



LOUD,
LOUDER,
LOUDEST

A regenring of a research project dissertation that explores the experience of women survivors of domestic abuse who had practised creative writing for therapeutic purposes—reading their written work at a spoken word poetry event and asking, What can we do as writing practitioners to support them? A case study using a phenomenological methodology.

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Roll Up, Roll Up

This article is not an article,
not in the traditional sense of an academic journal paper.

This article is
a long poem,
a poem on pages
accompanied by
voices from the quiet
of words from a page,
spoken.

Text from my dissertation has been rearranged with gaps on the page to offer space for reflection. I use / / / to suggest the persistent nature of acts of abuse.

Together these words form
a regenring
of my MSc Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes
a regenring
of a research project's dissertation.

The research was a case study using phenomenological approaches with semi-structured interviews.

It explored the experiences of six women survivors of domestic abuse
who volunteered as participants to read
at a spoken word poetry event for an invited audience.

This long poem, not article, not paper
shares the research project in a form congruent
with
creativity and courage at the project's centre.

Spoken word is burgeoning in entertainment and activism.

Yet, there are gaps gaps,
gaps in UK literature about spoken word's potential as a tool in CWTP.

An active spoken word performer myself, I was curious;
how could spoken word be offered and supported for vulnerable women with
whom I had been working?

Findings not wholly conclusive, some women experienced
aspects of re-trauma.

On balance, however, the women
experienced re-framing
of some defining negative features of domestic abuse,
turned these to positive experiences.

They felt
included, proud, accomplished, visible and heard,
confident,
empowered to learn from the experience.

The findings may not be generalizable, yet I encourage others
to replicate the methodology and methods in CWTP research and practice
with other participants and audiences.

Roll Up Roll Up Roll Up.

Keywords: domestic abuse, CWTP, spoken word, poetry, performance

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Clearing My Throat

Find yourself a table, grab a drink, pull up a chair, have a tissue handy, settle yourself in.

Let the lights dim and the sound come up; loud, louder, loudest

I first performed my poetry at an open mic event in September 2011, thinking that the pieces I read on that occasion were not particularly significant, but my response surprised me. In other aspects of my professional and personal life I felt confident as a public speaker.

As I stood at the mic
to read that night,
I was almost overcome
with stage fright.

I was aware of several strong physical sensations, emotional reactions. At the time I was surprised by the power of these, which included almost uncontrollable trembling of my hands, stomach, and legs and swirling vision. I completed the reading of the poems, and as I sat down was aware of a deep pounding ache in my lower back.

I ultimately enjoyed the rest of the evening, felt inspired to write about that experience, and returned to the mic the following month to read my poem, which documents, reflects on the event, and, in its closing stanzas, points to the importance that this form of performance would have in my life.

I will go to the fair again.
Not the daytime safety
of ladybird rides
and coconut shies.

I will have proper grown-up
dazzle in the dark,
hover in the town's night sky.

And let that moment at the mic
be no one-night stand.

(Perry, 2017)

My writing and performance careers have developed, and I have become an enthusiast of spoken word poetry, experiencing a wide range of performance styles and opportunities at home in Wales and in travels to Ireland and Sweden. As a student on the MSc Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes (CWTP) programme, I presented performative feedback from small group work discussions. I became more aware that performing—in addition to writing—my poetry could be therapeutic for me. I was curious about whether this might be the case for others and whether spoken word could become an activity that I and other CWTP practitioners could offer participants.

As I developed my CWTP practice, I was facilitating writing workshops alongside a self-support group of women survivors of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse (DA) is a major public health issue in the UK, impacting upon individual, community, and societal health and wellbeing.

Those who live with, and in recovery from, DA can be
marginalised/stigmatised/silenced/invisible.

I became eager to combine my creative interest with a professional background of working with vulnerable adults to find out what experience the women I worked with might have of reading at a spoken word poetry event and what this might hold for CWTP.

Since early 2021 I have been a regular participant in the Lapidus Living Research Community (LLRC), which shares and promotes CWTP practice, research, and innovation for members of Lapidus International. At one session we discussed the way in which research is presented. Following the work of English (2011) I wondered whether I could rework my research project's dissertation using a genre different from more familiar presentations of academic text. Could I regenre the work to be more congruent with CWTP?

So, here you have an MSc dissertation regenred as a long poem using some poetic presentations; creative conceits to convey the literatures, research methodology, and emerging issues for the participants, practitioners, and myself. Here is a link to a podcast where you can hear the project's written word spoken by myself and writer Lottie Williams:

<https://sites.libsyn.com/437676>

Programme Notes explores the interconnected literatures of domestic abuse, CWTP, and spoken word.

Ethical considerations, the research methodology, and project methods are covered by **Sound Checks**.

Lights Shining After the Party connects my findings with the issues that emerge in Programme Notes and includes some extracts from the poetry spoken at the event.

Future Listings considers implications for CWTP practice and research.

Closing the Stage Door reflects on three years on.

Programme Notes

I was interested in exploring spoken word poetry. I wondered
could it be a tool for writing practitioners to include in their therapeutic work
to support, inspire participants?

I had worked with a group of women survivors of domestic abuse for almost a
year.

Could I build on well-established trust, engage them to read their creative
writing at a spoken word poetry event?

What would they experience?

What would I learn?

What could I share with the field?

I needed to explore

CWTP

domestic abuse

spoken word

CWTP & spoken word.

I found gaps in the literatures.
together.

Gaps that I could begin to thread

In those literature gaps there is silence.

A **silence** of the silenced

silent voices silenced not heard, barely heard anywhere

in CWTP

in domestic abuse

performance

CWTP & spoken word.

I was enthusiastic for spoken word poetry and its potential to make sounds in
the silence.

Domestic Abuse

*Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening
behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have*

been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.
(ONS, 2018)

It can be physical/psychological/emotional/sexual; it can be financial abuse;
it can be broader/more insidious/coercive/controlling behaviour.

Popularly termed *gaslighting*, comprising

assault/bullying/threats/humiliation/manipulation/intimidation to
harm/punish/frighten.

assault/bullying/threats/humiliation/manipulation/intimidation to
harm/punish/frighten.

Designed to make the victim dependent/to isolate them from support.

Designed to exploit any resources they have/to invalidate their experiences/to
deprive them

of independence of means to
escape.

To make them question their sanity.

It is estimated that there are almost 2.0 million victims of domestic abuse aged
16 to 59 years as reported through the Crime Survey for England and Wales
(CSEW). The figure rises steadily

Over 50% of these victims are women.

Figures suggest that the prevalence of domestic abuse rose by 23% in one year
(ONS, 2018). Prevalence continues to rise (ONS, 2021)

Oliver, Alexander, Roe, & Wlasny (2019) identified the economic and social
costs of domestic abuse, recognising that the repeated/repeated repeated
ongoing nature of domestic abuse makes it difficult to identify a precise number of incidents.
They also estimated that the costs of domestic abuse in England and Wales
run to £66 billion.

The biggest single cost area incorporates the consequences for physical and
emotional health.

Women in poverty have their circumstances exacerbated by domestic
abuse.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic women have increased risk of
repeat/repeat victimisation and stigma, coupled with further barriers to reporting
abuse and seeking help (Davidge & Magnusson, 2018).

McGarry, Simpson, & Hinchcliffe-Smith (2011) point out that domestic abuse shares an intersection with elder abuse, that domestic abuse in those over 55 years is under recognised, and the impact upon this group may be greater as physical frailty and emotional resilience are further compromised, social stigma is greater, recovery takes longer.

Trauma is more than a single, transformational, catastrophic event.
It can be episodic///// periodic///// incremental.

Trauma affects our relationship with language.
We are crushed/silenced/muted;
that silence becomes a weapon against us
an armour with which we defend ourselves.
People who live with trauma may lose, and learn to live without, their voice.

Individual victims of domestic abuse hold trauma /guilt / shame / stigma /
recurring depression/anxiety and panic.

Their bodies become vessels
for physical/psychological/emotional trauma.
Their abusers' power can remain following separation, the affect
may be carried for many years.
The silence that has been imposed can become a refuge, a prison,
as independence, identity and self-worth are eroded.

Victims learn that control can be managed though a self-imposed silence that
militates against recovery.

The shackles of control need to be unlocked, muted silence re-voiced.

Cross (2017) calls for a community approach to address abuse such that
we recognise each individual's healing as all our healing,
when we share the unspeakable, even if we cry, or feel heavy and oppressed
by hurt, we also feel joy and a deeper connection with that community.
Maybe CWTP and spoken word can foster connections.

CWTP

Creative writing for therapeutic purposes literature shows, tells, speaks to the
power of expressive and reflective writing.
(Pennebaker, 1990; Bolton, 1999; Hedges, 2005; Bolton, Field, & Thompson,
2006, 2011; Mazza 2017).

Some of the literature specifically focuses on trauma, shame, freedom, and
voice:

Voice – physical; metaphorical voice lost, searched for, found

Voice – found, projected, sounded, voiced, heard, heard

Silences chinked by voices sounded

(Chavis, 2011; Cross, 2017; Wright & Thiara, 2018).

These issues are central to the experiences of survivors of abuse.

Williamson and Wright (2018) in their definition assert that CWTP emerges in
oral, RAP, play, oral, RAP, play, oral, RAP, play

However, I could not find detail in the literature on the process, experience, and impact of creative writing voiced through spoken word events.

Sharing is a key component of CWTP; its impact builds from sharing self to the page, from the page with one person, to a small group, a larger group.

Yet, what is the experience of, the impact of sharing more performatively?

As Williamson (2005) asserts,

performing poetry demands overcoming fear, being disciplined, having immense courage.

Performing poetry might suggest special dramatic skills

to use our body, face, voice to augment the power of the words.

A carefully managed spoken word event

can swell the benefits of initial writing and intimate sharing.

Creative writing for therapeutic purposes literature and practise is rich with detailed activities to support a writing practitioner and their participants to explore trauma/embarrassment/shame, those silencing/restricting experiences that confound self (Chavis, 2011; Mazza, 2017; Cross, 2017).

The hidden nature and stigma of domestic abuse can further undermine low self-esteem/damaged confidence.

Writing into these experiences can result in contradictions for participants.

These need to be handled with great care to prevent re-trauma as the writer revisits features of their lives associated with embarrassment and shame.

Chavis (2011) details the benefits of hearing a poem read out loud in a writing group situation. The impact appears to grow as bodily interpretation and dramatic techniques highlight a poem's meanings in unique ways. I wonder whether spoken word can be another step in freeing a victim from the abuser's story through declaiming the survivor's story. Giving people the opportunity to privilege their voice over that of an abuser seems fundamental to me. Their voices have been lost for so long; they have the right to have them heard.

Spoken Word

Spoken word it's a fast fast
fast-moving dynamic, increasingly politicised genre.

Bearder (2019) suggests,

spoken word poetry is full of cultural, physical, spiritual renewal that synthesises the medium.

He identifies general traits which have clear synergy with CWTP encompassing the poet reading their own work, valuing identity and authenticity.

While my preferred genre is spoken word poetry,

I would also support spoken word story telling
and would welcome readers who preferred that genre.
Bearder's own experience chimes with mine, that in the moment of the poem
being read

the performance moment

the reader and the audience reciprocate enabling the content to transcend witnessing to be re-witnessed.

This is similar to Chavis' highlighting new meaning

The world of spoken word and poetry in particular has grown to celebrate young female poets.

Hollie McNish, Kae Tempest, Rufus Mufasa,

Liv Torc, Hannah Lowe, Amanda Gorman

infuse society with a vibrant medium to challenge, campaign for and on behalf of major health and social justice issues.

They entertain their audiences too.

McGowan (n.d.) says that contemporary spoken word is fuelling poetry that inspires strong and deep thinking, emotion and action.

Such published research that exists in the area of CWTP and spoken word is mostly set in the United States and with young people.

Maddalena (2009) observed a therapeutic connection between reader and audience as she cautioned against potentially undermining features of competitive poetry slams.

I would favour revelrous, playful, respectful spoken word events without the competitive edge of slam as an introduction to the medium.

Alvarez and Mearns (2014) suggest that the performance aspects of spoken word poetry seem to confer extra benefits not found in writing alone. They also considered that people often resolve aspects of trauma before they perform out of consideration for the audience.

In the UK, English (2016) describes spoken word as expressive and free, enabling performers to speak openly, honestly with authenticity in a safe and held environment. Her research with young people found positive impact on stress, confidence levels, and leadership skills.

Bangerh (2017) concludes that *'Rap should be welcomed in CWTP.'* She encourages rap and hip hop's careful use to strengthen the therapeutic alliance, improve motivation, and open empowerment.

With CWTP's strong record of addressing issues inherent in domestic abuse and spoken word's growth in voicing personal experience, galvanising social activism in addition to being entertaining, there is clearly scope for spoken word to become a tool for writing practitioners, and we need to be prepared for how that can influence our practice.

Sound Checks

The creation and exploration of a safe environment closely replicating a spoken word poetry event

indicated a case study methodology.

Women's expressed experiences of the event

indicated phenomenological approaches.

Case Study

multi-purpose,

descriptive and questioning of an event,

offering knowledge to the field, (Flybvjerg, 2006; McLeod, 2010)

can be complemented by other approaches.

Findings not generalizable but can establish foundations for future research.

Illuminates concrete lived experience in context rather than abstract

Flybvjerg (2006) citing Abercrombie.

Phenomenological Approach

renders depth and richness of material to use with women experiencing trauma

(Stevens & McLeod, 2019; Rampley et al., 2019)

Matters of Ethics

Five interconnected ethical issues, questions emerged, as I drew on the experiences and findings of researchers in similar fields.

(Green Lister, 2003; Etherington, 2007; Burns & Chantler 2011; Michalko 2012; Johnson, 2014; Sjollem & Bilotta, 2017; Stevens & McLeod, 2019; Wright & Thiara, 2018).

Ethical issues emerged, re-emerged during my research, continue into my writing of this piece. I hold those women in mind as I answer the questions

*Participants might experience distress
and re-trauma.*

*How will you keep
vulnerable participants safe?*

Their involvement will be voluntary,
I will provide clear project information,
they will have access to the charity's
in-house counselling support, and
I will remind them of other sources of
support and to take care of themselves.

*How will you manage your knowledge
of the women, pre-existing
and ongoing practitioner relationship?*

The research activities will take place
outside other writing sessions and
activities.

*How and when will consent
be sought?*

Through project information sheets I will
seek approval and consent from the
charity's trustees, the members, in-
house counsellor, and those who
volunteer to take part. Volunteer
participants may withdraw at any point.

I continued to secure consent through
this publication process too.

How will you protect yourself?

I am aware that this project has the potential to affect me, that I might experience vicarious trauma. I have my own regular, independent supervision and will be engaging with her at least on a monthly basis to discuss the project.

*How will you keep safe
the project's documentation?*

I will record the interviews on an electronic portable device, not my smart phone. I will create password-protected anonymized files of the interview transcriptions in my password-protected computer. I will delete the transcriptions when the project is complete.

I will check in with participants provide reminders of voluntarism
offer reminders of self-care, group, and community support
I seek consent for an interview transcription and creative pieces to be included as appendices
I hold those women in mind as I seek consent to be included in this regenerated piece as I consider my response to the reviewers' comments and feedback.

The women in this project are survivors, not victims;
their voices need to be heard;
the impacts of abuse need to be seen, to be known.

I gave and maintain a commitment to this project's participants that
I will respect their anonymity, will not reveal their identities other than to describe very general characteristics.

Domestic abuse is shrouded by a thin, chafing veil around anonymity and invisibility; between invisibility, visibility and being known.

It is the women who will choose when they step through that veil.

The women,
regardless of individual preferences
respond as a group
on behalf of the needs
of the most vulnerable.

Methods

I arranged a spoken word poetry event, much like those I regularly host and attend.

Through project information I recruited eight volunteers from a women survivor's self-support group.

I planned and held two writing preparation and event rehearsal sessions in April and May 2019.

The event took place in the support group's usual venue, a medium-sized modern church hall with a low stage. We set up the space with tables arranged

'cabaret style' the women choosing where they sat.

I took time before the event to:

check and help set up the space,

arrange the participants' reading position,

sound check the microphone,

have a pre-event calming, mindful visualisation, voice and physical warm-up.

The audience was formed of women known to each other—fellow support group members, group's counsellor, mindfulness practitioner, local community police officer.

I took the role of MC, explaining the purpose and nature of the event, need for confidentiality, and advice on self-care.

My usual practice as MC is to decide a rough running order in my head and call readers randomly.

I offered participants options to choose the format which became a combination of those who chose their reading positions and those who were happy to read at random.

Each woman read three pieces, one at a time, and I offered comment and reflection after each reading.

I conducted semi-structured interviews to elicit demographic information, experiences of writing, reading at events, experiences of the support I offered, experiences their participation in the event.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were analysed for themes.

Lights Shining After the Party

Of nine project volunteers from the support group, six performed at the event. All six lived locally within the town or within fifteen miles.

They ranged in age from 34 to over 70.

Half the women over 60.

I hear McGarry et al. (2011)

notice the invisibility, under representation of this age group in domestic abuse research.

One woman had joined the support group only a month before the event, another joined at the group's inception in 2016. They chose to call themselves survivors.

None of the group was in immediate crisis, although one still lived with her partner. She was referred to the group by accident, and the women chose to include her.

They held a wide range of writing experience, three had not done any writing until I began working with them in 2018.

One said she only writes at the group

it's a job to concentrate at home

Little experience of reading at an event although some had experience of reading in front of people in school, work or church.

I had to temper my own zeal for performance. Focus on what was right for the readers.

I let them choose and rehearse their own pieces. promoted confidence in their choices to avoid influences of others. They chose to read pieces that they had written the previous year during my first contact with them.

As suggested by Alvarez and Mearns (2014) the women were concerned for the audience, and we discussed how they might modulate their choice of material to avoid burdening the audience.

They welcomed the preparation sessions.

great to get together and think and prepare how things might make us feel. I could see the point of all the exercises.

They took time to prepare and practise in their own homes to select their pieces, hone their readings, to read it right for themselves. Choosing to rehearse and read previously written pieces increased the sense of distance and detachment from the poems' contents and times of trauma.

Rehearsal minimised potential re-trauma and enhanced therapeutic benefits of reading the pieces out loud

*Preparing gave us the confidence
practise essential for practical reasons and I could remain detached, it
was another way of letting go. We have had to learn detachment skills*

The practical and empathic support I gave them was appreciated.

*You helped me to read out because I couldn't see some of the words, I
was struggling, I was so glad you were there to help me read*

One woman identified in her interview that she would access further individual therapy.

The group is a self-support group, and the readers knew that they could access support within the group from each other. They also used their judgment, discretion, and respect on whether to approach someone who might need support.

We had each other's backs all the time

One of the shortcomings I identified for myself was forgetting to build in an immediate post-event debrief.

*for some of us there was a feeling of unfinished business and it would
have beneficial to have had a mindful close to the event*

Arranging this would have given the women an immediate forum for support and I would urge people to include this as an essential component of this kind of event.

The physical environment was significant.

One woman would have preferred the usual and familiar single 'banquet table style' setup. She felt that the 'cabaret style' seating was chaotic, without structure, and it made her anxious. It was triggering for her.

Others liked the equality conferred on all participants reading from the stage and one particularly appreciated the performative nature of the event.

*If I'd just stood up, it would have been like being in the group. It needed
to be something purposeful. Walking up gave me those few seconds to
think 'Ahh, it's happening' It was more about performance anyway,
having that walk up, and people watching needed to be done.*

One participant described the physical sensation of: ‘collywobbles, like butterflies’ as I was introducing the event, but:

with everyone else going before me, I calmed down, they kind of went

I encouraged the women to choose their own poems and the order in which they read them; this became significant for them.

I suppose the order I decided to do it in was the therapy of being outdoors, then one where maybe the audience would be able to understand, identify with, empathise with my situation.

Lists

Helpline – fifty minutes

Statement – two days

Paperwork – two weeks

Bags packed – twenty-seven and a half minutes

Journey – eight hours

Forgetting the past – twelve years

Then my last poem about my children, and that’s the one that means the most to me. I left because of them, so that’s the one that strikes the chord.

and another:

The first part was the bad experience I’d been through, and then getting away somewhere, hiding away and I was thinking why I am hiding away, I haven’t done anything bad... The last piece was alright, that was a good part of it.

Some were shocked that they felt nervous.

Two expressed feeling vulnerable which deepened for one as the morning progressed.

One shared her challenge to her inner critic

I didn’t think I was good enough, no, I’m good enough but I didn’t think what I’d written was good enough. That’s my baggage, though it’s getting lighter.

The Limp Lemon

*But bite the limp lemon
and feel the acidic surge,
and the words will flow*

Although the women did not express it as such, there were times during the event when they experienced aspects of re-trauma.

I didn't like that feeling, it made me feel like I felt a little while back when I was in an abusive relationship, it triggered some stuff.

and

That feeling, a reminder of what I had to go through, a reminder of its own

The Door and The Case

*This is a red door
red was the colour of the door in the house
the one that got damaged by neighbours and my husband.
The case was the one I used to put things in
when I stayed with friends when things got difficult,
or I put in my favourite ornaments so they wouldn't get smashed.
The case said to me, 'Let's go.'*

The women expressed strong senses of achievement for themselves and each other.

They felt like *warrior women*.

They felt safe to be themselves. They felt included

They exuded pride in each other, which gave them strength.

They embraced and exhibited attributes for performing cited by Williamson (2005)

to overcome fear to be disciplined to have immense courage

I was not researching the impact of spoken word on the audience, but it clearly had an impact on the participants who were both readers and listeners.

*Moved, motivated by hearing each other read
somebody read, and it was about lists, and it kind of threw me a bit, for those moments I was back in that situation, back thinking about what I'd experienced*

Felt concern and guilt for each other, seeing the audience reaction as they read

As I was reading, I did notice that there was one woman who was visibly upset, in fact she was silently crying. That upset me, I felt my voice catch, and I thought "Do I go on?", because I felt guilty that I'd upset someone

A loving and collegiate atmosphere increased as the event progressed, a sense of emotional participation in listening to others, was palpable in the room.

This supports the concept of bounce back as described by Bearder (2019) referencing Hegley, where ideas and experiences are witnessed, re-witnessed between reader and audience.

Some traumatic attributes and manifestations of domestic abuse emerged in the women's writing re-emerged in their readings at the event and in their interviews

Some experienced negative physical and emotional sensations as they read and listened to others; they cried, were silent, visibly moved.

In our interview one individual described the invocation of powerful visual metaphors to describe re-reading one of her her pieces.

Trauma resolution is not static, it is hard to anticipate when trauma might rise to the fore in performance, we need to prepare, to acknowledge that, be ready for it.

The women experienced delight, surprise, powerful senses of pride and inclusion at renewed visibility and positive self-image.

Women once silenced by manipulating cruelty and trauma experienced that the spoken word event gave them voice and an attentive audience.

I enjoyed the experience, it was good. I enjoyed listening to the others. I want to do more. You're not going to be shot down in flames and to feel that there is somebody listening to you, somebody appreciating what you've done.

One day I might give it a go. I think having to stand up and do it again, I'd have to do a lot more to practice. I'd do it within group, definitely again.

One said she would definitely do it again... and goes on well in her own writing and performance careers.

The participants' expressed experiences about this event build on the CWTP literature that focuses on issues associated with abuse, trauma, shame, lost freedom lost physical and metaphorical voices (Chavis, 2011; Cross, 2017; Wright & Thiara, 2018).

I urge fellow writing practitioners to consider a spoken word event, it appears this approach supports earlier research from Maddalena (2009) that performing poetry confers similar benefits to writing and from Sigg (2016) that performing poetry can commemorate and transform trauma as part of healing

As the researcher I found myself experiencing vicarious trauma.

For practical and participant-centred reasons I interviewed one woman directly after the event.

I returned home exhausted and shivering from the elation and shared success of the morning, clouded by the dark life-story the woman shared with me, moved by the event's significance for her, the sense of pride she exuded.

I returned home/lay on the bed/cried, phoned my supervisor, slept.

Future Listings

I slid between various roles on the day of the event, as researcher, as writing practitioner, as MC.

When I facilitate a writing group I feel as if I am softly holding reins to support and guide participants. Three sets of reins were harder to hold on this occasion.

At this spoken word event, throughout the project,

I had to hold the reins
to steady myself,
to steady the participants
to guide my zeal

My findings are not generalizable, they may not be conclusive, there may appear to be contradictions, the outcomes were not definitive. But the women I worked alongside took deep opportunities
to bond as a group, develop self-confidence,
find a new way to raise the volume in their voices
become louder

The project offers foundations for further research; consider these:

adopting the methodology with other homogeneous, heterogeneous,
diverse, issue-specific-groups
researching the effect and impact of being an audience member
opportunities for an autoethnographic study
longer-term impact, outcome studies

Think about implications for practice:

Start small, at the pace of writing participants. Know your group well.

Be guided by your participants and keep them safe.

Remember our core values in CWTP they apply on the stage as much as
on the page, round the table, on the stage.

Develop the practice incrementally, hold the reins gently.

Network with local spoken word events. Find one that fits with your
therapeutic values.

Attend, watch, take part, see how it works. Do how it works.

Link in with other presentations and events. Support participants to read
familiar, previously written, shared and rehearsed pieces.

Prepare your participants, prepare the space.

Take good care of participants, take good care of yourself.

Be prepared but undaunted by challenges.

Prepare with mindfulness with practical, physical, emotional, and psychological
considerations.

Have a go. The opportunities for
creativity, variety, expression,
enjoyment, challenge, activism
make it worthwhile

Take small steps beginning with a closed audience, a selected audience,
progressing towards more public and maybe open mic events. Avoid slams or
competitions to begin with.

Be clear, visionary, alert, to the impacts.

The experience for my participants appears to have augmented the experiences of poems passing through our bodies (Chavis, 2011; Bearder 2019). It seems that imbuing a sense of occasion, reading more performatively as individuals and collectively made the experience more powerful and gave the women a strong sense of personal and group achievement.

Closing The Stage Door

As I close the door on writing this regenerated piece of research I notice.

I notice that I can see and hear those women even more clearly now than I could in 2019. I have felt closer, more alongside and with them than I previously felt.

Reading the reviewers' feedback gave me a unique opportunity to meet again with three of the original participants.

They would like to add:

we are survivors

writing had a huge impact on one particular woman, it helped her trust us, because no writing was wrong

if we were still in those abusive relationships we would not have had the opportunities or confidence to attend

distance from the time of abuse is helpful. The longer it is the better, to overcome fear, to keep safe

confidence levels have been eroded due to Covid isolation and lack of contact with the group

We were fearful of performing, but we preferred to read our own writing, share our own feelings, our own truth. Our voices were lost for so long, we wanted to use them, to own them

The process of reading, re-reading, re-hearing, re-writing their voices has raised their volume, their clarity from

silent

to loud,
louder,
loudest.



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