Dot-Dot-Dot:
A Feminist Critical Poetic Inquiry of Silence in Teacher Candidates' Responses to Teaching Sexual Assault Narratives

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Abstract:
The critical feminist poetic inquiry component of a larger feminist study, where 23 teacher candidate participants read about the trauma of sexual assault and responded to pedagogy for teaching such narratives with adolescents in Canadian public schools, is the focus of this article. This poetic inquiry sought to understand how breath, pauses, slivers of silence(s) and slow pacing surfaced during teacher candidates' disclosures of violence. Such disclosures emerged while learning and discussing the pedagogical potential of Tarana Burke's #MeToo movement, centering sexual assault narratives in the English literature classroom and resisting rape culture(s). Participants' testimonies of the diverse trauma they experienced demanded a poetry of witness. Poetic inquiry attended to the witness of these offerings visually, as *silence poems*. The silence poems re-transcribed participants' disclosures to include the capture of nonverbal moments, such as gaps, pauses and trailings off. The poems also included marked out portions to indicate when the researcher paused and held silence as a witness. With the aim of thinking ahead toward how secondary school English teachers might cultivate radical solidarity in classroom communities to resist patriarchal violence, this paper explores how poetic inquiry might offer a significant methodological entry point for anti-rape research.

Keywords: feminist research; #MeToo; poetic inquiry; rape culture; sexual assault narratives; silence; teacher education

Point-Point-Point :
Une enquête poétique critique féministe sur le silence dans les réponses des candidats à l'enseignement des récits d'agression sexuelle

Résumé :
Cet article porte sur l'enquête poétique féministe critique qui faisait part d'une étude féministe plus vaste, dans le cadre de laquelle 23 candidates à l'enseignement ont lu le traumatisme d'une agression sexuelle et ont réagi à la pédagogie vers l'enseignement de tels récits à des adolescents dans des écoles publiques canadiennes. Cette enquête poétique a cherché à comprendre comment le souffle, les pauses, les tranches de silence et le rythme lent sont apparus pendant les révélations de violence des candidats enseignants. Ces révélations sont apparues lors de l'apprentissage et de la discussion du potentiel pédagogique du mouvement #MoiAussi de Tarana Burke, en centrant les récits d'agression sexuelle dans la classe de littérature anglaise et en résistant à la culture du viol. Les témoignages des participantes sur les divers traumatismes qu'elles ont vécus exigeaient une poésie du témoignage. L'enquête poétique s'est intéressée aux témoignages de manière visuelle, sous forme de *poèmes de silence*. Les poèmes du silence ont retranscrit révélations des participantes pour inclure la capture de moments non verbaux, tels que les écarts, les pauses et les abaissements. Les poèmes comportaient également des parties occultées pour indiquer les moments où le chercheur s'est arrêté et a gardé le silence en tant que témoin. Dans le but de réfléchir à la manière dont les professeurs d'anglais de l'enseignement secondaire pourraient cultiver une solidarité radicale dans les communautés scolaires pour résister à la violence patriarcale, cet article explore la manière dont l'enquête poétique pourrait offrir un point d'entrée méthodologique significatif pour la recherche anti-viol.

Mots clés : recherche féministe; #MeToo; enquête poétique; culture du viol; récits d'agressions sexuelles; silence; formation des enseignants

> I want to read the words of people who fight for breath.
>
> (Moss, 2018, p. 147)

Literacy research has much to gain from poetic research (Patrick, 2016) and while poetic inquiry is a powerful methodology in its own right, it was especially helpful as part of a "double strategy" (Lykke, 2010) for my feminist doctoral research entitled *Exploring Teacher Candidates' Attitudes Towards Teaching Sexual Assault Narratives*, of which I share a piece, in this paper. For this study, I first used feminist critical discourse analysis (Lazar, 2007, 2017; Mills, 2004; Ohito & Nyache, 2019), and then feminist critical poetic inquiry (Faulkner, 2018a, 2018b, 2020, 2021; Ohito & Nyachae, 2019; Prendergast, 2015) to take an artful second look at the data. Through this poetic (re)examination, I enacted my own strategy of "after-the-fact" work to recycle and rethink my feminist critical discourse analysis through poetic reflexivity (Davis, 2014). This paper represents a significant piece of my project: how breath, pauses, slivers of silence(s) and slow pacing surfaced during teacher candidates' disclosures of violence. These disclosures emerged during discussions of their learning about the pedagogical potential of Tarana Burke's #MeToo movement, centering sexual assault narratives in the English literature classroom and resisting rape culture(s). It also represents how I, as the researcher, attended to how I held my breath, paused and slowed down at certain moments, and enacted silences in their stories.

Attending to silence in a project about sexual violence is necessary not only because silence is powerful and multi-faceted, but because the issue of silence surrounding rape culture is contradictory; there is all at once too much of it surrounding rape as well as a lot of unhelpful, even reckless chatter about it in public discourse (Gay, 2014; Hall, 2004; Wunker, 2016). As such, honing in to analyze how silences were both broken and maintained among emerging educators considering how to address sexual violence in public education is significant, especially because there is a need for increased research on student silence(s) generally (Vaccaro, 2017).

As with Barker and Macleod (2018), I never asked participants about their violent experiences, but I did anticipate disclosures. Disclosures are instances when victim-survivors tell someone about their attacks (Jones et al., 2019). When I taught sexual assault narratives as a secondary English teacher, disclosures consistently followed (Moore & Begoray, 2017; Moore, 2019). This is not uncommon; many who teach trauma stories receive disclosures (e.g., Godsland, 2015; Marciniak, 2010; Spear, 2014).

When I started data collection in the middle of the 2018 Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court hearings, I suspected that trauma testimony would be offered by participants and that this would demand witnessing. Six participants disclosed that they had been sexually harassed and/or assaulted. Seven discussed witnessing loved ones' testimonies. Each person who disclosed invited me into relationship to acknowledge, attend to, hear and see them (Barker & Macleod, 2018). I am very grateful to hold these stories.

The Study

In my research project, overall, I aimed to develop theory and innovative pedagogy and to advance knowledge by contributing to research on teaching more inclusive trauma texts in English education (for snapshots of this work, see Moore, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021, 2022). I investigated how teacher candidates responded to teaching and learning about sexual assault narratives assembled into a diverse trauma text set.[1] The trauma text set that spoke directly to sexual violence was taken from the works of Block (2000), Gay (2014), Gilhooly (2018), Kaur (2015), Leipciger (2017), Rosema (2018) and Whitehead (2017). I hoped that by exploring the narratives in this set, teacher candidates would consider how they might teach such stories in their future practices to explicitly address *rape culture*. Rape culture is defined in many ways, and I am always learning more about its contours from feminist thinkers. For example, Buchwald et al. (2005), Gay (2014), Gruber (2016) and Wunker (2016) have all influenced how I understand rape culture as a cultural and political act, as well as a consequence of patriarchal discourses deeply entrenched in and across societies (after all, #MeToo is now a global movement[2]).

To recruit for this study, I first joined two sections of a Bachelor of Education course as a guest and guest lecturer. I ran workshops on how to teach trauma literature, generally, and sexual assault narratives, specifically. Although I had previous experience as a volunteer sexual assault counsellor and extensive experience teaching trauma literature, I wanted to be thoroughly prepared to support students participating in my study. I brushed up on my skills, as Rodier et al. (2012) recommend, and I accessed both community and university sexual assault resources, which included a workshop and a consultation. I recruited 23 participants from the two course sections. I conducted a personal interview with each participant and invited them to attend one of two focus group sessions (each a group of 10 or so) with me to explore their responses to the pedagogy and texts.[3] I also gathered data using a research diary and collected workshop materials.[4] For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the poetic inquiry I used to analyze transcript data that contained disclosures specifically, and these emerged during the interview and focus group sessions.[5]

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[1] That is, "a collection of materials . . . composed of diverse resources on a specific subject matter, genre, or theme" (Lent, 2012, p. 148).

[2] For example, #NiUnaMenos across Latin America and #KuToo in Japan (Hewitt & Holland, 2021).

[3] Please note that after interviews and focus groups, participants were offered a list of local sexual violence resources they could access if they needed professional support.

[4] Please note that only participants' workshop materials were analyzed for this study.

[5] The invitation to join this study was open throughout the four-month duration of this course in the fall of 2018; participants could consent to parts or the whole of the study (e.g., only do an interview and not join a focus group). They could withdraw at any time but none did. Recruitment was conducted at the time of the workshop, just over halfway through the course, and permission was obtained through consent forms. Data included a research journal, 16 pieces of workshop materials from participating teacher candidates (e.g., exit slips), 23 individual interview transcripts and two focus group transcripts that were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the author. To protect participants' privacy and maintain ethics, pseudonyms were used and anyone who indicated on their consent forms that they wished to review transcripts, research findings and/or publications from this study were provided with these items and invited to offer feedback for member checking. Any and all suggested augmentations were honoured.

Research Context: The Resurgence of Tarana Burke's #MeToo Movement

Unfortunately, as I write, in 2021, research on sexual violence is all too relevant. Sexual violence continues, despite a resurgence in popularity of the #MeToo movement. Both the term and movement called #MeToo were established in 2006 by Tarana Burke, and her vision for the movement is to provide support to victim-survivors[6] of rape, especially Black victim-survivors of rape. The movement garnered international attention in 2017, especially after these two events: firstly, U.S. actress Alyssa Milano's #MeToo tweet response to the anniversary of Trump's "grab 'em by the pussy" video and secondly, the allegations of sexual violence by film producer Harvey Weinstein (who was later convicted; BBC News, 2021; Dalton, 2021; Ransom et al., 2020). The #MeToo movement continues to evolve, not only as an outcry against rape but in response to the complexity of rape culture and the discursive resistances it prompts. Ultimately, "#MeToo underscores the importance of an emergent culture of witness in hailing survivors into testimonial agency, rather than shaming and silencing them" (Gilmore, 2019, p. 162). Although #MeToo has been critiqued for having become subject to whitewashing (Phipps, 2019), its popularity on social media has undoubtedly demonstrated just how prevalent sexual violence is.

Theoretical Framework

Ahmed (2017) argues, "to inherit feminism can mean to inherit sadness. There is sadness in becoming conscious [of oppression]"; thus, to her, feminism means "living in proximity to a nerve" (p. 75), and this understanding of feminism especially resonates in this project. Erdrich's (2012) *The Round House* suggests the same. I was reminded of Erdich's story when I saw the call for this special issue of JCACS. In her novel, the young protagonist weeps quietly in his breath and in grief while processing his mother's rape: "I stood there . . . thinking with my tears. Yes, tears can be thoughts, why not?" (p. 75). Relatedly, Ahmed (2017) sees sadness as a potentially complex and rebellious expression responding to "collective failures" (p. 62). Rape culture is a kind of collective failure. It is a sign that a culture is out of control (Madhubuti, 2005). With this in mind, reading and teaching rape stories, although emotionally nerve-wracking, are significant because feminist feelings can likewise become sites for rebellion, and I, myself, strive to engage in this work as an act of resistance against rape culture. Thus, I employ feminism as my theoretical framework with an attention to intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). I use this specific framing especially because, having learned from scholars such as Henry (2011), I also believe that "any serious discussion of feminism in education has to espouse a theory of intersectionality" (p. 262). Intersectionality is activated to avoid perpetuating other forms of violence and to contribute to a collective effort where multiple approaches, such as academic, activist, artistic and/or educational share the same goal of ending rape culture.

[6] I use the term victim-survivor throughout to be inclusive of how people who experience sexual violence might identify.

Methodology

Poetic Inquiry

Poetic inquiry is an increasingly popular form of arts-based research due to its "capaciousness of expression" (James, 2017, p. 23). It is also diversely understood and exercised. Prendergast (2009) showcases this with her collection of forty terms and twenty-nine statements describing it. She teaches that poetic inquiry can be divided broadly into three categories: "vox theoria" (poetry in response to scholarship), "vox autobiographia/autoethnographia" (poetry focused on the researcher's voice) and "vox participare" (poetry mined from participants' voices). These categories suggest how researchers might "live poetically" (Leggo, 2005, p. 441) with data, ideas and participants. Particularly in education research, says Leggo, "we should always be looking for new rhetorics", and he promotes "the utility and value of poetry as a dynamic rhetoric for educational research and practice" (p. 443). The use of poetic inquiry for projects tackling difficult issues, such as mine does in tackling rape culture, is also a growing area of scholarship (e.g., Breckenridge, 2016; Downey, 2016; Hordyk et al., 2013). This project aims to contribute to this expanding corpus.

As a methodology, poetic inquiry has many significant qualities, but three stand out for my purposes: its ability to capture what might otherwise not be accessed through more traditional research methods (e.g., Killingsworth Roberts et al., 2014); its potential for polyvocality, or the inclusion of multiple voices (e.g., Gorlich, 2016); and its ability to promote increased reflexivity (e.g., Prendergast, 2018a). These affordances can enhance data representation by accessing what cannot be recorded, transcribed, collected or represented by other traditional methods because poetic inquiry engages the mind and spirit differently. If employed well, poetic inquiry can bring out nuance in emotion. After all, poetry is a genre with the capacity to convey emotional aspects of data, as well as for identifying the essence of a topic. Polyvocality privileges participants by including "a chorus" (Gorlich, 2016, p. 532) of experiences, which is important because sometimes, in more traditional forms of research reporting, participant voices can get lost (Kennedy, 2009). Finally, poetic inquiry is a way to exercise reflexivity when studying across difference, which is certainly a feminist concern; as Hesse-Biber (2014) argues, "reflexivity can be an important tool" for feminist research because it "allows researchers to be aware of their status differences along gender, race, ethnicity, class, and any other factors that might be important to the research process" (p. 215).

Feminist Critical Poetic Inquiry

As with Ahmed (2017), poetry for me is a part of a feminist life, and so I drew largely from scholars who define their work as either critical poetic inquiry (Prendergast, 2015) or feminist poetic inquiry (Faulkner, 2018a, 2018b, 2020; Ohito & Nyachae, 2019).

First, critical poetic inquiry "invites us to engage as active witnesses within our research sites, as witnesses standing beside participants in their search for justice, recognition, healing, a better life" (Prendergast, 2015, p. 683). Prendergast characterizes this approach as one that "never flinches from catching and voicing hard and shining truths about the way things are" (p. 683). Next, feminist poetic inquiry also and especially informs this study because of its liberatory potential (Faulkner, 2020),

because it can capture emergent "twists and turns" (p. 148) and finally, because it encourages a researcher to take a holistic approach. In my case, this meant drawing on practice, teaching and research all together. For Ohito and Nyachae (2019), feminist poetic inquiry enabled them to demonstrate research rigour. They found that because poetry requires detail, distillation and precision, it enriches triangulation through deepened data dialogue and reflexivity. As such, because of these affordances, the second phase of my analysis was a poetic revisitation of the interview and group transcripts by way of a feminist critical poetic inquiry. By generating poetry clusters to extend my initial analysis, I was able to dwell poetically with procedural openness to enrich the overall analysis (James, 2009).

Methods

As did Ohito and Nyachae (2019), I married feminist critical discourse analysis with poetic inquiry for my analysis,[7] and specifically used *found poetry*—that is, poetry that can be understood as "birthed from an existing text, using a poetic voice" (Hare, 2021, p. 418). Found poetry helped to deconstruct and reconstruct my initial analysis and to check that my findings were properly grounded in the data. I generated these poems using words, phrases and punctuation from the data, attending to line breaks and space as I composed (Faulkner, 2020; Parsons Emmett et al., 2011; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2014; Prendergast, 2006, 2015; Teman, 2019). I used found poetry because I was committed to staying faithful to the participants' voices and to the themes in the data (Patrick, 2016). Two specific ways in which I wrote the found poetry described in this essay were through two forms of *erasure poetry*—one more visual in nature, done without words, using ellipses and space, and another engaging mark out techniques. Each process is discussed—in advance of the poems in the Findings section.

This paper, then, offers a close examination of one of the three found *poetry clusters* (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009) that figure in my work, the cluster focusing on silence. This cluster helped me more deeply analyze the disclosure data. Latremouille (2018) has similarly used a poetry cluster strategy to explore school and student silence(s) for her ecological poetic inquiry. Poetry clusters "help to show the tentativeness of individual interpretations" and researchers might "see for the first time the dimensions of a theme that might not otherwise be revealed" (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009, p. 4). Poetry clusters provided me with a way to look "up close" (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009, p. 4) at the data. To write the poetry clusters, I re-read the data and returned to line-by-line coding. Most poems were created from multiple transcripts. I used this technique to construct a collective voice (Lahman & Richard, 2014). I also used it to see the data differently "through the lens of a poem" (James, 2009, p. 62). Of course, individual poems absolutely carry unique meaning, but when they are presented together, the cluster can add nuance (Hodges et al., 2014).

[7] It is worth noting that, more specifically, Ohito and Nyachae work with Black feminist poetry and call for more research to be done with this methodology.

Findings

The following cluster of silence poems represents disclosure data excerpts from participant interview and focus group transcripts in which participants disclosed an experience of sexual harassment and/or violence or witnessed testimonies of violence by loved ones.

The Silence Poems: A Poetry Cluster

For this cluster, I wrote found poetry, and employed two forms of erasure poetry. The first are visual poems, which make up the first part of the silence poetry cluster. These "dot-dot-dot" poems were used to re-analyze all data I coded as disclosures. I focused on disclosures because they are deliberate acts of breaking silence, even if the extent of the disclosures maintains other silences and indeed also include significant slivers of silence. Next, the mark out poems, in the second part, were named after the participants who disclosed an experience of sexual harassment and/or violence. Three of the six are included here. This cluster, as a whole, represents a (re)examination of the silence data.

Part One: The Dot-Dot-Dot Poems

The pacing in the disclosures differed slightly from other data. It was frequently offered a bit more carefully, more slowly, and it was sometimes spotted with pauses, as participants took care to speak intentionally. These moments of pause, which might be described as quick instances of taking a breath, being quiet or offering slivers of silence, were meaningful for the participants and for me as listener. Poetic inquiry enabled me to pay attention to these quick instances. The nuance of a disclosure, particularly, meaningful breaths, moments of pause and silences when offering testimony about violent experiences, is represented by the ellipses in the visual poems. It is significant to note that it was the writing process itself, a time-consuming activity that required my full attention to the detail, which enabled me to "soak" in these silences in the data anew (Harrington, 2019). Indeed, my poetry-writing experience in this context promoted slowness, which helped me to better attend to textual texture (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009).

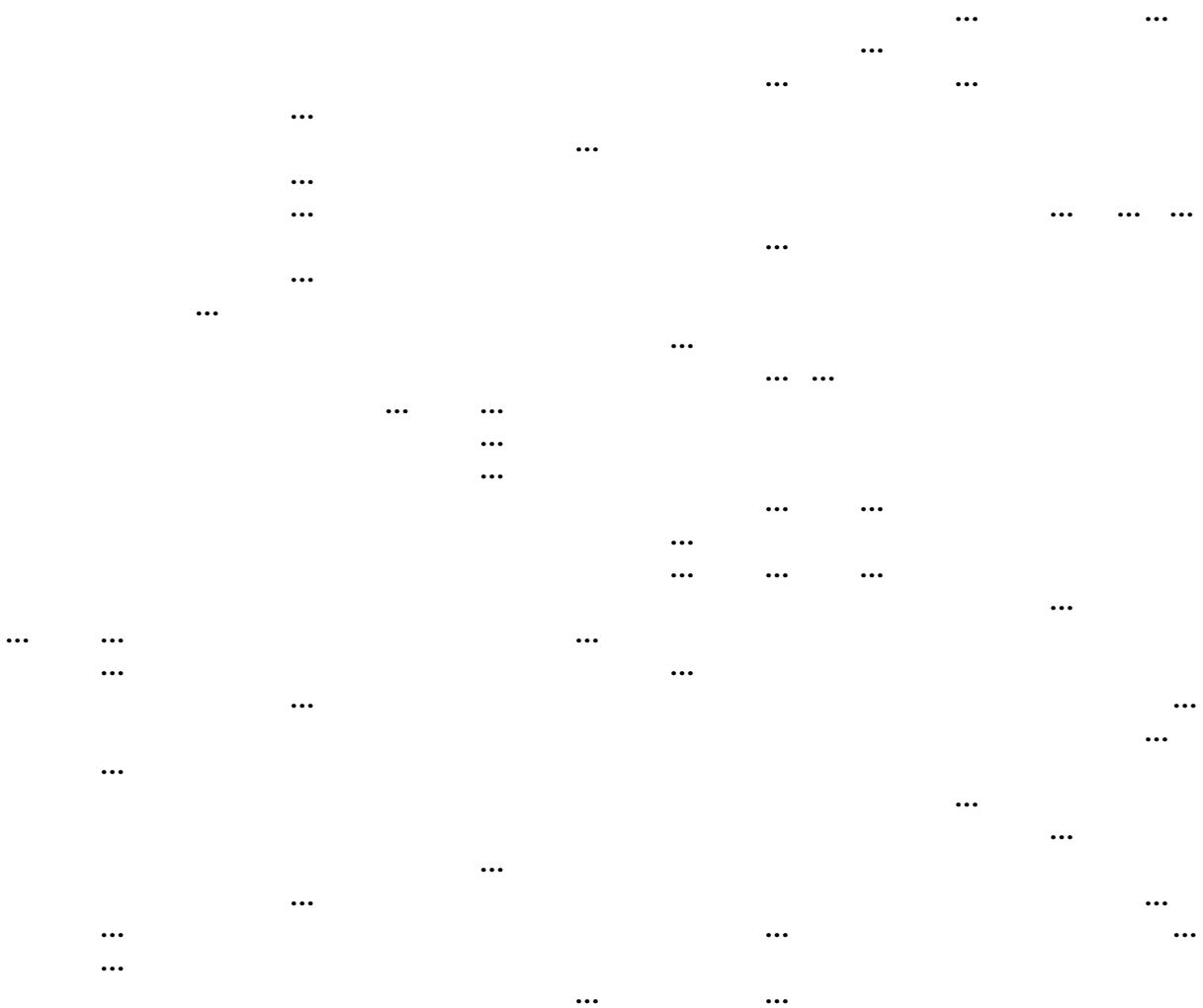
Visual erasure poems were selected because visual poetry privileges a focus on typographical arrangement to convey the intended effect, and visual poets use the page as a kind of canvas (Wang, 2012). As such, to write these poems, I copied and pasted data into word processing software, then deleted the text, leaving only blank spaces and ellipses to signal moments of pause and silence. These moments of pause and silence are not only significant in their own right, but they also give speech so much of its meaning (Cooney, 2014). That is to say, the blanked-out words and ellipses speak volumes and are full of meaning. The first poem represents the six participants who disclosed that they experienced sexual violence and the second poem represents the seven participants who disclosed that they had witnessed the testimonies of loved ones who had been sexually violated.

At first glance, these two visual poems may not seem like poems at all because they have no words. However, I drew from Holmes and Leggo's (2020) understandings about poetry and silence while writing these pieces. For them, poetry is a kind of magic, an "alchemy" (p. 2). In this case, it is a

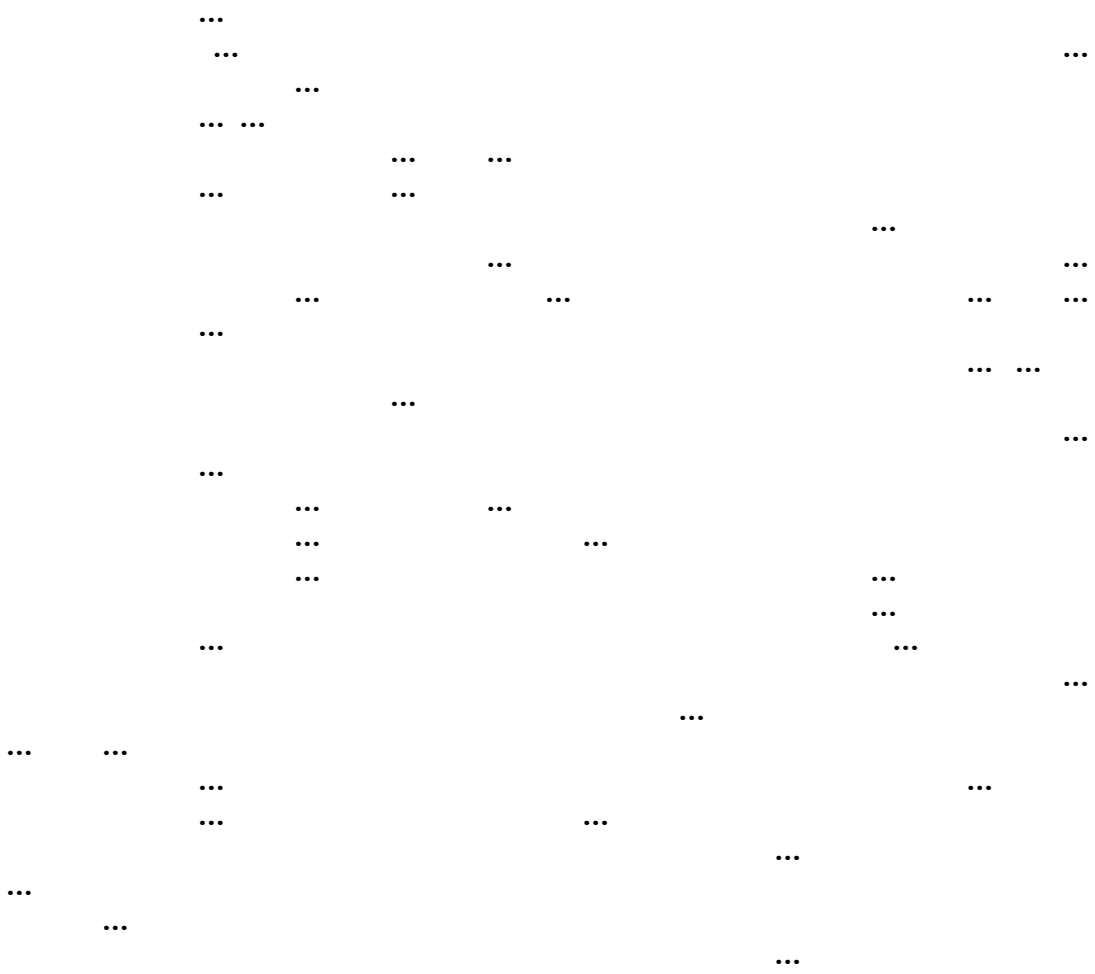
bit of a disappearing act. It is a poetic witnessing of traumatic lived experiences and a poetic expression of respect for the constraints and boundaries of silences. Although there appears to be no words, there are. They are just not visible. They are represented by blank spaces and it is both these spaces and the grammar of the ellipses that should be read. The blanked-out words also nod to how the world is not owed our hard stories (Medeiros, 2018); for example, as Gay argues (in Lewinsky, 2021), regarding speaking truth about trauma, "it's important to recognize that you don't have to divulge everything" (para. 50).

These visual poems also draw attention to the spaces in between the stories, which further represent meaning. As Fairfield Stokes (2018) argues, in the context of addressing sexual violence, "silence smells" and "silence feels too" (p. 293). And so, with these understandings in mind, both poems should be read left to right, as you would with many English texts, and with the knowledge that the empty spaces represent disclosures. Please read the erased texts and pause, as the participants did, at the ellipses.

Our Disclosures Dot-Dot-Dot



Their Disclosures Dot-Dot-Dot



Although the word "ellipsis" comes from the Greek, meaning omission (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), for me, these dot-dot-dot moments are full of offerings. Trauma studies scholars, Felman and Laub (1992) write that "through its breathless gasps", poetry speaks "beyond its means, to testify" (p. 22). It is my hope that these poems of ellipses and silent spaces help to mark the testimonies differently and help readers attend to the richness between the words of disclosure. According to Pollard (2019), an ellipsis is a punctuation "gem" (p. 6). I selected it because it is a sign that helps record experience on the page and because it has "long served as a means of promoting access to emotional or psychological states" (Toner, 2015, p. 1). Further, because ellipses derive their meaning from the context they are used in, they access the traces of silence that hold the emotional weight that so frequently accompanies disclosures: anger, confusion, fear, nervousness, resolve, strength, peace and so on (Johnson, 2008). Said another way, because there is so much threaded through and between these dot-dot-dots, the audience might wonder what each sliver of silence holds and perhaps reflect on their own stories that include such silences.

It is worth mentioning that regardless of the breadth or depth of the disclosure, I was not concerned with, nor did I need to access, anyone's "full voice" so that I would be equipped for a "full analysis" (MacLure et al., 2010, p. 495). I used what was offered and paid attention to the silent moments in each offering. Silences are worthy of attention and can, importantly, prompt researchers to consider our limits (MacLure et al., 2010). For example, because I was present during these silences, I can reflect on how some participants paused but held my gaze for a moment, with a knowing look. Some of these ellipses represent wet eyes, a moment to bite a lip or a reassuring smile. They were all meaningful communications that formed part of their disclosures. And yet, I was careful not to ask follow-up questions, to show respect for the boundaries they set, to know my limits. And so, each ellipsis represents a unique moment and a particular voice, just as every story about sexual assault is its own and was respected as such.

Part Two: The Mark Out Poems

Mark out poetry[8] is produced when a poet redacts words and phrases from an established text. It is a genre that I have found success with as an educator. Often, when students balk at poetry writing as part of their literacy learning, what has worked is handing them a newspaper and a sharpie and asking them to begin blacking out a poem. I returned to this specific erasure genre to attend to the moments that I found hard to deal with as a witness to my participants' disclosures. These moments, I imagine, were similar to what some of my former students felt when I announced they would be writing poetry. In successive moments, I felt apprehensive and nervous about revisiting these specific stories. However, using the mark out erasure technique allowed me to mark the text where I lingered, where I re-read, and like my reluctant students, the poetic inquiry actually started to flow more easily.

Like the visual poems, I copied and pasted this data into word processing software and used the highlighter function to mark where I paused, slowed, or fell into silence, as I witnessed these testimonies. A mark out poem, as a poetry of witness, "combines a sense of historical and personal urgency" that is "future oriented", and at the same time "a warning, a call to action" (Davidson, 2003, p. 166). Gilmore (2015) suggests that each disclosure of pain offers specific knowledge. This explains why the disclosures in my study varied greatly from each other in terms of length. As is typical in interviewing victim-survivors, some talked about their experiences briefly while others gave more involved descriptions (Ullman, 2010).

The mark out poems below represent disclosures from three of the six participants, Barrett, Becca and Winnie.[9] The parts that are blacked out represent where I paused, slowed down, and fell silent while revisiting this data.

[8] Note: I use the term *mark out poetry* as an updated term for what has been called *blackout poetry*, because, like Lahman et al. (2019), I believe that the term "blackout" may be found offensive to some and ought to be (re)considered.

[9] All names are pseudonyms.

Barrett

[redacted] occasionally, [redacted] I was [redacted] concerned [redacted]

[redacted] it bothered me. [redacted] I could tell [redacted]

[redacted] uh, [redacted] for a very long time…

[redacted]

[redacted] it's hard [redacted] and [redacted] embedded [redacted]

[redacted] what did you do?

[redacted] it's hard for me to not talk [redacted]

[redacted] about him [redacted] because [redacted]

[redacted] it just happens to be [redacted] about the children's reactions, [redacted] .

[redacted] I'm [redacted] shifting, [redacted] a great deal [redacted]

[redacted], frankly [redacted]

[redacted].

[redacted] bug [redacted]

[redacted] Trump [redacted]

[redacted] to [redacted] Shut the ---- up! [redacted]

Becca

[redacted]a really important lens[redacted] is [redacted]
[redacted]

You know…
It's … pretty common [redacted]

[redacted] … [redacted]I hadn't quite realized
[redacted] I [redacted]
[redacted]was really different.

[redacted]we [redacted] train[redacted]
[redacted] to realize that.

Winnie

[redacted] just watch [redacted] out for me [redacted] it's coming [redacted]… [redacted]
[redacted] these – these – threats of violence…

[redacted]that I never… ever told [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted]I dealt with it [redacted] on my own.

[redacted] look [redacted] at those pictures [redacted]
[redacted] everywhere… [redacted] people need to talk [redacted] to be [redacted]

[redacted]
handled…

[redacted] dealt with [redacted]

there's this … window where you have a chance to see [redacted]a fictional account [redacted]
[redacted]it's not pretty. [redacted] it wraps up nicely but [redacted]
it [redacted] needs to be made … more visible [redacted]

[redacted] ah, just… the amount of [redacted]
[redacted] trauma [redacted]

[redacted] carried [redacted] around [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted] it's… it's just a [redacted] sense of [redacted]

[redacted] suffocating and that – that needs to go [laughs quickly]

[redacted] I love that [redacted]

[redacted] privilege [redacted]

[redacted] regardless of [redacted]

[redacted] who's uncomfortable [redacted] rare [redacted]

[redacted] upset, [redacted] is [redacted]

[redacted] just as important. [redacted] to a point.

As with Lahman (2021), who uses mark out poetry to explore the intense topic of school shootings, I also found it useful for attending to violence, sexual violence in my case. Disclosures can be hard to provide and witness. Researching rape is both empowering and scary (Ullman, 2014) and so this work can be fraught. For me, this research is not neutral, because my commitment to combatting rape culture is personal and political. Like Best (2003), I feel both like an insider and an outsider in my project. I also take seriously her advice to remain attentive to how I shift in and out of these positions and to be mindful of the contexts that prompt these shifts. Mark out poetry writing facilitated this attention. It allowed me to mark where I breathed differently, held my tongue, narrowed or widened my eyes, sighed and slowed while witnessing. In many ways, the mark outs trace the shifts I made as a researcher from insider and outsider positionings to arrive at the fragments that particularly struck me. In fact, in the poem "Barrett" there is even a line about shifting: "I'm . . . shifting . . . a great/ deal".

Conclusion

This project had a great impact on me as a feminist educator. Overall, I became more attentive to embodied ways of knowing and to understanding lived experience as pedagogical and significant. More specifically, it reified and deepened my appreciation for and respect of student silence(s), especially the slivers that exist in moments between speech, that build up among the words that are

difficult to say, or that fill in spaces completely with significant presence in and of itself. More simply, I better understand that what is not said is as important as what is said. This is especially the case when exploring such intense subject matter. In the classroom, this understanding helps me to be more mindful, to take a deeply invitational pedagogical approach, to model attendance to and respect of silence(s), and to help facilitate the holding of silences as a way to create space for any feelings of distress that may need to be discharged. And ultimately, my feminist critical poetic inquiry helped me to take particular care with the disclosure data of my research.

As Sameshima and Leggo (2013) argue, "it is very difficult to describe strong emotion in writing" (p. 92), which is why poetry offered a measure of methodological flexibility and ease, which is not to say that it is an easy methodology. Rather, it provided a rich way to honour soft moments between hard words. Because participants trust me with their difficult stories, I am so grateful for these narratives, but also for the breath, healing, knowing, pain, relief, suspense, silence, and so much more, that is present in testimony.

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