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INVESTINGATING THE ROLE OF TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY
IN RESPONSES TO CONTEMPORARY POETRY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how one's tolerance of ambiguity affects his or her aesthetic response to contemporary poetry. Students from the Pennsylvania State University were asked to fill out an individual difference measure pertaining to tolerance of ambiguity and then read and assess poems that varied in ambiguity. A regression analysis was used to discover the relationship between tolerance of ambiguity and emotional arousal, appraisals of each poem read, and attributions of the reading experience. The results showed that there was a significant interaction effect between tolerance of ambiguity and poem ambiguity on a synthesized variable which correlated with enjoyment. Implications and suggested future research were drawn from the results of this study.

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INTRODUCTION

The current state of contemporary poetry in America is a polarizing one. Polarizing, at least, for those interested in poetry enough to give its relevance a fair assessment. Views range from dismissive claims that poetry is dead to optimistic cries that poetry will never die. And, in fact, both may be true. For the general public, W. H. Auden (1940) may have been right when he claimed “poetry makes nothing happen” (line 36) in an elegy for fellow poet W. B. Yeats. But for those who do read poetry, he may have been right as well. As a manifestation of the intangible workings of reason and imagination, poetry, in its own way, truly makes nothing *happen*.

Still, there appears to be a disconnect between contemporary poetry and the casual reader, a disconnect which isn't as prevalent in other genres of literature. While observing large scale bookstores, for example, it isn't rare to find the poetry section in an area of the store with less traffic and significantly less shelf space than even a random subgenre of fiction. Additionally, the poetry section consists mainly of anthologies and classics, such as Dante's *Inferno* and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, with few collections of contemporary poetry. Economically, this makes sense since bookstores are ultimately in the business of selling books and contemporary poetry may not justify having much shelf space, but the chances for incidental exposure or readers finding a poet that he or she may like decreases. It is also interesting to note that in larger cities a wider selection of contemporary poetry is available.

This isn't only a problem in bookstores. Generally, contemporary poetry doesn't have the necessary touch-points to be in a position to draw the attention of potential readers, unlike fiction or nonfiction, which receive more consistent streams of publicity. These touch-points would include timely and consistent book reviews in the general press and popular websites, articles in

magazines and newspapers with a broad appeal, as well as displays in brick-and-mortar bookstores. Fiction also holds the advantage of having cross-over appeal into film while nonfiction, due to its broad scope of forms, lends itself to a variety of forms of publicity. Contemporary poetry, compared to fiction and nonfiction, is more inwardly focused, resistant to mass appeal, and content to be an alternative. In summarizing the psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott, it seems that artists, especially poets, are conflicted between their desire to communicate and their desire to be protected from intrusion (Winnicott 1965). Winnicott describes this internal conflict as a “sophisticated game of hide-and-seek in which it is a joy to be hidden but a disaster not to be found” (Winnicott 1965, 186).

Regardless of contemporary poetry’s self-promotional ability, it remains inherently unpopular in today’s modern culture. In the essay *The Dehumanization of Art*, José Ortega Y Gasset comments on the unpopularity of modern art as a whole, as it was during the early 20th century, by making the distinction between what is ‘not popular’ and what is ‘unpopular,’ noting that certain styles of art take time to breakthrough and build popularity. However, he states, “Modern art...will always have the masses against it. It is essentially unpopular; moreover, it is antipopular. Any of its works automatically produces a curious effect on the general public (Ortega Y Gasset, 5).”

For any style of art, poetry especially, to eventually breakthrough and become popular it would have to change the perceptions of people over a period of time, much like an acquired taste (Ortega Y Gasset). While these styles are ultimately subject to differences in opinion, their general likability lies deeper than just matters of personal taste. Regarding this particular issue in modernism, Ortega Y Gasset states, “It is not that the majority does not like the new art...but that the majority, the masses, do not understand it (Ortega Y Gasset, 5-6).” Much like the state of

poetry nearly a hundred years ago, it could be argued that these same issues are inherent among those familiar and unfamiliar with the workings of poetry. But if we take this as the underlying cause for potential readers disinterest in poetry, does this imply “that one group possesses an organ of comprehension denied to the other (Ortega Y Gasset, 6)?”

The very notion that poetry has the ability to dichotomize people into two groups, those who do and do not understand it, is a controversial one. The question remains: are most poems simply too difficult and complex for the general public to understand or is this the result of a lack of effort, commitment, and intelligence? Another point-of-view is reflected in this snippet from the controversial Newsweek article “Poetry is Dead. Does anybody really care?”:

Anyone can write a bad poem. To appreciate a good one, though, takes knowledge and commitment. As a society, we lack this knowledge and commitment. People don't possess the patience to read a poem 20 times before the sound and sense of it takes hold. They aren't willing to let the words wash over them like a wave, demanding instead for the meaning to flow clearly and quickly. They want narrative-driven forms, stand-alone art that doesn't require an understanding of the larger context. (Wexler 2003)

In 2006, a survey was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center on behalf of The Poetry Foundation with the goal of ascertaining the attitudes of poetry’s existing and potential audience towards and experiences with poetry. The results (Bradburn, Parks, and Reynolds 2006) showed that poetry’s potential audience varies from its current audience when agreeing with the statement, “Figuring out a poem’s meaning is difficult.” Additionally, there were significant differences between the current audience and the potential audience in terms of

how favorably the benefits of reading poetry were viewed (Bradburn, Parks, and Reynolds 2006). In regards to exposure, of the respondents who were incidentally exposed to poetry, 75% liked the poem and 79% found it easy to understand, but only 33% said this exposure led them to seek out poetry (Bradburn, Parks, and Reynolds 2006).

Another interesting point to note from the results was that poetry books are more likely to be purchased as gifts for others as opposed to a gift for the self (Bradburn, Parks, and Reynolds 2006). From the results found in this survey, one could make an argument that the potential audience has a different reward-effort schema than current poetry readers in regards to poetry and its benefits. Who would want to invest their time into an activity that was ultimately deemed unrewarding yet requires effort to read? It seems that these perceptions, as well as perceptions of relevancy and a lack of exposure are what hinder people the most from being a part of the current audience (Bradburn, Parks, and Reynolds 2006).

Purpose of the Study

Ultimately, to understand why there is a disconnect between the casual reader and contemporary poetry we must first understand the differences between those who do and do not read poetry. To see if, as Ortega Y Gasset describes it, there is some “organ of comprehension” only one group of people has, it is important to know why the other group does not have it, or if it even exists in a measurable way. One key difference between readers lies in their decision styles in interpretation and criticism. As suggested by Rueven Tsur (2008), these decision styles can be viewed as two critical attitudes relative to each other on a scale from ‘positivism’ to ‘negative capability,’ which is a term lifted from the letters of John Keats.

Positivism refers to the idea that all meaningful statements can be verified by empirical sciences and that facts should be adhered to. On the other hand, negative capability can be described in Keats' own words (Keats 1817): "& at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature, & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason." In another letter, Keats further expounds on his idea of negative capability by noting: "The only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up ones mind about nothing—to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts" (Keats 1819).

This last statement solidifies Keats' idea and its contrast to positivism since a 'thoroughfare' is a passageway and not a destination, like a fact is. The relationship between these two critical attitudes corresponds with the personality variable tolerance of ambiguity, which will be used throughout this thesis as a substitute for negative capability and is defined later in the thesis. Since contemporary poetry strives to be clear while not remaining obvious or obscure, it often finds itself in a state of ambiguity—offering more than one plausible reading through the use of metaphor, line break, word connotation, and other poetic devices.

Different readers cope with ambiguity differently and by the use of an individual difference measure, this thesis aims to discern how important a factor ambiguity tolerance is in gaining pleasure from reading poetry. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to investigate how readers' tolerance of ambiguity affects their response to poems of varying ambiguity with the belief that such research could aid in further understanding the differences between poetry and non-poetry readers and increasing poetry audiences through advanced targeting.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The Poem and Reader Relationship

In the book *Poetry as Persuasion*, Carl Dennis argues that poems essentially work as persuasive acts and that a strong speaker is paramount to drawing the reader's "sympathetic attention" (Dennis 2001, 2) and sympathetic "appreciation" (Dennis 2001,7). Not only does the poem's constructed voice, its speaker, function "as an instrument for producing certain attitudes in the reader" (Dennis 2001, 2) by use of rhythm, tone, imagery, and syntax, but the speaker also works to convince the reader of the poem's own importance. For this importance to be realized, the reader must actively consider the poem's arguments and engage with the constructed perspective the poem presents.

However, the reader may not always be able to make sense of these arguments or add them up in a meaningful way. Poems can be ambiguous or difficult to read for a number of reasons and push the reader's information processing abilities. These reasons can be sorted into three distinct categories (Shepherd 2008). The first category deals with the poem's explication and its use of unfamiliar words, unfamiliar references, and complex, novel, and incomplete sentence structures. The second category deals with how the reader interprets the poem. This occurs when the reader cannot discern the literal sense of the poem or understand its intentions. This is referred to as the poem's semantic difficulty. The last category deals with the reader's recognition of the poem. This normally means that a reader misinterprets the poem's form and purpose, or doesn't understand what makes the poem a poem.

In addition to these difficulties inherent in poetry, readers may not accurately be able to assess and evaluate a poem due to reasons internal to the reader. By looking at the Elaboration

Likelihood Model of persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo 1986), a model of how attitudes are formed, the reader must be both motivated and have the ability to process the poem in order to adequately consider the poem’s arguments. For example, being motivated to read a poem without the ability to process it may lead to this ‘curious effect’ Ortega Y Gasset mentioned where the reader can’t make sense of the poem’s semantics despite comprehending the actual words. It is important to note that there is no right or wrong way to read a poem, but some readings of a poem are stronger than others and may elicit more enjoyment as well.

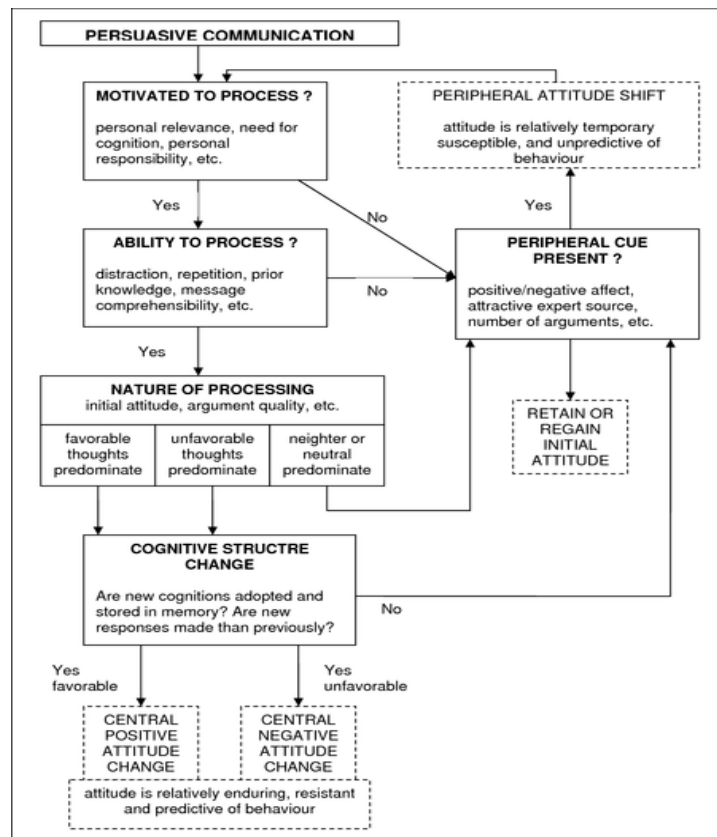


Figure 1 (Source: Petty and Cacioppo 1986)

Ultimately, a poem cannot persuade if readers are unwilling to suspend their disbelief or if they hold the attitude that poems are generally pretentious or esoteric and seek to advance an unwanted ideology. On the flipside, poetry does offer an opportunity to have one’s perspective of

life challenged and expanded (Dennis 2001) by processing its arguments to construe meaning and to be moved. As Carl Dennis puts it, as readers we ideally “want our poetic voices to show us that they don’t claim to know all things” (Dennis 2001, 15), and that, in most, if not all cases, “all efforts to tell the truth are more likely to be expressions of the particular needs of the truth-seeker” (Dennis 2001, 15), the speaker of the poem, “than revelations of the real nature of the world” (Dennis 2001, 15).

Information Processing

Having the ability to overcome the aforementioned difficulties inherent in poetry is an important determinant for how one’s relationship with poetry turns out. These difficulties are only enhanced by poetry’s mechanisms of self-resistance, as James Longenbach describes in his book, *The Resistance to Poetry*. Through the strategic use of line, sound, and voice, equivocations of “metaphors that turn against themselves,” and “syntax that moves one way because it threatens to move another,” poetry resists its own subject matter and, in doing so, provides a source of pleasure for the reader who reads for this self-resistance (Longenbach 2004).

By using these mechanisms, poetry exploits language which, in turn, exploits cognitive processes for aesthetic purposes (Tsur 2008). This exploitation essentially disturbs the reader’s cognitive processes in a number of ways and allows the reader to adapt to this disturbance with their own mental resources (Tsur 2008). These tactics essentially ‘defamiliarize’ everyday subjects, and by doing so artists achieve their desired aesthetic effects:

And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of

things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make the object “unfamiliar”, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (Shklovsky 1965: 12)

To adapt to these aforementioned disturbances, a reader is equipped with three degrees of readiness: mental sets, the shift of mental sets, and emotional disorientation (Tsur 2008). Mental sets are tendencies to approach situations in a particular way, usually derived from one’s past experiences. Shifting these mental sets when necessary helps us deal with changing situations. And lastly, emotional disorientation represents our ability to cope with conflicting attitudes. A reader’s ability and readiness to deal with ambiguity will ultimately aid in realizing the significance of a poem or any other demanding work of art. It is important to note that “the realization of a poem involves the solution of a problem—namely, the creation of an organized whole (cf. Arnheim, 1957: 55). ‘Organized whole’ is not a *given* fact, but rather an achievement by deploying certain cognitive strategies” (Tsur 2008, 30-31).

Additionally, something needs to be said about the medium in which poems deliver their significance. Anything expressed in language and words is “constantly between us and the immediate experiencing of the world” (Tsur 2008, 46). It is by use of this distance that poems can generate their aesthetic effects in trying to “impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known” (Shklovsky 1965). Emotions aroused from a work of creative writing differ from a visual medium, such as a movie, as well as the process in which we both recognize and experience an emotion in both (Tsur 2008). Whereas the process of recognizing and experiencing emotions in a movie might be seamless, as in a sad scene inducing sad feelings, these actions are delayed in the process of reading, allowing poetic conventions to

produce interesting emotional effects. However, to perceive these effects and work through poetry's means of self-resistance, it is assumed that one requires a high tolerance of ambiguity which is explained in the subsequent section.

Tolerance of Ambiguity: Review and Applications

The concept of tolerance of ambiguity made some of its first appearances more than sixty years ago when Frenkel-Brunswick (1948, 1949) argued it as an emotional and perceptual personality variable relevant to basic social interaction. She defined intolerance of ambiguity as “a tendency to resort to black-and-white solutions, to arrive at premature closure as to evaluative aspects, often at the neglect of reality, and to seek for unqualified and unambiguous overall acceptance and rejection of other people” (1949, p. 115). Afterwards, numerous studies have involved tolerance of ambiguity as a variable in specific personality traits, such as the authoritarian personality (Adorno 1950) and dogmatism (Rokeach 1956). Other studies have focused on further defining tolerance of ambiguity as an interesting variable in its own right.

Budner (1962) defined intolerance of ambiguity as “the tendency to perceive (i.e. interpret) ambiguous situations as sources of threat” and tolerance of ambiguity as “the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable” (Budner 1962, 29). In Budner's research to accurately define ambiguity, he ultimately broke it down into three dimensions: novelty, complexity, and insolubility. Budner described novelty as “a completely new situation in which there are no familiar cues” (Budner 1962, 30), complexity as “a great number of cues to be taken into account” (Budner 1962, 30), and insolubility as “a contradictory situation in which different elements or cues suggest different structures” (Budner 1962, 30).

Over the years following Budner's research and Bunder's creation of a tolerance of ambiguity measure (Budner 1962), a number of other researchers created their own measurements in hopes to find the most accurate way to measure tolerance of ambiguity as a construct. In addition to Budner, Rydell and Rosen (1966), Macdonald (1970), Norton (1975), and McLain (1993) have all developed measurement instruments aimed at quantifying an individual's tolerance of ambiguity. The creation and use of these instruments lead to an increase in correlation research, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s (Furnham 1994). Along with the aforementioned personality traits, researchers additionally sought out the relationship between tolerance of ambiguity and other phenomena of interest such as dissonance (Freonna 1973), cognitive complexity and sex-role orientation (Rotter and O'Connell 1982), and aptitude for second language acquisition (Chapelle 1986).

Ambiguity, in and of itself, has been referenced to many different meanings in the research literature over the years (Norton 1975). A stimulus is considered ambiguous when it is perceived to have vague, incomplete, fragmented, unclear, unstructured, inconsistent, probable, and/or contradictory cues. Ambiguity also refers to having multiple meanings and/or a lack of information (Norton 1975). Reactions to ambiguity can be seen as spread across a continuum of tolerance and intolerance, or of high and low tolerance. On one end, those who have a low tolerance of ambiguity generally are less receptive to ambiguous stimuli and tend to avoid them. Conversely, those with a high tolerance of ambiguity are attracted to ambiguous stimuli and hold more positive and objective attitudes towards them. Since this thesis seeks to test these tried and true aspects of ambiguity on the aesthetic response to poetry, a brief review of aesthetics is offered in the next section, detailing how the study of emotions in art has evolved.

Aesthetics and Emotions in Art

The way art makes us feel is an important determinant in shaping our preferences, expectations, and future attitudes and evaluations of art. The study of these preferences, evaluations, and feelings toward art, known as aesthetics, is one of the oldest forms of psychological research dating back to Fechner's interest in the golden ratio (1876). Since then, interest in aesthetics remained relatively stagnant until Daniel Berlyne (1971a, 1974) presented a breakthrough in what was termed "the new experimental aesthetics." Berlyne's approach towards aesthetics was inspired by previous research conducted by Wilhelm Wundt (1874) whose research described an inverted-U relationship between stimulus intensity and pleasure.

Key to Berlyne's approach was stimulus features, coined as "collative properties," which consisted of complexity, novelty, incongruity, and surprise among others; these properties very much align with the constructed definition of ambiguity mentioned earlier. In addition to these properties, Berlyne also relied on psychophysical properties—corresponding with physical properties of a stimulus such as brightness, pitch, and hue—and ecological properties—corresponding with the learned sign value and associations of a stimulus. These three types of properties were said to have an "arousal potential" and were responsible for the arousal of feelings and strength of preference for and towards a stimulus. These feelings were either positive or negative, referred to as "hedonic value." Similar to Wundt's research, the relationship between arousal potential and hedonic value also demonstrated an inverted-U function where a moderate level of arousal related to peak hedonic value. Low arousal began from a neutral hedonic value yet high arousal shifted the hedonic value from positive to negative.

This approach towards the study of aesthetics ranged from studying preferences towards random generated polygons (Evans & Day 1971) to preferences toward musical melodies and visual art between untrained and expert individuals (Crozier 1974; Hare 1974). Since these properties were inherent in the structure of the art, it was assumed the inverted-U function would be in other aesthetic contexts, such as poetry, which could be classified as having these properties. However, there have been a number of inconsistent results and weaknesses in Berlyne's theory (Martindale 1990) including the viability of general arousal as a relevant concept (Cupchik 1988).

Recently, more attention has been paid towards modern emotion psychology and how it could benefit the study of aesthetics. Paul J. Silvia (2005) has suggested using appraisal theories of emotion and has sought to develop an appraisal model for interest in four studies involving random generated polygons, contemporary poetry, and visual art (Silvia 2005a). Appraisal theory asserts that emotions arise from the evaluation of a stimulus and not the stimulus itself (Roseman & Smith 2001). This differs from Berlyne's approach which focused on objective stimulus properties and saw the emotional response and preference as a general function of arousal. In comparison, appraisals are subjective and rely more on an individual's perception of the characteristics of a stimulus.

To provide an example of an appraisal structure: Scherer (2001a) offered a multi-level model of appraisal which consisted of sequential cognitive checking which, in theory, causes and enacts the emotional experience. The series of checks fall into four broad categories—relevance, implication, coping, and significance—which are interdependent and subject to reappraisals in order for the evaluation to right itself (Scherer 2001a). Generally, the appraisal process begins with a novelty check and assessment of pleasantness and unpleasantness. The appraisals that

follow, especially if the stimulus is deemed unpleasant, concern relevance to a goal, attributions of causality and controllability, discrepancy with expectations, coping potential, and normative significance (Scherer 2001a). The idea is that different combinations of appraisals arouse different emotions.

Many researchers (Ellsworth and Smith 1985; Frijda 1986; Scherer 1988; Ortony et al. 1988; Roseman 1991) have developed similar views on which appraisals cause emotions and have developed similar broad categories such as evaluations of pleasantness and attributions related to the event being appraised. Furthermore, not only is appraisal theory being used more heavily to convey how appraisals of events generate emotion, but how appraisals can influence judgments, form predispositions, and inform behavior. Lerner and Keltner (2001) constructed the appraisal-tendency framework which suggests that emotions aroused from appraisals can lead to a tendency to appraise future events similarly with the central appraisals that gave rise to the initial emotions, summarized as “appraisal tendencies.” Seeking to extend the appraisal-tendency framework, Winterich, Han, and Lerner (2010) provided evidence that an emotional experience, with a contrasting appraisal tendency, could blunt a subsequent emotional experience.

In regards to art and literature, poetry more specifically, it would be interesting to know how appraisals of the aesthetic experience determine future readership and interest, and how emotional blunting works for emotionally disoriented readers especially when accounting for crucial personality variables such as tolerance of ambiguity. Although the study presented in this thesis does not provide results to make assessments on future behavior, the results could provide a launch point for additional research.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study is a 2 (poem ambiguity: low, high) X 2 (tolerance of ambiguity: low, high) design with tolerance of ambiguity treated as a continuous variable and aims to identify how the interaction of these variables affects emotional arousal, enjoyment of the reading experience, and attributions of this enjoyment. Emotional arousal can be defined as the activation of emotional states (Thayer 1978) whereas enjoyment is defined, for the purpose of this thesis, as the aggregate evaluative aspect of the emotions generated during the reading experience (Harold 2011). Also included in the study are aesthetic poem characteristics to be appraised by the respondents, which serve as a manipulation check and provide additional information on the assessments of the poem. Furthermore, this study does not include all of the checks in Scherer's multi-level model of appraisal as certain checks, due to the interests of the study, were not relevant or needed to be accounted for, such as relevance to social reference groups and normative significance.

The respondents, although a random sample, were collected from a pool of students who largely did not have much experience with contemporary poetry. This was by design to see how tolerance of ambiguity moderates the reading experience for those who are unfamiliar with poetry's ways of 'defamiliarization.' The goal of the research is mainly to answer the broad question: How does a reader's tolerance of ambiguity affect his or her aesthetic response to contemporary poetry? Poem ambiguity was generally hypothesized to have a moderating effect on tolerance of ambiguity. Individual hypotheses are presented below:

H1: For the high ambiguity condition, those with a higher tolerance of ambiguity will become more emotionally aroused compared to those with a lower tolerance of

ambiguity. Tolerance of ambiguity will have no effect on emotional arousal in the low ambiguity condition.

H2: For the high-ambiguity condition, those with a higher tolerance of ambiguity will enjoy the poem more as opposed to those with a lower tolerance of ambiguity. For the low ambiguity condition, tolerance of ambiguity will not have an effect on enjoyment.

H3: For the high ambiguity condition, those a with a higher tolerance of ambiguity will attribute their enjoyment as an internal, changeable, and controllable occurrence as opposed to those with a lower tolerance of ambiguity who will tend to attribute their enjoyment as an external, unchanging, and uncontrollable occurrence. Tolerance of ambiguity will not have an effect on attributions in the low ambiguity condition.

METHOD

Procedure

The study was offered as an extra credit opportunity in marketing related courses where respondent participation was voluntary. The respondents were allowed to take the survey online in whichever location they saw fit before a certain period of time. The respondents were told that the purpose of the study was to explore how readers understand contemporary poetry. Upon beginning the survey, respondents filled out a questionnaire assessing their tolerance of ambiguity and were then randomly assigned a set of poems in a random order to read and assess. After reading and assessing both poems in the set, respondents were asked to give personal information such as gender, class standing, and how knowledgeable they felt about poetry. The complete survey can be found in appendix A.

Subjects

There were a total of 174 respondents, 54 males and 120 females, which consisted of students in marketing related courses at the Pennsylvania State University. 34.1% of the respondents were college juniors while the remaining 65.9% were seniors. A total of 13.2 % of respondents cited that they did not mainly speak English at home. Because poem difficulty may be influenced by language barriers, these respondents were excluded from the data analysis leaving a total sample of 151 respondents, 46 males and 105 females.

Independent and Dependent Variables

Tolerance of ambiguity and poem ambiguity were the two independent variables. The former variable is assessed as a continuous variable while the latter was divided into two sets, the

control set and the ambiguous set. Emotional arousal, poem appraisals, enjoyment, and attributions of enjoyment were the dependent variables.

Instruments

Tolerance of ambiguity questionnaire – Macdonald’s (1970) Revised Scale of Ambiguity Tolerance was used to measure the respondent’s tolerance of ambiguity. The scale, commonly referred to as the AT-20, consists of 20 statements that the respondent can rate as either true or false. The scores can range from 20 to 40 and the higher the score, the higher is the respondent’s tolerance of ambiguity. As a result, questions 4, 5, 12, 17, and 19 were reverse coded during data analysis. Example statements from the questionnaire include, “Nothing gets accomplished in this world unless you stick to some basic rules” and “Perfect balance is the essence of all good composition.” This scale was used as opposed to alternatives due to its brevity and its internal reliability with an alpha of .78 (Furnham 1994).

Poem assessment questionnaire – This questionnaire was designed to (A) measure the respondent’s emotional arousal after reading the poem, (B) allow the respondent to evaluate the poem on a variety of attributes, and (C) measure the respondents enjoyment of the reading experience and attribution of enjoyment. Emotional arousal was measured using Thayer’s (1978) Activation-Deactivation Adjective Checklist, commonly referred to as the AD-ACL. Only the energy (A1) and tension (B1) subscales of the measure were used in this survey as this study does not focus on low arousal states. Also, the use of all four dimensions reduces the observed relationship between arousal and other behaviors (Thayer 1989). Examples of the adjectives listed include “intense,” “fearful,” and “jittery.”

The attributes of the poem were evaluated 1 through 7 on eight bi-polar adjective scales. These particular adjectives were chosen because they are commonly used to describe certain literary works. Examples of the bi-polar adjectives listed include “trivial/meaningful,” “simple/complex,” and “dull/lively.” Enjoyment was also ranked on a 7 point bi-polar adjective scale from “very unenjoyable” to “very enjoyable.” Following the enjoyment scale were three more bi-polar 7 point scales measuring the locus of causality, stability, and controllability of the respondent’s enjoyment. For these last three scales, each had their own polar responses: “reflects an aspect of yourself” (1) and “reflects an aspect of the poem” (7) for locus of causality, “is changeable” (1) and “is unchangeable” (7) for stability, “is controllable by you” (1) and “is outside your control” (7) for controllability.

Stimuli

Four poems were subjectively assessed based off of discussions in poetry classes and divided into two different sets corresponding with their levels of ambiguity. The two poems in the low ambiguity set are primarily narrative-driven and feature a limited number of turns and syntax that wasn’t deemed too disorienting. In one poem, the speaker simply describes a photograph of a starving teenage girl in Russia back in the 1920s. In the other, the speaker narrates the story of a tree-frog who plans on attending school to the dismay of the faculty and staff. Each poem presents their ironies towards their ending and does not require too much effort to deduce meaning.

In contrast, the poems in the high ambiguity set force the reader to do more work in understanding their significance. One poem features no conventional punctuation and incomplete syntax that blends together and leads to lines that can be read multiple ways; the image of the

cardinal in this poem is constantly transformed and placed in different settings which relies on the reader to make sense of the images to construe meaning. In the other poem of this set, the speaker is a Martian sending a postcard to his home which describes common human life as if it were some novel thing, which ultimately leaves the reader to discern the semantic unfamiliarity of the Martian's text to understand which actions are being described. Copies of these poems can be found in appendix B. Sets were collapsed by high and low ambiguity for analysis.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Preliminary Analysis

Table 1 displays the means of the respondents' AT-20 scores by poem set in addition to the whole study. On a scale of 20 to a possible 40, the mean AT-20 score overall was 28.15, and as noted in Table 1, the scores were distributed fairly among the low and high ambiguity sets, 28.21 and 28.10 respectively. The lowest AT-20 score overall was 22 and the highest was 35.

Table 1
Ambiguity Tolerance scores and number of respondents per set.

Condition	AT-20 Scores		
	M	SD	N
Low Ambiguity Set	28.21	3.22	72
High Ambiguity Set	28.10	2.85	79
Total	28.15	3.02	151

To check how well the respondents paid attention throughout the duration of the survey, a question was placed at the survey's conclusion asking: "How seriously did you take the tasks you were asked to perform as part of this study?" The preceding instructions for the question consisted of five lines and stated towards the end to disregard the question and select the "not at all" option. Only 61 of the 151 respondents passed the attention check, which represents 40.7% of the total number of respondents. Additionally, the amount of time that respondents spent on reading and evaluating each poem was calculated. This was done by measuring the time until their first ($m = 12.16$ seconds), and last ($m = 23.22$ seconds) clicks on the page, how long before they submitted the page ($m = 92.36$ seconds), as well as the number of clicks ($m = 1.04$). No differences or trends were found between respondents by their tolerance of ambiguity.

Regarding information pertaining to the respondents' general experience with poetry, they assessed the following three statements on a scale from 1 to 5 in terms of how well these particular statements applied to them: "I feel knowledgeable about poetry" ($m = 2.3$); "I enjoy reading poetry" ($m = 2.74$); and "I read poetry at least once a week" ($m = 1.38$). As expected, respondents assessed themselves on the lower end of the scale for the three statements, and these results lend credence to the assumptions that the selected respondents, being business majors, would perceive themselves as having a low level of overall knowledge and experience with poetry.

Throughout the course of analyzing the data, the means of these three questions were combined to create a new independent variable called "experience." A correlation analysis involving this newly created variable and tolerance of ambiguity yielded a marginal significance ($P < .076$) and a correlation coefficient of .145. However, it is believed that outside the scope of this experiment those who self-select into reading poetry have higher tolerances of ambiguity and that much like an acquired taste, the more exposure one has to poetry the greater their tolerance of ambiguity concerning poetry will be. This perhaps is the case since tolerance of ambiguity operates as a personality variable but also as a cognitive and perceptual process (Frenkel-Brunswick 1948, 1949).

Analysis of Emotional Arousal

The two AD ACL scales used in this study, Energy and Tension, had a Cronbach's Alpha of .80 and .83 respectively, which is considered adequate and consistent with the results in other studies (Bagozzi 1978; Nunnally 1967). For each measure, the scores could range from a low of 0 to a high of 15, with a higher score indicating greater emotional arousal. Overall, the scores

were relatively low across conditions and after running an independent samples T-test only the “tension” scale had significant differences ($t(149) = 2.25, P < .026$). The means and standard deviations of the two measures can be found in Table 2 by poem ambiguity.

Table 2
Means and standard deviations of Emotional Arousal.

Condition	Energy		Tension	
	M	SD	M	SD
Low Ambiguity Set	4.40	2.15	6.80	3.10
High Ambiguity Set	4.76	2.97	5.67	3.06

Note. Scores range from 0 to 15.

After this initial analysis, a multiple regression was ran on both the “Energy” and “Tension” measures to test the hypothesis that readers with a higher tolerance of ambiguity would experience higher levels of emotional arousal compared to those with a lower tolerance of ambiguity in the high ambiguity condition. However, tolerance of ambiguity and poem ambiguity had no significant effect on energy or tension, nor did they interact; thus, H1 is not supported. Refer to table 3 for a summary of the regression results.

Table 3
Regression Results for Tolerance of Ambiguity and Poem Ambiguity on Emotional Arousal.

Independent Variable	Energy		Tension	
	Unstandardized Coefficient Estimate	t-Value	Unstandardized Coefficient Estimate	t-Value
Tolerance of Ambiguity (AT)	-0.03	-0.27	-0.17	-1.50
Poem Ambiguity (PA)	0.96	0.24	-2.16	-0.46
AT X PA	-0.02	-0.15	0.04	0.22
Energy: $R^2 = .01$; F -Value = .34		Tension: $R^2 = .06$; F -Value = 2.86		

Analysis of Poem Appraisals, Enjoyment, and Attributions

Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations of the respondents' appraisals of the eight poem attributes listed in the poem assessment questionnaire. The "simple/complex" variable was used as a manipulation check to assess whether the individual poems in each set were viewed similarly by the respondents and the researcher. On a scale from 1 to 7, the perceived complexity of both poems in the low ambiguity set was 4.89 and 4.6 respectively. However, for the high ambiguity set, the perceived complexity of both poems was 4.52 and 5.3 respectively. This indicates that one of the poems in the high ambiguity condition was not perceived to be as complex as the other poem in the set, which could have potentially affected the results. Furthermore, no difference or trend was shown in the respondents' appraisals of complexity by their tolerance of ambiguity.

To test whether there were significant differences between the respondents' appraisals across conditions, the difference between the means were compared using an independent-samples T-test. The tests showed that there were significant differences across the variables: "vague/clear" ($t(149) = 6.79, P < .000$), "trivial/meaningful" ($t(149) = 7.53, P < .000$), "tiresome/stimulating" ($t(149) = 5.57, P < .000$), "senseless/sensible" ($t(139.23) = 7.49, P < .000$), and "weak/powerful" ($t(149) = 6.84, P < .000$). Generally, the high ambiguity set of poems were more closely associated with the lower and more negative pole of the adjective sets.

Table 4

Means and standard deviations of appraised poem characteristics.

Condition	Vague/Clear		Unoriginal/Novel		Dull/Lively		Trivial/Meaningful	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Low Ambiguity Set	4.29	1.16	4.96	0.90	3.04	0.61	5.15	0.97
High Ambiguity Set	2.94	1.26	4.81	0.96	3.00	0.75	3.80	1.22
Condition	Tiresome/Stimulating		Simple/Complex		Senseless/Sensible		Weak/Powerful	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Low Ambiguity Set	4.67	0.96	4.74	1.07	4.66	0.75	5.19	0.94
High Ambiguity Set	3.68	1.18	4.91	1.20	3.53	1.08	4.11	0.97

Note. Scale values ranged from 1 to 7.

Additionally, enjoyment and its attributions were tested to see if there were significant differences among the means across conditions. The tests showed that “enjoyment” was indeed significantly different ($t(149) = 5.11, P < .000$) and that respondents who read the poems in the lower ambiguity set had a more enjoyable experience. Of all the subsequent attributions, only locus of causality proved to be significantly different across conditions ($t(136.84) = 2.55, P < .012$) with respondents who read the low ambiguity set of poems being more likely to attribute their enjoyment to an aspect of the poem they read compared to those who read the high ambiguity set of poems. The results can be found in table 5.

Table 5

Means and standard deviations of enjoyment and attributions.

Condition	Enjoyment		Locus		Stability		Controllability	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Low Ambiguity Set	4.29	0.97	4.82	1.09	4.03	1.07	4.26	1.07
High Ambiguity Set	3.36	1.22	4.23	1.64	3.94	1.55	3.89	1.65

Note. Scale values ranged from 1 to 7.

To test the hypotheses that poem ambiguity moderates the effect of tolerance of ambiguity on poem enjoyment and its appraisals, a multiple regression was run on enjoyment

and its aforementioned attributions. The analysis yielded no significant effects on enjoyment, which means H2 is not supported. The analysis also yielded no significant effects on locus of causality and stability but there was a main effect of poem ambiguity on controllability ($t(149) = 2.15, P < .033$), as well as an interaction effect ($t(149) = -2.32, P < .022$) which is charted in Figure 2. Note, for this measure, that lower scores indicate more perceived controllability and higher scores less. This indicates that respondents with a higher tolerance of ambiguity generally felt that their enjoyment of the high ambiguity poems was something that they, themselves could affect and not something in which they had no control over more so than those with a lower tolerance of ambiguity. For low ambiguity poems, there wasn't much difference between respondents, but respondents with a higher tolerance of ambiguity tended to attribute their enjoyment as an unchangeable experience more so than respondents with a lower tolerance of ambiguity. Thus, there is partial support for H3. Refer to table 6 for the regression summary.

Table 6

Regression Results for Tolerance of Ambiguity and Poem Ambiguity on Enjoyment and Attributions.

Independent Variable	Enjoyment		Locus of Causality	
	Unstandardized Coefficient Estimate	t-Value	Unstandardized Coefficient Estimate	t-Value
Tolerance of Ambiguity (AT)	0.05	1.12	0.05	1.01
Poem Ambiguity (PA)	-1.13	-0.66	0.40	0.18
AT X PA	0.01	0.12	-0.03	-0.45
Enjoyment: $R^2 = .17$; F-Value = 9.66		Locus of Causality: $R^2 = .05$; F-Value = 2.45		
Independent Variable	Stability		Controllability	
	Unstandardized Coefficient Estimate	t-Value	Unstandardized Coefficient Estimate	t-Value
Tolerance of Ambiguity (AT)	0.04	0.77	0.02	0.37
Poem Ambiguity (PA)	3.04	1.48	4.55	2.15*
AT X PA	-0.11	-1.53	-0.17	-2.32*
Stability: $R^2 = .02$; F-Value = .87		Controllability: $R^2 = .07$; F-Value = 3.38		

* $P < .05$

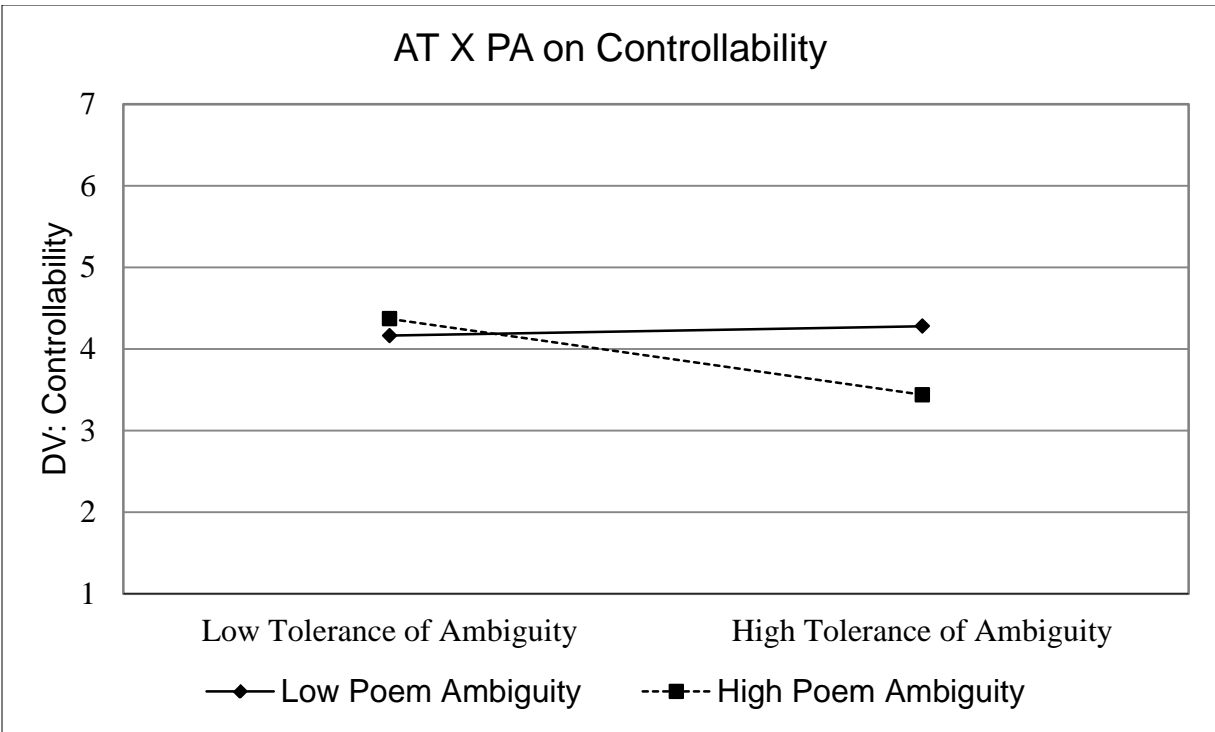


Figure 2

Additional Analysis

Substituting the aforementioned “experience” variable for tolerance of ambiguity, another multiple regression was ran on enjoyment to further assess the respondents. As expected, a significant main effect of poem ambiguity ($t(150) = -4.36, P < .000$) and a significant interaction effect ($t(150) = 2.78, P < .006$) was found and is charted in Figure 3. Generally for both low and high poem ambiguity, those with higher experience with poetry are more likely to enjoy the poems, particularly for high ambiguity poems which would support H2 had it been modified for experience and not tolerance of ambiguity. These results solidify the notion that those who are more experienced with poetry tend to enjoy it more. A summary of these results can be found in table 7.

Table 7
Regression Results for Experience and Poem Ambiguity on
Enjoyment.

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient Estimate	t-Value
Experience (EXP)	0.18	1.17
Poem Ambiguity (PA)	-2.05	-4.36*
EXP X PA	0.57	2.78*

$R^2 = .29$; F -Value = 20.11

* $P < .05$

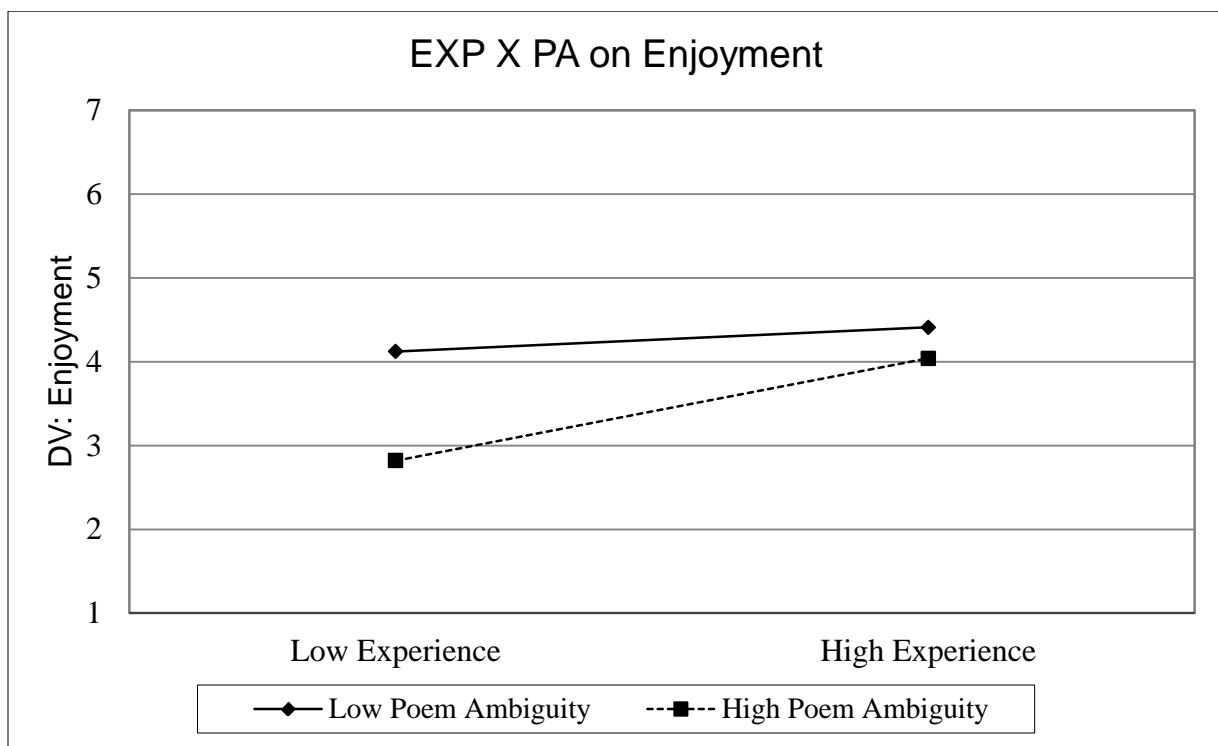


Figure 3

To probe deeper into the data, a factor analysis was also conducted with “enjoyment,” appraisal characteristics, and attributions to ascertain whether variables could be combined and reassessed. These variables were varimax-rotated into factors and, interestingly enough, the results showed that the appraisals of “senseless/sensible” (.835), “trivial/meaningful” (.829), “weak/powerful” (.818), and “tiresome/stimulating” (.783) clung together with “enjoyment”

(.732) as a single factor. As a result, the means of these four variables were combined into their own variable, called “meaning,” and treated as an additional dependent variable to further analyze.

To investigate this newly created variable, a multiple regression was run on it with tolerance of ambiguity and poem ambiguity, as well as additional variables, yielding a significant main effect of poem ambiguity ($t(149) = -2.56, P < .012$) as well as a marginally significant interaction effect between tolerance of ambiguity and poem ambiguity ($t(149) = 1.72, P < .088$) which is charted in Figure 4. For the high ambiguity condition, respondents tended to evaluate the aforementioned variables higher as tolerance of ambiguity increased. For the low ambiguity condition, respondents tended to evaluate the aforementioned variables lower as tolerance of ambiguity increased. The additional variables yielded no significant main effects and a summary of the results can be found in table 8.

Table 8
Regression Results for Tolerance of Ambiguity and Poem Ambiguity on “Meaning.”

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient Estimate	t-Value
Tolerance of Ambiguity (AT)	-0.043	-1.36
Poem Ambiguity (PA)	-3.36	-2.56*
AT X PA	0.08	1.72**
Time (Poem 1)	0.00	1.15
Time (Poem 2)	0.00	0.96
Attention	0.01	0.55
Race/Ethnicity	-0.05	-0.60
Gender	0.06	0.39
Class	0.198	1.24

$R^2 = .36; F\text{-Value} = 8.81$

* $P < .05$; ** $P < .10$

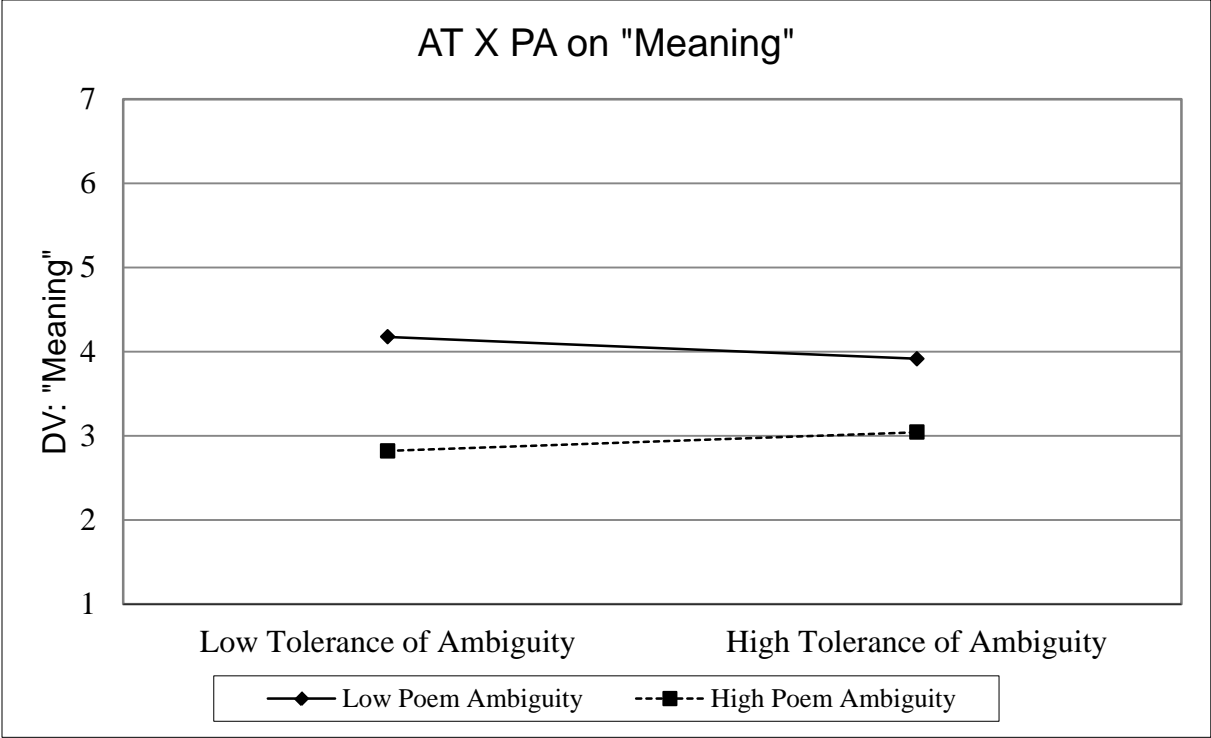


Figure 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the role of tolerance of ambiguity as a personality variable and its contribution to the evaluation of contemporary poetry varying in ambiguity. The study sought to test whether poem ambiguity moderated the effects of tolerance of ambiguity on aesthetic response. Although the results of this study have not validated the original hypotheses, it presented some interesting findings. A factor analysis revealed that respondents' appraisals of certain aesthetic characteristics—senseless/sensible, trivial/meaningful, weak/powerful, and tiresome/stimulating—correlated with their own enjoyment of the reading experience.

This is significant because it could possibly mean that these are the main characteristics respondents rely on the most when determining whether they find reading a poem enjoyable or not. Typically, much of the discourse surrounding the enjoyment of poetry deals with the issue of accessibility (Bernstein 2011), which is ultimately a derivative of how difficult a poem is to read. Note, however, that complexity and novelty, two of the three key dimensions in Budner's definition of ambiguity (Budner 1962), do not correlate with enjoyment as individual aesthetic characteristics but as dimensions of ambiguity they affect how the other characteristics are appraised. This is in part because reading a poem, or the evaluation of any work of art, is an experience and poetry, as Auden describes, is "a way of happening" (Auden 1940, line 41). How a poem "happens" is crucial in determining how readers draw meaning from it or how it affects them emotionally.

The results also showed a slightly significant interaction effect between poem ambiguity and tolerance of ambiguity on the synthesized variable, "meaning," from the aforementioned

appraisals. This suggests that respondents with a higher tolerance of ambiguity have an easier time drawing meaning from a poem, or being comfortable with their own interpretations.

Typically, a person with a low tolerance of ambiguity “identifies and organizes stimuli in a fixed way” (Schroder 1970), whereas a person with a high tolerance of ambiguity has a greater number of rules conflicting on different levels (Schroder 1970), but this advantage in interpreting and feeling comfortable with the mysteries, uncertainties, and doubts of the more ambiguous poems hasn’t been shown to directly lead to enjoyment.

An additional analysis showed that experience tends to play a big role in whether one enjoys a poem or not, which is to be expected, but I believe that with experience doesn’t necessarily come a greater knowledge of the technical aspects of poetry—although it does if one actively searches for these things—but more so a greater appreciation of the experience it provides. This means focusing on the manner in which it is written, not only its matter, feeling what the poem does and not yearning for what it means. As James Longenbach notes, “the wonder of language depends less on meaning than on the ways in which it means” (Longenbach 2004, 100). We know that prior experience has an effect on appreciation but how exactly does tolerance of ambiguity affect the building of this appreciation? This thesis doesn’t provide an answer for this question but it is an interesting one to note.

This matter of experience also seems to speak on why contemporary poetry produces such a perplexing effect on those who don’t typically read it. Not only are its arguments ambiguous, the way it is written unfamiliar, but there are relatively little cues outside of the poem itself in which one can use to form an attitude or gain a feeling of resolution from the experience. Those who do read poetry know how to approach reading poetry and know how to assess its intrinsic cues when formulating attitudes about the poem, which is consistent with

consumer research (Rao and Monroe 1988). Usually, after reading a poem, we can expect one to make attributions about his or her poetic competency, but this confusion as to how to approach certain kinds of poetry perhaps is the reason why the attributions of the respondents in this study hovered around the middle of the scale.

In conclusion, for the potential audience, it appears that tolerance of ambiguity is not a standout variable which will have great pull in determining ones overall aesthetic response, but at the same time, it is a factor that affects how one assesses the arguments of a poem, how one appraises a poem of certain attributes, which could lead to enjoyment depending on motivation and prior experience. It is possible that the potential audience is confused about what poetry is or how to appreciate it since, as Howard Nemerov states in his essay *The Difficulty of Difficult Poetry*, “poetry is many things and is for many things” (Nemerov 1972, 28). On the other hand, as the Poetry in America results suggest, they may just find it effortful and unrewarding (Bradburn, Parks, Reynolds 2006).

In any case, these findings should be useful to publishers, individual poets, and organizations such as The Poetry Foundation and The Academy of American Poets. In finding ways to appeal to the casual reader, the results do not prove that the less ambiguous or difficult poems will garner high levels of enjoyment ($m = 4.29$ out of 7) even if they were proven to be more enjoyable than the high ambiguity poems. This ambivalence does not bode well in hoping that exposure to less ambiguous poems prove effective in changing the behavior of the potential audience. If anything, the reader might just find the individual poem interesting without realizing the joy in the process of reading and discovering. On the other hand, the results don't support the idea that high ambiguity poems will stimulate ($m = 3.68$ out of 7) the potential audience more than the alternative or be all that enjoyable ($m = 3.36$ out of 7).

Overall, these results may indicate that increasing poetry's appeal may not be as much a matter of the accessibility of the poetry being introduced, or the selling of the idea of poetry to an audience that doesn't even notice it. Perhaps it is a matter of relevancy for the reader, of creating an intrinsic incentive to read. There are poems about almost every subject from almost any point of view and by enhancing the alignment of interests between poems and readers, promoters of poetry might see an increase in interest and curiosity from the potential audience. Additionally, these results suggest that less ambiguous poetry, as opposed to the alternative, should be used for exposure to readers with low poetry-related experience.

Limitations

Due to time constraints, the study was conducted through an online survey which wasn't the preferred method of conducting the study as an uncontrolled environment could've affected the results in a number of ways, especially concerning motivation to read. In the sample, the majority of AT-20 scores were around the average with a larger representation of low tolerance of ambiguity than high tolerance of ambiguity. Respondents were all college juniors and seniors studying business which makes it hard to generalize the results for a broader population that takes into account differing ages and disciplines of work and study. Also, it is questionable how accurately self-report measures are when individuals assess their own appraisals of stimuli (Parkinson 1995).

Further Research

I believe that clarifying this study's possible issue with motivation is essential for any further research, which means ensuring that respondents are intrinsically motivated, making the reading of poems an autotelic experience. This may not be possible for everyone since people

with low tolerances of ambiguity are supposedly averse to ambiguous stimuli (Budner 1962), but it would go a long way in controlling for outside factors. Also, as mentioned in the discussion section, manipulating motivation, relevancy, and poem ambiguity might also lend itself to interesting studies. Generally, I believe future research on this subject should be in the form of experiments and should consider aspects of knowledge—perhaps by presenting additional information about a poem perceived as ambiguous as done in Silvia’s experiment (Silvia 2005a)—and exposure on readers with varying tolerances of ambiguity, seeing how they react.

For example, I’ve always been interested in poetry’s ability to instill an aural pleasure and wonder if an experiment that centers around respondents of varying tolerances of ambiguity being split into groups—one group, say, attending a poetry reading while the control group does not— and then having them read and assess poems featured in the reading and seeing if there is a difference in their responses. This experiment could also work where the respondents read and assess the poems before the reading and then do the same after the reading. I also think it would be interesting to do a study on how perceived accessibility in poetry affects enjoyment and willingness to read poetry for respondents who not only vary in tolerance of ambiguity, but in experience reading poetry as well. In conclusion, I believe that poetry can offer a collection of benefits that can’t quite be duplicated, economies of thought, and the sharing of emotions and I hope this thesis provides some valuable insights for enhancing the appeal of poetry to the general public.

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APPENDIX A

Macdonald's AT-20

On the next several pages, there are a series of True/False questions. Please do not spend too much time on the following items. There are no right or wrong answers and therefore your first response is important. Mark T for true and F for false. Be sure to answer every question.

1. A problem has little attraction for me if I don't think it has a solution.
2. I am just a little uncomfortable with people unless I feel that I can understand their behavior.
3. There's a right way and a wrong way to do almost everything.
4. I would rather bet 1 to 6 on a long shot than 3 to 1 on a probable winner.
5. The way to understand complex problems is to be concerned with their larger aspects instead of breaking them into smaller pieces.
6. I get pretty anxious when I'm in a social situation over which I have no control.
7. Practically every problem has a solution.
8. It bothers me when I am unable to follow another person's train of thought.
9. I have always felt that there is a clear difference between right and wrong.
10. It bothers me when I don't know how other people react to me.
11. Nothing gets accomplished in this world unless you stick to some basic rules.
12. If I were a doctor, I would prefer the uncertainties of a psychiatrist to the clear and definite work of someone like a surgeon or X-ray specialist.
13. Vague and impressionistic pictures really have little appeal for me.

14. If I were a scientist, it would bother me that my work would never be completed (because science will always make new discoveries).
15. Before an examination, I feel much less anxious if I know how many questions there will be.
16. The best part of working a jigsaw puzzle is putting in that last piece.
17. Sometimes I rather enjoy going against the rules and doing things I'm not supposed to do.
18. I don't like to work on a problem unless there is a possibility of coming out with a clear-cut and unambiguous answer.
19. I like to fool around with new ideas, even if they turn out later to be a total waste of time.
20. Perfect balance is the essence of all good composition.

Poem Questionnaire

We're interested in knowing how you feel after reading this poem. Work rapidly, but please mark all the words. Your first reaction is best. This should take only a minute or two.

	Definitely Feel	Slightly Feel	Cannot Decide	Definitely Do Not Feel
Active	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jittery	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Energetic	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intense	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vigorous	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fearful	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lively	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clutched-up	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Full-of-pep	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tense	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What do you think this poem is about? (Open-ended)

Please rate the poem you just read on the following characteristics:

Vague	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Clear
Unoriginal	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Novel
Dull	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Lively
Trivial	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Meaningful
Tiresome	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Stimulating
Simple	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Complex
Senseless	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Sensible
Weak	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Powerful

To what extent did you find reading this poem enjoyable?

Very Unenjoyable	Unenjoyable	Somewhat Unenjoyable	Neutral	Somewhat Enjoyable	Enjoyable	Very Enjoyable
●	●	●	●	●	●	●

To what extent do you believe your enjoyment of reading this poem...

Reflects an aspect of yourself	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Reflects an aspect of the poem
Is changeable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Is unchanging
Is controllable by you	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Is outside your control

Additional Information

What is your gender? (Male; Female)

What is your class standing? (Freshman; Sophomore; Junior; Senior)

What is your major? (Write-in)

What is your race? (White/Caucasian; African American; Hispanic; Asian; Native American; Pacific Islander; Other)

Do you mainly speak English at home? (Yes; No)

Please indicate the extent to which the following statements apply to you:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel knowledgeable about poetry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy reading poetry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I read poetry at least once a week	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To help us understand how people respond to poetry, we are interested in information about you. Specifically, we are interested in whether you actually take the time to read the directions; if not, some results may not tell us very much about attitudes toward poetry in the real world.

To show that you have read the instructions, please ignore the question below about the seriousness and instead check only the "not at all" option as your answer.

How seriously did you take the tasks you were asked to perform as part of this study?

Not at all													Very Much
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What do you think is the purpose of this study? In other words, what is the researcher trying to find out in your opinion? (Open-ended)

Below, please list any other thoughts you had about this study that you would like to share with the researchers. (Open-ended)

APPENDIX B

Low Ambiguity Set of Poems:

Photograph of the Girl

By: Sharon Olds

The girl sits on the hard ground,
the dry pan of Russia, in the drought
of 1921, stunned,
eyes closed, mouth open,
raw hot wind blowing
sand in her face. Hunger and puberty are
taking her together. She leans on a sack,
layers of clothes fluttering in the heat,
the new radius of her arm curved.
She cannot be not beautiful, but she is
starving. Each day she grows thinner, and her bones
grow longer, porous. The caption says
she is going to starve to death that winter
with millions of others. Deep in her body
the ovaries let out her first eggs,
golden as drops of grain.

s e g r e g a t e

By: Terrence Hayes

On the first morning of school there is a young tree-
frog waiting patiently at the front gate.
Since this means there will be no classes for the rest
of the day, the children dump their school gear
in their lockers & hustle to the windows to stare.
The girls are eager to transform him with a kiss; the boys eager
to see him on the basketball court. But their principal greets
him with a "Get the Hell out of here!" A security guard fetches the tear-
gas. Some of the older teachers crowd in the doorway like befuddled geese.
"You belong in our swamps not our schools!" they rage.
But clearly the cool-blooded Amphibian-American does not agree.

High Ambiguity Set of Poems:

The Cardinal is the Marriage Bird

By: Shane McCrae

The cardinal is the marriage bird / And flies a flash of dusk
becomes forgets becomes / Again the body
of the cardinal in the sunlight in the day / Imagine
otherwise the cardinal in the room

The sunlight in the room in the day / The sunlight
on the snow the snow like frosted glass / The cardinal in the snow
as clear as if it were on the inside side of the window
And not in the world the cardinal is

The marriage bird and flies in the sunlight on the snow / Between the sunlight and the snow
a shadow on the snow but still / The sunlight on the snow
imagine otherwise
The cardinal on the windowsill

And flies
a flash of shadow and the cardinal is the shadow bird / A flash of wound the wound
bird evergreen to evergreen
Wound leaping evergreen to evergreen / Imagine

welcoming the wound

A Martian Sends a Postcard Home

By: Craig Raine

Caxtons are mechanical birds with many wings
and some are treasured for their markings -

they cause the eyes to melt
or the body to shriek without pain.

I have never seen one fly, but
sometimes they perch on the hand.

Mist is when the sky is tired of flight
and rests its soft machine on ground:

then the world is dim and bookish
like engravings under tissue paper.

Rain is when the earth is television.
It has the property of making colours darker.

Model T is a room with the lock inside -
a key is turned to free the world

for movement, so quick there is a film
to watch for anything missed.

But time is tied to the wrist
or kept in a box, ticking with impatience.

In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps,
that snores when you pick it up.

If the ghost cries, they carry it
to their lips and soothe it to sleep

with sounds. And yet they wake it up
deliberately, by tickling with a finger.

Only the young are allowed to suffer
openly. Adults go to a punishment room

with water but nothing to eat.
They lock the door and suffer the noises

alone. No one is exempt
and everyone's pain has a different smell.

At night when all the colours die,
they hide in pairs

and read about themselves -
in colour, with their eyelids shut.

ACADEMIC VITA

Warren M. Beckman | Email: warren.m.beckman@gmail.com | Phone: 570.582.9194

Education

University Park, PA **Pennsylvania State University**
Smeal College of Business, Schreyer Honors College
B.S. and honors in Marketing, Minor in English

Work Experience and Internships

State College, PA **Surge Business Development**

February 2012- April 2012, Intern

- Conducted prospecting calls and generated leads for sales representatives
- Participated in a project expanding Subway's breakfast-hours sales

University Park, PA **Summer Study Programs**

July 2011, Staff Assistant/Business & Marketing Instructor/Assistant Basketball Clinician

- Taught, lead, and guided high school students in a month long summer program

University Park, PA **McGraw-Hill**

January 2011- May 2011, Marketing Intern/Campus Brand Ambassador

- Researched, planned and executed a campus grassroots marketing campaign for GradeGuru.com
- Hazleton, PA **Penn State Hazleton, Student Tutoring Services**

September 2009- May 2010, Student Tutor

- Tutored in College Algebra II, Techniques of Calculus I, and Human Body: Form and Function

Extracurricular Activities

September 2010- April 2012– University Park, PA – Kalliope – **Poetry Staff**

September 2010- May 2011 – University Park, PA – Penn State Marketing Association – **Project Manager**

- Lead various projects/fundraisers for the PSMA Sales Division and unofficial Social Media Chair
- Communicated with businesses in downtown State College as part of the PSMA Consulting Team

October 2009- March 2010 - Penn State Hazleton, Men's Varsity Basketball Team

Various Honors

January 2011- Present – University Park, PA – The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi - **Member**

October 2010- Present – University Park, PA – The International Honor Society Beta Gamma Sigma - **Member**

October 2010- Present – University Park, PA – Golden Key International Honour Society – **Member**

Other

October 2010 – University Park, PA – The PNC Leadership Assessment Center

- Assessed on eight different levels of leadership qualities in a number of exercises