretive process are significant. (p. 14)

These interactions correspond closely to the interactions that occur between readers,

texts, and the "text" of poets in performance.

Peskin's (1998) research looked at a different aspect of this interaction

between readers and texts, comparing how experts and novices find meaning when

reading poetry texts. To address this question, Peskin analyzed the transcripts of eight

experts and eight novices as they thought aloud while reading and interpreting two

different poems.

Peskin (1998) concluded that experts do exhibit the use of particular

conventions for understanding poetry. The most common conventions include

allusions to other literary works, being able to see the poems as part of an historical

context or how they fit into particular genres, and the ability to anticipate what is to

come in the poem by recognizing extended metaphors. All of these strategies were

used more frequently by experts than novices. Peskin concluded that novices

expressed greater dissatisfaction and frustration with their interpretative efforts, while

experts were more likely to express enjoyment or appreciation of a poem or a

particular poetic element within a poem. This study clarified some of the essential

elements of poetry comprehension as well as the effect that reading difficult poetry

can have on appreciation.

Tompkins' (2002) study had many similarities to my own research. The

researcher acted as a participant observer in her own college classroom as she

conducted her research, focusing on both the individual nature of meaning making

with poetry as well as how social interaction with others contributed to the process.

Her research was founded on both Reader-Response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978) which

focused on students interacting with poetry texts to make meaning, as well as the New

Rhetoric theory (Perelman, 1979) which focused on the communal nature of

interpreting poetry texts as students worked together.

The population for Tompkins' (2002) qualitative study was 18 of her own

students enrolled in a first-year composition course at a community college. She

gathered her data from a variety of sources including student compositions, student

notes, audiotaped discussions, her own field notes, and pre- and post-questionnaires.

The primary source of data was a series of compositions that the students wrote in

response to poetry, which they then revised after discussing the poetry with fellow

students. Tompkins used these compositions to analyze both the personal interaction

with the text (Reader-Response theory) and the influence of others on the student's understanding of the poetry (New Rhetoric theory).

Ultimately, Tompkins' (2002) study documented the complex process of making meaning from poetry and how this process worked best when it included both individual response as well as opportunities for interaction with others in order to clarify and enrich one's own interpretation. Tompkins illustrated how "Reader-Response theory and the New Rhetoric work in combination to enable students to develop comprehensive readings of poetry" (p. 20). She also emphasized the importance of the categories developed through her research to analyze student response, and how "professors and researchers can compare these categories and examples to those encountered in their previous teaching or research in order to gain better awareness of the thinking behaviors of students" (p. 21).

Knoeller's (1993) research explored the ways in which readers appropriate the "voices" of others--texts, authors, teachers, peers--as they speak and write about literature. Knoeller used the term 'appropriating voices' to describe the ways in which we use the words of others in our own writing and speaking. In a later textbook based on Knoeller's (1998) research, he explained some of the purposes of appropriating language as he stated, "[s]peakers and writers routinely appropriate the language of others to concur with another's ideas to articulate and support their own claims" (p. 15). He based his study on the work of Bakhtin (1981) and his concept of "polyphony," or the multiple voices that become incorporated into any one

individual's thinking, speech, and writing, as well as other theories related to text interpretation (Iser, 1971; Rosenblatt, 1978).

Knoeller's (1993) study focused on three main research questions. Whose words, other than their own, do students use when discussing literature (referred to as 'voicing'), and to what extent do students use others' words? What functions do different varieties of voicing play in a discussion of literature? What role does voicing play in student writing about literature, and what role does a student's discussion play in his or her writing? To answer these questions, Knoeller studied 21 students in an open admission AP English course at a public high school in California. Over nine months, he collected data from a variety of sources including tape recordings of student-led class discussions, student compositions about literature, student interviews, and his own field notes. The author did not just focus on the class of students as a whole; he also chose five students representing varying levels of involvement with voicing to use as case studies. To analyze the data collected, he created categories to describe the different kinds and purposes of voicing. Transcripts of discussions and student writing were then coded using the categories.

Knoeller (1993) concluded that, "Voicing the words of others became an integral part of interpreting text in the social context of the classroom, encompassing language from the text itself as well as 'readings' of it offered by classmates" (p. 312). Eighteen of 21 students incorporated the voicing of others' ideas into their own comments, both oral and written. Knoeller went beyond merely addressing his

research questions to outline the implications for practicing teachers of literature and future research.

Knoeller's (1993) research most closely paralleled my own research. His research analyzed the ways that students voiced their own ideas and appropriated the ideas of others--those present (peers and teachers) and those absent (authors and fictional characters). Knoeller (1998) later wrote:

> If one assumes that all language including classroom discourse is inevitably polyphonic, then the grounds for discussing voice shift dramatically, recognizing the ways in which students appropriate the language--spoken and written--of others in their "own" thinking. (p. 18)

This emphasis on voice and the dynamic interaction between both the voice of written texts and the spoken voice seems especially relevant to the study of poetry and poetry in performance. The relevance lies in the relationship between others' ideas, both spoken and written, and one's "own" thinking. A poet reading his or her own work is also a "text," a voice that can influence a reader's (or listener's) thinking and understanding. Knoeller (1993) provided me with some of the few research connections to the idea of voice as text that I was able to find.

Overall, each of these four research studies (Hoel, 1997; Knoeller, 1993; Peskin, 1998; Tompkins, 2002) provided positive models for my own research; what became clear to me, however, as a result of my efforts to find studies related to my own research interests with poetry, is that there had not been much done to date. There was definitely room for a study looking at the concept of poetry in performance as a kind of "text" and the ways in which students perceive such texts. My research focused on poetry as more than just the text on the page, more than just the poet's

voice. The challenge was to study how these two manifestations of a poem might work together to allow for a richer experience with the literature, the potential for deeper understanding, and a clearer vision of the relationship between reader and author and text.

Influences of the Literature on my Research Focus

There was very little research related to my interest in looking at the effects that written poetry and poetry in performance might have on the reader. Because there was no theory to test or critique, no related studies to compare to, I chose to use a grounded theory approach for this qualitative study. While there were theories related to reading and literature that did inform my thinking on this topic, there were none that focused on the intersection of written texts with visual/oral texts. Indeed, Ratcliffe (1999) in her discussion and study of the four traditional components of rhetoric-- reading, writing, speaking, and listening--stated that listening had been especially overlooked, "Something that everyone does but no one [feels they] need study" (p. 196). Researching this essential experience for readers and students of poetry was a chance to, as Charmaz (2004) described grounded theory, "generate data by investigating aspects of life that the research participants [might] take for granted" (p. 504). My research goal was to use grounded theory to look at these seemingly everyday events--responding to written poetry, watching poets read their own work-- and try to better understand how the relationship between these processes might influence and/or inform each other.

Summary and Research Question

While the relationship between text and reader has been explored extensively (Langer, 1995; McCormick,1994; Rosenblatt, 1978; Wilhelm, 1997), the concept of poetry in performance as text has had much less attention. Theorists such as Economou (1975) and Richardson (2000) had discussed the text-like qualities of oral poetry, but these voices are rare. Even more rare is research focused on the interaction of the poet in performance and the reader/viewer. Even today's most commonly used college texts barely mention poetry in performance, and are void of instruction about how to best view or "read" these performances. While related research does exist (Hoel, 1997; Knoeller, 1993; Peskin, 1998; Tompkins, 2002), it is minimal and not directly focused on the effect of poetry in performance on the reader/viewer. The focus of this research addresses this research question: How might videotaped poetry readings affect one's understanding or appreciation of poetry or the poet?

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Putting the Research in Context

My research goal was to more clearly understand how the experience of reading poetry on the page is similar or different from viewing poetry in performance and how these two processes influence each other. Specifically, how might viewing videotaped poetry readings affect student understanding or appreciation of the poetry or the poet? As a teacher of poetry, I hoped to not only better understand these experiences for my students; I also hoped to eventually use my findings to improve my own teaching. To accomplish this, I conducted a qualitative research study, using grounded theory as my methodological approach. Lincoln and Guba (1985), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) have all played important roles in clarifying and developing both theory and methodology of qualitative research and grounded theory specifically.

My research involved students enrolled in my Introduction to Poetry (ENG 106) course taught during two different terms at a local community college. In order to better understand the influences of written poetry texts and poetry readings by the poet on student understanding, participants involved in this project began by reading poems and completing a written response to these written poetry texts. They then had the opportunity to watch videotaped performances of poets reading the same poems. Participants' subsequent written responses to the videotaped poetry readings became the primary source of data for this research project.

One might easily imagine a quantitative study based on these same research interests, but a qualitative study best meshed with my own research epistemology. I believe strongly in collaboration, constructing meaning, and clarifying and discovering meaning from the messy process of sharing ideas and continually redefining what I think and what I know. I am very interested in the insights and experiences and stories of others, and I wanted my research to yield something useful and practical for myself as both a learner and a teacher and a lover of poetry. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) provided a definition of qualitative research that reflected my own value of this method:

> This is interpretive scholarship that refuses to retreat to abstractions and high theory. It is a way of being in the world that avoids jargon and incomprehensible discourse. It celebrates the local, the sacred, and the act of constructing meaning. Viewing culture as a complex process of improvisation, it seeks to understand how people enact and construct meaning in their daily lives. It celebrates autoethnography, the personal account, "mystories," myth, and folklore. (p. 620)

I believe that my research is a reflection of who I am and what is important to me. The process was respectful of those involved--their stories and their perceptions--and my goal was to provide practical, meaningful contributions to the field of education. I wanted my research to reflect hard work, good thinking, and care for learners, both teachers and students. And in the end, I wanted to be proud of my research.

My Role as Poet

I believe that my experiences as both a poet and teacher of poetry have influenced the fundamental questions I ask as a researcher. When I first started my Masters program in English years ago, I knew I'd be stretching my own boundaries as

a writer, but I didn't realize at the time exactly how much. It was in an essay writing class that my teacher and major professor announced an upcoming graduate level poetry writing course he'd be teaching. When he asked if I'd be taking it, I kind of laughed to myself. The last time I had written a poem was in the seventh grade. The poem was one of those fill-in-the-blank kinds. "I like <u>ice cream</u>, <u>Chinese food</u>, and <u>clean sheets</u>. . . ." Three adjectives here, a noun there, a few zippy verbs, and POW— poetry. I still have that poem, complete with my own accompanying artwork, and while proud of my early attempts at poetry, there was no way I had an ego strong enough to withstand sure humiliation resulting from a public display of my lack of ability to write poetry. However, my professor said one of the most liberating things a teacher can say when I told him about my lack of experience as a poet: "It's okay, we'll all be learning together. There's room for everybody."

It was a strenuous class, lots of reading of poetry journals and each others' writing, lots and lots of late nights before class the next day, trying to eke out the required five pages. And I did. And sometimes they weren't even so bad. At the end of the term, we gave a poetry reading, sharing four or five of our best poems. I remember that night exactly. We had briefly rehearsed the program so that we'd know who came next and the order of our poems. But as the reading began and the first student poets started reading their poetry, they each began spontaneously introducing themselves, commenting on the class and how they had learned, struggled, benefited from the experience, etc. It bothered me; I thought it detracted from their work.

Instead of focusing on the poetry, it became a kind of testimonial to their process. It all felt kind of sappy. When it was my turn, I just read my five poems.

In retrospect, I think I wanted the poems to be heard as they were, uncluttered by who I was. If someone had been interested in my writing process or learning more about me, I would have been happy to talk, but that seemed incidental to the poetry. That first poetry reading was the first inkling of my interest in the connection between the poet and reader/listener and the poems themselves.

Since that first experience, I have participated in other poetry readings as both a poet and as an audience member. To some degree, my initial instincts about the relationship between the poetry and the poet have changed. One thing I love about poetry readings is the context that they can provide for the poetry—information about how the poet came up with an idea, what the poem means for him or her, how the poetry reflects the person. As a teacher of poetry, I find that my students often are very interested in the poet. Who wrote this? And why? There seems to be a strong need to put the poem in a context, to connect it to some human relationship. As a researcher, I wanted to learn more about this relationship between the receiver and giver of poetry.

My Role as Teacher

Teachers can make a real difference in the lives of their students. I know this because I am a product of teachers who have influenced not only how I teach, but who I am today. I remember exactly the first time I was aware of a teacher really changing the way I saw myself as a student. I had just turned in an assignment for an education

class that required me to reflect on my memories as a reader and writer. I worked hard on the paper. I remember precisely the comments in miniscule cursive in the margins, the questions the teacher asked to make sure he understood, the little exclamation points or smiley faces to communicate his response to the writing, and a little note, "try this," followed by some suggestions on how to rephrase a sentence or more effectively use punctuation. Every element communicated interest and respect for my ideas. And then those final words at the bottom of the page, "You're a good writer . . ." Such a small thing, but my teacher made me stretch my thinking about who I was and what I could do. As an English instructor at a community college, I often sit at my kitchen table grading a stack of essays. I make suggestions for rephrasing a few lines, and I catch myself writing in the margin, "try this. . ." an attempt to make a suggestion, to respond to my students as an interested reader, to encourage them to keep working and improving. I have become, in probably more small and large ways than I consciously recognize, like my teacher from so many years ago. Because I recognize the impact my teachers have had on me, I accept the responsibility that I have as a potential source of influence on my students.

Regardless of which class I teach, I give all of my students a lecture at the beginning of each term. I tell them this will *not* be the kind of class where they can come in and sit anonymously on the back row, never to speak. I believe students need to make connections, and these come through speaking, voicing an opinion, responding to another's. Very little is set in stone in my classroom. In my literature classes, I tell the students that my goal is to have them read the literature and feel

confident enough in their abilities as readers and thinkers to contribute to the conversation about it. I will not lecture them about what the experts say a particular text means. Their interpretations are valuable, and I give them a forum in which to share them. In my writing classes, we spend a lot of time reading each others' writing, responding to it, talking about our own, and reading excellent examples. My students take their writing through draft after draft and help each other work through the problems inherent in writing. They become a community of people striving to do their best work, striving to write and speak in ways that allow them to be heard.

As a teacher, I believe one of my essential aims is to help students be better members of our community. We rarely get to be an island; almost all of our existence is as a member of one group or another, and learning to accommodate and respect the rights of others, and expect the same for ourselves, is vital. Regardless of the content being taught, this is an integral part of my teaching, from helping seventh graders respond to each other's writing in positive ways to getting college students to accommodate the particular needs of a deaf student and her interpreter in class. I acknowledge the social nature of much of learning and try to give my students opportunities to build on their existing skills and beliefs while challenging them to stretch further.

I work hard at engaging my students in active learning. I want them to take a primary role in directing the course that our class takes through the content. I continually evaluate what works and what doesn't because I know that teaching does not necessarily mean that learning takes place. I feel a responsibility to provide my

students with learning experiences that help them progress and build upon their

existing knowledge in meaningful ways. I hope they also feel more confident when

they leave my class, and more connected to their learning community because of their

relationships created in the classroom. This emphasis on relationships, the connections

between learners, is at the foundation of my work as a researcher.

My Role as Researcher

Unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers value the kinds of

information and experiences that cannot necessarily be measured, but that still reveal

important insights. In an introduction to a comprehensive description of and reflection

on qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated:

> The word qualitative implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are
> not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all) . . . Qualitative
> researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate
> relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational
> constraints that shape inquiry. (p. 4)

Because I conducted a qualitative research study, I too ". . . [sought] answers to

questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin &

Lincoln, 1994, p. 4). Within these broad parameters of qualitative research, studies

can employ many possible methodologies. My research incorporated a grounded

theory methodology.

Grounded theory has many similarities to other qualitative methodologies.

Charmaz (2004) summarized the goals of grounded theory studies in this way: "Such

studies aim to capture the worlds of the people by describing their situations, thoughts,

feelings and actions and by relying on portraying the research participants' lives and

voices" (p. 499). And like other qualitative methodologies, my task was to "construct [the participants'] experience through their actions, intentions, beliefs, and feelings" (Charmaz, p. 499). However, grounded theory is unique from other methodologies in many ways. A key task that distinguishes grounded theory from other methodologies is the simultaneous and fluid movement back and forth between data collection and analysis. As I encountered new information in the process of my research, my questions and techniques for seeking answers needed to adjust as well. "That means that you start with individual cases, incidents, or experiences and develop progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, explain, and to understand your data and to identify patterned relationships within it" (Charmaz, p. 497).

In my research, I was involved with the participants not only as a researcher, but also as their teacher. I of necessity became a participant observer in my own research. Being a participant in my own research environment as both an actor and observer not only allowed ". . .phenomena to be studied as they arise, but also offer[ed me] the opportunity to gain additional insights through experiencing the phenomena for [myself]" (Ritchie, 2003, p. 35). The nature of grounded theory research also requires that the researcher be highly involved with participants in clarifying participants' intent and understanding through the recursive process of data collection, analysis, and the refining of research questions. Because of my dual role as researcher and teacher, I needed to carefully design my study in such a way as to not detract from

my students' safety, comfort, or learning. Ideally, the activities that they participated

in have enhanced their learning.

The Participants in Context

Before beginning the story of the many layers of this research project, it seems

important to put the participants into some context. Up until this point, the students

who agreed to participate in this research have only been mentioned as a collective

unit, and while it is impossible in this forum to give detailed descriptions of each of

the 36 participants, they do need to be identified more thoroughly than they have been.

One source of data collected for this study consisted of students' written

responses to videotaped poetry readings in two community college classes I taught.

One during Spring 2006, and the other during Spring 2007. Students were given

questions to respond to and completed these in class. Researcher notes taken from in-

class discussions were also used to better understand the participants' written

responses. Transcripts from follow-up interviews with four students during Spring

2007 were also an important source of data. I used many excerpts from these

participant responses in this chapter; however, pseudonyms were used to protect

participant confidentiality. To put this data into context, the participants need to be

described.

The community college where I gathered my data is situated in the Willamette

Valley in Northwest Oregon. The Willamette Valley traditionally has an agricultural-

based economy, with a long history of hazelnut and grass seed farms and large-scale

nurseries. Within the last 20 years, vineyards have become an important part of the economy for their production as well as the accompanying tourism. While there are several larger cities in the valley, students involved in this study lived in relatively rural or suburban communities.

The community college where I teach is a satellite campus that serves approximately 3,000 students in a community of approximately 30,000. This campus serves students from a large number of smaller, surrounding communities as well. The community college as a whole serves approximately 64,000 students with approximately 1,000 faculty and staff. The student population is very diverse, from recent high school graduates to retirees, and the purposes for attending vary widely as well. While some students attend classes for personal enrichment or for job retraining, the majority of students work toward a two-year certificate or a transfer degree with the intent to move on to a four-year university. The gender mix of the student body is approximately equal, with a few more women attending than men. Ethnically, the makeup of the student body tends to reflect the same proportions as the surrounding communities. The majority of students self-identify as white, non-Hispanic, and approximately 20% identify themselves as Hispanic. The college is supported mainly by state funding and local taxes, with students providing approximately 23% of the cost through tuition. While the tuition at the community college is markedly cheaper than the four-year institutions in the state, many students still need and receive financial aid in the form of student loans.

The students who participated in this study closely matched the demographics for the community college as a whole. Information about the participants in this study was gathered from an information sheet students were asked to fill out at the beginning of the class as well as from informal conversation. Students spanned the age range from recent high school graduates to retirees who took the Introduction to Poetry class for personal enjoyment. While most students were single, several were married or had been previously married, and some were parents. Most of the students were part-time students, working part-time jobs to earn tuition money or juggling school and full-time careers. While most students were white, there were also Hispanic students and African-American students in the classes. Twenty one of the participants were female; fifteen were male.

The purposes for enrolling at the community college varied among participants as well. Some students at the college were completing courses with the intent to transfer to a four-year institution. A smaller number were working toward a two-year degree, while others were simply trying to upgrade skills for the workplace or take classes for personal enrichment. While the Introduction to Poetry (ENG 106) course satisfies one of the humanities requirements for both a transfer degree and multiple two-year program degrees, there are always students who take the course simply as an elective course or for enjoyment. These students contrast with others who only take the course because it satisfies requirements and fits their schedules. This broad spectrum of motivations for taking the introductory course in poetry tends to be matched by a spectrum of past student experiences with poetry. Some students

actively read and write poetry on their own; others have had negative experiences reading poetry in the past, generally in school settings, and thus come to the class with trepidation. The mix of students makes for an eclectic classroom with a variety of perspectives stemming from a variety of life experiences.

Research Procedures

My doctoral research stemmed from a research project I began as a part of a graduate course on the pedagogy of literature. For my final project in the pedagogy of literature course, I chose to explore issues related to the pedagogy of teaching poetry and the use of videotaped poetry readings in the classroom. Stemming from this initial exploration, my doctoral research incorporated several videotaped poetry readings produced by the Lannan Foundation (Griggs, 1993, 1995; MacAdams & Dorr, 1989, 1991) into the Introduction to Poetry (ENG 106) course I teach at a local community college. Data took the form of papers written by students in response to videotaped poetry readings and transcripts of follow-up interviews. During Spring 2006, I gathered the first set of data which consisted of written responses to two videotaped poetry readings. I gathered the second set of data, which included written responses to three videotaped poetry readings, during Spring 2007. Follow-up interviews were conducted with some of the Spring 2007 participants as well. In the following sections, I will outline the specific procedures I used for gathering and analyzing data.

<u>Participants and Informed Consent</u>

Selecting willing participants for this study and protecting the rights of those participants was one of my primary concerns as a researcher. Students who take Introduction to Poetry (ENG 106) are undergraduates with a variety of backgrounds in poetry. Generally, the population of an ENG 106 course is quite diverse. This is a basic introductory course that students from many different majors take, and most students who take this course tend to be in either their first or second year of higher education coursework. The participant population was not restricted to any gender or ethnic group and included anyone in the ENG 106 class who was interested in participating. In the two classes involved in this study, a total of 36 students, only one student chose not to participate.

I realized that my position as teacher and researcher in the classroom put me in a position of power with my students that could potentially lead to feelings of discomfort or even coercion. I did not want students to feel compelled to participate in the study or to respond in ways that seemed "supportive" of my research. Nor did I want students to be concerned that if they chose not to participate, they might become the victim of instructor bias or favoritism (or lack of it.) I was concerned about protecting not only the rights of my students, but their comfort level as learners and participants in the classroom, and the informed consent process designed for this research project helped avoid those problems.

Because all students may not have chosen to be involved in this research project, and to avoid concerns over instructor favoritism or bias during the course of

the research, I did not know who was a participant and who was not until after the end

of the term and grades had been submitted. Before any data collection began, all

students were informed, both orally and in writing with the informed consent

document, about the expectations and procedures for the study. All students were

given an informed consent document. Those who wanted to participate could sign it,

those who didn't simply turned the form in unsigned, and all consent forms in the

classroom were gathered. The signed and unsigned forms were stored until after the

end of the term and grades had been given. In this way, I did not know who was

participating and who wasn't until after the term had ended. This technique worked to

insure that students were treated fairly because all of the data collection activities that

were conducted during the term were regular parts of the ENG 106 curriculum.

Participants had no need to be treated differently than non-participants during the

research.

Data Collection

Another of my concerns as a teacher/researcher was that my research, and

specifically, my data collection activities, not burden my students in any way. I did

not want to interfere with the regular activities and procedures of the class, and it was

important to me that students were not required to do any "extra" work as a result of

my research. My research design reflects this priority. For this project, students were

asked to read selected poems and then respond in writing to a videotape poetry reading

including the same poems. (See Appendix A.) Prior to viewing the poetry readings,

students were given a group of poems to read and respond to as a homework

assignment. The homework assignment, a response paper, asked students to reflect on their understanding, interpretation, and appreciation of the assigned poems. Response papers are a regular part of my ENG 106 course, and this is a learning activity that takes place regularly during the term. These response papers were important because they required that students complete the reading and do some thinking about the poetry prior to viewing the poetry reading. (See Appendix B.)

During the following class meeting, students watched a videotape of the assigned poet reading his or her poetry. Students were then given a series of questions that asked them to respond in writing to this experience, indicating insights, responses, questions, etc. Class discussion followed. During the data collection for the Spring 2006 class, I took notes as the students discussed their reactions to the videotaped poetry reading and shared ideas and responses. It was extremely difficult to lead a discussion and take meaningful notes at the same time, so during the Spring 2007 term, I asked a friend to sit in on the classes and take notes during the discussion part of the class. The in-class written responses to the videotaped poetry readings became the primary source of data for my study. Additionally, follow-up interviews were conducted with some of the participants. The audiotaped interviews were transcribed and coded in the same way as the written responses to poetry.

I realized that by not knowing exactly which students were participating in my research, I may have missed out on potential sources of information. For example, a comment or response by a known participant could have been discussed or probed more thoroughly during class discussion than might have happened otherwise. In

addition, limiting my sources of data to the in-class written responses to the

videotaped poetry readings also limited data collection to some degree. I could have

had students devote much more of their class or out-of-class time and energy to

questions related to my study. However, ethically, I could never have made this

choice as a researcher, and I believe that I gathered sufficient data using methods

designed to keep respect for students' comfort and learning at the forefront.

Documenting the Research Process

Other data sources for my research included my own notes and reflections after

each class period during which data was collected. I also kept a research journal that

was invaluable in helping me think through each step of my research, from designing

to gathering data to analysis. Beyond the technicalities of the study, my research

journal was a place to think through the data and the theory I was developing and my

personal reactions to these, my responses as a teacher, and my frustrations and

questions as a novice researcher. A constant monitoring of my own self-awareness as

a researcher was essential to keeping me connected to the research process. As

Kleinsasser (2000) put it:

> Researcher reflexivity represents a methodical process of learning about self as
> researcher, which, in turn, illuminates deeper, richer meanings about personal,
> theoretical, ethical, and epistemological aspects of the research question.
> Qualitative researchers engage in reflexivity because they have reason to
> believe that good data result. (p. 155)

I believe my research journal not only led to good data and helped me make sense of

that data, but that it also served as a support during the process. When the data

seemed an overwhelming obstacle, reading back through my research journal and reaching forward with new ideas helped me think more clearly.

Another important source of data resulted from follow-up interviews I conducted with four of the participants from Spring 2007. These participants were given an additional informed consent form to sign, and I met with them individually and taped the interviews. These interviews allowed me to clarify concepts, fill in theoretical gaps, and triangulate my thinking and perceptions with participants who were directly involved with the data. (See Appendix C.)

Research Memos

Because of the continually evolving nature of grounded theory methodology, I knew I would need to take care to clearly document and organize my research process, especially my data analysis and recurrent data collection. Most of this took the form of my own research process notes or research memos. In these memos I documented my day-to-day research activities, decision making procedures, and personal reactions to the process. In addition, I needed to document in writing any relationships between concepts as I began comparing data, as well as decisions about procedural changes, such as revisions to written response questions and possible interview questions. These organizational and documentation concerns resulted from the grounded theory data analysis procedures I used.

Coding the Data

Charmaz (2004) summarized the essence of grounded theory methodology related to data collection and analysis: "The hallmark of grounded theory studies

consists of the researcher deriving his or her analytic categories directly from the data, not from preconceived concepts or hypotheses" (p. 501). Thus, rather than beginning with categories that collected data must fit into, I created categories for analysis using the constant comparative method outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). As Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out, "Because grounded theory is a general methodology, a *way of thinking about and conceptualizing data*, it was easily adapted by its originators and their students to studies of diverse phenomena" (p. 275). I adapted this methodology in the following ways to meet the goals of my research.

Student in-class written responses to viewing the videotaped poetry readings were the primary data source that was coded. My initial plan involved coding by "units" of thought evident in the students' written responses rather than coding rigidly by sentence or paragraph or the entire document. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified two important characteristics of these units:

> First, it should be heuristic, that is, aimed at some understanding or some action that the inquirer needs to have or to take. Unless it is heuristic it is useless, however intrinsically interesting. Second, it must be the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself . . . (p. 345)

For the Spring 2006 class, during two separate class sessions, students read poetry from Sharon Olds and Pattiann Rogers, then watched a videotaped poetry reading for each of these poets. (See Appendix A.) Students had time in class to respond in writing to questions I provided about their reactions to the videotaped poetry reading. I began my analysis by making copies of the students' written responses. It was important to keep the originals clean so that they could be copied again for recoding as

part of verifying the validity of the coding process. Using marginal notes on the copies of student responses, I began by labeling units of response. After open coding each class set of responses, I wrote up a corresponding research memo, in addition to recording my experiences and thinking in my research journal.

From the two sets of open-coded responses from Spring 2006 and their corresponding research memos, I then began to identity categories of response. This was not a clear-cut process. Both my open coding memos, my axial coding memos, and my research journal reflect my wandering thinking about the data at this time. While "open coding fractures the data . . . axial coding puts those data back together in new ways to *make connections between a category and its subcategories*" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). Eventually, my initial categories of student responses evolved into more inclusive categories so that areas or types of response were consolidated, known as axial coding.

As I became involved in axial coding, the refining of categories and subcategories, I began to see patterns among the data. My goal was to analyze and group categories in a way that described the relationship among the different categories of responses. For example, I could see a possible connection between watching the videotaped poetry readings and an increase in understanding about some concept from the poetry. Eventually, I was able to describe some of the relationships both narratively and graphically through diagrams that helped me "depict the relationships among concepts" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 217). This became the nexus of theory I was developing. Describing and "making category properties

explicit" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 342) became an important part of the analysis of the data. The categories and their labels reflected my thinking and analysis and eventually led to the next phase of data analysis, selective coding.

Even while developing a theory from the data, I needed to fill in the gaps in the theory by using selective coding or theoretical sampling. Strauss and Corbin (1990) described this as sampling that is "direct and deliberate, with conscious choices made about who and what to sample in order to obtain the needed data" (p. 187). One of the constraints on my study was the relatively short length of time that I had with my students during a 10-week poetry course. This necessarily limited my data collection, as I did not have contact with many of the students after the end of the term. Gathering data from two groups of students who have in common their enrollment in ENG 106 solved this problem. As I reached the point of clarifying theory with theoretical sampling, I involved a new class of ENG 106 students in Spring 2007. Strauss and Corbin (1990) clarified this process, which they termed "discriminate sampling," when they wrote:

> In discriminate sampling, a researcher chooses the sites, persons, and documents that will maximize opportunities for verifying . . . relationships between categories, and for filling in poorly developed categories. This may mean returning to old sites, documents, and persons, or going to new ones where one knows the necessary data can be gathered. (p. 187)

My Spring 2007 Introduction to Poetry students became the source of data that helped me to clarify my developing theory.

The Spring 2007 group of ENG 106 students participated in the same activities as the Spring 2006 class, with a few minor changes. Instead of two opportunities to

read poetry and then respond in writing to videotaped poetry readings, these participants had three opportunities. The poets they read/viewed were Lucille Clifton, Gary Soto, and Pattiann Rogers (also watched by the Spring 2006 class.) While written responses to Clifton's poetry were used to solidify and finalize categories during axial coding, the written responses to Soto's and Rogers' poetry were part of the selective coding process. For that reason, I asked specific questions after the Soto and Rogers poetry readings that would help me clarify and solidify categories and fill in gaps in the theory I was developing.

Throughout the process of data collection and the process of defining and labeling categories, memo-writing remained an important research tool. Through memo-writing I documented and organized my thinking and decision-making, and the memos became part of an auditable trail through the entire research process. Charmaz (2004) outlined the multiple benefits that memo-writing contributes to this process and encouraged researchers to use this process as a means of exploration and discovery:

> Memo-writing should free you to explore your ideas about your categories. Treat memos as preliminary, partial, and immanently correctable. Just note where you are on firm ground and where you are making conjectures. Then go back to the field to check your conjectures . . . You are writing to render data, not to communicate it to an audience. Later, after you turn your memo into a section of a paper, you can start revising the material to make it accessible to a reader. Writing memos quickly without editing them gives you the added bonus of developing and preserving your own voice in your writing. Hence your writing will read as if a living, thinking, feeling human being wrote it rather than a dead social scientist. (p. 512)

Memos became one of the important ways that I not only documented my thinking and actions as a researcher, but that I stayed connected and clear about my role in this project as a learner.

Establishing Trustworthiness

All of my plans for collecting and analyzing data using grounded theory methodology rested beneath an umbrella of concern for establishing trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posed this important question, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (p. 290). Lincoln and Guba outlined four basic areas of concern related to establishing trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Throughout my research, I used particular methods in order to address each of these concerns.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which a researcher acknowledges the multiple realities of research participants and works to represent them as thoroughly and honestly as possible. In addition, methods must also be chosen that insure a researcher's "findings and interpretations will be found credible" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305). Methods that I used in my study to establish credibility included reflexive writing about my experiences as a researcher, triangulation of both data methods and data sources, member checking, and peer examination. Each of these will be discussed in more detail.

As a researcher using my own students as participants in my research, I was highly involved in the entire research process and setting. Striving to remain aware of my own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as a researcher was important in maintaining my reflexivity. One way I tried to accomplish this was by using a

research journal. This journal included information about the research process as well as personal thoughts, reactions, questions, and frustrations. Krefting (1991) wrote:

> In writing these personal thoughts and feelings about the research process, the researcher may become aware of biases and preconceived assumptions. Once aware of these biases, the researcher may alter the way that he or she collects the data or approaches the analysis to enhance the credibility of the research. (p. 177)

Additionally, as a part of my grounded theory methodology, I wrote memos throughout the research process that documented my thinking, decision-making, and developing conceptual knowledge about the data. Both of these reflexive writing activities aided in establishing the credibility of my research and findings.

Triangulation also played an important role in developing the credibility of my research processes and findings. Triangulation provides an opportunity for many different perspectives, including different sources of information as well as different methods of obtaining them. Krefting (1991) summarized the benefits of this technique:

> The triangulated data sources are assessed against one another to cross-check data and interpretation. This strategy of providing a number of different slices of data also minimizes distortion from a single data source or a biased researcher . . . (p. 177)

In this study, I triangulated methods by obtaining participant data through written responses, notes taken during class discussions, and audiotapes of interviews. Over the course of this research, I gathered data from a variety of students from two different Introduction to Poetry (ENG 106) classes. In addition, students within both of the ENG 106 classes had multiple opportunities to respond to questions regarding the experience of reading poetry on the page and watching it in performance, both in

writing and verbally as a part of class discussion or during interviews. This established a triangulation of data sources "based on the importance of variety in time, space, and person in observations and interviewing" (Krefting, p. 178).

Similar to triangulation, which focuses on multiple perspectives on data, member checking, another technique for establishing credibility, allows for multiple perspectives on concepts drawn from the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) wrote about the importance of member checking in building credibility:

> The member check, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. (p. 314)

Because the participants in this study were my own students and the class they were a part of was only 10 weeks long, time constraints limited opportunities for member checking. However, there were still opportunities for relevant member checking in the research process. For example, class discussions that occurred after students had watched the videotaped poetry readings provided opportunities for clarifying ideas summarized from student responses. During the follow-up interviews, I was able to ask students for their reactions to categories of responses that I had identified from the class written responses. Transcripts of the interviews were also given back to the participants for checking, and they were invited to clarify or add to any part of the transcript. (See Appendix C.) In addition, summaries of the ideas from one participant's interview were given to another participant for reaction or clarification.

The last important technique for establishing the credibility of my research came through peer examination, which is "based on the same principle as member

checks but involves the researcher's discussing the research process and findings with

impartial colleagues who have experience with qualitative methods" (Krefting, 1991,

p. 178). Because this research was a part of my doctoral program, I had a built-in

group of knowledgeable peers who provided me with feedback throughout the process

of my research. Peer debriefing, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) labeled it, serves many

purposes:

> . . . help[ing] keep the inquirer 'honest,' exposing him or her to searching
> questions [. . . providing the] opportunity to test working hypotheses that may
> be emerging in the inquirer's mind. [It also] provides the opportunity to
> develop and initially test next steps in the emerging methodological design . . .
> [and] provide[s] the inquirer an opportunity for catharsis . . . (p. 308)

Another benefit of peer evaluation was that it allowed me another opportunity to be

open to new ideas and ways of thinking about the research process and findings.

While there were other potential methods that could have been used to establish

credibility in qualitative research, these were the methods relevant to my study.

Dependability

Another important element in the overall trustworthiness of a qualitative study

is dependability. How reliably did I, as researcher, adhere to the stated methods?

How reliable are my findings and interpretations? To accomplish this, I needed to

present a clear, detailed, and thorough picture of the methods used for gathering,

analyzing, and interpreting data (Krefting, 1991, p. 179). Thus, as Lincoln and Guba

(as cited in Krefting, 1991) summarized, ". . . another researcher can clearly follow the

decision trail used by the investigator in the study" (p. 179). This focus on describing

and documenting each aspect of the process was essential. In addition, triangulation of

data sources and methods as well as peer review contributed to the dependability of

my research. Another way to confirm the dependability of my analyses was to recode

data, with a minimum of two weeks between coding sessions for the same data. In

this way, I was able to get a better feel for the consistency of my data analysis. While

I did not recode all of my data, I did recode all of the Spring 2006 data and the first set

of written responses from the Spring 2007 class. Each of these procedures described

in this chapter--documentation of methods, triangulation, and peer review--played a

role in establishing the dependability of my research.

Confirmability

Each of the activities used to establish dependability also contributed to the

confirmability of this research study. The main means of establishing this was

through an audit, or the "residue of records stemming from the inquiry" (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985, p. 319). " . . [A]uditability suggests that another researcher could arrive

at comparable conclusions given the same data and research context. The auditor

considers the process of research as well as the product, data, findings, interpretations

and recommendations" (Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Krefting, 1991, p. 180). As a part

of my own research plan, I incorporated many activities that facilitated the audit of my

work by my doctoral committee. These included records of the data collected from

participants (written responses, transcripts of audio recordings of interviews, and

summaries of classroom discussions); my own reflexive writing (notes, memos, and

research journal); and procedural records (memos documenting research goals, data

collection activities and decisions, analysis activities and rationale, and

interpretations). Ultimately, all of these became part of a clear and thorough written description of the processes and findings of my research project.

Transferability

The possible transferability of the findings of my research to another setting becomes a final concern when considering the trustworthiness of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined the parameters under which transferability could occur:

> Whether [hypotheses] hold in some other context, or even in the same context at some other time, is an empirical issue, the resolution of which depends upon the degree of similarity between sending and receiving (or earlier and later) contexts. Thus the naturalist cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility. (p. 316)

This "thick description" is the key to allowing the transfer of findings to another setting. Johnson (1997) summarized what this thick description should include:

> . . . the number and kinds of people in the study, how they were selected to be in the study, contextual information, the nature of the researcher's relationship with the participants, information about any informants who provided information, the methods of data collection used, and the data analysis techniques used. (p. 290)

All of these descriptive needs were met with the numerous research activities outlined in this chapter on methodology.

Study Limitations

While I have tried to design this qualitative research project as thoroughly and thoughtfully as possible, I realize that there are limitations to this study. As I have

tried to illustrate throughout these chapters, there has been very little done in this field

of inquiry regarding the intersection between videotaped poetry in performance and

written poetry texts and readers. And while I hope that this research has yielded

interesting and relevant results that can inform my thinking as both a reader of poetry

and a teacher of poetry, I know that this research project is just a first step. The

qualitative, particular, and very local nature of this research that took place in my own

classroom also acts as a limit to the scope of the conclusions that can be drawn. My

goal was to conduct this research with as much skill and integrity as I could in order to

make it as relevant to my needs and my research questions as possible, while

acknowledging that my analysis and interpretation of the data reflect my own

particular constructions of meaning.

The videotaped poetry readings themselves serve as another limitation to the

study. Culturally, they reflect a very western stance; the poetry reading itself is very

formal, with the poet at a distance from a largely silent audience. While there is

reaction from the audience, there is little interaction. This necessarily constrains the

response of both the videotaped audience and the participants of this research in ways

that might not occur in different settings with different poetry readings reflecting other

cultural biases and practices.

Summary

Overall, I believe my research plan contributed to a transparent view of my

activities, motivations, and thinking throughout the research process, and these taken

together have yielded trustworthy research findings and conclusions. An evaluation of this research study can be informed by the criteria for trustworthiness outlined previously in this chapter. In addition, a summary of the characteristics of excellent qualitative research have helped inform my research practices both during my research and as I wrote this research report. With this goal in mind, I developed criteria based on qualities described by Ambert, Adler, P.A., Adler, P., & Detzner (1995), Eisenhart and Howe (1992), and Lincoln and Guba (1985) for evaluating qualitative research. These criteria included:

- Researcher background, biases, and theoretical stance(s) are clearly stated

- Research is connected to prior related studies and cites relevant related literature

- Research questions are clearly stated and special terms defined

- Researcher treats participants ethically and respectfully

- Triangulation of methods and analysis is evident

- Includes thick descriptions of the research process

- Analysis is clear, coherent, and thorough

- Conclusions reflect coherent reasoning

- Writing is clear, accurate, and accessible to a variety of readers

- Study as a whole contributes to knowledge in the profession and is relevant to practicing educators or students

These criteria have informed the development of this research, and keeping these criteria at the forefront of my own research practices has assisted and motivated me to conduct my research to the best of my ability.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Spring 2006 Data

The first collection of data was gathered during Spring 2006 from my Introduction to Poetry class. The data consisted of written responses from 14 participants to videotaped poetry readings by Sharon Olds (MacAdams & Dorr, 1991) and Pattiann Rogers (Griggs, 1993). The videotaped poetry readings are part of a series produced by the Lannan Foundation in an attempt to make poetry readings more readily accessible to the public. The poetry videos are all produced following a similar format. The poet is videotaped while reading poetry to an audience. These settings are rather formal. The poet is on a stage behind a podium, and the audience is seated in an auditorium, fairly removed from the poet. Each poem is introduced by the poet, and audience reactions to the poetry and the poet are audible, though the audience is rarely shown on screen. Rather than the audience asking questions of the poet, which would be more typical of a poetry reading, an interviewer on film asks the poet questions. Segments of the interview are interspersed throughout the videotaped poetry reading. The structure of the videos gives viewers the opportunity to hear the poet read his or her poetry, to hear the poet introduce the poems to the audience/viewers, and to hear the poet respond to interviewer questions about the poet's life, writing process, etc. Overall, the experience captured on video is quite similar to the experience any listener might have at a live poetry reading.

Because of time constraints, participants did not watch the poetry readings in their entirety. Instead they watched an approximately 30-40 minute excerpt that included a combination of the poet reading and responding to interview questions. In preparation for watching the videotaped poetry reading, participants were asked to read a collection of the poet's poems, most of which would appear in the video excerpts to be watched in class. In addition to reading the poems at home, participants responded to these poems in writing following the guidelines for a recurring assignment for the class, a response paper. This response paper is designed to get the students thinking about what they have read prior to class discussion. (See Appendix B.) In this case, the response paper required students to think through the poetry prior to watching the videotaped poetry readings. During the next class, students watched the videotaped poetry reading and were given time in class to respond in writing to two questions. For both of the videotaped poetry readings watched by participants during Spring 2006, they responded to the following questions:

1. How has seeing the video changed or reinforced your understanding of the poet or her poems?

2. What additional thoughts or impressions did you have about any of the poems you saw today or the poet herself?

Open Coding

Open coding of the data gathered during the Spring 2006 term was coded after the term had ended, and the results helped inform the data collection procedures

during the Spring 2007 term. The written responses from Spring 2006 were copied to preserve the originals, and I coded the copies using comments in the margins. For the first set of data from the Olds (MacAdams & Dorr, 1991) poetry reading, I used a fairly wide variety of labels for the different concepts I identified in the data. For example, one student wrote:

> Seeing [Olds] let me know that she has some years under her belt; some experience from which to draw her conclusions and pictures. The video gave a face and a voice to the poems. It also helped me to know that I was reading the poems in the proper way. (Kate)

For this participant's reference to the poet's age and experience, I used the label, "age/experience." The participant's comment about the video giving the poet a "face and voice" was labeled using those very words, and the comment referring to reading the poem in the "proper way" was again labeled using the term, "proper reading." This labeling strategy was typical of my first attempts at coding the data; I often used in vivo codes, or labels "taken from the words of respondents themselves" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 105). Even so, by the time I had coded the first set of 14 participant responses, I had already begun to see patterns among the participant responses, and some of the labels were being solidified by repetition as they were frequently needed to describe participant responses.

By creating an open code memo, I was able to better see patterns of response and think more clearly about specific student responses. Strauss and Glaser (1998) explain this need for "[m]icroanalysis . . . [which] uses the procedures of comparative analysis, the asking of questions, and makes use of the analytic tools to break the data apart and dig beneath the surface" (p. 109).

My first open code memo for the Spring 2006 set of data responding to Olds' poetry was an important foray into connecting concepts that I had noticed during the initial labeling of the data. Instead of the initial labels I had indentified in my research journal right after gathering the data, I used labels that were more descriptive and that began to represent the interconnected nature of the data. While it is impossible to document here all of my thinking at this stage in the research process, it is important to illustrate the evolution of some of the initial labels used in open coding the data into more refined and clearer labels of response. This evolution resulted from writing and thinking through the open coding memos. The labels used most frequently to code the data are listed below with corresponding participant responses as illustrations for each. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Open Code Labels used with 2006 Olds Data

Proper Reading	"It also helped me to know that I was reading the poems in the proper way . . ." (Kate).
Confirmed Response	"Seeing her didn't actually have a huge impact on the way I read or understood the poetry. The way she read it wasn't too different from how I read it in my head" (Debbie).
Appreciation	"I like Sharon Olds a lot more than I did. She is unique and amazing" (Steve).
Tone	". . . she read it with more of a romantic passionate feel . . ." (James).
Context	"I felt that her presentation and giving of backgrounds of some of her poems helped me to look deeper into her poems" (Michael)

Personality	"I liked her personality. She was very spunky in reading her poems. She had an air of sadness in her eyes" (Ida).
Increased Understanding/Insight	"When she was reading the poems the poem felt alive . . . seeing the video made her work come alive" (Sue).
Author's Intent	"It was mainly when she talked . . . before and after the poems that allowed me to see a sort of mindset for the poetry. It allowed me to see where she was coming from" (David).
Voice	"I think hearing the author read her poem helps me to better understand her meaning. . . voice, tone, and speed can make or break a poem" (Michael).
Disagreement	"I disagree with her on many of the points she makes" (Julie).
Decrease in Appreciation	"When I read the poem, they had a lot of feeling. Then when she read them, they seemed really monotone. I didn't like it" (David).
Visual Image	"I liked to put her face into each poem or her voice into the poem so it would make better sense" (Natalia).

The second set of data gathered during Spring 2006 included written responses to a videotaped poetry reading by Pattiann Rogers (Griggs, 1993). The initial data were coded in the same way as the previous set. Original written documents were copied and marginal notes on the copies were used to label "units of thought" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) rather than each individual line of data. Even at this early stage in the research process, refinement of the labels used to open code the data was occurring.

Several participant responses were unique from the first set of data related to the Olds

poetry reading. These new labels, added to the previous set, included the following.

(See Table 2.)

Table 2: Additional Open Code Labels used with 2006 Rogers Data

Physical Appearance	"She does look like the type of person to write the poems that she does . . . It is very interesting to see the face behind the poems" (Michelle).
Personal Connection	"I didn't realize when reading her poems that she has such long sentences till I heard her almost run out of breath. I tend to do the same thing when I write. I like her poems even better now" (Julie).
Elements of Poetry	"By using alliteration . . . [it] caused me to think of children's literature, especially when regarding nature and animals" (James).
Movement	"It seems like she is a very nervous person. She is very fidgety and yet she does have a certain confidence about her" (Michelle).
Concept Change about Poetry/Poets	". . . [I am] understanding that poetry is nothing more than opening your person for others to see . . ." (Max).

The open coding memo written from responses to the Rogers poetry reading

(Griggs, 1993) served to reinforce and further my thinking about the concepts I

gathered from the data. One of the most important ideas was the concept of personal

connections to the poetry. One participant illustrated this clearly:

[Rogers] makes fun of her own poetry. I was surprised that she joked around
about her poems as she was reading them. She was very down-to-earth, not

how I expected a poet to sound . . . I couldn't believe it when I heard her talk. She sounds like me! (Sue)

This participant was from Texas, and Rogers, originally from Missouri, has lived in Texas. Finding a personal connection with the poet was a positive experience for this participant. Her comment also led to another development in terms of evolving labels to describe the experience participants were having with the videotaped poetry readings.

Rather than just respond to the particulars of a given poet or poem, some participants expressed their changing perceptions about the general nature of poetry and poets. In response to the Rogers poetry reading (Griggs, 1993), one participant wrote: "I noticed she can't stand still . . . she kept fidgeting" (Sue). Another participant summarized this observation by writing, "She seemed like a real person" (Natalia). Students seemed genuinely surprised that a "famous" poet would be nervous about sharing her work. These observations of what students considered to be weakness in public performance—visible nervousness—was an indication of their preconceived ideas about what poets look or behave like that was challenged when they had access to real poets in performance.

<center>Recoding the Data</center>

Another source of data gathered at this stage of my research were the recodings of the various data sets. Because I had preserved the original documents produced by the participants, I was able to once again copy them and recode them. It was reassuring to note that my second analysis of the data yielded very nearly the same

results as the first, with the exceptions being more standardized labels for the concepts identified in the data. This helped confirm the consistency of my analysis procedures.

Spring 2007 Data

The Spring 2007 data consisted of participants' written responses to three poetry readings, Lucille Clifton (MacAdams & Dorr, 1989), Gary Soto (Griggs, 1995), and Pattiann Rogers (Griggs, 1993). The procedure for gathering these written responses was exactly the same as the previous data collection from Spring 2006. Participants did not watch the poetry readings in their entirety, but instead watched an approximately 30-40 minute excerpt that included a combination of reading and responses to interview questions. In preparation for this videotaped poetry reading, participants were asked to read a collection of the poet's poems, most of which would appear in the video excerpt to be watched in class. Participants responded to these poems in writing following the guidelines for a recurring assignment for the class, a response paper intended to get the students thinking about what they had read. (See Appendix B.) During the following class, students watched the videotaped poetry reading and then were given time in class to respond in writing to questions. For the first poetry reading with Lucille Clifton during Spring 2007, students responded to the following questions:

1. How has seeing the video changed or reinforced your understanding of any of Lucille Clifton's poems?

2. How has seeing the video changed or reinforced your thinking or response to Lucille Clifton as a poet?

Throughout the process of open coding the Clifton 2007 data, connections between labels and their relationships were at the forefront of my thinking. No new labels were used to code the 2007 Clifton data, and it became increasingly clear that rather than identifying individual concepts, the effects of these concepts on the reader needed to be explored. Categories of response were evolving, and rather than focusing just on the participants' words, I was beginning to ask questions "such as why or how come, where, when, how, and with what results, and in so doing . . . uncover relationships among categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 127). I had begun the process of axial coding.

Axial Coding

While grounded theory distinguishes between the open coding of the data and axial coding, "the process of reassembling data that was fractured during open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123), in reality the two processes often overlap. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained it: "It is important to note that we do not go through an entire document, put labels on events, and then go back and do a deeper analysis. The labels that we come up with are, in fact, the result of our in-depth detailed analysis of data" (p. 110). The primary goal of axial coding, which focuses on identifying the relationships between and among categories and subcategories of data, is essential to the process of understanding the data and working toward a theory.

In addition, as I categorized student entries, it was necessary to think about how the different categories related to each other. How did some categories subordinate themselves to other categories, and what exactly was the relationship among the different categories?

One example of a category that evolved as my understanding of the data became clearer was the concept of "personality." This term was commonly used by participants in their written responses. Eventually, it was evident that this nebulous category was actually a combination of other factors at work. References to voice, humor, contextual comments provided by the poet about how a poem was written, etc., and body movement were linked by participants to their discussion of personality. Ultimately, elements of this category became parts of three others: voice, contextual comments, and appearance, and all contributed to increased understanding of the poetry and the poet. This is only one illustration of the evolving nature of categories. My intent in this section is to summarize the categories developed during axial coding and describe their relationships to each other using participant examples to illustrate each.

Voice

Voice was one of the strongest categories of response for participants. Many reported that their ability to detect tone was enhanced as a result of hearing the poet's voice as they viewed the videotaped poetry readings. One participant wrote: "[The poem] was a lot different from my understanding. [Clifton] put a passion in it that I didn't feel when I read it" (Henry). One way in which participants were better able to

detect the tone of the poetry was in their insights about humor. It was very common

for students to miss the humor in the poetry, and after viewing the poetry reading, they

were often surprised (and pleased) to consider the poem more light-heartedly. This

was illustrated clearly with the following participant response:

> [Clifton] sees herself as a struggling woman. Her poetry said that to me on the paper, but her reading reinforced that. I would not have seen the humor behind "Homage to my Hips" or "Wishes for Sons." I might have only seen the anger that men do not have to experience as many difficult "body parts" (as she calls them) as women do." (Margaret)

Viewing the poet in performance gave participants new information about the

tone of the poems. Another participant wrote about a poem in which the speaker talks

back to the mirror:

> When I first read ["What the Mirror Said,"] I thought Clifton was angry with a certain man, that someone had put her down. After hearing her, I realized she was talking about herself only, and her struggles to not try to keep up with the Jones, but to be proud of every part of her. (Drew)

While tone was important to the participants' experience of reading/viewing

poetry, as a label for their experience, it was still subordinate to the concept of voice.

This became clear as other factors related to voice also contributed to tone.

Participants identified several factors related to voice that they felt made a difference

in their understanding of the poetry. The speed at which a poet read and the fluency of

the reading were often referred to. Michelle wrote: "Unlike some authors who rush

through their poems or drag them out too long, she has a nice steady pace." Did the

poets stumble over words? Change words? Another participant described it this way:

"I think hearing the author read her poem helps me to better understand her meaning

of the poem. To me voice tone and speed can make or break a poem. Her voice tone set a calm mood, making the poem flow very smooth and easy" (Michael).

In addition, how the poet emphasized particular words while reading the poem affected how students understood the poetry in new ways through viewing the poet in performance. One participant's comment illustrated this point:

> When [Olds] was reading her poems, her voice turned the poems that I read into new poems that I had never heard before. The way her voice fluctuates and the tone that she takes when saying certain words is what makes a poem come alive. It gives new understanding to her work and knowing a bit more about her. (Michelle)

Voice became an important category encompassing pacing, delivery, emphasis, and these elements contributed to an increased ability to not only detect tone, but an increase in overall understanding of both the poem and the poet.

Appearance

Appearance was another strong category of response that developed during axial coding. My initial thinking about his category was that it would include responses related only to the physical appearance of the poet. Because participants would be viewing a video of the poet, I anticipated that they would have a lot to say about appearance and its effect on their thinking about the poetry. In reality, there were relatively few references made about the physical appearance of the poets. One of the few comments representative of this included: "I never thought that [Clifton] was a big, black woman in her poems, but I did understand some of them better when I saw her" (Claire). Because the physical appearance of the poets was mentioned so little, this became one of the categories specifically targeted during selective coding.

In contrast, the body movements of the poets were often mentioned by participants as contributing to their understanding of the poetry. How a poet moved while reading or talking, indications of nervousness particularly, caught more than one participant's attention. Together, the comments related to physical appearance and movement were closely linked to either a participant feeling a connection to the poet or a general shift in perception about what poets look like.

Being able to observe the physical movements of the poet from the videotaped poetry readings served many purposes for participants and encompassed much of the participants' written responses. Responses like the following were common:

> All of [Rogers'] poems are filled with detail and heavy thinking. I think I was expecting a dark person, an unhappy person. After watching I realized she is kind, with a great sense of humor. She changes my whole view of her poems. At first I was thinking she was speaking of an ugly worthless lizard [in "The Justification of the Horned Lizard."] After, I realized she was showing us that every life is worth fighting for. (Maria)

Another participant wrote:

> As I observed [Olds], I began to see why she wrote her poems. I pictured her sitting on a bus with her son and having that experience then writing about it [in "The Missing Boy."] I liked to put her face into each poem or her voice into the poem so it would make better sense. (Natalia)

It became clear that the physical appearance of the poet provided more than just information about how the poet looked. In large degree, viewing the poet provided context for the poetry as well as a means for better understanding the poems themselves. Natalia used her observation of the poet to extrapolate to other poems by the poet that were not on the video but that were part of the reading assignment. She imposed the face or voice of the poet on the poetry and used that technique to help her

make sense of the poems. Both of these students found importance in knowing what the poet looked like. It affected their attitude toward the poetry as well as how they understood the poetry.

<u>Contextual Comments</u>

Contextual comments included all of the things a poet might say other than reading the actual words of the poem. This was a strong category of response, and because the comments that the poets made on the videotapes were the kinds of comments that probably would have been made at a live poetry reading, they were especially enlightening. For example, on some of the videos the poets responded to questions from interviewers, similar to the process of accepting questions from audience members at a live reading. For this reason, contextual comments became a valuable resource for students learning about how poets write, how they get their ideas, what inspires them to write the poems they do, how they feel about their poems, what they think about their poems and about being poets, etc. It is an incredibly rich resource for any poetry reader/viewer. David wrote:

> Seeing the video has changed my understanding of the poems because it allowed me to see what [Olds'] attitude was like. It was mainly when she talked about them before and after the poems that allowed me to see a sort of mindset for the poetry. It allowed me to see where she was coming from.

Natalia gives another example of the impact of contextual comments on understanding: "Hearing her read the poems made the pictures in my [head] more vibrant and clearer. I really enjoyed the introduction before each poem because it helps me to envision what the poet is talking about." Both of these comments seem to focus not only on the poet's reading, but on the comments and conversation the poet

had during the reading. These non-poetry comments put the poet into perspective for the students. The poet is revealed as a person, not just a poet.

One participant summarized the influence of contextual information about the poet like this:

> Seeing the video helped me to understand who she is, where she comes from, what her background is, why it matters, and why she writes like she does. Seeing her personality, rather than guessing at it, helped me to see how it actually comes through in her poetry. (Katherine)

Audience Cues

While recoding the Clifton 2007 data, audience cues became one new category of response. Audience cues, including both the reactions from the video audience and the other live participants in the classroom, became a factor that influenced participant understanding. While comments from others can potentially wield an enormous influence on participant understanding, the vast majority of participant references to audience dealt with detecting humor. The audience laughing would clue participants that the poem was humorous when they might have missed it on their own while reading. Thus, the relationship between audience cues and detecting tone was targeted during the selective coding process.

The concepts contained within these four categories of response provided students with a vast array of new information about both the poetry and the poets, and they contributed to the participants' own conceptions of poetry/poets in general. Viewing individual poets contributed to their constantly developing conceptions of what it means to be a poet and the nature of poetry in general. In explaining the evolution of the four main categories of participant response, I have also mentioned

how these four factors interact and affect each other as students watch poetry readings. However, the resulting changes in participant understanding and appreciation of poetry need to be outlined and described. It is clear that after viewing the videotaped poetry readings, participants had altered conceptions, and these fell into the following categories:

Increased Insight/Understanding about the Poem/Poet

Participants came to the poetry performance with a set of expectations or preconceptions. Some of these emerged as a result of reading the poems on the page, but some of the preconceptions came as a result of past experiences with poetry. It was evident from their response that many participants had general conceptions about what a poet looks like, sounds like, the nature of making meaning from poetry (difficult), the tone of poetry (formal and serious), etc. All of those past experiences were at work as a context for receiving the new information—the poem in performance. Most likely, participants were not always conscious of all of these influences as they viewed the poetry readings, but they often seemed to become more aware of these factors as they wrote about their responses to the poetry performances. Ultimately, participant responses fell into two basic categories related to their understanding of the poetry. Student preconceptions were either reinforced or added to, or they were not met and were subsequently replaced with new conceptions. Both of these processes added to student understanding. One participant illustrated this as

she summarized her changes in understanding not only about the poetry, but about the poet as well:

> Seeing [Rogers] read her poems made me reevaluate how I felt about her writing. I reread them with a different tone. Her voice is soft and her personality is humorous. It made me look for the positive. It never felt dark and depressed, but after hearing her read, it made me look for the good. (Maria)

One recurring theme among participant responses related to increased understanding was that seeing/hearing the poet allowed participants to understand the "correct" way to read/understand a poem. This emphasis on the need felt by many participants to understand the intent of the poet was strongly related to other areas of response. For example, it was clear from participant responses that perceptions of voice connected to the concept of how to "properly" read the poems. One participant wrote:

> When [Olds] read her own poems I understood it better because she could place the proper emphasis and the tone of voice she uses. Like "Little Things," I didn't quite get why she had her father in the poem but when [she] read it, I understood it was because he made her appreciate the little things in her life like her son, who may be messy or have big problems but she still loves him. (Steve)

While the concept of voice becomes further specified as tone in many participant responses, the interrelationship between voice, tone, and the "proper" reading of the poem is illustrated in this example: "Without knowing the appearance of a poet or the sound or tone of their voice, it is difficult at times, despite specific and intentional diction, to know how exactly the poem is meant to be read" (James). All of these factors contributed to increased understanding for the participant.

Another theme evident during axial coding resulted from participants having

their conceptions about the poetry either confirmed or reinforced as a result of viewing the poetry reading. One participant wrote:

> Seeing [Rogers] didn't actually have a huge impact on the way I read or understood the poetry. The way she read it wasn't too different from how I read it in my head, and when I imagined the scenes from the poetry, I never really imagined her, just the things she spoke of. I guess the only thought I might have is it solidified the reality of her poems. (Debbie)

Another participant confirmed this when she wrote: "[Clifton] sees herself as a struggling woman. Her poetry said that to me on the paper—but her reading reinforced that" (Margaret). Even confirmations of what is already known or understood result in strengthened conceptions of both the poetry and poets.

Another result of participants' experiences with viewing poetry readings was a change in general conceptions of what poetry is and who poets are. Participants would, in the process of describing and commenting on their increased understanding of a particular poem or poet, reflect on their changing conceptions of the nature of poetry. One participant wrote: "[I am] understanding that poetry is nothing more than opening your person for others to see" (Chenoweth). This participant's summary of his new understanding shows a growing conception of both poetry and poets.

Increased Appreciation/Enjoyment of the Poem/Poet

In addition to an increased understanding of the poetry, another result evident from participant responses is an increase in appreciation or enjoyment that is derived from seeing a poetry reading versus simply reading the poems on the page. A combination of the four categories of influence on participants--appearance, contextual comments, voice, and audience cues--interact to influence the pleasure a

participant experienced when reading/hearing the poetry. Several participant

responses illustrated this. One wrote:

> When [Olds] was reading the poems, the poems felt alive as she was reading
> them one by one. Seeing the video it made her work come alive. I like her.
> She is a good poet . . . I enjoy reading her work because of how she gets the
> point across to people. She gets straight to the point. (Sue)

Another participant confirmed this idea:

> I like Sharon Olds a lot more than I did. She is unique and amazing. I like her
> shoe analogy. [As a new poet, Olds went to a reading of famous poets, and
> related how she sat so close to the stage that she mostly saw their shoes. She
> was situated lower than they were, rightfully where she saw herself as a poet
> at the time.] It was smart and funny. (Steve)

> Again, the idea that seeing the poet in performance provides not only

information about the poem but pleasure as well was clearly stated by this participant:

> I didn't like a lot of [Clifton's] poems on paper, but when she read them in the
> video, I could read her face and body language. She made it much more
> enjoyable to hear her poems. "Homage to my Hips" was one of those I hated,
> but when she read it, I laughed and found a new taste for it. . . The humor of
> her poems was easily expressed through her facial expressions and her voice.
> In short, it was more fun/interesting to listen to the poems than just read them.
> (Sam)

In addition to enjoying the poetry more, this participant's responses clearly indicate

the increased level of understanding that most often accompanies, or perhaps precedes,

increased enjoyment of the poetry. This question about the relationship between

increased understanding and enjoyment/appreciation for the poetry was one I

continued to explore during the selective coding phase of my research.

Throughout the process of conducting this research, there was no instance of a

participant understanding the poetry less as a result of watching the videotaped poetry

readings. On the contrary, an increased understanding of the poetry and often the poet

was universally demonstrated by the participants. This often included an increased ability to identify tone and the development of general concepts of what constitutes poetry and poets. However, increased understanding did not necessarily mean that all participants had a corresponding increase in appreciation or enjoyment of the poetry or the poet. In a few instances, participants, though acknowledging an increase in understanding, continued to feel negatively about the poetry or poet or enjoyed the poetry less after seeing it read by the poet.

Decreased Appreciation/Enjoyment of the Poem/Poet

Significantly, there was no instance of decreased understanding about the poetry/poet as a result of viewing the videotaped poetry readings. In addition, participant appreciation or enjoyment for the poetry or the poet mostly increased and only occasionally decreased as a result of seeing the poet in performance. An increase in understanding never led to a decrease in enjoyment; however, there were other factors that did cause participants to enjoy the poetry less after viewing the poetry readings. One factor was the experience of not having expectations met by the poet, especially when connected to the voice of the poet and the way he or she read the poem. One participant wrote: "I was surprised to hear [Olds] read these poems the way she did. They were all monotone and seemed to have no feeling, but when reading them to myself as I thought it should sound, they had great intensity" (Anna). This participant's preconceptions about how the poetry was to sound went unmet, and this led to her disappointment in the reading.

In addition to dissatisfaction with the poet's reading of the poetry, some participants found particular body movements of the poet annoying or distracting. For example, one participant wrote: "Watching the video, I noticed [Rogers] can't stand still" (Sue). Others concurred that she was "fidgety" and "seem[ed] unsure of herself" (Anna). While not always the determining factor in whether a participant ultimately enjoyed the poetry or not, the poet's movements did at times detract from some of the participants' overall positive experience with the poetry in performance.

The combined effect of multiple factors--appearance, contextual comments, voice, and audience cues--led some participants to draw conclusions about the poet's personality which they found negative. One participant wrote:

> While I don't think that there is an anger toward men that underlies some of [Clifton's] work, rather I think she genuinely thinks less of men than she does of women. She really thinks negatively of men, but not with anger but rather with just a matter-of-fact attitude as if everyone should agree. (Max)

This participant found Clifton's contextual comments and poetry offensive because he felt they included humor at the expense of men, and this affected his enjoyment of the poetry.

Another catalyst for negative response was participant perceptions of philosophical or political differences with the poet that stemmed from the content of the poetry. While this was a rare occurrence, one participant confirmed this phenomenon with this response: "The poem 'On the Subway' was a poem about racism as I took it[;] however, I disagree with her on many of the points she makes" (Julie). While not totally rejecting Olds' poetry, this instance of disapproval or disagreement with the content of the poetry was intriguing. Understanding the factors

that contributed to some participants' lack of enjoyment or appreciation for the poetry was one thing I wanted to find out more about during selective coding.

Selective Coding

Selective coding is "the process of integrating and refining the theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143). At this point in the study, written responses to the poetry readings of Sharon Olds (MacAdams & Dorr, 1991) and Pattiann Rogers (Griggs, 1993) from Spring 2006 had already been coded, as had written responses to the poetry reading of Lucille Clifton (MacAdams & Dorr, 1989) from Spring 2007. In order to fill out the categories created during axial coding, it was necessary to delve into two additional sources of data. These included written responses to the poetry readings of Gary Soto (Griggs, 1995) and Pattiann Rogers from the Spring 2007 class, as well as four interviews with participants from the Spring 2007 class. Each of these data sets yielded valuable information that contributed to the developing theory.

The procedure for gathering written responses to the poetry readings was the same as the data collection techniques used previously. Participants watched excerpts from videotaped poetry readings and were given time in class to respond in writing to questions about their experience with the poetry. As a part of the selective coding process, I honed in on particular categories of response that I needed more information about. For example, I asked questions about the influence of the audience on participant perceptions (Soto: Question 2) as well as how the poet's body language, gestures, and pace of the poet's reading affected understanding (Soto: Question 4). I

noticed these issues during axial coding, but I needed more information to fill out the categories. For the Gary Soto poetry reading during Spring 2007, students responded to the following questions:

1. How has seeing the video changed or reinforced your understanding of any of Gary Soto's poems?

2. Did the audience reactions either from the video or from others in class affect your understanding or appreciation of the poetry at all?

3. How has seeing the video changed or reinforced your thinking or response to Gary Soto as a poet?

4. Did Soto's body language, gestures, the pace of his reading or the volume of his voice, etc. make a difference in how you understood the poems?

Each of these questions yielded new insights about the relationship between the participants and their experiences with reading poetry versus viewing poetry in performance.

For the written responses to the Pattiann Rogers poetry, I once again adjusted the questions to fill in categories. Previously, for the Soto reading, I had asked about the effect of audience reactions on enjoyment or appreciation. For the Rogers reading, I asked a more general question about the impact of viewing the poetry reading on enjoyment or appreciation (Rogers: Question 2). In addition, I asked whether audience reactions affected understanding (Rogers: Question 4), while previously for Soto, the question addressing audience reactions had also included its effect on appreciation (Soto: Question 2). These are subtle changes in questioning, but it was

what was needed to fill out the categories and my understanding about how viewing

poetry readings affected participants' enjoyment or appreciation.   For the poetry

reading with Pattiann Rogers during Spring 2007, students responded to the following

questions:

1. How has seeing the video changed or reinforced your understanding of any

   of Pattiann Roger's poems?

2. How did seeing the video of Pattiann Rogers affect your enjoyment of her

   poems or your appreciation for her work?

3. How did seeing the video change or reinforce your thinking or response to

   Pattiann Rogers as a poet?

4. Did Roger's body language, gestures, the pace of her reading or the volume

   of her voice, etc. make a difference in how you understood the poems?

   Did audience reactions, either on video or in our classroom, affect your

   understanding in any way?

Follow-up Interviews

During Fall 2007, I conducted follow-up interviews with four of the Spring

2007 participants. Ideally, these interviews would have taken place closer to the

original data collection, but because the original data collection took place throughout

the Spring 2007 10-week term, there was not enough time to code and analyze the data

and follow up with participant interviews. The four participants interviewed were

chosen because their original written responses were insightful and mentioned ideas

that I wanted to follow up on. These students had returned to school during Fall 2007

or lived nearby, so they were accessible for an interview. Though each interview took its individual course, as a starting point, each participant was asked the following questions:

1. Did viewing the poet reading his or her work change your understanding of the poetry?

2. Did viewing the poet reading his or her work change your appreciation of his or her poetry?

3. Did the poet's physical appearance affect your response to the poet or his or her poetry?

4. How did viewing the poets in performance affect you ability to detect the tone of the poems?

5. Did viewing the poet reading his or her work affect any personal connection you made to either the poet or the poetry?

6. If you were to read other poems by these poets, how do you think the experience would change now that you've seen the poet performing (reading) his or her poetry?

7. Did your ideas about what poetry is or what poets are like change as a result of viewing poets in performance?

Despite the time delay between the written responses to the videotaped poetry readings and the follow-up interviews, the interviews yielded valuable data that was used during the selective coding process. In addition, the interviews provided a chance to check in with interviewees about my impressions of the whole participant

group's written responses and concepts related to theory I was developing. This process helped in establishing the validity of my interpretations.

New insights gleaned from the selective coding of written responses to the Soto and Rogers poetry readings from Spring 2007, as well as the follow-up interviews, are summarized below. Many of these insights helped to more clearly establish the relationship between categories of response established during axial coding.

Audience and Detecting Tone

Both the Soto 2007 and Rogers 2007 poetry reading response questions addressed the effect of audience on participant understanding, and it was clear that the audience did make a difference. While some participants mentioned that they already caught the humor, most said that the audience reactions and cues helped them consider the poetry in new ways. I think it is interesting that humor in poetry, for these participants, often went undetected. The default mode for participants seemed to be a dark, serious tone, almost as if they expected a poem to be somber. I think this reflected how participants perceived poetry in general, especially due to the novice status of most of the participants as readers of poetry.

I also believe their general conceptions of poetry might have changed as a result of seeing poets whose poetry included humor, not light-hearted verse, but serious experiences and questions being explored with humor as one of the tones that came through. One student very simply stated, "I didn't know how funny the poems really were till I listened to [Soto] read it. It was nice to laugh with others" (Gloria).

That response was so fundamental and such a simple example of the need we have as humans to connect to each other, emphasizing the communal aspect of poetry. However, not all participants felt that the information gleaned from the audience responses really changed how they perceived the poetry. Ira wrote, "I heard them laugh and people in [the classroom] laughed too. I already knew that these poems were humorous, so their laughter didn't affect my opinion" (Ira).

Audience Influence on Appreciation

Audience also played a role in how participants enjoyed the poetry as a result of viewing the videotaped poetry readings. One participant wrote:

> The audience had a wonderful sense of humor and I appreciate[d] their input. It added to my appreciation and enjoyment. You need to hear [the poet] bounce off something, no? [It] would be sad or boring to hear silence and it reinforced my own reactions. (Margaret)

For this participant, the experience of the poetry is enhanced because of the group setting, even a videotaped group. One participant compared the effect of the audience on her own enjoyment to "the TV sitcom effect of a studio audience's 'awww . . . s,' but less fake because this is a real audience" (Katherine). She went on to say, "A lot of the humorous lines I didn't catch before because I was busy concentrating on whether they were supposed to be dark. It was a lot more fun to see [Soto] read it and also feel like I'm part of the audience too." Again, the communal nature of poetry readings seems to play a part in how students enjoy the poetry as well as the insights they gain from even videotaped fellow listeners.

Voice

       I noticed several important concepts related to the voice of the poet as experienced in a poetry reading during the selective coding process. These included: participant insights about the non-fixed nature of poetry in performance, the impact of voice and sound on understanding and the identification of tone, and the question of the authority of the poet versus the reader in terms of validating interpretation.

       Because participants had read the poetry in print prior to watching the videotaped poetry readings, they were able to detect differences between the poetry in print and the poetry as performed by the poet. One interesting observation made by participants after watching the Soto videotaped poetry reading was that he occasionally changed the wording of his poems from what was published. It is interesting that participants even caught the subtle changes, and they seemed to think the changes or additions that Soto included in his reading enhanced their understanding. These changes or additions gave participants additional information which made understanding the poem(s) easier. This is also significant because it illustrates the malleable nature of poetry and reinforced that it isn't carved in stone, even when it might be in print. Gloria commented about this process and how it made a difference. In response to the questions about whether the poet's body language, gestures, pace of reading or volume of voice, etc. made a difference in how the poem was understood, she responded:

> I noticed [Soto] kept pausing here and there even without punctuation. Also he said words that weren't in the poems' print that I think helped me understand better. For example in the poem "Wrestler's Heart," in line 38-40 he asked his

> mother what their name meant. In the text, it says "Mexican," but when he read it, he said it meant "nothing." (Gloria)

That she would acknowledge specific lines with changes indicated that it really caught her attention.

Another participant responded to changes in the poet's delivery of the poem by writing, "I noticed that he would omit or add words from his poem. It led me to believe that maybe the subject and situation is more important to Soto rather than rhythm" (Reed). This participant commented not on the malleable nature of poetry that was demonstrated, but on the insight he gained about the poet. To this participant, it was the message or idea of the poem, the "subject and situation," that he perceived to be most important to the poet, not a particular set-in-stone pattern of words or syllables. This was an interesting insight that likely wouldn't have come up if only reading poetry on the page. This participant observed that the flexible nature of poetry, the conversation-like qualities with an audience, and the concept of the poem are more important than the precise wording or structure set in print.

Another interesting insight related to the voice of the poet and its effect on understanding resulted from participant reactions to Pattiann Roger's southern accent. This connected directly to a change in conceptions about what poets sound like as well as some non-poetry related insights about southern accents in general. One participant stated:

> [Rogers'] voice was also interesting; it was distracting at first, because I was honestly not expecting someone so obviously educated to speak in a drawling accent—I guess that's a hidden slight prejudice I didn't know I had. It's cured now; the rhythm in her speech brought out alliteration that I didn't catch before—it was pleasant to listen to. (Katherine)

Preconceptions about what poets sound like—they don't have southern accents—were

changed as a result of seeing Rogers in performance, and this participant's overall

understanding was enhanced.

The importance not only of hearing poetry in performance, but that the poetry

be sounded was also emphasized by this participant. She continued:

> I like most of [Rogers'] poems . . . One important thing. I only like them <u>after</u>
> I started reading them out loud . . . They don't mean anything, though, if you
> read them with your eyes and mind; it's just like a bunch of blobs that someone
> carelessly set down in the name of Poetry. "Family" was one I didn't read out
> loud, so it was boring for me before she read it. Her voice is what made the
> difference—if it's an anonymous bunch of words, it means much less than it if
> is her personal words that mean very much to her. The meaning gets activated
> through the voice, even if it's just a meaning of "I like the sound."

The participant not only discussed the impact that hearing a poem can have, she also

suggested that even hearing one's own voice is preferable to not hearing the poem at

all. Voice and hearing/listening were essential to real understanding for this

participant.

Another participant discussed the relationship between hearing the poet and

constructing meaning for himself. He wrote:

> I liked pretty much all of [Rogers'] poems more after I heard her read them.
> When I read them, I didn't know how to read them properly . . . Reading
> someone's poetry is one thing. I mean you read it in your own way; therefore,
> you make it yours in a sense, creating your own images. But hearing the writer
> of the poem helps [me] see the poem for [how] they envisioned it. When I
> heard her read her own poetry, it helped me understand her as a poet. (Sam)

This participant had a clear vision of the role he played in making meaning from a

poem, but he also clearly identified the role that the poet's voice can play in this

construction of meaning. Hearing the voice of the poet allowed him to understand

something more about author intent and who the author was "as a poet."

The voice of the poet was not always the main source of meaning about the

poetry, however. During a follow-up interview with one participant, he described the

connection between his own interpretations and the information provided by the voice

of the poet during a poetry reading:

> Basically it's all in my head. I mean, when you read the poem, you're reading
> it your own way. So basically, it's how you would tell the poem yourself, so
> when I hear [Clifton] tell it, she has a really good comical delivery because I
> didn't know the poem was supposed to be comical. But when [Rogers] read
> [her poems], I read them in a very different way that made me appreciate it
> and all the rhythmic stanzas and everything for them, and that worked well for
> me, but when she read, it was drawn out and dull, and it drove me insane.
> (Sam)

What struck me most about this participant's response was his confidence as a reader.

Not that he thinks he has all the answers, just that he thinks his response or way of

reading the poem is just as valid as the poet's. As a teacher, I want to think this is

because I've empowered my students with values about their right and privilege to

interpret for themselves. But as the participant mentions at the end of this interview,

maybe he just ". . . see[s] things in a different light" (Sam).

I think of how different Sam is from so many students who feel cowed by the

idea of The Poet. He continued to explore this idea about the impact that viewing the

poets had on his ability to detect the tone of the poetry. He responded:

> Well, the tone of the poem is sometimes best seen by the poet's face. You can
> understand their facial expressions and how [the poems are] supposed to be
> happy, sad, angry, and when you're reading the poem it's also the same, but
> it's your emotional state of it. It's how you think it is. So, it's basically what I
> said earlier, it's got to balance in some way or another. When I saw [Clifton],

she was smiling when she was [reading her poems], but [Rogers], she was smiling, but they still sounded dull . . . dull . . . dirge; I didn't like it. I usually always have a happy beat to them unless I read them again, and it's like, oh yeah, that's supposed to be kind of sad . . . maybe. (Sam)

Sam discussed the need to balance his own interpretation with the poet's. The emotional state of the poet came through from his or her facial expressions. With rereading, the participant would sometimes change his mind about an interpretation, but he seemed to know himself as a reader of poetry. His initial inclination was to read a poem with a "happy beat," and ultimately, his interpretation took precedence over the poet's. He concluded his thoughts as he added:

I can still think of it the other way just because it was my original thought, so that's going to be ingrained into my mind forever, but when I still hear the poet read it, I could hear the balance. I think, "Uhhh . . . it works, I guess." Especially if I really like the poem, and then I hear them read it. With [Rogers], it's like, "I like the poem, but I . . . don't like how they read it. (Sam)

Seeing poets perform their poetry added to understanding, but for some participants, did not preclude their own interpretations obtained from reading the poetry on the page.

Personal Connections

In addition to increased understanding, personal connections to the poet were sometimes a consequence of seeing the poetry readings. One student wrote: "Being Hispanic as well [as Soto]—I can completely relate to what he is talking about in his poetry" (Ida). Another student responded to the experiences that Soto related in his poetry—growing up with his siblings, wrestling in high school—and said, "My own memories come back to me of my childhood. Not exactly the same, but similar"

(Max). Seeing the poet gives the reader/viewer more information, more context for

the poetry, and thus increased connections to the poet and poetry.

Personal connections to the poetry or poet also played a role in increased

understanding of the poetry. One interview participant stated:

> I can connect it all. When I first [started], I had respect for poetry and poets, but I'd never really gone into it or pursued trying to find poetry and then reading it, and even at the start of the class, it was cool and everything, but then once I started seeing poets themselves and hearing them read it themselves, it was poetry in a broader picture. It was a much more emotional, more relational type of writing. It became a lot more human to me. It was a lot more tangible almost. (Drew)

This participant's changing conceptions about the poets and their poetry led to an

increased connection to the poetry and the poets.

This connection was also addressed by another participant during a follow-up

interview. She commented:

> I think the poetry class in general helped me to see that poetry is not just this stuff that's in old dusty books. It's stuff written by real people, and seeing the authors helped me see their human side too. It's not this ethereal, immortal work in a book; they're people. (Katherine)

This emphasis on understanding the human quality of poetry through better

understanding the poets seemed important to participants. Another participant stated

during an interview:

> I think I would explain it by . . . there's just more life if I can see them, if I can visualize them. There's just more life to them, more joy of life. It explains it better; it's grittier. It's more real. You see their struggles, you understand their struggles better. (Margaret)

Being able to see the poets as real people enhanced both the understanding of the

poetry and the participant's appreciation of it.

Appearance and Detecting Tone

The physical appearance of the poets also provided participants with valuable information that affected understanding, but appearance also allowed participants to feel that they more accurately detected the tone of the poetry. One participant wrote: "[Soto's] way of looking at his past is clearly positive and fun loving. I actually had pictured a more stoic gentleman type, not a class clown type personality. His poems now seem to me to convey more of a whimsical look at life than a serious-lesson-learned look" (Max). This comment provides an interesting insight into preconceptions about poets and how those can not only change, but the new, added insight can alter one's understanding about the poetry as well. This same idea was reiterated by another participant.

> I imagined him an older gentleman who spoke with conviction, mustache and all. Seeing the video changed my ideas about his poetry. [Soto] is a younger, comical poet whose poems represent his eventful childhood. It changes my perception of the poems. The seriousness faded away. (Reed)

In this case, an insight about the appearance of the poet led to increased understanding, and specifically an increased understanding of the tone of the poem.

Movement

While the appearance of the poets did provide participants with valuable information that affected understanding, some participants learned more from their observations of the behavior of the poets than from their appearance only. While movement is actually a subset of the appearance category, in general, participants had more to say about the poets' movements than their appearance. This student's

comments actually straddled both the concepts of physical appearance and movement. "[Soto] showed us how beets or cotton are chopped, giving us a better image in "The Red Palm." . . . I now understand why he was a bad wrestler; he's tiny" (Sam). This participant referred to the physical clues the poet gave during his performance, acting out the task of chopping with a hoe to illustrate its difficulty. Another sort of body movement that yielded contextual clues for a participant was illustrated in this response:

> The way that [Soto] separated the words and lines was helpful—in one's mind, if you don't read out loud, the words can bungle together so that their meaning in terms of the context of a line can be confused. His emphatic-ness of voice and movement of his head to emphasize pointed out what he thought was important, and helped me to understand too. (Katherine)

This participant mentioned the voice or delivery of the poet in this response, but also the poet's movements as he read and the insights she gained from viewing these.

<center>Summary</center>

Viewing videotaped performances of live poetry readings did have a variety of interconnected influences on participants' understanding and enjoyment of the poetry. Describing this phenomenon in terms of theory is difficult because of the connectedness of the many different elements of influence involved. Perhaps it is the influence of poetry in my life, but I find that analogy and metaphor help me better understand complex issues. Hirsch (1999b), in his discussion of Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, explained the power of metaphor to "[create] relations between things unrecognized before, and . . . create new thoughts and thus revitalize . . ." In

attempting to better understand the complex factors at work as the participants made meaning of poetry, several metaphors have helped me, some of them supplied by the participants themselves.

One participant (Drew) compared the experience of viewing the poet in performance as an orchestra versus simply reading the poetry on the page as one instrument being listened to in isolation. Other participants used the metaphor of a puzzle to describe the many elements required to make meaning and find enjoyment from poetry, and in viewing the poet in performance, they were able to find that rather large missing piece that allowed them to see and appreciate the full picture of the poetry. Other researchers have used metaphors to communicate the complexity of theories. One of the most influential on my own research is Richardson (2000), whose central image for establishing the validity of postmodern research is the image of a crystal "which combines symmetry and substance with the infinite variety of shapes, substance, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach" (p. 934).

Perhaps the metaphor that best helped me think about the complexities surrounding the interactions that occur among the reader and poem and poet is that of a tapestry. Just as the different threads in a tapestry connect and support the others, the influences of audience, contextual clues, voice, and appearance become almost inseparable from each other as they influence the understanding of poetry. And these four threads, rather than constricting or delineating boundaries, create a structure that allows for innumerable connections, for increased understanding. The greater the connections, the clearer the image or understanding that emerges, which contributes to

the overall appreciation and enjoyment of the poem and poet. Though metaphor helps me communicate and think about my findings in this study, this metaphor is grounded in real phenomena.

There were four factors that contributed to participants' increased understanding of poetry and poets as a result of viewing videotaped poetry readings. These were: the voice of the poet, including the speed at which a poet reads, fluency of the reading, and tone of voice; contextual comments, all those things a poet says other than reading the actual words of the poem; audience cues, including both the reactions from the video audience and the other participants viewing the video; and appearance, including the physical appearance of the poet as well as his or her movements. These four factors functioned as anchors for student understanding. However, in order to fully understand the impact that watching poetry readings has on participant comprehension, it is important to consider the different roles these four factors play in the process of reading poetry in print as compared to viewing poetry readings. While reading poetry on the page, readers can still be influenced by the voice of the poet, contextual information, and audience cues, but these influences are much more indirect than when viewing a poetry reading.

The concept of voice in poetry takes vastly different forms depending on whether the poetry is read or viewed in performance. Identifying voice and tone in poetry are some of the biggest challenges that readers of poetry have, especially novice readers of poetry, which generally describes students in a community college setting. The novice readers of poetry in this study tended to hold conceptions about

the inherent serious nature of poetry. Culler (as cited in Peskin, 1998), while not specifically referring to the ability to infer tone, discussed novice readers of poetry and the ways they make meaning. He stated that "expectations about poetry and ways of reading guide the interpretive process and impose severe limitations on the set of acceptable or plausible readings" (p. 254). Though poetry may contain humorous elements, the humor is often missed if it is not considered as an option.

When reading poetry and trying to identify the voice of the poet, students must rely on the words of the poem, the connotation of those words, and their placement on the page and within the poem. When viewing poetry in performance, voice ceases to be an abstract concept and is a real entity that viewers can hear and experience for themselves. There is a directness inherent in this process that is not possible when simply reading poetry on the page. Understanding of tone in poetry is likewise affected by the limitations of print when reading, and enhanced by the experience of viewing a poet in performance. Factors that enhanced the understanding of tone in poetry viewed in performance included the speed of the reading, emphasis both with voice and body movements, and the fluency of the reading.

Just as the concept of voice changed from reading to viewing poetry in performance, the concept of contextual information took different forms as well. When reading poetry, especially in an academic setting, contextual information is often provided by a teacher, by a poetry textbook, or by curious readers themselves who take the time to research background information about the poet or poem. This form of contextual information differs from the contextual information provided by

the poet at a live poetry reading (or a videotaped live poetry reading.) Generally, the contextual information available to a reader of poetry has been filtered through someone else's perceptions and thinking. In the classroom, teachers, textbook publishers, and other sources of information about poetry, such as online poetry resources or general resources (e.g., Wikipedia), influence the kinds of information made available to readers. These influences include the format of the information, the complexity and completeness of the information, and the unavoidable warping of information that occurs when translated from one source (the poet) through a secondary source (the teacher or publisher) to a third (the reader.)

In contrast, viewing poetry in performance provides a direct link between the viewer/listener of poetry and the poet. Information about context comes from the poet's mind and mouth and from the observations and connections that the viewer/listener makes. Receiving contextual information directly from the poet is a clearer form of communication, though it, too, may undergo a change in the process of passing from speaker to listener. Undoubtedly, listeners also must make meaning of what they hear, but the process is more direct than relying on translation from a secondary source such as a teacher or publisher. Bernstein (1998) addressed this primacy of the interaction between poet and listener when he wrote:

> Poetry, oddly romanticized as the activity of isolated individuals writing monological lyrics, is among the most social and socially responsive— dialogic—of contemporary art forms . . . the poetry reading [is] the ideal site for the presence of language—for listening and being heard, for hearing and being listened to. (p. 23)

Though the relationship between poet and listener is an integral part of understanding poetry in performance, others can play a role in enhancing this understanding.

Just as for voice and contextual information, when reading poetry on the page, the concept of audience takes a much different form than occurs when viewing poetry in performance. Discussions about poetry that has been read or viewed in performance are undoubtedly valuable sources of information that can enhance both understanding and enjoyment. However, for the purposes of this study, audience cues refer to communications from the audience (or peers in a classroom setting) that occurred in the moment of viewing a poetry reading or while reading poetry on the page, rather than audience discussion activities that may have occurred afterwards. While the spontaneous reactions of others are commonly encountered during a poetry reading or while viewing a videotaped poetry reading, they are a rarity when reading poetry on the page. Perhaps in a classroom situation where poetry is being read silently as a group, spontaneous response from a fellow class member could occur, but in general, reading poetry is a solitary endeavor. The reactions of audience members who are viewing a poetry reading together are much more apt to be heard and seen by a fellow viewer, and these communications are more likely to influence one's own reaction to or understanding of the poem. Middleton (1998) wrote of this interaction that occurs among fellow listeners of poetry:

> Performance is a moment when social interaction can study and celebrate itself and the poet is given significant new materials with which to extend the signifying field of the poem . . . Part of what the poem means is what it means as an event in which individual identity is set alongside the group identification of an audience. (p. 295)

The immediacy of communication that occurs among audience members engaged in poetry is most vitally felt during poetry readings.

Voice, contextual information, and to a very limited degree, audience cues, play a role in student understanding of poetry when read on the page. When viewing poetry in performance, each of these factors is greatly enhanced, and most importantly, a fourth influence emerges: appearance, including the movement of the poet as he or she reads. Middleton (1998) began his exploration of the nature and value of poetry readings by questioning the importance of seeing poets in performance. He wrote that ". . .audiences at least enjoy seeing the poets live, seeing their faces, shapes, clothes, and mannerisms" (p. 263). He went on to summarize those that disparage poetry readings as mere theatrics, but balanced this view with a quote from Stern (as cited in Middleton, 1998), who acknowledged that "To put living voice and flesh together with text, to momentarily dispel the anonymity of silent reading, and to affirm the importance of poetry, are the real achievements of poetry readings" (p. 264). Seeing the poet in performance and learning from the physical act of reading poetry is an important way of connecting to both the poem and the poet.

These four factors—voice, contextual comments, audience cues, and appearance—provided the underpinnings for understanding poetry in performance, and they allowed for increased interaction with and connections to both the poetry and the poet. But how, specifically, do these four influences interact with each other, and what effect do they have on understanding and appreciation of the poetry?

Participants of this study, having read the poems in print prior to viewing the videotaped poetry readings, and as a result of past experiences with poetry, came with general conceptions about poets and poetry. They also held specific conceptions about particular poets and particular poems they encountered during this study. After viewing the videotaped poetry readings, participants had altered conceptions which always included an increase in understanding of the poetry or the poet. One of the most significant of these conceptual changes occurred as participants could more deftly and accurately identify the tone of a particular poem. In addition, participants' increased understanding reflected several subcategories of changed conceptions. These were: changes in the general concept of what a poet or poetry is; an increased personal connection to the poet; and/or solidified or reinforced ideas about the poem.

In addition to an increased understanding as a result of viewing videotaped poetry readings, participants often experienced a change in their appreciation or enjoyment of the poetry or poet. Most commonly, as understanding grew, so did appreciation and enjoyment. However, it was possible for understanding to increase without there being a corresponding increase in enjoyment/appreciation for the poetry. The level of appreciation any participant felt for the poetry or poet seemed to stand independent of the factors that affected understanding.

While every participant experienced an increase in understanding about the poetry or poet, appreciation/enjoyment of the poetry would occasionally remain unchanged or even decrease. There was no evidence that an increased understanding of the poetry contributed to a decrease in appreciation/enjoyment of the poetry.

However, several identifiable factors did contribute to a decrease in appreciation/enjoyment. Occasionally, participants did not like the writing style of a particular poet. In this study, some in the 2007 group of respondents felt negatively about Pattiann Rogers' style of writing, especially the "list-like" quality of her poems. Viewing the videos, however, did not lead students to appreciate her poetry less. Appreciation either remained the same or increased due to a greater comprehension of what she was trying to accomplish as a writer.

There were several other factors associated with a decrease in appreciation/enjoyment. One of these factors resulted when participants' expectations of the voice of the poet and how the poem "should sound" were not met. In addition, some students found particular body movements annoying, such as Rogers' fidgetiness. Occasionally, the combined effect of factors such as voice, contextual comments, and appearance led some students to characterize the poet's personality negatively. For example, one participant portrayed Clifton as a "man-hater" because of her subject matter and what he felt was condescending humor toward men in her contextual comments (Max). In one instance, a participant held what she perceived as a philosophical or political difference with the poet about the content of a particular poem (Julie). Overall, very few participants stated a decrease in appreciation or enjoyment of the poetry or poets encountered in this study.

The following diagram graphically summarizes the four main influences that affected participant understanding in this study. (See Figure 1.) The central plane identified as "Understanding of Poetry/Poet" rests on the four major influences that

Figure 1: Influences on Understanding/Effect of Understanding on Appreciation
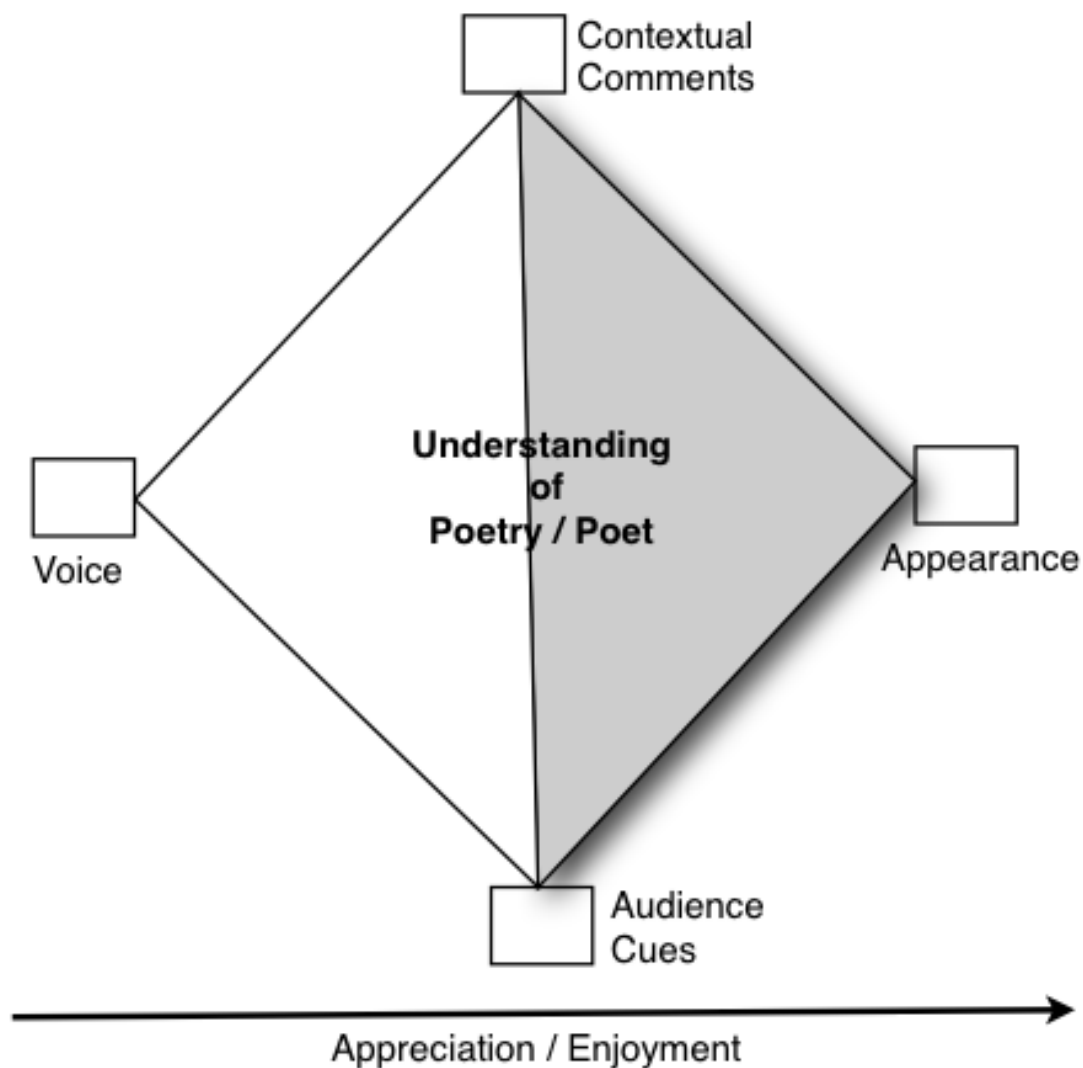
contribute to participant understanding: voice, contextual comments, audience cues, and appearance. Significantly, the first three of these influences can also be found, though to a lesser degree, in the process of reading poetry on the page. The line bisecting the plane representing participant understanding illustrates what would be the limited understanding that would occur if only three of the influences were

present, as when reading poetry in print. The fourth influence, appearance, doubles the area of the plane representing understanding. This is not incidental, and the existence of this fourth element is crucial because it provides an essential source of information for the viewer of poetry readings. Through the process of seeing the poet in performance, the other elements of influence—voice, contextual comments, and audience cues—were strengthened and enhanced, and overall understanding was deepened.

The effect of viewing poetry readings on appreciation or enjoyment of the poetry is represented by the unidirectional arrow. While participant appreciation/enjoyment occasionally remained static, in relation to increased understanding, change in appreciation or enjoyment of the poetry only occurred in a positive direction. No participants appreciated or enjoyed the poetry less as a result of increased understanding about the poetry or poet.

Defining the critical components of a theory that describes the influence of videotaped poetry readings on readers/viewers has been a challenge. The next challenge becomes thinking through the significance of this theory in relation to other research about how we understand and appreciate poetry and the implications for the teaching of poetry.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

At the outset of this research, I expressed a desire that the process yield

something practical, that the results of my efforts might contribute something useful to

teachers and readers of poetry. This is a grounded theory study, a first look at what

happens for readers when they encounter videotaped poetry readings. There is very

little research on the role that viewing and listening has on our understanding or

appreciation of poetry. For this reason, I think the greatest contribution that will come

from my research will be the raising of many follow-up questions and the proposing of

recommendations for future study. Even so, there are important conclusions to be

drawn from this study.   In this chapter, I will discuss three of these conclusions: the

importance of the visual in understanding tone in poetry, the role of authorial intent on

reader understanding, and the role of poetry readings in constraining or constructing

meaning for readers/viewers. In addition, I will make specific recommendations for

future research and study, with implications for the teaching of poetry.

The Role of the Visual in Understanding Tone

One of the most difficult tasks for those who read poetry is trying to identify

the tone of a poem. Tone is an ephemeral concept, something that must be inferred

from nebulous elements such as language and connotation. For novice poetry readers,

identifying tone becomes an even greater challenge. Even textbooks have a difficult

time guiding readers toward an understanding of tone. Vendler (2002), author of a

popular poetry textbook, wrote that the "poem itself tells you how to sound" (p. 183), but having taught many beginning poetry readers, it is not at all easy to "listen" to what a poem is saying regarding tone. Part of this difficulty lies in novice poetry readers' preconceptions about what poetry should sound like and the difficulty of making tone tangible. One participant, after viewing a poetry reading, wrote about this phenomenon of grounding tone in visual perceptions: "A lot of the humorous lines I didn't catch before because I was busy concentrating on whether they were supposed to be dark" (Katherine). This was a common reaction; poetry was perceived as being serious and somber, so other tones were often missed or unacknowledged. Though Vendler wrote that ". . . every poem suggests to its readers the tones with which they might give voice to it" (p. 184), these cues are often missed by readers of poetry.

In *The Norton Introduction to Poetry* (Hunter et al., 2007), another standard poetry text for college courses, the authors explained that "Letting a poem speak to us means listening to *how* the poem says what it says—hearing the tone of voice implied in the way the words are spoken" (p. 27). Again, the issue of how one listens to a poem and the messages implied by that voice are not directly addressed, although this textbook, by connecting tone to the speaker's voice, began to suggest that a visual embodiment is one of the cues for understanding tone. As with the Vendler (2002) text, the authors offered up poems and examples of analyses of tone in the subsequent pages of the text, but there was no direct instruction about how to achieve these analyses on one's own.

Kennedy and Gioia (2007), in *An Introduction to Poetry*, offered a more practical approach to identifying tone in poetry. They acknowledged that "to perceive the tone of a poem rightly, we need to read the poem carefully, paying attention to whatever suggestions we find in it" (p. 18). They then provided a practical checklist of aspects of the poetry to focus on as a part of this analysis. Some of these suggestions included identifying the speaker, the emotion conveyed both directly and indirectly, and the attitude toward the subject of the poem communicated through the details of the poem (p. 45). Even with this checklist for analyzing tone, the authors failed to acknowledge the possibility of visualization and instead, advised that "we need mostly just to listen" (p. 44).

Identifying tone requires an embodiment of the poet or the speaker of the poem. It is a voice that we "listen" to, even when reading silently. Hirsch (1999a), with his emphasis on "embodiment" and "contact," suggested that something stronger than an ephemeral sense of sound might be needed in order to truly understand poetry. He wrote:

> The writer creates through words a felt world which only the reader can vivify and internalize. Writing is embodiment. Reading in contact . . . It is the joint effort of author and reader which brings upon the scene that concrete and imaginary object which is the world of the mind . . . The reader becomes the listener, letting the poem voice and rediscover itself as it is read.

Achieving this visualization, this embodiment of the author, is not easy, especially for novice readers of poetry. Listening to the voice of the author as it is translated through the text and through the speaker of the poem in an attempt to identify tone can be a decidedly indirect and messy endeavor.

Through this research study and the resulting theory describing the effect of videotaped poetry readings on understanding and appreciation, one of the most important findings dealt with the issue of tone and how a participant's ability to detect tone was enhanced. An increased ability to detect tone led to an increased overall understanding of the poetry. This relationship between viewing the poet and the subsequent increase in the ability to detect tone reflects the processes involved in understanding poetry as explained by two prominent theorists and practitioners, Langer (1995) and Wilhelm (1997). However, my research findings go beyond these theories, primarily based on prose literature texts, to reflect the specialized needs of understanding poetry. In order to understand the significance of the theory developed from this research project, Langer and Wilhelm's theories for understanding literature must first be explained.

Langer's (1995) *Envisioning Literature: Literary Understanding and Literature Instruction*, outlined her theory about the relationship between text and reader, with the ultimate goal of increased engagement and understanding for the reader. Langer's goal for a reader is "to live through a literary experience, in both a cognitive and a humane sense . . . [so] that we see it in as much of its totality as our awareness permits" (p. 8). To accomplish this, Langer believed that readers must involve their imaginations: ". . . imagination becomes a way to look beyond things as they are and seek new and potentially enriching perspectives" (p. 8). She referred to this imaginative engagement with literature as a "text-world" (p. 9), and an

"envisionment" as a reader's understanding at any given time. She summarized, "Envisionments are text-worlds in the mind" (p. 9).

Langer (1995) stated that readers interact with literature from different vantage points or "stances" (p. 15). While Langer outlined multiple stances at different points in the reading process, the first two are most relevant to this discussion. The first stance she described as, "being out and stepping into an envisionment" (p. 16). Through the process of reading, one can step into an envisionment "by using . . . knowledge and experiences, surface features of the text, and any other available clues" (p. 16). The second stance was described as "being in and moving through an envisionment" (p. 17). Focused on developing understanding of a text, this stance requires a reader to "use personal knowledge, the text, and the context to furnish ideas and spark . . . thinking" (p. 17). In summary, reading closely and paying attention to the details of a text can result in the imaginative embodiment of the story, characters, setting, etc. for the reader. The resulting envisionment "includes what the individual does and does not understand, as well as any momentary suppositions about how the whole will unfold . . ." (p. 9). Readers bring their own experiences and thinking and connect with the text in order to "step in" and "move through" the resulting envisionment (p. 16-17).

While Langer (1995) used the term 'envisionment' to mean active, critical thinking, there is also an inherent focus on the reader producing a vision for him or herself. In Langer's explication of her theory, she emphasized that "imagining is an essential part of meaning creation" (p. 22) and that in the "quest for the 'real' story [,]

we often create scenarios as a means of exploration" (p. 26). Both of these processes are visual in nature. To make meaning of text we, as readers, give it life; we use our "knowledge to create literary worlds" (p. 135).

Like Langer (1995), Wilhelm (1997) stressed the importance of the relationship between reader and text in "*You Gotta BE the Book:" Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents*. Similar to Langer's envisionment, Wilhelm stated the importance of a visual "secondary world" (p. 99). Wilhelm explained this concept:

> Reader-response theory argues that personal involvement and imaginative evocation of a text are necessary to the experience of a secondary world. This experience is the purpose of 'aesthetic,' or literary reading, and is a prerequisite to any interpretation and reflection upon that world. Without such an evocation, there is no experience, and therefore nothing to think about. (p. 99)

Wilhelm described the necessity of understanding text in order to connect with it and be able to create an embodied, imagined, visualized world of the text.

Most pedagogical theorists have prose as their "ideal" model of the literary text—both Wilhelm's (1997) and Langer's (1995) examples are taken from prose, where one would expect readers to envision characters and scenes, etc. Poetry also has character and scene, but comprehension and perception in lyric poetry must start with the problem of visualizing something more ephemeral, voice. What would the process of reader envisionment look like when applied to the specific difficulties or issues posed by lyric poetry?

The theory that developed from this study of the effect of videotaped poetry readings on participant understanding and appreciation reinforced the need for

visualization described by Langer (1995) and Wilhelm (1997). They both gave priority to the construction of the visual but were not primarily concerned with the specific demands of understanding poetry. However, genre does make a difference in how one approaches a literary text. Tone is more important in poetry than in other forms of reading, it can be argued, since the content of poetry, especially lyric poetry, is intricately connected to the qualities of the speaking voice. Visualization of the speaker behind the voice becomes even more important when reading poetry.

Langer's (1995) and Wilhelm's (1997) emphasis on the creation of visual worlds based on understanding and connection with text is similar to what I see happening with readers of poetry who have access to visual images of the poet through videotaped poetry readings. The concrete visual images of the poet in performance provide several critical components that contribute to an increased understanding of tone: voice of the poet, appearance and movement, contextual comments provided by the poet, and audience cues. In combination, these allowed participants to report an increase in understanding and insight about the tone of particular poems, and thus an increase in understanding and appreciation for the poetry and the poets themselves. Katherine illustrated this as she commented on a videotaped poetry reading with Gary Soto (Griggs, 1995).

> The way that [Soto] says it, his funny, storytelling-ness, made the poetry seem more humorous than dark and hopeless . . . I could tell that he was meaning to be funny because of how he would skillfully pause to let the audience laugh, but there was also a hint that part of it was an expression of former low self-esteem.

A visual, embodied poet leads to increased understanding of tone and a subsequent increase in appreciation and connection to the poet/poem.

Langer's (1995) "envisionments" and Wilhelm's (1997) "secondary worlds" outlined a pathway to understanding similar to that stemming from my own research. However, providing students with videotaped poetry readings takes this process one step further, and this technique is especially appropriate for addressing the challenges of detecting tone in poetry. Viewing poetry in performance gave participants the opportunity to check, clarify, and organize their understanding of poetic tone through a visual element provided for them. Langer said that readers should envision for themselves, which they must do in order to make meaning, but providing students with visual images and visual experiences with the poet in performance, in effect, gives them an enhanced envisionment.

That viewing poets in performance could have such an impact on participant understanding of tone, one of the most difficult literary concepts in poetry, is worth paying attention to. It raises important questions about the role of poetry readings in the instruction of poetry and how these might not only improve instruction, but improve student appreciation and attitude toward poetry as well.

Insights about Authorial Intent

One of the most important insights I experienced as a result of conducting this research was an understanding of just how much students are interested in knowing and connecting with the poets behind the poetry. I find this interesting because, in an

effort to allow students their own interpretations, as a teacher, I don't often emphasize

the poets themselves. We might consider the details of an author's life a bit as we talk

about biographical, gender, or psychological criticism, but in general, I don't give the

lives of the poets much emphasis. Yet when the participants involved in this study

had the opportunity to view the poets in performance, they were almost universally

intrigued by the person behind the poem and felt satisfaction and pleasure at having

that human connection. In response to a poetry reading by Lucille Clifton

(MacAdams & Dorr, 1989), Drew wrote:

> I didn't like a lot of her poems on paper, but when she read them in the video, I
> could read her face and body language. She made it much more enjoyable to
> hear her poems. "Homage to my Hips" was one of those I hated, but when she
> read it, I laughed and found a new taste for it. . . The humor of her poems was
> easily expressed through her facial expressions and her voice. In short, it was
> more fun and interesting to listen to the poems than just read them.

In Reader-Response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978), authorial intent plays a

relatively minor role. Wilhelm (1997) wrote, "It is a central tenet of reader response

theories that a reading is an experience created by the reader" (p. 138). The text and

reader combine to make meaning, but where does the author fit into this relationship?

Given this emphasis on the primacy of the reader, authorial intent, what Knapp (2004)

referred to as a "scare-word," does not get much attention in current scholarship on

reading (p. 8). Both reader and text take precedence over author, the source of the

text. Middleton (1998) communicated this stance, though a bit sarcastically:

> A spectre is haunting poetry readings. The 'dead author,' risen from the text
> again and trailing the rags of the intentional fallacy, claims to be the
> originating subject from which poetry is issuing, right in front of your eyes . . .
> It ought to be surprising that an author is still the cynosure of every
> contemporary poetry reading, usually uttering the words of a written text as if

every single one bore the indelible mark of their composer. This fixed element might appear to depend upon beliefs about authorship well past their sell-by date. (p. 268)

Middleton (1998) accurately portrayed a common attitude in literature study about authorial intent, seen as inconsequential at best and suspect at worst. But Middleton went on to acknowledge that:

> The reader [poet] in turn uses these elements to produce a multidimensional commentary on what is read, through tones of voice, asides, and physical gestures. Such a medium is a highly flexible signifying vehicle for the affective and cognitive information presented alongside the reading itself, adding further semantic tracks to the performance. (p. 268)

He acknowledged that there is value in hearing the voice of the poet and that "the physical presence of the speaker acts as their warrant for their relevance to a specific body, point of view, and history," though Middleton seems to concede this point grudgingly (p. 268).

Even when theorists acknowledge the role that the author plays in the process of engaging with and learning from literature, the discussion often morphs into the more general concept of text, with the author subsumed beneath this more abstract term. McCormick (1994), in describing the complex web of influences that exist within a written text, its repertoire, stated that "the act of writing, like the act of reading . . . is balanced between autonomy and determination as an author both consciously and unconsciously appropriates aspects of the general and literary ideology of his or her particular social formation" (p. 70). But the discussion quickly lost any reference to author, and McCormick continued on to discuss the many ways that readers must "reconstruct a text's repertoire" (p. 71). While techniques for

actively engaging the discussion of authorial intent exist (Beck & McKeown, 2001;

Kukan & Beck, 1997), the valuing of text over author is typical of most discussions

about teaching literature.

When the discussion narrows to particular settings where authors dominate,

such as poetry readings, the influence of author tends to be addressed more directly.

Piombino (1998) offered a different view of the role that the author can play in a

poetry reading. Rather than seen as a single and perhaps primary source of

interpretation, he wrote:

> . . . many, if not most, of the innovative artists and poets of our time are less
> interested in their works being interpreted as representing or reflecting specific
> ideas and ideologies, than in having their art work provide . . . juxtaposed
> modes of paying close attention to external and internal experience. This
> opening or freeing of forms of focusing in turn makes possible an intensified
> collaborative sharing (between a poet and listeners at a reading, for example)
> in the effort of organizing otherwise anomalous, disparate and incommunicable
> perceptions into patterns of meaning that can be further articulated, refined,
> and better understood, in an ongoing process. (p. 56)

Rather than the author constraining the meaning of the poetry, his or her

comments and interpretation of the poetry, as communicated through voice and

movement, are other sources of information that participants of poetry readings can

add to their own constructions of meaning. Though viewing a poet in performance

"presents nothing but shards of an individual life temporarily illuminated for the

occasional gathering of witnessing other" (Logan, 2005, p. 284), these shards can

enhance the experience of reading and connecting with poetry rather than constraining

it.

Study participants confirmed their increased connection to the poetry as a result of viewing poets in performance. They expressed a desire to know more about the poet, expressed interest and pleasure in coming to "know" the poet better, and reported an increase in their understanding of the poetry. The author's ideas and feelings about the poetry informed the participants' own understanding, but that did not require them to replace or devalue their own thoughts and perceptions about the poetry. As one participant put it, "It's [my] original thought . . . that's going to be ingrained into my mind forever" (Sam). Probst's (1988) summary of this process of integrating an author's intent with one's own interpretation supports the findings from my research when he wrote: "The interpreting process is neither one of submission nor one of tyranny—rather, it is an attempt to see clearly, giving both the author and the self their due" (p. 21). Providing students with opportunities to listen to and see poets in performance, even videotaped performances, is an important way of allowing students to see clearly.

As a teacher of poetry, I need to honor my students' questions and natural curiosities about the poets themselves. It is imminently human to want to connect with those around us, to want to know more about the source of what we read and hear, and for our students in a poetry course, to want to know more about the creators of these poems that challenge and enlighten and inspire. Scholes (as cited in Showalter, 2003), writing about the need to incorporate poetry more fully into the teaching of literature, asserted that "the poet's life and world are relevant" (p. 65). Rather than ignoring or diminishing the importance of the poet in the study of poetry,

teachers should encourage students' natural curiosity about the author. Not in an attempt to coerce certain interpretations of the poetry, but in a natural response to the need we have as readers to "fill in [the] gaps" (McCormick, 1994, p. 84). Gioia (2004) wrote: "The urge to see the author face-to-face is not merely fandom, it is also a deep-rooted, primitive human desire" (p. 51).

<div align="center">Constraining vs. Constructing Meaning</div>

One concern I had as a researcher, given my pedagogical foundation of Reader-Response theory and its emphasis on, as Probst (1988) described it, ". . . requiring the reader to consider his personal investment in the experience and not make a pretense of suppressing his own perspective" (p. 23), was that having students view poetry readings would constrain their thinking about the poetry. Once they heard a poem as the poet presented it, could any other interpretation or way of thinking about the poetry be possible? Would their thinking about the poetry and connections to the poetry be limited by their perceptions of the poet's version of the poem?

My worry was unfounded. Not only did participants want to know more about the poet, they universally felt that it increased and broadened their understanding of the poetry. Having read the poems and thought about them enough to complete a short homework response prior to viewing the poetry reading, participants already had conceptions about the unseen poet. Viewing the poet in performance either confirmed or changed these perceptions. Claire demonstrated this change in understanding as she responded to Clifton's poetry: "When she read the poems that we have read, I got a

sense of what she wanted the tone to be, not what I thought it would be." Another

participant reflected new understanding based on his interpretation of the poet in

performance: "Seeing who she is as a person, and seeing glimpses of her character,

helps me to better understand what she writes, and what she wanted it to mean, and

why she wrote it" (Katherine).

Increased understanding led to new insights, but did not necessarily result in

the subordination of one's own perceptions of the poetry to those of the poet. The

same participant went on to write:

> I think seeing the poet, too, helped, kind of seeing their personality in their
> body movements and seeing how that, maybe, influenced how they read the
> poem, understanding the poet better by seeing them, even though you can't
> really make too many judgments off of just seeing them . . . But, I guess seeing
> that the author looks different than the picture I had in my mind, maybe it
> doesn't necessarily change the poem but it gives it an added layer of meaning.
> (Katherine)

This participant acknowledged the role that viewing the poets had in her own

interpretations; it enhanced rather than replaced. Another participant wrote:

> My opinion did not change after [viewing the poetry reading,] but I did
> understand more of what [the poet] was like. This has deepened my respect for
> her writing . . . Listening to a poet read their own works gives you a greater
> understanding of the person so it makes it easier to appreciate their work.
> (Drew)

In this study, rather than constraining the participants' ideas or understanding,

viewing poetry in performance increased the information available to the

reader/viewer. In effect, it expanded the context of the poetry. Greene and Ackerman

(1995), in their discussion of the role of prior knowledge in constructing meaning,

stated: "Elaborations contribute to evolving representations of a task by fleshing out a

mental context . . ." (p. 389). For the participants of this study, more information was better, and the poetry readings became a way to elaborate and extend their understanding.

Ideas about the poetry that resulted from viewing the videotaped poetry readings were not limited to particular poems. In a broader way, viewing poets in performance changed students' constructions of the very nature of poetry and poets. For example, rather than poets being individuals foreign, removed, and unapproachable, the videotaped poetry readings allowed participants to see poets as real people, as fellow learners and the kind of people the participants could be like if they chose to. Katherine commented on the poetry readings:

> [They] helped me to see that poetry is not just this stuff that's in old dusty books. It's stuff written by real people, and seeing the authors helped me see their human side too. It's not this ethereal, immortal work in a book; they're people . . . I think coming to class and discussing, reading the poems, writing about the poems, and seeing and hearing the poems, all that in combination helped me to reconfigure in my mind that I can be a poet too. Anybody who writes words on the page can be a poet. And so I assumed the humanity of the authors, just that maybe they were a little bit nervous or maybe other people might think they're silly, but they can still write beautiful poems.

Rather than feeling constrained by viewing the poet's reading, this participant eloquently portrays how seeing the poets in performance empowered her. Seeing the poets as humans--real people--makes the poetry accessible, makes the human act of writing poetry--putting "words on the page"--something available to anyone.

Another participant confirmed this same stance that viewing the poet in performance increased the personal connection to the poet, which is in itself

empowering. About Pattiann Rogers, she wrote:

> Her posture on stage was different than you'd expect. I just didn't expect her
> to be like someone you could meet and know and be friends with. I just
> expected her to be someone more distant and caught up in a more complicated,
> different life. But no, she was just someone who loved detail and was . . . an
> ordinary person . . . She's someone who's sat through the same things [I have],
> so I can identify with her. (Margaret)

Certainly, there might be poets whose readings would not inspire such connection, but

the poets encountered in this study did contribute to the participants' insight,

reflection, and sense of connection. Eva-Wood (2004), discussing the effect of

engaging readers on an emotional level in their reading, stated: "If students can be

drawn into the emotional life of a character or speaker in a poem, they may be more

likely to actively engage with poetry analysis" (p. 189). Videotaped poetry readings

became a way for participants in this study to engage emotionally with the poet as well

as with the poetry.

The findings of this study and the theory developed from those findings

provide solid answers to the question of whether viewing poetry in performance

constrains or constructs meaning. Rather than information about or from the author

constraining the process of making meaning from poetry, this information broadened

the scope of the participants' thinking about the poetry and thus, their connections to

it.

Recommendations for Further Study and Implications for Practice

While important insights were achieved as a result of this study, many

questions emerged as well. Several of these came directly from participant

observations. One of these deals with the possible connection or influence of learning

styles on the process of reading poetry on the page, seeing it in performance, or

possibly listening to audio recordings of poetry readings. Would these different

experiences interacting with poetry yield different results depending on learning style

preferences, or is viewing poetry in performance an important tool for learning for all

readers of poetry? While I hadn't given much thought to the possible effect of

learning styles on comprehension in this study, one participant wrote:

> I'm a very visual person. I'm very auditory and visual, that's the way I learn.
> And I think that's how so many people learn. A lot of us are auditory learners,
> so I have to hear it in order to understand it. And then when you add the visual
> aspect of it, it's perfect for me as a learner. I can't just look at it. I can't get
> anything from a page with writing on it. I have to read things out loud too to
> truly understand it. I think many of us are that way. (Margaret)

Part of what makes this comment so interesting is her degree of self-awareness as a

learner and her technique of reading poetry aloud in order to increase her

comprehension. Research into these questions does exist. Richardson (1990)

explored the use of visuals in teaching poetry to college students, and Ross and

Schultz (1999) reported on the use of internet resources (e.g., visual and audio) in the

college classroom to accommodate different learning styles.   Further exploration of

the relationship between learning styles and the use of visual formats such as

audiotaped poetry readings could yield valuable information for teachers of poetry.

In this study, participants were asked to read written poems prior to viewing

the corresponding poetry readings. While Middleton (2005) asserted that "both the

performance of the poem and silent reading of the poem are necessary to experience

the poem" (p. 9), how would the meaning making process change if poetry were only

viewed in performance? Poetry in the United States and perhaps elsewhere is

returning to its oral, performance roots. Gioia (2004), in his book entitled

Disappearing Ink: Poetry at the End of Print Culture, wrote:

> Without doubt the most surprising and significant development in recent
> American poetry has been the wide-scale and unexpected reemergence of
> popular poetry—namely rap, cowboy poetry, poetry slams, and certain overtly
> accessible types of what was once a defiantly avant-garde genre, performance
> poetry. These new forms of popular verse have seemingly come out of
> nowhere to become significant forces in American culture. (p. 6)

And I would add that they will become increasingly more accessible to

readers/listeners/viewers via the internet and other technologies. Continued research

should explore the difference that viewing poetry has on comprehension when the

poetry readings are not also accompanied with the written text. Answering this

question could contribute greatly to the development of a pedagogy for listening to

and viewing poetry.

Related to the previous recommendation is a question that stems directly from

this research project. Participants in this study read poetry then viewed the same

poetry read by the poet. It seems an important next step to research how subsequent,

never before encountered, poems would be read, perceived, or understood differently

by readers. Does watching a poetry reading affect how a reader might understand or

appreciate poems by that poet when next encountered in print? Given ideal

circumstances, it would have been a logical next step in my own research to have had

participants read more poems from the same poet they had previously viewed. How

might their understanding, ability to detect tone, or appreciation have changed as

compared to their first encounters with the written poems, prior to viewing the poetry

readings? Such a study might yield interesting findings about best practices for teaching poetry.

In this study, participants were better able to identify the tone of poems after watching a poetry reading. All four of the poets encountered included humor in either their poetry or their discussions of their poetry. Participants often misread or missed the humor in the written texts, and the poetry readings helped them to detect the humor through the voice of the poem, movements, contextual clues provided by the poet, or the audience cues. Detecting humor lends itself to these methods of communication. It's easy to detect humor when a roomful of people burst into laughter. But might these same cues and sources of information also yield valuable information when detecting other tones in poetry such as anger, sarcasm, or sadness? How might a poet's movements or voice behave differently? How might audiences react differently? And what could be learned from studying this process more closely?

Related to the issue of detecting tone is the question of culture and its influence on the processes and outcomes of this study. The poetry readings viewed by these participants were very traditionally academic and western in their orientation. The poet stood behind a podium and rarely interacted with the audience. It would be interesting to explore other kinds of poetry readings reflective of other cultural traditions and influences and how responses to these might be similar or different from those that occurred in this study.

Another potential area for research might explore the effect of gender on responses to poetry readings. It was interesting to note that two of few negative

responses to the poetry were by males in response to a female poet, Lucille Clifton, who addressed very gender-related topics in her poetry. One male participant expressed what he felt was Clifton's "anger toward men" (Max). Other male participants (Henry and Sam) reported that they initially didn't like Clifton's poetry, but after viewing her read her poems, enjoyed her poetry more. Clifton's obviously gender-related poetry, such as "Homage to my Hips" and "Poem to my Uterus," may have played a part in these strong negative male responses. (See Appendix A.) It would be worth exploring the possible effect of gender on responses to written poetry and poetry in performance, especially poetry that addresses very gender-related issues.

Finally, one participant's comment opened up a whole new line of questioning for me as a researcher. When responding to a question about the difference it made to view the poets reading their own work, she responded, "I think coming to class and discussing, reading the poems, writing about the poems, and seeing and hearing the poems--all that in combination helped me to reconfigure in my mind that I can be a poet too" (Katherine). In fact, this student did go on to write a poem that she shared with others in the class. While she didn't attribute her inspiration to write solely on viewing the poets reading their work, it did make a difference. It would be interesting to further study this connection between viewing poets and students' perceptions of their own ability or willingness to try to write their own poetry.

There are many possibilities for future research related to viewing poetry readings and their effect on comprehension and appreciation. Each of the suggestions for future study mentioned here would contribute, ultimately, to the body of

knowledge about teaching poetry. This research study and the resulting theory can also be a piece in that growing body of knowledge about best practices for teaching poetry.

Final Thoughts

I believe that poetry readings satisfy a very human need we have to connect with not only the poet behind the poetry, but with others. Gioia (2004) described this phenomenon: "The popularity of poetry readings is a reminder of the strong aural and tribal roots of poetry. Readings bring an audience into a direct physical relationship with the author—and momentarily form a tribe of like-minded listeners versus isolated readers" (p. 51). This research study made clear to me the need and desire students have to connect with the author behind the text as well as the positive effects that satisfying those curiosities can have. While Short (as cited in Greene & Ackerman, 1995) confirmed that "things, events, experiences, and other people" (p. 408) are valued texts for learning, one question that could be asked of this research is whether a recorded poetry reading can have the same impact as a live reading. Middleton (2005) wrote about the necessity of seeing poetry readings live by outlining the limitations of audio recorded readings:

> Gone is the moment-by-moment responsiveness between audience and performer; gone is the information about the setting that is understood largely subliminally by the audience, and yet provides a backdrop to everything that happens. A more dramatic but still realistic way of saying this is that gone too is much of the element of risk that submitting oneself to a performance entails. One will usually be affected by the event, bodily, emotionally, and intellectually; and it will become a part of who one is, to a degree much greater than any listening to a recording can induce. (p. 15)

Middleton (2005) accurately conveyed the limitations of recorded poetry readings, though videotaped poetry readings might capture some of those elements of a live performance. Some disparage even the value of a live poetry reading. Poet, John Glassco (as cited in Middleton, 1998) disparaged poetry readings as he "complains about the 'naïve listener's belief that he is getting *closer* to a poem by hearing it from the poet himself." He believed that "the educated *inward* ear can do more with the rhythms, vowels, syncopations, and stresses of any poem than the amateur human voice can hope to do" (p. 264). I believe, if asked, the participants of this study would disagree. While perceptions, whether of a specific poet or of poets in general, were either reinforced or changed, understanding of the poetry universally increased among participants as a result of viewing the poet and poetry in performance.

It became clear that seeing poets in performance was important for the participants of this study beyond simply helping them understand the poetry better. It provided a way to connect on a more human level with the poems and proved empowering for many as they made connections on a personal level, had their thinking and responses reinforced, and became more comfortable joining in the conversation about poetry. As Probst (1988) stated it, "The literature teacher is charged with helping students formulate their ideas of the world, of their own potential, and of the relationships among people" (p. 216). I believe that using videotaped poetry readings in my classroom as a part of this study allowed my students to connect with poetry in ways they wouldn't have been able to by simply reading poetry on the page.

One of the most important conclusions drawn from this study is the importance of the visual in understanding tone in poetry. Tone is a difficult concept in poetry because, when read, requires one to "listen" to an unembodied voice. This listening "means to attend to the voice of a text . . . [and] is most closely related to envisionment, or the creation of mental images" (Bomer, 2006, p. 525). Giving participants the opportunity to engage both intellectually and emotionally with the poetry readings aided them in creating these visualizations of the poetry for themselves. As Eva-Wood (2004) stated: "If novices, like more experienced readers, could better sense and appreciate the rich connotative nature of words and language, they might be less intimidated when befuddled by a poem and might value the meaning-making process as an open, exploratory experience with words" (p. 175). Providing students with opportunities to view poetry in performance enhanced this process. As one study participant confirmed:

> I guess it was both hearing and seeing [the poet]; if I had only heard her, I would have still been able to experience her voice, her rhythm, and her sense of humor. Hearing would have been better than just reading. Seeing was also good though; in addition to her expression through her words in the poems and her expression that can be caught in her voice and personality, seeing her lets me experience her expression of herself. If I have the combination of all three (words, voice and personality, and self-presentation), I can better understand where the words are coming from, and I can relate to them from my own experience. (Katherine)

Seeing the poet in performance humanizes the poet, makes poetry more accessible and, in effect, opens the door for viewers to perhaps become participants in the process.

Finally, this research was a learning experience for me. My teaching was better because of it, and my future teaching will be informed by what I've learned, not only about poetry, but by the research process itself. And my commitment to the importance of poetry, both intellectually and emotionally, has been reaffirmed. Poetry provides a means of human connection and learning about self and others that is unique. Billy Collins, 2001-2002 U.S. poet laureate (as cited in Eva-Wood, 2004) stated it best:

> I came to realize that to study poetry was to replicate the way we learn and think. When we read a poem, we enter the consciousness of another. It requires that we loosen some of our fixed notions in order to accommodate another point of view—which is a model of the kind of intellectual openness and conceptual sympathy that a liberal education seeks to encourage. (p. 173)

Time to go read a poem.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Poems used in Study

<u>Lucille Clifton</u>

Clifton, L. (1987). *Good woman: Poems and a memoir*. Brockport, NY: BOA
      Editions.

      "Harvey Nichols was a White Man"
      "Homage to my Hips"
      "Salt"
      "The Lost Baby"
      "What the Mirror Said"

Clifton, L. (1987). *Next: New poems*. Brockport, NY: BOA Editions.

      "Atlantic is a sea of bones"

Clifton, L. (1991). *Quilting*. Brockport, NY: BOA Editions.

      "I am Accused of Tending to the Past"
      "Poem to my Uterus"
      "Quilting"
      "Sleeping Beauty"
      "To my last Period"
      "Wishes for Sons"

Clifton, L. (2000). *Blessing the boats: New and selected poems, 1988-2000*.
      Rochester, NY: BOA Editions.

      "White Lady"

Sharon Olds

Olds, S. (1980). *Satan says*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

> "The Language of the Brag"

Olds, S. (1987). *The gold cell*. New York: Knopf.

> "I Go Back to May 1937"
> "Liddy's Orange"
> "Little Things"
> "On the Subway"
> "Topography"

Olds. S. (2004). *Strike sparks: Selected Poems, 1980-2002*. New York: Knopf.

> "The First Thanksgiving"
> "The Missing Boy"
> "The Month of June: 13 ½"

Pattiann Rogers

Rogers, P. (205). *Firekeeper: Selected poems*. Minneapolis, MN**:** Milkweed Editions.

> "Being Accomplished"
> "In Addition to Faith, Hope and Charity
> "Justification of the Horned Lizard"
> "Rolling Naked in the Morning Dew"
> "The Family Is All There Is"
> "The Pieces of Heaven"

Gary Soto

Soto, G. (1995). *New and Selected Poems*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.

"Afternoon Memory"
"Apple:
"A Red Palm"
"Learning my Lesson"
"Magnets"
"Oranges"
"Summer"
"The Wrestler's Heart"
"Water and Light"
"Waterwheel"

Appendix B

Response Assignment used with Written Poetry

English 106 Response Paper Guidelines

What is the purpose of a response paper?
Response papers give you a chance to process some of the ideas covered in the assigned readings. They will also allow your instructor and class members a chance to better understand your responses to the reading and should make it easier and more comfortable for you to contribute to class discussions.

What should it contain?
For each response paper, you'll respond to two poems from the reading for that day. Make sure you label your response paper with your name and the chapter number. For each poem, include the title and page number it can be found on. In 1-2 typed, double-spaced pages, you should complete either activity A or B described below using one poem from the reading assignment. Everyone should complete activity C with an additional poem.

A. PARAPHRASING A POEM:

1. For this activity, paraphrase the poem you have chosen. This means that you go line by line, putting the words in the poem into your own language. This is not an analysis, however. Don't interpret the lines or discuss their meaning, just translate the words of the poem into your own words. Your paragraph doesn't need to cover *every* detail of the poem, but it should cover the important points and details. This should take one chubby paragraph.

2. Now you get to analyze. Once you have written the paraphrase, write about what you understand from the poem in a second paragraph. Some questions to get you started might be: Who is speaking in the poem? What is the setting? What is the situation being presented? What is the main idea or theme? How is your paraphrase different from the poem? Are there, for example, lines you found difficult to paraphrase? Why do you think this is?

B. ANALYZING A POEM:
For this assignment, give each of the following six questions a sentence or two. Don't expect to have as much to say about some questions as others, but take a stab at each of them.

1. Speaker: Who is speaking in the poem? How would you describe that voice?

2. Situation: How would you describe the situation in which the speaker finds him/herself? What is the central problem or situation behind the poem?

3. Setting: What is the poem's setting--when and where does it take place? How do the words used to describe the setting influence your thinking about the speaker and situation described in the poem?

4. Tone: How would you describe the emotion of the poem? What is the tone at the beginning of the poem? At the end? If, there is a shift in tone from the beginning to the end, what words or lines create that shift?

5. Structure: What words, sounds, images, or ideas repeat in the poem? How does this affect the poem?

6. Overall: What is the most interesting moment in the poem for you?

C. REACTION:

In one paragraph, respond on a more personal level to the other poetry from the chapter you have read. For example, discuss a poem that you really liked or disliked (not the one you used for the first activity). Why did you like or dislike it? As the term progresses, you will have learned more ways of looking at poetry and analyzing poems, and your responses should reflect this growing sophistication with the language of poetry and poetry response. For example, saying you didn't like a poem is one thing. Realizing that you didn't like it because the word choices were difficult and you prefer a less structured rhyme scheme adds another level of depth to your response. However, our responses are often from a very personal level. Are there particular lines, words, images, etc. that caught your attention? That you thought were especially beautiful--or disturbing? Ideas or images that you could relate to personally? This is the place where you can explore some of those responses to the reading assignment as well. Use specific examples to illustrate the points you make.

Appendix C

Sample Follow-up Interview Transcript

Did your enjoyment/appreciation of the poem increase or decrease after seeing the poets?
I definitely think that having it [the author reading his/her poetry] on a video did increase my enjoyment of the poem, just because the author's inflection into his or her own work clarified the meaning that the author wanted to convey. Seeing the authors made the meaning of their poetry more understandable to me, but I think it was really, really important to have the audio. The audio alone really contributed to my appreciation of the poems, lending more meaning than I could have gained by just reading them in written form. I think seeing the poets, too, helped; my seeing their personalities in their body movements helped me to see the personality that comes out through their poetry. You can't really make too many generalizations about the poet or his/her intended meaning just from seeing them on screen for a few minutes, but having that glimpse into their personality kind of opens up another layer of insight into their poem. I think the audio definitely adds much, much more than the visual. The visual is important too, but I think the audio is what's really important.

Did the physical appearance of the poet make a difference?
Actually it did. I think maybe the first time I read through Lucille Clifton's poems, I'm not sure whether or not I knew she was a black woman. I figured it out after reading it a few times, because of the words that she uses and some of the things that she discusses. For me, seeing that the author looks different than the picture I had in my mind didn't necessarily change the poem, but it did give the poem an added layer of meaning.

Knowing what she really looks like, you mean, or the fact that it was different than what you thought?
When I read a poem, I can interpret the author's personality coming through the poem as one thing, but when I see or when I hear the author reading the poem, hearing the author's voice and seeing what the author looks like can be different than the image I had in my head, and that can enhance my understanding.

Did seeing the poet create more of a personal connection?
I guess a little bit. That's not something I had really thought about too much. I think the poetry class in general helped me to see that poetry is not just this stuff that's in old dusty books. It's stuff written by real people, and seeing the authors helped me see their human side too. It's not this ethereal, immortal work in a book; they're people.

Did your ideas about poets and poetry in general change from having seen the poets?
Seeing the poets kind of helped, but it wasn't necessarily the biggest factor in changing my mental paradigm about poetry and poets. I think that coming to class and discussing, reading the poems, writing about the poems, and seeing and hearing the poems, all in combination, helped me to reconfigure in my mind that I can be a poet too. Anybody who writes words on a page can be a poet. Also, seeing the poets helped me to see their humanity: maybe they were a little bit nervous or maybe other people might think they're silly, but they can still write beautiful poems.

Do you think you would read new poems by these poets differently now that you've seen them read?
Yes, I think I probably would interpret the author's poetry differently, because understanding her character, her person a little bit more through seeing her read a sample of her poems might help me interpret what she meant in a different poem. A greater knowledge of the poet's personal style, gained from hearing or seeing her read one/some of her poems, would contribute to my appreciation of poems written by the same author that I might read in the future.

Did you have the experience of being able to better detect the tone of the poems as a result of watching the videos?
Yes. For me, my previous mindset about poetry was that if it's written in a book, it's old and sober and sacred and must be read in monotone. The authors who we learned about write poetry to express themselves, too. They don't just sit around thinking of profound things with which to fill dusty books. They write poetry to express their personalities, and to express their humor, even maybe about serious things. If I were reading their poetry in a book, I'm not sure if I would necessarily see the same tone that they intended to convey in the poem. Seeing them read the poems definitely did make a difference; I was able to catch little different meanings that they put in, that I hadn't caught before when I read the poems.

For lots of students Lucille Clifton's poems were a lot angrier on the page than they seemed in person, and I'm wondering if you picked up more of her poems, would you think, "Oh, there might be humor in here"?
I think I would possibly be able to catch a humorous tone because when we saw Lucille Clifton reading her poems, her tone trended toward kind of making light of stuff that's serious, but in a fun way, not sarcastic. Like, this is life; there it is. It's tough, but I'll write about it and show that it's not completely sober.

Did viewing poets affect you ability to detect tone?
I'm not sure if it would carry through for different poems by the same author, because poems are different; you can't generalize. I think having an understanding of the

author's tone in one poem might be able to help in interpreting the tone of another poem.

It's an option, like "Maybe this poem is angry, but there's the potential that it could also be humorous?
Yeah.

Anything else?
Now I'm seeing poetry when I work with elementary school students, and one time in particular, a little girl that I read with sometimes was kind of stuck on her page for awhile. The students were doing a unit on poetry, and it was kind of hard for her to make sense out of it at first, because the author's words and meaning were not really clear at first glance. But by asking her questions and helping her to kind of delve into it more deeply, she was able to get some meaning out of it and appreciate it. She usually reads silently; when we read the poem out loud, it started to make sense, and it became more fun for the student.

Cool. You're spreading the good word of poetry. I kind of make a joke of that, but I really do kind of feel that way. It's like, "Oh, I hope my students will start to love poetry and kind of spread it around a little," so good for you!