

12-8-2014

Narrative Life Review and Poetry-Writing with Older Adults

Cherita M. Black

Western Kentucky University, cherita.black126@topper.wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Black, Cherita M., "Narrative Life Review and Poetry-Writing with Older Adults" (2014). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 518.

http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/518

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

THE INFLUENCE OF NARRATIVE LIFE REVIEW AND POETRY-WRITING WITH
OLDER INDIVIDUALS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

Cherita M. Black

Western Kentucky University
2014

CE/T Committee:

Dr. Dana Bradley, Advisor

Professor Marybeth Hunt

Dr. Sara Northerner

Approved by

Advisor
Center for Gerontology

Copyright by
Cherita M. Black
2014

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores narrative life review and poetry writing with older individuals, as an alternative to support their successful aging. Four females, ages 66-93, participated in a two-part project. Phase I included: (a) completing a narrative life review, and (b) developing original poetry with the researcher. Phase II included: (a) poetry reflection and (b) completing an open-ended evaluation. Phase I results demonstrated four successful narrative life reviews, which composed the poetry-writing sessions. Phase II demonstrated that three out of four participants reported no significant positive influences in the evaluation. Implications suggest social well-being replicated study can possibly assess social well-being by including shorter intervals between phases, weekly social interaction with participants, and random selection of demographics, representative samples, and certified scales to screen for well-being. In a group setting, social engagement may enhance narrative reflections and poetry writing.

Keywords: population aging, successful aging, social well-being, life narrative review, poetry-writing, older individuals

Dedicated to my parents, Timothy and Veronica

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Foremost, I thank God for blessing my academic journey with achievements, strength and guidance. Second, I want to thank my parents, Timothy and Veronica, for instilling courage and support. I am even more proud to represent the first person in our family to receive a Bachelor's degree.

The capstone thesis process could have not occurred without the F.U.S.E. program. I am highly appreciative that the WKU Office of Academic Affairs and the WKU Office of Research chose to fund my research with the FUSE Award # 13-SP172. Thank you for financing my opportunity to enhance my academic experience. Next, and most distinctively, I want to thank Dr. Dana Burr Bradley, Mrs. Marybeth Hunt, Dr. Sara Northerner and the amazing team at the Center for Gerontology for mentoring me. Mrs. Hunt you have always provided positive energy, insight and serenity in this process, and I am thank you for all your help, encouragement, and kindness. Dr. Northerner, I am overjoyed that you participated in my committee.

Additionally, I want to thank the excellent graduate assistants, Ms. Louise Barr and Ms. Sowmya Karamcheti, for giving me excellent advice and inspiration.

Dr. Bradley, you exude strength, kindness, intellect and a unique character that always noted how exploring “the outside of the box” as a worthy approach. Your

protocol has taught me valuable lessons that identified and improved my strengths and weaknesses. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to explore beyond the classroom, and learn about the aging experiences through active engagement with older adults. Despite the occurrence many of life's challenges, I appreciate your contributions of knowledge, patience, guidance, and faith during the development of my thesis. Dr. Bradley, you inspire for me, thus your distinctive achievements, and intellect continuously gives me courage.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Honors College for providing a stimulating program, which has challenged and improved my intellectual abilities. The thesis experience allowed me to be a pioneer in a creative research exploration. Importantly, I thank the Honors College for giving me the opportunity to seek greatness, and represent ethnic diversity in institutions of higher education.

VITA

May 3, 1991.....	Born – Nashville, Tennessee
May, 2009.....	Springfield High School, - Springfield, TN
January, 2012.....	Accepted to WKU Honors College
December 10, 2012.....	Awarded FUSE Award # 13-SP172
December 10, 2013.....	CE/T Thesis Proposal Accepted by Honors College
April 4, 2013.....	Thesis proposal presented at 34th Annual Meeting of the Southern Gerontological Society (SGS)-Charlotte, NC
March 21, 2014.....	Presented Phase I of Thesis at Spotlight on Creative Activity and Performance WKU Student Research Conference –Bowling Green, Ky
September 27, 2014	Presented Phase II of Thesis at the Kentucky Honors Roundtable (KHR) Conference –Bowling Green,

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Psychology

Minor Field: Gerontology

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Vita.....	vi
Fields of Study.....	vi
List of Figures.....	viii
List of Tables.....	ix
Chapters:	
1. Introduction	
2. Literature Review	
3. Methodology	
4. Results	
5. Discussion and Conclusion	
6. Appendices	
Bibliography.....	60

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	Page
Figure 1: Portrait of my Grandmother in Poetry-Reading Session.....	6

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Demographics of Participants.....	16
2. Poetry-Session of Participant F-93.....	25
3. Poetry-Session of Participant F-94.....	33
4. Poetry Session of Participant F-66.....	42
5. Poetry Session of Participant F-85.....	49

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Origin of Developing the Thesis

As a psychology major and gerontology minor, my professional interests aim to support successful aging, improve the quality of life and psychosocial well-being for older adults. My interest developed during my experience as a caregiver in my grandmother's home hospice care. My grandmother's health worsened, because her body became preponderated by terminal cancer. Her cognitive functionality declined with progressive dementia. Re-occurring cataracts damaged her vision. Lastly, a nearly fatal car accident damaged her hips and legs, which lessened her mobility, and caused arthritis in her joints.

I witnessed my grandmother's vitality fester with pain, confusion and melancholic states. Morphine gel was applied to her wrist to remedy pain and emotional outbursts of confusion. The morphine calmed my grandmother. It also induced a sedative state that diminished her beloved spirit. Devastation occupied me, because her doctor predicted my grandmother's death to approach, sooner. The doctor explained that illness limits her mortality to three to six months; instead six months to a year. Caregiving was a trial at times, but I enjoyed the time I spent with my grandmother. She often screamed and cried, and indicated she was lost.

I was concerned, and I felt helpless watching her suffer. I pondered alternatives to inspire meaningfulness in my grandmother's remaining months. Therefore, I developed an idea to enhance my grandmother's care routines, beyond eating, bathing, and waste removal. I decided to use a personal alternative to remove the objective and subjective emphasis on my grandmother's terminal illness. I aimed to promote positive meaning to end of grandmother's journey, through social support and reading poetry. Therefore, poetry helped me deal with the burden of severe bullying in grade school. I was able to find serenity in writing poems, and reading poetry by authors, such as Edgar Allen Poe, Maya Angelou, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, and Walt Whitman. Those wonderful words allowed my mind to illustrate a picture of what the writers expressed, and my pre-occupation moved away from the negativity of my taunting peers. Likewise, I hoped my grandmother would be able to discover solace through poetry.

The beginning was challenging, because each day was unpredictable. It was saddening to witness the confusion and pain in my grandmother. I sat at her bedside, and read bible verses and poetry. She recognized her favorite bible verses, such as the Psalm 23. Many times, she accompanied my recitations of bible verses, but sobbing succeeded her recitations.

Next, I decided to attempt my goal of reading poetry to her. I read a random love poem from the internet. After I finished the love poem, my grandmother responded with silence and a frown. Then, she returned to a melancholic posture and gazed down at her hands. The frown haunted me, because I was not sure if she was displeased, intrigued, or

remained in confusion. I knew I had to find another way to introduce her to comfort in poetry.

My grandmother often had delusions, in which she returned to memories of her past. My other grandmother, Pam, assisted in caregiving, too. Pam always emphasized that the delusions were not true. This would cause complete panic, and my grandmother would have an emotional outburst. When my grandmother began to talk about these peculiar topics, I began to engage as if I was experiencing the same matter. At times, she would move her hands in a circular motion, as if she was stirring an imaginary pot. Then, she announced “Everybody get enough to eat? Make sure to feed the baby!” I replied, “Yes, I am finishing up!” I engaged by scrambling eggs in a non-existent frying pan. Also, informed her I cooked enough “scrambled eggs” for the children (i.e., my grandmother had 11 children).

Many times my grandmother believed she was on a horse carriage. When my grandmother announced we must round up the horses for the carriage, I agreed to accompany her to town. She explained her need to travel into town to purchase household items. My grandmother would say, “Hold on now. Don’t you fall of this carriage, “girl”?” I told my grandmother that I was secured in my seat, and ready for a bumpy ride down the country road. She no longer remembered my name, so I was addressed as “girl” (which she pronounced as “gal”). Although, my grandmother remained inconsistent in identifying me, we developed a connection.

My persistence to connect with my grandmother, allowed her to become more to be accustomed my presence. With this new consensus, I offered poetry reading to my

grandmother, and she exhibited interest. After breakfast, gave me permission to turn off her radio, and read poetry. Despite the confusion caused by dementia, my grandmother was always receptive for a daily session of poetry reading. The routine of poetry reading became even applicable on my grandmother's bad days. When I arrived in the morning, she would bolt out, "I hope you have a good reading prepared for today. I am ready for my frosted flakes, and make sure to put extra sugar on them. Listen here, girl, don't you let my flakes get soggy. I can't eat them soggy."

Next, we began to sit next to each other on her bedside, while she rested her head on my shoulder. She would often say, "If you are getting tired of holding me up, tell me, and I will just lie down in this old bed" I replied, "No, I am not tired. You can rest on my shoulder. I continued to read a poem, and she interrupted, "I know you are getting tired. I am tired, and this is only how I can get rest, because the bed causes an itching on my body." I reassured her that she could rest her head on my shoulder as long as she would like, and I continued to read to her. My grandmother started to cry, and said, "I am old and ugly now! My hair is about gone!" My grandmother's tears streamed down my right collarbone, and pelted my shirt. As she sobbed, the air conditioner rumbled in that sad silence. I told her that she is and will always be beautiful. I told her she is not old, instead, she has acquired many years of experience in what time offers. Then, I told her that her hair was lovely. She stopped sobbing, pursed her lips, and said, "Go on now, continue to read. You have a good voice for reading"

Impressively, she began to ask me questions about the poetry. She would ask about the poetry's meaning or author. In addition, she requested an encore for the poetry

she enjoyed to hear. When my grandmother noticed a rhyme in the poem, and she would slightly tap her right hand to along with poem's rhythm. My grandmother became weaker, and the doctors were surprised that she still exceeded the months of expected death. I knew her time with me was lessening, so I began to read my personal poems to her. In a weak and calm voice, she often told me, "That was really good. Did you write this, or is this a reading from one of those books?" I expressed to her that it was my personal literature. It seemed to calm her and she would listen, and close her eyes. I would stop reading because, I thought maybe she drifted into a nap, but she would always say, "Keep on reading. I am just resting my eyes." Even the home health nurse began to notice the influence of the poetry-reading sessions. She said that I was very good with communicating with older individuals, and that she admired my patience.

As predicted, my grandmother passed, but I never forgot how we made a social and emotional connection through the poetry. I wrote a poem for her funeral service, but I was not able to read it. We both found a peaceful connection when I read my poems to her. On the days I was not able to be her caregiver, she would ask, "Where is that girl at? Is she going to read me more stories?" My grandmother had forgotten my name and face, but she always seemed to recognize my voice. This meant reading poetry to her accounted for some importance.

From this experience, I decided to create a thesis similar to my poetry sessions with my grandmother. I conducted extensive research, and discovered Gerontological journals that reported experiments slightly similar to my experience. I chose to explore

utilizing narrative life review and poetry writing with older individuals, as an approach to support successful aging.



Figure 1. With family members' consent, I took the photo during a poetry-reading session with my grandmother. In the photo, she is sitting on her bedside listening to poetry.

The Controversy of Population Aging

While my interest in working with older adults is rooted in my past, the contemporary challenge of population aging in American society inspires my rationale. Population aging is the exponential increase of older adults in nation's population (Administration on Aging, 2013). Currently older adults represent 13.7% of the population with "one and every eight Americans" is 65 and older (AoA, 2013, p. 2). The AoA (2013) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2013) report reduced death rates, aging "baby boomers", and increased life expectancy are attributes of population aging (AoA, 2013, p. 2; Centers for Disease Control & Prevention [CDC], 2013, p. 1). America's ability to manage population aging is dire, because 92 million Americans will be over 65 and older by 2060 (AoA, 2013, p.3).

The CDC (2013) suggests a critical issue within population aging is the major diversity of population of older adults. Factors such as chronological age, gender, health status, socioeconomic status, marital status, social engagement, care accessibility, race-ethnicity and residency can affect both longevity and quality of life (AoA, 2013; CDC, 2013). The aging population and retired baby boomers is proposed to threaten America's ability to maintain both healthcare systems and Social Security benefits (Dillaway & Byrnes, 2009). Considering the heterogeneity among elders' lives may help researchers develop alternative care approaches aimed at improving quality of life and preventing the risk factors associated with illness (CDC, 2013).

Gerontological research aims to understand population aging and diversity because these factors help determine the aging experience (Katz & Calasanti, 2014). For

example, contemporary gerontologists are exploring the utility of “successful aging” and struggle with how diversity in aging creates variations and gaps in research on this topic (Katz & Calasanti, 2014, p1). Researchers have yet to create standard objectives and metrics for successful aging. The multidimensional framework of the successful aging construct allows many interpretations of social well-being. Therefore, the research protocol includes “narrative therapy” and “poetry therapy” as valid ways to support social well-being in older adults.

Literature Review: Discovering the Primary Determinant of Successful Aging

This review of literature focused on quality of life, successful aging, social well-being and interventions, which could support social well-being in older adults. Although, researchers have yet to articulate all aspects of successful aging, variations on the concept reveal that “social well-being” is a major determinant of quality in older age (Kaneda, Lee, & Pollard, 2011, p. 28). Social well-being influences other areas of life, specifically the health status of older adults (Franklin & Tate, 2008). Social well-being exemplifies various contexts, which incorporates a social domain relative for older individuals: “social engagement” (Kaneda et al. 2011, p 28; Mendes de Leon, 2005, p.64). Lastly, the literature review concludes with a discussion of both “narrative therapy” and “poetry therapy” as practical methods to support social well-being.

Defining Social Well-Being

Kaneda et al (2011) suggest social well-being indicates of the quality of life. The Stanford Center on Longevity and the Population Reference Bureau (SCL/PRB) Index globally examined and compared the well-being of older adults (Kaneda et al., 2011).

The SLC/PRB index demonstrates social well-being is important for the aging experience (Kaneda et al., 2011). Kaneda et al. (2011) state well-being is primarily characterizes an older adult's "social engagement" (p. 28). The criteria of social well-being illustrates social engagement involves the following: "encompassing involvement with family members, peers, community members, and local institutions" (Kaneda et al., 2011, p. 28). The SLC/PRB index reports the presence of social factors is associated with health and higher "life satisfaction" (p. 28). Thus, social well-being is an umbrella of social content that can provide an objective for supporting successful aging.

Social Well-Being Relative to Health Status, Mortality and Morbidity

Durand and Barlow (2014) suggest social well-being influences other aspects of general well-being. Franklin and Tate (2008) explain specific determinants of successful aging centralize the health status an important contributor to successful aging (Franklin & Tate, 2008, p. 7). Past research, demonstrates that aspects of social well-being links to an older adult's health span, which explains a social domain, may be a primary determinant of successful aging. The following discussion reviews literature that explores how different aspects of social well-being, such as types of social activities, and social relationships, influence the health outcomes.

Ryff and Singer (2005) demonstrate the role that social environment has as a primary influence on health status and show that positive social environments protect physical health by hindering and preventing the occurrence of chronic disease. Ryff and Singer (2005) review literature on biomedical and molecular genetics that emphasize social environments as determinants of genes express health risk for older adults. Despite

genetic disposition, positive social environments persist to prevent the risk of illness (Ryff & Singer, 2005). In addition, the authors emphasize even a single positive connection with an individual can primarily diminishes the challenges of physical impairment. Moreover, social relationships can be a preventative intervention of genetically based health risks (Ryff & Singer, 2005).

Antonucci, Birdit, & Webster (2010) indicated that the type of social relationships is significant for the association with mortality in older age where type depends on both quality of social relationships and health context. Antonucci et al. (2010) discovered a significant interaction between “positive relationship quality as a child” and chronic health conditions (p. 655). High versus low positive child relationship quality exhibits a stronger, positive correlation between chronic illness and mortality in older adults (Antonucci et. al, 2010, p. 655). Thus, mortality is associated with chronic illness based on the characteristics of a social relationship, and supportive social relationships are important in longevity.

Similarly, a recent study by Steptoe, Shankar, Demaskakos and Warkdle (2013) demonstrated social isolation and loneliness is predictive of mortality. In this longitudinal study, Steptoe et al (2013) examined social isolation, based on communication with family and friends and engagement in public organizations. Mortality increases for socially isolated and lonely older adults while social isolation or limitations of social interaction are associated to a variety of subjective and objective factors (Steptoe et al., 2013). Older adults experience limitation in social networks, because of mobile impairment, decline in economic resources, and death of peers (Steptoe et al., 2013).

Narrative Life Review and Poetry-Writing: Alternatives to Influencing Social Well-Being

Social well-being is an important aspect of successful aging. The increasing diversity of the aging population necessitates examining many alternatives to promoting social well-being of older adults. Criteria for selecting the “best” alternative include attributes related to creativity, cost-effectiveness, multi-dimensionality, and potential clinical effectiveness. Currently, several alternatives to fostering successful aging capitalize on counseling, social engagement, and social support (Kaneda et al., 2011; Durand & Barlow, 2013). Narrative therapy, an alternative to psychotherapy, allows individuals to analyze life and separate themselves from personal problems (Gardner and Poole, 2009, p. 602). This thesis proposes to examine a narrative life review and poetry writing with older adults as a practical alternative to influencing social well-being. The following discussion examines how narrative therapy and poetry with older adult foster successful aging as a form of counseling, social engagement, and social support.

Narrative Therapy with Older Adults

The Definition Narrative Life Review

According to Butler (1963), the “life-review process” was inaccurately associated with the ageist perspective of reminiscence in older adults. Butler (1963) states other researchers negatively propose reminiscence, “the act of or process of recalling the past,” as a symptom of psychological disorders, or uninhibited mental dysfunction in the elders (p. 66). Conversely, Butler (1963) suggests older adults re-connect the present and past to re-discover self in the awareness of approaching death. Thus, Butler proposes the process

of reflective memories as “life review mechanism”, in which holds significant in the “psychopathology of the aged” (p. 66).

Butler (1963) defines life review as “the universal occurrence in older people as in inner experience or mental process of reviewing of one’s life” (p. 65). Life review allows older individuals to re-evaluate past life to construct validity and significance before death occurs. Case studies demonstrate the psychological mechanism of life review establishes positive resolution in some individuals (Butler, 1963). Apart from the presence of psychological illness, Butler (1963) does not present details that indicate objective outcomes of a successful life narrative. Butler (1963) concludes that additional empirical data is needed to explore the connections between mental functioning, the aging process and one’s realization of death.

Narrative Life Reviews: An Approach of Establishing Meaning in Later Life

Kropf and Tandy (1998) explore life review as “narrative therapy” with older adults as a “mean-making approach,” of narrative therapy allowing older adults to reconstruct the devastation, from current life stories, into the creation and reflection of alternative stories (p. 4). Kropf and Tandy (1998) implement the mean-making approach of narrative therapy with the case study evaluation of an older adult named, Elizabeth. First, Elizabeth participated in a life review of her life, and battle with depression and losses. Next, Elizabeth and the authors create an alternative life narrative. Kropf and Tandy (1998) suggest that developing the value of an elder’s history comes from their social environment. Although, the researchers propose Elizabeth’s alternative narrative would result in positive effects for her well-being. Kropf and Tandy (1998) did not

present any evaluations that indicated Elizabeth positively internalized the alternative narrative.

Poetry Therapy with Older Adults

Alongside narrative therapy, expressive arts positively influence well-being (Longo, 2003). Scholars report “poetry therapy” as an expressive art mechanism in psychotherapy for individuals. Robinson (2005) implemented poetry writing, as a holistic approach with older patients in palliative nursing. Robinson (2005) suggests poetry can allow individuals to express concerns about sensitive issues using reflection. Caldwell (2005) suggests expressive writing is a psychosocial intervention to promote well-being in caregivers, older adults, and to promote resilience in older adults.

The concept of poetry writing is adapted from “informal poetry therapy” (Robinson, 2004). McArdle and Byrt (2001) state that expressive writing, or poetry can relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety in mental health patients (p. 522). Longo (2003) expresses poetry “is the focus for healing, self-expression, and growth of the individual” (p. 2.) Most importantly, McArdle and Byrt (2001) emphasize professionals, such as nurses, use narratives and writing as a way to improve an individual’s well-being. This thesis builds upon the uses of poetry in therapy to modify it as poetry writing with an older person. Past research integrates narrative therapy and poetry therapy as a psychosocial intervention for individuals. Similarly, the present thesis integrates narrative life review and poetry writing as a process to promote positive influences in the social well-being of older adults.

Rationale of the Current Study

The present study investigates narrative life review and poetry writing with older individuals. The investigator predicts participants will experience a positive influence in social well-being based on fulfilling a domain of social well-being: social engagement with an individual. The purpose of the project is to investigate life review and poetry writing as an alternative approach to improving the social well-being of older individuals.

The guidelines for implementing a narrative life review adapts from the narrative methods by Hospice Foundation of America (2005) and Butler (1963). Butler (1963) suggested life review therapy is a therapeutic process that facilitates a review of life events, or the” progressive return to consciousness of past experiences, and the resurgence of unresolved conflicts, which can then be surveyed and reintegrated” (p. 66).

Poetry therapy and narrative therapy are alternatives to formal psychotherapy in promoting successful aging by contributing to social well-being for older individuals (Gardner & Poole, 2009; Longo, 2003). Social well-being is an important aspect of older age due to its protective capacity against morbidity and influence in increasing longevity. This may be particularly true given some of the potential limits placed on active engagement by those who are aging such as chronic illness, social isolation, ageism, and even loss of family and friends (Katz & Calasanti, 2014). As the population of elders continues to grow, we are likely to see increased demands for diverse and alternative options in caregiving for older individuals (AoA, 2013). Therefore, relevancy lies in examining alternative approaches to foster successful aging.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research protocol built upon narrative therapy and poetry therapy as validated approaches to supporting social well-being in older adults. Four females between the ages 66-94 participated in this two-phase project. Phase I focused on completing a narrative life review and developing original poetry with the researcher, and Phase II consisted of a poetry reflection and completing an open-ended evaluation.

Materials

The researcher used a narrative life review schedule (Appendix A), paper and pencils for drafting the poems, an open-ended evaluation (Appendix B) and four 8x11 frames to hold a finished poem. The narrative life review was adapted from a narrative life review guide (Hospice Foundation of America, 2005). The poetry session followed from the significant themes of a participant's narrative life review.

Participants

Participants were all females with ages ranging from 66-94. The mean age is $M = 84.25$. The ethnicities of the participants included three Caucasians and one African-American. The following table displays the demographics of each participant.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants						
DATA I.D.	AGE	SEX	ETHNICITY	TYPE OF RESIDENCE	ASSISTANCE	DISCLOSED CHRONIC ILLNESSES
F-94	94	Female	Caucasian	Personal Home	Prescription eye glasses	Arthritis
F-84	84	Female	Caucasian	Independent Living facility	Prescription eye glasses	Arthritis
F-93	93	Female	Caucasian	Independent Living Facility	Electrical mobile chair, oxygen tank, walking cane	Cognitive impairment, respiratory illness, arthritis
F-66	66	Female	African-American	Personal Home	Inhaler, cancer treatments, glasses	Cancer, cataracts, respiratory issues, high blood pressure, arthritis

The participants disclosed their demographics. Thus, illnesses are based upon their personal accounts, and observed usage of medical assistance. The participants may retain disclosure of additional demographics. The investigator does not have certification to administer health assessment.

Procedure

Participants recruited from independent-living communities and community dwellings of older adults in Kentucky and Tennessee. Participants were collected from different cities and states to capture different aging demographics. With the approval of the activities coordinator, a research flyer was placed in the independent living facility. The flyers placed on a public bulletin board in the community dwelling. The research flyer included: (a) the research purpose, (b) the research procedure (i.e., the narrative

interview disclosed about conducting an interview, writing poetry, signature informed consent and information to contact the researcher via email and phone).

After each participant responded via email or phone call, appointments are scheduled for two phases of research. One appointment was scheduled for each research phase. The appointments were conducted in the participants' residencies.

Phase I: Narrative-Life Review and Poetry-writing Session.

Phase I focused on completing a narrative life review and the participant developing a poem with the researcher. First, the participant signed the informed consent document (WKU IRB# 13230). After signing the informed consent document, the researcher began conducting the narrative life review. The narrative review questions were adapted from a narrative review created by Hospice Care Foundation (2005) which asked questions covering both the life span and individual life details. In addition, I found the accompanying guide helpful in adapting this to my own purposes. The narrative life review used is in the Appendix A. The narrative reviews were recorded with paper and pencil during the session and the researcher took care to initiate and facilitated contact by clarifying information and engaging in conversation with the participant.

After completing the narrative life review, the participant and researcher engaged in a poetry writing activity. The researcher inquired the participants about their knowledge of writing poems and prose. For example, the researcher informed the individual that rhyming was not essential, but the meaning and flow were important to create expression in the poem.

If a participant was unable to understanding the concept of creating a poem, the researcher referred to alternative examples, such as greetings cards or song lyrics to demonstrate their similarity to poems. If more clarification was needed the researcher demonstrated the process by choosing something (e.g. apples), and created a simple poem about it.

Next, the researcher asked the participant to choose a significant theme from their narrative life review. If participant was unable to select a theme, the researcher reviewed the narrative and suggested three or more prominent features found in the narrative life review. The participant chose the theme because creating the poem was a direct benefit of the participant's personal reflection.

After the participants selected a theme, the researcher asked the participant to brainstorm ideas, emotions, and memories related to selected content. This process prepared the participant to reflect on the meaning, and became inspired to create a poem. After the participant selected a theme, the researcher asked the participant to reflect on the theme and write "freely". Subsequently, the participant composed a rough draft of the poetry.

When the participant finished the first draft, the researcher read the poem. The researcher allowed the participant to examine the first draft again, and explained any thoughts about the poem, or proposed additions. Next, the researcher and participant brainstormed to compose the final draft of the poetry. The researcher explained poetry's goal of self-expression, by examining the content, context, and clarity. Most importantly,

the participant's narrative supported any changes or additions in the poem. Finally, the researcher and participant reached a consensus and created a final draft of the poem.

Phase II: The Follow-Session.

The final portion is Phase II, which is a follow-up session. Phase II included a poetry-reflection and an open-ended evaluation. Due to the extenuating circumstances, the researcher delayed Phase II to a year later (e.g. lack of transportation, funds, and illness). First, the participants signed the informed consent document of Phase II (WKU IRB# 15-403). Next, the participants received framed copies of their poems, and were asked to read them. Participants could request that the researcher read the poems. After reflecting on the final poem, participants completed an open-ended evaluation about the project (Appendix B).

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

The results include the participants' narrative life reviews, first and final drafts of poetry, and open-ended evaluations. All information presented in the case studies are based on participants' personal disclosure. To insure confidentiality, participants' names are coded by sex and age (e.g. sex and age, F-72). Additionally, the first name initials and an alphabetic letter code the names of family members of friends. The alphabetic letter was chosen by the sequence of a person's appearance in the narratives. For example, if a Jane Doe is the first associate discussed in the narrative, then the case study codes Jane as J.A. The case study codes or redacts any institutions, facilities, or businesses that may reveal a participants' identity (e.g. AB University or ABU).

Case Studies

Case Study of Participant F-93

Introduction: Participant F-93

F-93 is a 93-year-old Caucasian female living Bowling Green, Ky. F-93 resides senior in a living complex where residents live in their own apartments. Residents are able to take advantage of opportunities to engage in activities such as games, exercise, attending chapel, and holiday parties sponsored by the owner of the complex. F-93 lives

Independently and utilizes an electrical mobile wheelchair, walking cane, and oxygen tank. The wheelchair allows F-93 to travel long distances. The walking cane helps F-93 to walk minimal distances, such as the areas in her apartment. F-93 explained she uses the oxygen at night, and for shortness of breath.

F-93 was very excited to meet with me. When I arrived, F-93 was waiting in her mobile chair outside her apartment door to greet me. She welcomed me with a lovely smile, and we sat at a small dining table. After explaining the informed consent document, F-93 signed it, and I began conducting the narrative life review. F-93 answered the first question of the life review by stating, "You can call me, (first name)".

F-93 seemed to be very lonely. F-93 explained that family occasionally visits her. It was noticeable that F-93 anticipated holiday visits from her children. Thus, she had placed boxes of Christmas decorations in the living room. F-93's son lives upstate, while her daughter also resides in Bowling Green. F-93 indicated her daughter has busy work schedule, thus she cannot attend to F-93 for long periods. F-93 expressed, "I needed more attendance so my daughter decided it would be best for me." F-93 moved to an independent facility, because she began to have difficulty with basic care routines. Unfortunately, she did not indicate the duration of time in the independent living facility.

F-93 is a widow of two marriages. Both of F-93's husbands preceded her in death. F-93 had pictures of her children and second husband on a shelf. F-93 explained she put away the pictures of her first husband, because it was at times painful to see his face.

F-93 appeared to exhibit a significant cognitive delay, because she repeated many topics and had difficulty retrieving specific dates of events. F-93 acknowledged she is

aware of the gradual diminish in her memory. She specified that the memory problem made it difficult to specify timeframes. On numerous occasions, F-93 showed me the same photo of her grandsons, and said me, "These are my grandchildren." F-93 mentioned her son visiting for the approaching holiday on several occasions, also. F-93 would randomly repeat, "Oh, I am so excited. You know my son, his wife, and children are visiting me." Due to a possible memory deficit, F-93 appeared to forget that she previously told me the same information.

Childhood

F-93 was born in late August of 1920, and she grew up in St. Bernard, Ohio. F-93 had one sister, E.A. E.A was six years older, than F-93. F-93 grew up in a loving and traditional family. F-93 explained she always felt love and support from her parents, because her parents were supportive and always spent much time together. Family tradition included family vacations and Sunday dinner. F-93 expressed that she adored father. F-93's biggest inspiration growing up was her father, because he was strong, independent, rational, wise, and loving. F-93 described her mother as a gentle, caring, and perfect. F-93 and E.A. did not get along until they both became married with children. Since F-93 and E.A did not get along as children, F-93 spent most of her leisure time with a group of girls, whom she considered as sisters. F-93 and E.A's interpersonal communication became more frequent, when they were able to share common interests and experiences as mothers. F-93 expressed she admired and was inspired by E.A's independence and lady-like nature.

Adolescence: Transition into Adulthood

In school, F-93 was very athletic. F-93 played tennis, basketball, and croquet. She even was the captain of the basketball team. F-93 spent most of her time with 13 girls, who were her classmates. F-93 and the girls frequented the bowling alley, tennis court, movie theater, and malt shops. F-93 expressed the highlight of going to malt shops was trying to meet cute boys. F-93 had 13 friends, but she considered, Betty, as her best friend.

Around the age of 16, F-93 had fallen in love. On a typical night out with the girls, F-93 ventured out to meet cute boys. On this specific night, F-93 was due for a date with a young man, but instead she met the first love of her life, H.B. F-93 and H.B instantly fell in love and spent much time together during high school. After high school, F-93 attended a commercial school for two years and began clerical work. During this time, H.B was sent to war, and F-93 wrote him often.

Although H.B was far away, F-93 expressed she remained in love with him. H.B and F-93 communicated through letters. H.B's letters included many details about his experiences in the war. In addition, H.B's letters included expressions of love for F-93, and post-war plans to spend time with her. F-93's wrote letters to H.B that expressed her love and anticipation of his return. She inquired H.B. about his war experiences. F-93 indicated anticipation of H.B's return helped her during the war.

F-93 expressed her biggest childhood dreams were marriage and motherhood. Her dream became true, thus she married H.B (i.e., first marriage) in Marietta, Ohio. Next, H.B. and F-93 had two children: a son and daughter. K.D and S.C. were born 2 years

apart. Furthermore, F-93 said her transition into adulthood occurred when she became a wife and mother.

When H.B.'s war duties ended, H.B. and F.93 spent much family time together. F-93 and H.B. often travelled to Cincinnati, Ohio. H.B.'s favorite place to visit was F-93's cousin in South Carolina. F-93 described the trips to South Carolina with her family as delightful times of her life. F-93 indicated H.B. was the love of her life, and he meant the world to her. Unfortunately, H.B. passed away.

In her 50's, F-93 continued to venture out and travel. On a cruise, she met a new love interest. H.E became F-93's second husband. F-93 said, "We were so in love, and we went on cruises, to parties, derbies, but he also passed away." F-93 and H.E. did not produce any children. F-93 did not indicate the length of her marriage to H.E. F-93's memory difficulty, limited her to relay any additional specifics about her marriage with H.E. F-93 only recalled the leisure outings in her marriage with H.E.

F-93 expressed the biggest turning points of her life was the death of her father and first husband, H.B. H.B. and F-93's father were the most important people in her life. F-93 explained losing H.B. is still very painful. Despite her losses, F-93 expressed her life turned out the way she thought it would. F-93 was able to become a wife and mother.

At the end of the life review, I asked F-93 "If you could write anything about your life what would it be?" Have you ever used poetry to express yourself? She replied, "I have never written poetry! I love to read poetry and the bible. But, no, I have never written a poem." Next, I inquired her, "Can you pick one influential event, you have experienced in life that you could talk about or express your feelings about in poetry? F-

93 replied, "I am not sure what I would write about." I asked her if she would like to write about her first husband, H.B. She paused, and said, "I am very fond of H.B, but it has been so long and it may be difficult". F-93 paused and her face lit up, and she said, "Yes! One of my best friends that I miss so often" F-93 smiled and continued, "My memories of her are so strong and I really wish she was here. Her name is Betty. I can write about her and our friendship." F-93 paused again, and said, "I cannot remember when she passed away .but I remember that she had two children and got married." F-93 mentioned her cognitive delay did interfere with her memories, but memories of Betty. Thus, F-93 and the researcher composed a poem about, Betty.

Table 2. Poetry Session of F-93	
Title: <i>My Friend Betty</i>	
First Draft	First Draft
<p>Times gone by, most pleasurable and happy memories of the past remain.</p> <p>Without you Betty, things will never be the same.</p> <p>The joy we shared can never leave my heart. I knew you would be a great friend from the start.</p> <p>Memories of you will never depart.</p>	<p>Times gone by, most pleasurable and happy memories of the past remain.</p> <p>Without you Betty, things will never be the same.</p> <p>The joy we shared can never leave my heart.</p> <p>I knew you would be a great friend from the start.</p> <p>In the spirit of our youth and adulthood, we challenged our dreams.</p> <p>Our bond became an untethering seam.</p> <p>Time proceeds and so does change.</p> <p>Betty, our friendship will never leave my heart. Memories of you will never depart.</p>

Open-Ended Evaluation of F-93

1. Did you enjoy writing poetry with another individual?
I do not recall writing poetry with you. I know that I am not good at it.
2. If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed writing poetry with another individual?
N/A
3. Did you enjoy talking about your history and present life with another individual?
Yes.
4. If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed talking about your history and present life with another individual?
It brings back good memories
5. Do you think writing about your life is beneficial? If so, why?
I do not know. I do not remember anything to reflect upon.
6. Would you refer this experience to a family or friend?
Yes, my granddaughter, because she write poetry. She lives in California.
7. If you could change anything about the process, what would it be?
Yes, I would have written about my daughter, K.D. Betty has been dead for years. Memories of her gone now. I would have written about the people that are present in my life now.
8. Any suggestions?
I wish you could have explained this better, because I do not have anything to reflect upon. I do not remember.
9. Open-ended: If you would like to say anything about how you feel or about the project please write it here.
No, I needed something to think and reflect upon.

Case Study of Participant F-94

Introduction: Participant F-94

Participant F-94 is a 94-year-old Caucasian female, from Bowling Green, Kentucky. F-94 lives in her own home in a beautiful, historical neighborhood located in Bowling Green, Kentucky. F-94 explained that her home was home built 56 years ago; subsequent to her father's death. During that time, F-94 explained she was expecting to deliver fourth child, the completion of her new home.

After F-94 warmly welcomed me, I followed her as she directed me to the dining room. F-94's home was very spacious, clean, welcoming and quiet. Plaques, artwork, and family portraits embellished the walls of F-94's home. F-94 adjusted her chair, and her glasses. She rose and straightened the tablecloth. Next, I explained the informed consent document. After signing the form, F-94 expressed that creative writing is not her strength, and was very concerned with her ability to create poetry. I reassured her that the poetry writing of the project is a cohesive process and I will be able to facilitate her in creating a meaningful poem. I asked F-94 the name that she would like me to address you as, and, she replied, "F-94. Subsequently, we initiated the narrative life review.

As I approached the dining area, a golden glow emitted from the windows. The golden luster was the amazing scenery, blanketed by the gleams of a retreating afternoon sun, of F-94's backyard. F-94 said, "Before this home was built, all the land behind it was farmland. There were no houses or businesses behind here." F-94 faced lit up with joy and thankfulness, as her eyes gleamed at the view of tall, ancient trees and picturesque rolling hills of green grass.

In former years, F-94's street ceased at the current stop sign. The area beyond the current stop sign consisted of farmland and forestry. As years progressed, the purchase of the farmland resulted in new neighborhoods and businesses that replaced ancient pastures and forestland. The expansion added a four-way intersection, leading to additional homes and businesses. Luckily, the new construction did not remove the beautiful rolling hills and pastures behind F-94's home.

F-94's husband is deceased, thus she lives alone. Although she lives alone, family visits the home daily and on occasion. In fact, F-94's daughter, E.A., entered the home several times during my visit. F-94 expressed her grandchildren often come over for breakfast. Her granddaughter often visits after swimming practices to take showers, and have lunch with F-94. F-94 even at times has sleepovers and watch movies with her grandchildren in the family den downstairs. Therefore, it was clear that family is a huge support system for F-94.

It was certain that F-94 valued family and friends. F-94 and I sat at a large kitchen table, in which many holiday and family dinners took place. She said, "I love to cook for family dinners. I am good cook, but I do not follow recipes. I just taste the food as I go." We both laughed. F-94 further explained that she loves to make a variety of dishes. Most importantly, she loved cooking for children and grandchildren.

A distinctive, black chair cushion occupied the head chair of the dinner table. F-94 explained that is where her deceased husband, D.B. often sat. F-94 explained D.B. became progressively ill, and she knew the time would soon come. She stared at the empty seat and said, "I left the cushion there because, it was where he often sat. As he

became ill, it was hard for him to rest comfortably in bed, but he was comfortable in that chair. I could not remove it, it seems as though he is still present. I know he is still present.” F-94 explained that she is certain true love existed, because she met D.B. F-94 expressed that D.B. was the love of her life, and the most amazing person she had ever met.

F-94 is mobile and independent. She drives minimal distances, but receives transportation by her children. It was observable that F-94 has some difficulty walking, which she explained is the result of arthritis in joints and legs. In addition, she wears prescription eyeglasses to aid her vision. Furthermore, F-94 explained she tries to avoid going downstairs to the den, because it can be difficult to climb the stairs.

Childhood

F-94 described growing up in a traditional home that emphasized religion, respect, ethics, and the importance of family. F-94 was born and raised in Searcy, Arizona. In Searcy, she lived on a farm with her father, mother and older brother. F-94’s father raised dairy cattle, which required many tasks. F-94’s father and brother completed many the difficult farm tasks. F-94 participated in minimal farm work, and helped her mother with house duties, such as cooking and cleaning. F-94 and her family were members of the First United Methodist church. Attending church service was an important principle in the home. F-94 mother and father had important roles in the church. F-94 father was a church usher. Her mother was the choir director and Sunday school teacher.

F-94 indicated she was very close with her grandparents. F-94 explained visiting her grandparents was a highlight of her childhood. She described her grandparents as intellectual, kind and loving people. She often visited them when she wanted to venture away from her parents' farm. F-94's grandfather emphasized the importance of education and leadership, which was significantly inspirational.

Adolescence: Transition into Adulthood

F-94 did not identify many distinctive experiences during grade school. During her years of high school, F-94's brother left for college. After two years, F-94's brother returned and decided to raise registered cattle as a profession. F-94 explained she was glad that her brother returned home, helped her father raise cattle, and followed her father's footsteps in agriculture.

While F-94's brother chose to raise cattle, she also had begun working towards establishing a profession. In adolescence, F-94 learned about the criminal justice system. Thus, her grandfather was a judge at the local courthouse. F-94's close relationship with her grandfather, allowed her the opportunity to be a clerk for an attorney during her Junior and Senior years of high school. She expressed her biggest dreams, as a child was to enter pre-law and become a lawyer like her grandfather. Furthermore, F-94 expressed her grandfather was her biggest inspiration growing up.

Initially, F-94 was interested in studying pre-law at the CD University but decided to change routes. F-94 wanted to attend AB University (ABU). The deadline for registration had passed, and F-94 knew that in her heart it would be better to attend AB

University. Subsequently, she wrote a letter to President G.C about attendance, and ABU accepted to F-94.

F-94 expressed her transition into adulthood occurred when she married D.B. During her first year at ABU, F-94 met D.B. She stated, "I arrived to ABU on Thursday, and had a date with D.B. on Monday." F-94 fell in love with D.B, then married him, and gave birth to five children. F-94 explained, that she thought being a lawyer would be her most important duty in life. Conversely, becoming a wife and mother was the best part of finding her niche.

F-94 was very happy and spent much time with her family. During college and after marriage, F-94 and D.B. exercised and travelled to many places. The duties of a wife and mother were enjoyable, because F-94 valued the importance of family. Apart from motherhood, F-94 explained that time spent with D.B. was very important. Unfortunately, after marriage D.B. entered the U.S. Navy and ordered to serve as an officer in World War II (WWII).

D.B. kept in contact with F-94 through letters. She expressed how she adored the writing letters to D.B. F-94 said she still has many of the letters that D.B. wrote to her during WWII. F-94 explained that D.B. wrote about his duties, the places he visited, the tragedies, and his love for F-94. Out of many of the talents D.B. possessed, F-94 expressed his ability to write manuscripts and letters were distinctively amazing.

F-94 and D.B. loved to travel to together. F-94 expressed her favorite place to travel was a country town in France. D.B. and F-94 travelled to France to visit, J.C, D.B.'s older brother. J.C. was a distinguished painter in France. F-94 explained how

amazing J.C.'s paintings were, and she was always amused with his creations. F-94 further explained that a museum exhibited J.C.'s artworks. Unfortunately, some of J.C.'s paintings were damaged by accidental fire, but many of his artworks could be saved.

After returning from the military, D.B. coached basketball and taught mathematics at ABU. Later, he entered an executive board at ABU. F-94 explained D.B. was a successful professional. After promotion to various positions, D.B. soon became the president of ABU. F-94 told me various stories and challenges that occurred while D.B. was president at ABU. The most specific was the racial tension that occurred at ABU when African-Americans began to attend the university. As always, F-94 said D.B. was professional, but had compassion for all individuals. One occasion, African-American students protested in front of the ABU president and dean's office. F-94 expressed D.B. was overwhelmed, but he was concerned about why the protesters were upset. D.B. came out of his office, stood on a bench, and peered in the crowd with tears in his eyes. D.B. told the students that he accepted all students, and was more interested in the quality of a student's education, than the student's skin color. F-94 indicated that the protesters left in silence after D.B.'s announcement. Out of all the amazing things D.B. had done, in his older age, he continued to write many letters to individuals. F-94 believed that D.B.'s letters seemed to change lives. F-94's love and admiration for D.B. seemed to be a central point to her happiness.

F-94 expressed her life turned out as she thought it would. She desired a marriage and motherhood. I asked F-94, "If you could write anything about your life what would it be?" She paused and replied, "It would be about D.B. or family. Family is important." I

then asked her, “Have you ever implemented poetry to express yourself?” She replied, “No. I am not good at writing poetry. My daughter is an amazing writer.” F-94 began to show me many lovely poems written by her daughter. Next, I asked her, “Can you pick one influential event, you have experienced in life that you could talk about or express your feelings about in poetry?” F-94 replied, “I would like to write about family and friends.

Table 3. Poetry Session of F-94	
Title: Family and Friends	
First Draft	Final Draft
<p>Blessings for me Joys and sorrow have gain us unbroken bonds My prayers would be that love continues through all time</p>	<p>Out of the many challenges that life presents, blessings for me are sure to exist. Thus, the love and loyalty of family and friends continue to persist.</p> <p>The joys and sorrow of life has bestowed us with an unbroken bond. Even though my companion passed on, my heart remains fond.</p> <p>In the sincerity of the light he rest; However, his letters remain to remind me that I am blessed.</p> <p>Although, his soulful harmony cannot be heard in this house. The essence of my heart thrives for my spouse.</p> <p>We built a home for family and friends. Each generation comes forth to begin. Holidays pass, but family and friends return, again. My prayers are that love continues through all ends.</p> <p>It is definite, this love remains in my heart. In life, family and friends will always be the most important part.</p>

Open-Ended Evaluation: Participant F-94

1. Did you enjoy writing poetry with another individual?

Writing poetry is not my strength, but it was interesting.

2. If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed writing poetry with another individual?

I think writing poetry is interesting, because you put thoughts into poetic form.

3. Did you enjoy talking about your history and present life with another individual?

I always enjoy talking about my life.

4. If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed talking about your history and present life with another individual?

I enjoy it, because truly see I have been blessed with family, good friends and I like to pass on that joy.

5. Do you think writing about your life is beneficial? If so, why?

I don't know if it is beneficial or not you will never know unless you actually see results. It if it's not firm in your heart, then it is not beneficial.

6. Would you refer this experience to a family or friend?

If they show interest, then I would.

7. If you could change anything about the process, what would it be?

More interaction with the student doing the project would be better.

8. Any suggestions?

More interaction between the student and the older person would be important. Maybe people who show interest in the project, would do better if they established more a friendship with the student. Time between each meeting should be shorter, because I did not remember writing the poem.

9. Open-ended: If you would like to say anything about how you feel or about the project please write it here.

I think the project would be beneficial for people who don't have anybody to see them or interact with them, or if they may not have family. Have you ever heard of a "do-gooder". Well there's this lady in my church, and we have a good relationship with each other. Of course, she knows she I attended two funerals this week, so she called to check on me, and that was nice of her. We are good friends, but she is now a choir director, so the church has made it important for members to reach out to the older members to see if they are okay. Now, my grandson, he visits with older individuals a nursing facility every day, and he does it because he likes and it is in his heart. I think this

project should be done by people who are surely interested in and have the talent for talking older people. If it is in your heart, then you can do it, instead of doing it, because you think it may be right.

Case Study of Participant F-66

Introduction: Overview of Participant F-66

Participant F-66 is a 66- year-old, African-American female from Springfield, Tennessee. F-66's home was bequeathed by her deceased mother, E.A. The home was small, cluttered and antique. F-66 indicated her mother raised her in this home. F-66 also raised her five children in the same home. It is noticeable her home needs repairs because, the floor is unevenly elevated and stains from roof leakage were present. Many areas her homes, specifically the parlor and family room, contained many houseplants. In addition, many family photos, religious plaques and holiday cards embellished the walls. F-66 explained that many of her houseplants passed through 100 years of family generations by re-plantation. F-66 explained her plants are not only a hobby. Gardening symbolizes strength and love in family.

The clutter in F-66's home resembled characteristics of hoarding. All the rooms in F-66's home were cluttered with an abundance of "safe-kept" items, such as piles of old newspapers, sacks of clothing, empty perfume bottles, figurines, and boxes containing miscellaneous items. Another observed indicator of hoarding included the presence high quantities of household items, such as toilet paper and laundry detergent. F-66 even kept toys, passed on from previous generations, in which she provides for her younger grandchildren.

F-66 acknowledged she needs to remove the excess items from her home, but experience the Great Depression and poverty taught her to maintain items for survival and future usage. F-66 mentioned her sister, A.B.'s exhibits signs of extreme hoarding. A.B.'s lives directly across the street from F-66. According to F-66, A.B.'s house contains clutter and excess amounts miscellaneous items that are stacked to the ceiling. Additionally, F-66 explained A.B.'s front door is only able to open, a few inches due to immense clutter in the home.

Currently, F-66 and her son, T.C, are the only residents in the home. Although, T.C. is F-66's only roommate and he is often at work. However, neighbors, relatives, children and grandchildren frequently visit her. F-66 is legally married, but separated from her husband, J.D. J.D. resides with his girlfriend, D.E., in Nashville, Tennessee. F-66 and J.D. never discuss the process of signing divorce papers. J.D. sometimes only visits his children and grandchildren during holidays specifically Christmas. F-66 and J.D. do not communicate, and she expresses a vague indifference about the martial separation.

Despite the martial separation, F-66 is primarily independent. F-66 is mobile and active, except her physical functioning is slightly limited by arthritic joints, and swelling in her legs. She has employment, maintains a gardening hobby, and social engagement with friends and family. F-66 works as a bus attendant on a school bus for blind children. She possesses a driver's license, but does not own a vehicle. Therefore, she requires transportation for completing errands, shopping and doctor appointments. Fortunately, the bus driver is able to transport her from home and work. Also, F-66 sells Avon

cosmetics for extra income, because she is only employed when school is in session. Thus, her occupation ceases during the summers.

F-66 has survived, cervical, colo-rectal, and thyroid cancer. She has no signs of cancer, but deals with high blood pressure, asthma, and arthritis. F-66 demonstrated a mild cognitive delay, which she explains is a result of thyroid medication. F-66 carefully examined the informed consent form, and she inquired about the methodology. F-66 asked for specific explanations to define the methodology, because she was not familiar with the process of narrative life review and writing poetry.

F-66 was nervous about the narrative life review and poetry writing. Although, she expressed there is a lot to tell about her life. F-66 expressed concern about her ability to effectively talk about her life and write poetry. F-66 sat adjacently in her living room and began the narrative life review. F-66 stated that she would like to be called referred to as “F-66.”

Childhood

F-66 was born in the outskirts of Robertson County, Tennessee. F-66 grew up on a farm with her mother, father, and 10 siblings. F-66’s biggest childhood was to graduate high school, obtain a college degree, and become a wife. Family was important and at times financial burden was an issue, due to having a large family. F-66 specifically said the hardest times for her family was during the Great Depression and racism made stability more difficult.

F-66 grew up in the mid-1940s and 50s, during a time of racial tension between African-Americans and Caucasians. Caucasian children stoned F-66 and her siblings with

sharped rocks, during walks the country dirt roads. F-66 stated, “Blacks entered the movie theater through the back, were made to sit in the balcony seats of the heater, and use the restroom in the back of the theater.” F-66 even remembers the difficulty shopping with her mother in town. The store clerk demanded that Blacks could receive service after all white customers purchased their goods. F-66 recalls waiting for over an hour to purchase simple household items, such as soap or canned goods. Another reflection involved family trips to a theme park in Bowling Green, Kentucky called, Beech Bend. F-66 stated, “Beech Bend was fun, but all Blacks were made to use the restroom in the woods.”

F-66 expressed her biggest inspiration growing up was her mother. F-66 emphasized her mother’s ability to survive inspired her a great deal. F-66 described her mother as quiet and calm. F-66 expressed E.A was an ideal mother, but she wished her mother educated her on certain topics relative to puberty. F-66’s mother was always determined to survive. To help pay for expenses F-66’s mother, E.A. worked as a house cleaner and nanny for Caucasian families.

At the age of eight, in a Model T-Ford car, F-66’s entire family experienced a head on collision with a drunk driver. Unfortunately, a car accident killed F-66’s father, W.E. The crash crushed W.E throat, which caused instant death. F-66’s mother, E.A., survived, but of many her bones were crushed. F-66 mother was in full body cast for almost a year. F-66’s Aunt became the legal guardian for F-66 and her siblings. F-66 and her siblings visited their mother several times a month. F-66 and her siblings continued their lives in Nashville, and her attended school. F-66 explained she was too young to

understand the grief she experienced from losing her father. Furthermore, she often experienced apprehension about her mother's condition.

After her mother healed, F-66 and her siblings moved from the country to a house in Springfield, Tennessee. With money saved, E.A. was able to purchase a small home in Springfield, Tennessee. F-66's mother was unable to work due to her injuries. E.A. received only \$100 a month from welfare to provide for her 11 children. F-66 had to share one bed with her three sisters in a two bedroom home.

Adolescence: Transition into Adulthood

When F-66 reached her adolescence years, racial segregation became a controversial issue in Springfield, Tennessee. Therefore, civil activists promoted and desired racial integration. F-66 expressed fear about racial slurs and threats aimed at her when she attempted to enter "Whites Only" areas in town. Due to F-66's lack of education about contraception, she became pregnant at the age of 16. During her senior year, F-66 dropped out of high school, and married the father of her child and high school sweetheart, J.D. F-66 expressed her transition into adulthood began when she became mother and a wife. F-66 eventually received a GED, but she emphasized it is a constant wish of her to graduate with a high school diploma and attend a graduation ceremony. F-66 also expressed she desired to attend college, but marriage and motherhood became more important. Furthermore, two of F-66's sisters went to college and received degrees.

F-66 gave birth to four more children. After marriage, F-66 and her husband moved in with her in-laws (i.e., J.D's parents). After F-66 discovered J.D's "coating" (i.e., infidelity), she moved with five children into her mother's home. The move back

home occurred after her youngest son, V.E., was born. F-66 faced a similar burden as her mother: the trial of being a single mother. F-66 worked in factories to earn money. F-66 attended a second job, in which she was a house cleaner for Caucasian families. While F-66 worked, her mother helped take care of her children. F-66 expressed faith in God, the relationship with her mother, and her children were the driving inspiration in the hard times of being a young, single mother. F-66 stated J.D. seldom visits their children, or did not provide any financial support. Fortunately, F-66 was able to raise all of her children.

Progression to Current Life

F-66 and J.D. remain in a separated marriage. All of her children, except, T.B., moved out and attended college. F-66 time of motherhood ended, thus she began to travel with church groups for vacations. F-66 expressed her favorite place to travel is Florida. Although, F-66 was fighting cancer, she was able to travel and live her life independently. F-66 won her battle to cervical cancer.

However, F-66 was burdened by the presence of drug and alcohol abuse in her family. Two brothers, and F-66's son struggled with addiction. She provided shelter for them during their addiction. F-66 was the caregiver for her aunt and mother, whom suffered from chronic illnesses. F-66 aunt, L.G suffered from Alzheimer's disease. F-66 was the only member that volunteered to take care of L.G. Simultaneously F-66 was also her mother's caregiver. E.A's health began to deteriorate due to progressive debilitation of car wreck injuries and chronic illnesses. With minimal assistance, F-66 fed bathed, clothed, monitored and administered medication to her mother and aunt. Furthermore, F-

66 struggled with enabling her son T.B., who battled alcoholism and addiction to crack-cocaine.

Cancer caused the deaths of F-66's siblings, H.M and J.K. Unfortunately; F-66 received a cancer an additional cancer diagnosis. During the toughest times of caregiving, F-66 battled colorectal cancer. As age progressed, F-66 aunt perished during the advanced stages Alzheimer's disease. Soon, F-66's mother developed aggressive cancer, and declared terminally ill. F-66's mother passed away in home hospice care. As F-66 progressed through middle age, she battled a third invasion of cancer. On this occasion, F-66 was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. F-66 also survived this diagnosis of cancer.

F-66 stated her biggest turning points in her life was fighting cancer three times (i.e., cervical, colorectal, and thyroid cancer), witnessing her son's battle addiction to crack-cocaine and alcohol, and the death of her mother E. A. Fortunately, T.B has successfully recovered addiction, and works at a local factor. T.B. still lives with F-66. F-66 expressed her life did not turn out how she thought it would, because she desired to graduate from high school and have a happy marriage. F-66 expresses she is happy with her life's outcome, and receives inspiration and support by siblings, children and grandchildren.

I inquired F-66, "If you could write anything about your life what would it be?" She replied, "I would write about trials and tribulations of cancer survival (3 types of cancers: cervical, colorectal, and thyroid) and how to let things work out in life." Next, I asked F-66, "Have you ever utilized poetry to express yourself?" She answered, "No". F-66 became concerned, because she did not understand the concept of poetry writing. I

began to explain to her what poetry is, and she related it to Christian hymns she often sang. I was able to utilize Christian hymns and biblical scriptures to demonstrate the concept of poetry. I asked F-66 to select her favorite biblical scripture, which is Psalm 23. I was able to identify how Psalm 23, is highly similar to the formation of a poem. Lastly, I asked her, “Can you pick an influential event, you have experienced in life, in which you could express your feelings about it in poetry?” She replied, “My mother, E.A.”

Table 4. Poetry Session of Participant F-66	
Title: Powerful Mother	
First Draft	Final Draft
<p>My mother was a powerful mother She taught me right from wrongs and to always be strong.</p> <p>Many times we went without, my mother I could never doubt.</p> <p>She taught me the ways of the Lord, and that her love protected me like a sword. As I grew older, I remembered she told me to never look back over my shoulder.</p> <p>For the past is old, God only knows the future to be told. She taught me how to care for each child that I raised, tender and mild.</p> <p>As I think of her often, I will never be saddened for her love is forever and eternity</p>	<p>My mother was more than a nurturer and protector. She symbolized the power that exists in being a Mother.</p> <p>She taught me right from wrong, to always be strong. Many times we went without, my mother I could never doubt.</p> <p>She taught me the ways of the Lord, and that her love protected me like a sword.</p> <p>As I grew older, I remembered she told me to never look back over my shoulder. For the past is old, God only knows what the future to be may hold.</p> <p>One day, I became a mother too. She taught me how to care for each child; tender and mild.</p> <p>The country wind in her hair is a sweet memory that makes me smile. In the silence of her home, I can hear her humming hymns that I cherish.</p> <p>As I think of her often, tears have fallen. I will never be saddened for her love is forever and will never perish.</p>

Open-Ended Evaluation of F-66

1. Did you enjoy writing poetry with another individual?
Yes, it was an okay experience, but some things about it I disliked.
2. If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed writing poetry with another individual?
It is okay if you can word it correctly. I dislike it because I cannot write it down on paper the way I want to.
3. Did you enjoy talking about your history and present life with another individual?
It made me feel good about life. I have had some ups and down. Overall I had a good life.
4. If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed talking about your history and present life with another individual?
I liked talking to about my life. I had some up and downs. Overall, I had good life.
5. Do you think writing about your life is beneficial? If so, why?
It benefitted me because; I went back to the good things about my mother, to keep my memories going.
6. Would you refer this experience to a family or friend?
Yes, I would because it is good it can help people know about themselves.
7. If you could change anything about the process, what would it be?
No, I cannot think of any changes.
8. Any suggestions?
No, I cannot think of any changes.
9. Open-ended: If you would like to say anything about how you feel or about the project please write it here.
It is good idea to write poetry about the relationship with my mother. I felt good about telling my story about my life.

Case Study of Participant F-84

Introduction: Participant F-84

The participant F-84 is an 84-year-old Caucasian female named from Bowling Green; F-84 currently resides in a senior living complex. Older residents who live there are able to live independently although some require assistance and experience multiple chronic illnesses. The residents live independently in their own apartment and have the opportunity to engage in activities, such as games, exercise, attending chapel and holiday parties. F-84 often plays board games with other residents, or reads in the common areas.

When I arrived to at F-84's residence, she was waiting for me in the front lobby. She was clutching a novel to her side and I thought she seemed both eccentric and intellectual. She suggested we sit in the sunroom at a small dining table where I explained the informed consent document. F-84 signed it and we began the life review. F-84 answered the first question of the narrative review life with a smile and said, "You can refer to me as F-84." With her approval, I referred to F-84 as "F-84."

F-84 expressed it was her husband's decision to move to her current location, because he became very ill and "was unable to care for himself and handle expenses". According to F-84, her husband has dementia, but she did not specify the severity of the dementia, or any other present conditions. Her husband's condition required him to be placed in a skilled nursing facility nearby where F-84 lives.

F-84 did not specify any present illnesses or disorders. F-84 is active and mobile, and exhibits no significant cognitive delay. Thus, she presented awareness of the current date, time, and was able to recall specific memories without any difficulty. F-84 wears

prescription eyeglasses to aid her vision. In fact, F-84 explained she often assists her husband F-84 with minimal care needs, such as grocery shopping and handling expenses. F-84 expressed she enjoys grocery shopping with her husband

Childhood

F-84 was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. F-84 grew up in a standard, suburban home with her mother, father and older sister. F-84 considered her sister to be “a woman of society.” F-84 looked up to her sister, and aspired to become successful and refined as her. Before explaining any other details about her family, F-84 emphasized her home was governed by her German father’s strict parenting; which emphasized structure and obedience. (F-84 impersonated her father, by illustrating his character with a high-posture, and a deep German accent.) Conversely, F-84 described her mother to be “too alternative”. When F-84 expressed “too alternative”, she meant her mother did not deliver the adequate nurturance and support expectant of a mother. F-84 further described her mother to be very distant, passive and allowed her father to be the primary instructive parent in the home. F-84 admitted she wished her mother would have been more expressive, supportive and socially interactive with her.

F-84 claimed her father’s strict parenting style resulted in exclusive rules and guidelines that limited her freedom and curiosity in childhood. F-84 remembers she would receive punishment for simple things, such as leaving the parlor doors open. Unless authorized, F-84 father did not allow F-84, or her sister, to enter the parlor. On one evening, F-84 invited a friend over after school. F-84 friend insisted on entering the parlor. Mistakenly, F-84 friend did not close the parlor doors. Upon her father’s

discovery of the opened doors, F-84 received punishment and was never allowed to invite friends over again. Due to this punishment, F-84 explained she was discouraged to make any new friends, and often played with her sister.

According to F-84, the overprotection and strict parenting caused her to develop an introverted personality. F-84 expressed her introversion led to obtaining no friendships in grade school. F-84 said she spent a lot of time alone in the library. F-84 explained the library was a place of solace, in which she discovered comfort in reading literature, obtaining knowledge, and introspection.

F-84 not only escaped in literature and knowledge; she often visited her grandparent's farm. F-84 spent many summers on the farm with her grandparents. F-84 said her fondest childhood memories took place at her grandparents' farm. The farm had many acres, which contained chickens, cows, and beautiful forestry. F-84 expressed adoration for her grandparents' European larch (i.e. trees). With a smile, F-84 explained the European larch was very beautiful, and treetops could be seen from miles away. As F-84 would travel down the country road, she would become filled with happiness when she saw the tree tops of the larch.

F-84 described her grandparents to be kind and loving people. Her grandparents always shared great food, stories, and songs. She emphasized the farm gave her serenity, inspiration and freedom. In fact, one of F-84's biggest childhood dreams was to operate her grandparents' farm. F-84's sister went of college and started clerical work, and she explained the happiness in her grandparents' faces often made her miss her sister. During childhood, F-84's sister and grandparents were her greatest inspirations.

Adolescence: Transition into Adulthood

At age 16, F-84 expressed she reached competency and claimed her identity. Thus, F-84 discovered her purpose and “a place to belong”. She continued to find solace in literature, intellect and her grandparents’ farm. Even as a teenager, F-84 explained her father’s authoritative politics remained consistent.

With new self-confidence, F-84 ventured out and started making connections with other people. F-84 met a Japanese teenager, and she became fond of him. According to F-84, war in the 1940s created racial discrimination against Japanese individuals. Due to her father’s disapproval on dating, F-84 explained experiencing apprehension about having a boyfriend. Additionally, F-84 experienced opposition from her neighbors about dating a Japanese man.

One day, F-84 decided that she would go on a date with the Japanese man. F-84 hesitated to inform her father, because she feared his punishment. When the time came near, F-84 informed her father of the date. F-84 explained her father elicited no reaction. Similar to most times, F-84’s mother did not say anything. F-84 explained she remembered all of her neighbors staring in disapproval, as she rode away with her Japanese date. F-84 thought she would marry him, but the political and racial indifference discouraged to pursue the relationship. She never saw the Japanese man, again.

F-84 transitioned into adulthood when she entered to college. F-84 attended the EF University (EFU), where she received a degree in social work and education. F-84 emphasized attending a university gave her great freedom to break away from the

overprotection of father, and she was able to submerge herself in knowledge and introversion.

After, completing a bachelor's degree, F-84 began teaching fifth graders for one semester. Subsequently, F-84 met a man who was also in the field of childhood education: a gym teacher. F-84 met her future husband at a square dance, and fell in love. Soon, F-84 was married, and retired from teaching to focus on being a wife. F-84 claims her marriage was simple and wonderful. F-84 enjoyed being a wife, and was glad she finally found love. F-84 and her husband never travelled, but did many activities such as, canoeing, hiking and playing tennis. F-84 did not produce any children, and she did not explain any reasoning behind her decision. Furthermore, F-84 did not she give any details specific events during her marriage.

Progression to Current Life

In F-84 middle age, she decided to return to her passion of education. She began teaching mathematics to adults. During this time, F-84 explained the use of computers became more prevalent in education. Along with her adult students, F-84 learned about utilizing computer technology. F-84 emphasized her biggest turning points in life were “getting hitched” and finding her personality and freedom in college via intellectual discovery. F-84 stated her life turned out the way it should be: she got married, went to college and found herself. After many years, her husband struggled from hearing loss and dementia. I asked F-84, “If you could write anything about your life what would it be?” She replied, “It would have to be about my grandparent's farm. It was an amazing place.” Next, I asked F-84, “Have you ever used poetry to express yourself?” She answered,

“Yes, I love to read poetry.” Lastly, I asked F-84, “Can you pick one influential event, you have experienced in life that you could talk about or express your feelings about in poetry?” F-84 replied, “Being at my grandparent’s farm, they are were hard-working and loving people and I was free and it was so beautiful there. There were animals, a lot of land and this beautiful larch across the front lawn. I could see them coming down the long country road on the way to the house. “

Table 5. Poetry Session of Participant F-84	
Title: The Farm	
First Draft	Final Draft
<p>When you come to the farm, you are safe from all harm.</p> <p>You find beauty and love, all sent from above. Folks care for each other, uncle, cousin and brother.</p> <p>They care for their friends, who come to bad ends.</p> <p>If someone’s in need, they’ll surely pay heed. Shelter, clothing of food. They’re always in the mood.</p> <p>Together they play and sing what joy that brings.</p> <p>The beautiful European larch across the front lawn surely did march.</p>	<p>When you come to the farm, you are safe from all harm. You find beauty and love, all sent from above.</p> <p>Folks care for each other, uncle, cousin and brother. Whether you are animal, family or friend, folks at the farm will lend you a hand.</p> <p>Even shelter, clothing, or food are given to those who come to bad ends. If someone is in need, folks at the farm will surely pay heed.</p> <p>At the farm, love is always the mood; Here you will never brood. Together we play and sing. Oh, what joy does that bring!</p> <p>From miles away, you can see the tree tops of the beautiful European larch. The joy from the farm never makes them parch.</p> <p>Please come back to the farm again. Grandma and Grandpa deliver friendship that never ends.</p>

Open-Ended Evaluation of Participant F-84

10. Did you enjoy writing poetry with another individual?

Mildly.

11. If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed writing poetry with another individual?

Mildly, because I don't think it is my calling.

12. Did you enjoy talking about your history and present life with another individual?

Mildly

13. If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed talking about your history and present life with another individual?

I don't find anything exciting in my life that I've been bursting to share it with others.

14. Do you think writing about your life is beneficial? If so, why?

I don't know. I attempted to write an autobiography before. I enjoyed writing, but I am not sure if it would be interesting

15. Would you refer this experience to a family or friend? **If you were hard up to find someone, I would. Not sure if anyone would show interest.**

16. If you could change anything about the process, what would it be?

I had not thought about that.

17. Any suggestions?

Clueless.

18. Open-ended: If you would like to say anything about how you feel or about the project please write it here.

Clueless

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the thesis was to investigate if narrative life review and poetry writing with older individuals support their successful aging. The concept of successful aging is has yet to be standardized, thus I chose to examine social well-being domain of the concept. Therefore, past research suggests health span is associated with social well-being and influenced by the diversity in the aging population. Population aging necessitates alternatives to support successful aging, which is why I chose a practical, informal and interpersonal approach of narrative life review and poetry writing. Moreover, narrative therapy and poetry therapy can establish meaning in later life.

The research design included four case studies of females, who participated in the two phases of the project. Phase I included the narrative life review and poetry-writing session. Phase II was a follow-up with participants that included the poetry-reflection and open-ended evaluations. The results between the two phases of this project demonstrated contrasting outcomes. While Phase I included four successful narrative life reviews, which informed the poetry-writing sessions, three out of four participants did not report significant positive influences in social well-being after Phase II. Thus, narrative life review and poetry writing with older adults did not appear affect the social domain of successful aging. In the four case studies factors, the following factors contributed to

these findings: (a) lack of familiarity with poetry as an art form, (b) confidence with poetry writing skills, and (c) quality of the relationship between researcher and participant.

Limitations

Many limitations in the study associate to the disconfirmed hypothesis. Shorter intervals between the phases of the project would have made the process more reflective for the participants, and less exhaustive for the researcher team. Changes in health status, such as chronic illnesses and memory deficits, contributed to the inefficiency of the intervals between phases. Thus, participants did not remember her poetry in Phase II. One participant experiences a stroke and increased memory deficit, which required her to be less independent. Additionally, the researcher's lack of transportation and health issues increased the intervals between phases. Time is critical for a small sample, and health demographics of the participants. Fortunately, all participants were able to complete Phase II.

Social interaction is important for establishing trust and familiarity between the researcher and the participant. Maintaining social interaction with the researcher and participant could possibly result in beneficial outcomes. Additionally, during the life review some participants did not disclose uncomfortable memories. For example, participant F-66 would not disclose details on enabling her son who suffered from a drug and alcohol addiction. Likewise, participant F-84 did not disclose much detail on her marriage. The failure to disclose certain information may complicate approaching emotional memories, which I would hope would inspire meaningful poetry writing.

However, it may be possible that establishing familiarity with the participant will the participant to feel free to express more in the narrative life review.

Result Analyses

While all participants reported that they had not received any formal training in writing poetry, the amount of formal education did have an effect on their self-perceived ability to complete the poetry writing exercise. For example, the participant with the lowest education level and highest poverty level told me that she did not understand how to write a poem. I then explained what poetry was and named some famous poets, but this did not trigger any familiarity with the art form. In our discussion, she referred to a poem as “a reading.” The participant emphasized the personal importance of religion during her life review and we selected a “very religious hymn-singing person” as the subject of her poem. I then explained to her that church hymns are similar to poems, and I retrieved a bible and selected a Psalms verse. After this discussion, she understood that bible verses were in the form of a poem, and we were able to complete the poetry writing exercise.

Participants with a college education demonstrated awareness of the poetry form but also doubted their ability to write the poetry. In my role as the researcher, I explained I was a facilitator and that we would write poetry together after they had created a context or theme for the poem. While one participant was reluctant to compose any poetry, even after a successful and thorough life review, she did compose a few lines. She then asked me to add more to it. Her poem was very short. She showed me poems created by her daughter and even mentioned at several times that we should just use one of her daughter’s poems. She repeated, “Poetry was not her forte.” While this could have been a

significant barrier to completing Phase I, I explained that we could use her daughter's poems as a guideline to create the context of the poem. In doing so, I was able to mediate her reluctance to continue with the creative process.

Therefore, I visited with the participants only once during Phase I, there was limited opportunity to develop a strong bond or trust. Some participants either refused or were reluctant to disclose information to some of the questions in the narrative life review. Although I facilitated the poetry-writing process, I made a conscientious decision to make sure the participant was engaged in conversation, as opposed to a question and answer dialogue. Most importantly, I gave feedback, asked questions, and shared my familiarity with certain parts of their stories, which socially engaged me with the participant.

The intervals between phases were the strongest limitation of the poem, because older adults experience many changes as chronic illnesses progress and their memory is limited. I found that three of the participants did not remember the poem from Phase I and one participant remembered the theme of the poem but not the specifics. For example, one participant who had a cognitive deficit in Phase I worsened after a stroke before we began Phase II. She did not remember writing the poem with me, and even said the person in the poem was not relevant because she had been dead for many years and that she would rather write about the current people in her life, since her memory is fading. Despite her cognitive deficits, she avidly read the poem, the open-ended evaluation and informed consent.

One participant suggested that projects conducted, similar to my thesis, involves either “do-gooders” or people who have a passion for communicating with elders. She suggested more interaction would have been important. One participant did not remember me. She suggested that she would have needed more time to reflect to complete the evaluation. Another participant responded negatively on the open-ended evaluation because she displayed no interest in the project, but suggested she wanted to help me out and would only refer the process to a friend or family if I were “hard up” to get participants.

One participant was highly hesitant to accept the framed poem; therefore, she regretted the theme of the poem because the person in the poem died many years ago. In Phase I, the participant disclosed Betty was a strong memory of her childhood, but after the progression of chronic illnesses, memories of Betty were no longer present. She valued what memories she could retrieve now. Her daughter, K.B., visited before I arrived and she mentioned she wish she could have written about K.B. or people that are alive.

Participant F-66 agreed that the topic of her poem remained very important in life, thus suggesting her social support network is very stable. She talked about visitations and interactions with family and friends and how socially engaged she was in church. Even though she was unable to understand the meaning and format of poetry, she remained open-minded and we were able to create poetry that seemed to be reflective and emotional.

The narrative life reviews appeared to be the most important part in which participants, reflect upon the past with someone. Educating the participants about expressing reflection in poetry could have made the poetry writing more significant. Secondly, more interaction would allow the participants to develop a relationship with the researcher. Potentially more positive effects on social well-being could be gained if subsequent iterations of this study include shorter intervals between phases, weekly social interaction with participants, random selection of varying ages and sex, implementing certified scales to screen for well-being. While this effort was completed in an one-on-one setting, additional social interaction could be attained if the project and subsequent poetry reflections were done in a group setting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I found personal value in conducting life reviews. Reflecting upon past, especially during distinct changes, can allow an individual to find meaning in the unpredictable direction they are approaching. Each life review touched me emotionally, and I am so thankful I was able to learn about someone's entire life within an hour or two. I found that highly meaningful, for young girl embarking on journey in search of ways to change another's life and improve my understanding of the other individuals. The participants also seemed to pour out so many delightful memories, some of which I felt they had not visited in a while. I observed more smiles during the narratives, even while discussing sensitive subjects.

I am an avid reader and writer of poetry, and I find it fascinating how perspectives are a dynamic part of creating poetry writing process. As I listened to each narrative, I

illustrated their stories in my head to experience their memoirs. The sensory perception of memories and emotions are powerful, and I utilize that to create a meaningful poem. It was delightful to explore a creative and personal methodology, which may possibly create significance in the aging experience.

Although, each participant seems to experience “writer’s block”, each participant reflected upon the narratives to write poetry. Within an hour, I heard an individual’s entire life story. The participant and I cohesively re-visited how the emotion in memoirs can be a very strong inspiration for current circumstance. I was so grateful to create an opportunity for each person to experience expressive and therapeutic intention of the process. Lastly, I aimed to create unity and personal serenity in older adults, through expressive art and social interaction.

CHAPTER 6

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. NARRATIVE LIFE REVIEW

The life review interview should take about 30 minutes to complete. It will allow the participant the participant and researcher time to establish trust and for the researcher to collect background information helpful for the poetry writing session.

1. What is your name? What name do you prefer for people to call you?
2. Could you tell me why this is your current place of residence?
3. Where were you born?
4. What was it like growing up? Tell me about your family.
5. What were your dreams as a child?
6. Who/what were your biggest inspirations growing up?
7. Could you tell me about your life once you become an adult?
8. What was the highest level of education that you have completed?
9. Did you get married? Have children?
10. Where have you travelled?
11. What were the biggest turning points in your life?
12. Did your life turn out the way you thought it would?
13. If you could write anything about your life, what would it be? Have you ever used poetry to express yourself?
14. Can you pick on influential event, you have experienced in life that you could talk about or express your feelings through poetry.

APPENDIX B. OPEN ENDED EVALUTION

Open-Ended Evaluation

- 1.** Did you enjoy writing poetry with another individual?
- 2.** If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed writing poetry with another individual?
- 3.** Did you enjoy talking about your history and present life with another individual?
- 4.** If yes, could you explain why you enjoyed talking about your history and present life with another individual?
- 5.** Do you think writing about your life is beneficial? If so, why?
- 6.** Would you refer this experience to a family or friend?
- 7.** If you could change anything about the process, what would it be?
- 8.** Any suggestions?
- 9.** Open-ended: This question is an open-ended portion, in which you can say anything that I did not cover in the previous questions. Would like to say anything about how you feel about your experience in the project?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Administration on Aging (2013). A profile of older Americans: 2012. Retrieved from http://www.aoa.acl.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2013/docs/2013_Profile.pdf
- Antonucci, T. C., Birditt, K.S., & Webster, N. J. (2010). Social relations and mortality: A more nuanced approach. *Journal of Health Psychology, 15*, 649-659.
- Butler, R. N. (1963). The life review: An interpretation of reminiscence in the aged. *Psychiatry, 26*(1), 65-76.
- Caldwell, R. (2005). At the confluence of memory and meaning –life review with older adults and families: Using narrative therapy and expressive arts to re-member and re-author stories of resilience. *The Family Journal, 13*(172), 1-5.
doi:10.1177/1066480704273338
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013) *The state of aging and health in America: 2012*. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/aging.
- Dillaway, H. E., & Byrnes, M. (2009). Reconsidering successful aging: A call for renewed and expanded academic critiques and conceptualizations. *Journal of Applied Gerontology, 28*. doi: 10.1177/0733464809333882
- Franklin, N. C., & Tate, C. A. (2009). Lifestyle and successful aging: an overview. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine, 3*(6), 6-11.
doi:10.1177/1559827608326125

- Gardner, J. G., & Poole, J. M. (2009). One story at a time: Narrative therapy, older adults, and addictions. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 28(5), 600-620.
- Hospice Foundation of America (2005). A guide for recalling and telling your life story. Southeast Florida Center on Aging, Florida International University.
- Kaneda, T., Lee, M., & Pollard, K. (2011). SCL/PRB index of well-being in older populations: Final report global aging and monitoring project. *Population Reference Bureau*. Retrieved from: <http://longevity3.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/SCLPRBIndex-of-Well-Being-in-Older-Populations.pdf>
- Katz, S., & Calasanti, T. (2014). Critical perspectives on successful aging: Does it “appeal more than it illuminates”? *The Gerontologist*, gnu027.doi: 10.1093/geront/gnu027
- Kropf, N. P. & Tandy, C. (1998). Narrative therapy with older clients. *Clinical Gerontologist*, 18(4), 3-16. doi: 10.1300/J018v18n04_02
- Long, P. (2003). Sanctuary psychiatric centers’ information network: Poetry as therapy. 2-9. Retrieved from http://www.spcsb.org/pdfs/resources/a-poetry_as_therapy.pdf
- McArdle, S. Byrt, R. (2001). Fiction, poetry, and mental health: expressive and therapeutic uses of literature. *Journal of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing*, 8.
- Mendes de Leon, C. F. (2005). Social engagement and successful aging. *European Journal of Aging*, 2(1), 64-66.
- Robinson, A. (2004). A personal exploration of power of poetry in palliative care, loss and bereavement. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, 10(1), 2-10.

- Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. (2005). Social environments and the genetics of aging: advancing knowledge of protective. Health Mechanisms. *Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, *60B*(1), 12–23. doi:10.1093/geronb/60.Special_Issue_1.12
- Stephoe, A., Shankar, A., Demakakos, P., & Wardle, J. (2013). Social isolation, loneliness, and all-cause mortality in older men and women. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *110*(15), 5797-5801. doi:10.1073/pnas.1219686110