

Independent Study: BMPF 7013F

Teaching Gen Z to sing: teaching with empathy and understanding for the new generation.

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Portfolio

Word Count: 4061

1. Introduction and Rationale

To give this research context, a brief introduction to my work is necessary. I have been a singer, singer-songwriter and teacher for approximately 12 years working in various environments and education settings. I have worked in high schools as a peripatetic singing teacher working with single students and small groups, dance schools, primary schools and private performing arts academies. At the moment, my main job role is that of the singing technique lecturer for Liverpool Media Academy (LMA) in Liverpool for their BA (Hons) course in Musical Theatre. In this role, I am responsible for teaching ensemble singing, and singing techniques with a focus on the Estill Method and also assessing students in their solo singing module. Alongside this role, I am a singing teacher in the prestigious LIPA 4:19 academy teaching students aged 4 to 19 years both pop and musical theatre singing techniques and preparing them for shows and examinations with recognised examination boards. To complete my studies with a busy family life, I have suspended all of my one-to-one students temporarily however, this is an aspect of my working life that is also important to give context to this area of research. My own academy, Rainford and Ormskirk Vocal Academy, offers one-to-one singing tuition to all ages and abilities, the ages of students have ranged from 5 years old to 85 years old giving daily work like variety and as well as teaching style and technique used. The majority of my students across all job roles, however, are approximately 10-25 years old. This makes them “Gen Z”, born between 1997 and 2012 (Beresford Research, 2024). As I am a “Millennial”, born between the years 1981 and 1996 (Beresford Research, 2024), I have found significant differences between students and teachers. Generally and briefly, Gen Z seeks uniqueness and independence whereas Millennials are more likely to conform (Tracy, 2021). If generations differ in everyday life, social situations and characteristics, I find it fascinating that this would affect the student-teacher relationship in the singing studio, according to Serra-Dawa (2014) “Without solid compatibility, the student’s development might be compromised.”

Over the 12 years I have been teaching in all environments, the awareness of cultural, racial and sexuality issues has, in my experience, risen. With this, I have found that I need to be more aware of these issues and how singing lessons are connected have truly changed to accommodate this. While every generation is different, this generation, or Gen Z as they have been labelled has been exposed to more issues and sensitive topics via social media and therefore has a heightened sensitivity to topics such as gender equality, social justice and mental health (Thakre, 2023). By completing this research, I hope to gain more insight into my main customer base and learn techniques specific to voice pedagogy to support, teach and encourage my students to my full capability and strengthen the student-teacher relationship that, arguably, is more difficult between generations.

2. Planned Programme Of Study.

Having a planned programme of study will enable me to structure my learning and organise tasks to make them more manageable, make me more focused and make this module less stressful than the previous research projects I have completed (Katamba, 2023). This section will

include learning objectives, methods, resources, a Gantt chart, a preliminary literature review and an ethics discussion to organise and efficiently research this subject area.

2.1 Aims, Objectives and Learning Outcomes.

For this study, my aims are as follows:

- To gain more insight into the ideologies of GEN Z to provide my largest student group with the best learning experience.
- To identify and implement teaching methods to engage students of this age group.

My Objectives are:

- Identify ideologies and differences between Gen Z and my generation, Millennials.
- Analyse the pedagogies recommended to engage Gen Z in the singing classroom.
- Identify areas of concern to improve the student-teacher relationship.

Good learning outcomes avoid jargon, are specific and use action verbs such as “identify”, “record” or “perform” depending on the type of learning (Oxford Teaching Ideas, 2024). They should also avoid using words that are difficult to measure such as “understand” or “believe” (Oxford Teaching Ideas, 2024). A learning objective is a statement of what a learner should be able to do by the end of an educational activity and using the SMART [Figure 1] system can ensure the learner has a measurable way of identifying the knowledge they have gained during the activity (Chatterjee & Corral, 2017)

SMART learning objectives are:

Specific: What action will be performed and by whom?

Measurable: How will success be measured?
Objectives should quantify the amount of change expected.

Achievable: Can this objective be achieved within a given time frame and with available resources?

Relevant: Are the objectives aligned with the instructional method and assessment?

Time-Bound: When will this objective be achieved?
Objectives should provide a time frame indicating when the objective will be met.

Figure 1 (Chatterjee & Corral, 2017).

With the SMART method in mind, my learning objectives are as follows;

- By the end of this module, I will be able to identify what areas of voice pedagogy are affected by generational differences by critically evaluating pre-existing data and research.

- Identify any techniques, both in singing and teaching that will help me, as a teacher, approach subjects in an empathetic and understanding manner using current methods and research.

3. Methods And Resources.

As this is a desk-based study, I will use existing data to support or validate my learning objectives and findings. There are many advantages and disadvantages when it comes to desk-based research however, the most relevant pros to this research specifically are that it is efficient and no primary data needs to be collected, it is low cost and, when done correctly, the data can be extremely insightful (March, 2022). The cons of using desk-based research in this study are the fact that research in vocal pedagogy is a relatively new field of study (Sansom, 2019) therefore data that is peer-reviewed and verified, also known as “white literature” may be limited (March 2022). To combat this, the use of “grey literature”, defined as “the diverse and heterogeneous body of material that is made public outside, and not subject to, traditional academic peer-review processes” will likely be required to make the findings relevant, up to date and make the impact of the research greater. (Adams et al, 2016). To ensure the validity of this study and to counter any validity issues that may arise through the use of “grey literature”, I will evaluate it for its currency, relevancy, the authority of the author, website or organisation and the accuracy of the information including spelling and grammar used (Sheridan, 2024).

Overall, the resource I will focus on using throughout this research will be Google Scholar as this is the most highly recommended way of searching for peer-reviewed and credible research as well as other research databases such as JSTOR, ProQuest and ResearchGate (Carleton, 2023). Where necessary, I will use books, websites, government data, magazines and academic reports to ensure my arguments and conclusions are based on up-to-date and relevant information (Imperial College London, 2024).

4. Gantt Chart

A Gantt chart is a tool used to manage projects by illustrating work completed over a period of time about the land timeline projections. It can include dates, milestones and more to ensure projects are managed efficiently in a visual way that is simple to read, they can also monitor progress throughout a project (Meardon, 2024).

Start date 22/12/2023	December 23	January 24	February 24	March 24	April 24	May 24
Initial Research and decision on topic.	Book Tutorial					
Plan a timeline of study						

Complete Preliminary Literature Review.						
Begin thorough research, reading and organising findings			Book Tutorial			
Critical analysis of findings						
Write up of Portfolio Excluding Analysis of Learning						
Write Up Research Paper 4500 Words				Book Tutorial		
Analysis of Learning Write Up						
Proof read and submit draft					Draft due: 22/04/2024	
Make any changes fro feedback, proof read and submit final draft for marking.						Final due date: 07/05/2024

Above is the Gantt chart I have prepared for this project to keep me on track, it was suggested to include tutorial dates also to ensure enough time to book in times when needed.

5. Literature Review

To ensure my knowledge and understanding of this subject are current and comprehensive, a literature review is required (The University of Edinburgh, 2023). It will also provide an overview of the subject and provide information on any gaps in knowledge or relevant theories that already exist (McCombs, 2023).

According to Reeves and Oh (2007), there has always been much speculation surrounding the differences in generations and how they respond to instructional designs however, little substantial research has been done into this area even going as far as saying the existing data is limited, lacking validity and reliability. On the same line of thought, Galanis et al (2013) acknowledge the

differences in generations when it comes to learning but question whether this issue is a variable strong enough to need consideration when developing techniques for instruction. With little research on the subject, it is difficult to gauge this however, it is within their nature as teachers and professionals to constantly try to find better and newer ways of engaging our students who, usually and eventually, are younger generations. (Nicholls & Wright, 2018). Nicholls and Wright (2018) discuss how more academic research into the newest generation, who are now entering higher education and the workplace, is needed to “build organizational effectiveness through generational integration.” This could also be true of the younger generation of singers entering the singing studio whether it be in a one-to-one setting or a more formal education setting, this generation is becoming our majority clientele and understanding their trends, personality traits and other areas will teach us how to make their learning environment the most comfortable and as effective it can be. Mohr and Mohr (2017) state that to make the most of academic opportunities, teachers must understand and support the students they are instructing. More specific to singing, this is further supported by Daughtry (2020) when she discusses the topic of singing lessons questioning how older generations can most effectively achieve the best results and “pass on the precious gift of song”.

One of the most common themes current literature explores is Generation Z’s digital proficiency, their ability to access and interpret digital information efficiently and because of this, they are more open to modernity (Shupiarza and Sarbeni, 2021). Often referred to as “Digital Natives”, Gen Z have been shaped by the digital age where they were born with technology surrounding them, being used in everyday life, the first generation to witness this (Mkinsey & Company, 2023). While this is true, Mohr and Mohr (2017) expand on this arguing that is generation, however much information they can access, also appears to need support analysing, evaluating and sorting the information to find the truth or relevance as they explore. They go on to suggest more guidance and strict rules for students searching for information online, viewing strategies and clear goals to help with this. This digital age has also impacted how singing lessons are delivered for example, technology and screens are more efficient than their paper predecessors. Sheet music is often on a screen and streaming of backing tracks and music has replaced CDs. Buying music in sheet music form is seen as a “last resort according to Hoch (2019) which negatively impacts the music industry via copyright laws and composers earning royalties. However, bringing the digital age into the singing studio for this generation is inevitable for any singing teacher as “swiping tapping and scrolling is about as second nature as breathing” for the new generation of singers (Merriam-Webster, 2024).

When discussing the differences in generations, it is easy to generalise however it is important to note that there is considerable variation within generations based on aspects such as ethnicity, personality types and learning styles to name a few (Behar-Horenstein and Horvath, 2015). Behar-Horenstein and Horvath (2015) go on to argue that there are other reasons to enhance teaching techniques rather than doing it for just one group of students and new instruction methods would also benefit other generations present in the classroom. While this statement is made with the best of intentions, when considering that Gen Z has become the largest per cent of consumers and the largest generation, it could be argued that teaching techniques should be targeted at the majority

while leaving room for those who do not conform to generational qualities we would expect (Fromm and Read, 2018).

There are more factors to include in defining a generation according to Mannheim (1952), war, culture, politics and economics play a role in creating shared values within society. Gen Zers are more diverse when it comes to race and ethnicity and because of this exposure to diversity, they have a lower tolerance for inequality (Pichler et al, 2021). With this, issues can arise in a singing lesson environment when dealing with cultural appropriation versus appreciation as just one example. Being authentic is one of society's most relevant issues and is more relevant than ever with Gen Z and brings up questions of when if ever, is it ok to sing songs from other cultures that are not our own. (White, 2020). In the singing studio, it is essential teachers learn to navigate this generation's heightened knowledge and sensitivity towards such issues. Thakre (2023) agrees when they say, it has become increasingly evident that Generation Z is characterised by a heightened sensitivity.

Other literature suggests that Gen Zers are even more impatient than their predecessors therefore learning a musical instrument that takes time, patience and practice seems like an impossible task (Golan, 2024). Suggestions such as using apps, creating communities and integrating technology are just some of the suggestions given to combat this however, most evidence given for these seems anecdotal and doesn't take into consideration, time, cost and effectiveness. This is an area that will be covered in more depth in my research as it has become evident that there is a knowledge gap here.

Overall, the information in the current literature covers a variety of subjects about Gen Z and their educational needs. While most are valid and reliable, some are anecdotal and rely on a generalisation of people in this generation. Using the literature already available and the limited academic research already conducted, the study conducted will apply formation directly to singing lessons and hopefully, give solid techniques and methods to engage the latest generation in a singing studio whether it is a one-to-one setting or a more formal environment such as a lecture at degree level.

6. Ethics

It is important, in research, to adhere to ethical norms as the researcher that promote knowledge and truth whilst minimising error by prohibiting falsification of data or misrepresenting research for example (Resnik, 2020). It is just as important to protect the rights and well-being of the participants or subjects to maintain the study's credibility and protect all involved's rights, dignity and safety (Bhandari, 2022).

As this study will use secondary data, the main concern is the potential harm to subjects when considering data protection and consent as it is often difficult or impossible to gain consent if the data collected has identifying information included. (Tripathy, 2013). To combat this ethical dilemma, I will use only research and data freely available on the Internet as this implies consent to use in further research and analysis. I will also cite all of my references to acknowledge original ownership to avoid any confusion or plagiarism (Tripathy, 2013).

To further ensure that my study is ethically sound, I will also de-identify any data collected and make sure it can not be identified after publication, I will also be careful not to use data that, through its use, will cause distress or harm (Tubaro, 2015).

As I am exploring Gen Z, it may be possible that data is collected relating to young people under the age of 18. If this is the case, I will make sure that the original data collection methods adhered to strict ethical guidelines and that consent from both child and parent was provided at the time of collection (UKRI, 2023).

After reviewing the University of Wales Trinity St David Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice (2022), this study is low/negligible risk and does not require an ethics board review however, I will maintain and foster the values outlined in this guide of “honesty, rigour, openness, care and respect”.

7. Critical Reflection

Critically reflecting on difficult situations and processes is key to self-development and how past actions can affect current and future actions (Hattam, 2023). To do this most effectively, with a deep level of reflection, the Atkins and Murphy (1996) model of reflection will be used [Figure 2].

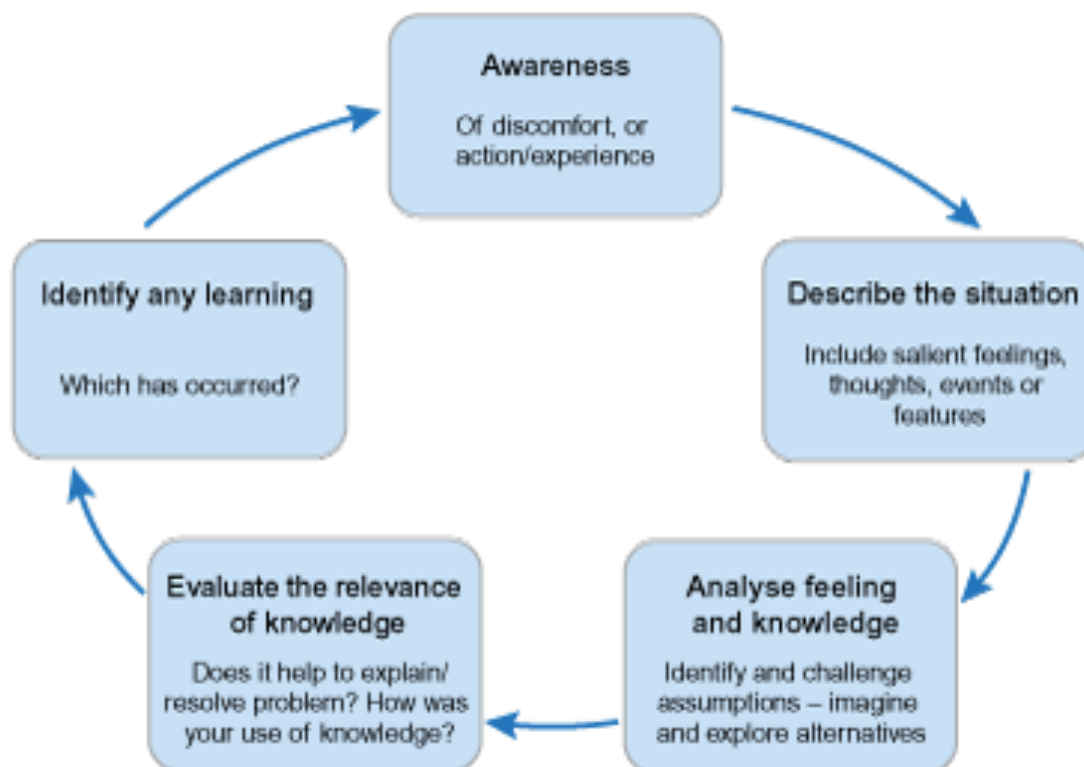


Figure 2

7.1 Awareness

The starting point in this reflective model is awareness, where basic knowledge of the situation is gathered. Using subheadings suggested by Robinson (2022), I will reflect on certain feelings involved in this study:

7.1.1 Which occurrences had a major effect on your emotions?

The first aspect of this study that caused a negative emotion was deciding on an area to focus on. I initially wanted to do an artefact however, I felt that all of my ideas were overly complicated, then I decided to do an independent study with no artefact but could not decide on a specific subject.

I also felt uneasy about this project's planning and organisational aspects as my work, home and social life have been busier than usual. I felt it would be difficult to find the time to write up my research.

One positive aspect of this module was that I started the write-up a lot earlier than I had in previous modules and, although there was still some present, the level of procrastination significantly reduced from previous modules.

7.1.2 What were you thinking at the time of the situation?

The thoughts I had at the time of the events above were that of panic as I knew if I didn't make a swift decision, the report would suffer due to time restraints. I felt overwhelmed thinking about organising my time effectively to complete this research and avoid burnout. In the end, starting the write-up process early gave me some confidence and enabled me to do little and often rather than the pressure of writing big sections in the last weeks before the deadline.

7.1.3 What exactly were your feelings right after the situation occurred?

After I eventually decided upon a definite area of study, I was relieved however I knew the research would evolve as it took shape and I still had a little anxiety over whether I had chosen the most interesting and relevant area to research. Once I had started writing, I felt I managed to get over the initial hurdles and looked to the organisational future of the study deciding on a specific time of day to dedicate to this project, after the children's bedtime most weeknights.

7.1.4 What are your feelings right now about the situation you are reflecting upon?

As I am now reflecting on this study, I feel relieved that I persevered with the initial research and found an interesting area to focus on that has kept me engaged throughout. I am also happy that I have been able to write this report in plenty of time without being too concerned with meeting the deadline, writing little and often over a longer period.

7.2 Describe

The next step in this cycle is to describe the key details of the vent you are analysing using the following questions (Robinson, 2022);

7.2.1 What, where, when, and why did things happen the way they did?

My situation was composed of having to research, critically evaluate and write a report on an area relating to voice pedagogy. This could include an artefact for Module 5. There was a word count limitation of 4500 words for each section, 9000 words in total. This module started on 22nd

December 2023 and the deadline for final submission is 5th May 2024. I decided to do an independent study with no artefact as I could not find an area of study that was passionate enough about that could include this.

7.2.2 What was your contribution to the situation?

I could've been more organised from the beginning, utilising more of my free time to start the portfolio section of this project. I could have also asked my tutor for more support and input into my subject at an earlier date.

7.2.3 How other factors and elements were involved?

Around the time of research, and again at the write-up stage, I was asked to mark two modules at the university where I work as a singing teacher. This was to be completed under the pressure of tight deadlines and impacted my organisation as this became a priority for the small amount of free time I have. Also, I have two children under 4 years old and I am their main caregiver as my husband works away most weeks.

7.3 Analyse

In stage 3, analysis of the situation occurs by answering the following questions (Robinson, 2022);

7.3.1 What were your previous assumptions about the situation?

Before I started this project, I was nervous about the artefact aspect however, I did not include this in the end due to time restraints and subject matter. I presumed once I had started the write-up stage, the work would flow and be relatively quick as the assignment was the same as the last module. After my last assignment was quite rushed, I presumed the previous experience of the stress involved in rushing would lead to less procrastination overall.

7.3.2 What was the actual reality of the situation?

The reality was that there were still some moments of procrastination as I wrote each section. I found that when I was starting a new area within the research would always lead to a difficult study session however, once a flow was established, I would always manage to get a large amount of words written.

7.3.3 What was the difference between your assumptions and reality?

The biggest difference between the assumptions I had and the reality is the presence of procrastination, I was not prepared for this to be an issue in this module as I tend to procrastinate out of worry that I do not understand what I am doing. I still feel I am second-guessing myself, even nearing the end of this MA course. In this case, I think I procrastinated due to being overwhelmed and a perfectionist (mind-tools.com, 2024).

7.4 Evaluate

Using the information gathered in the previous stages, stage 4 aims to evaluate this information using the following questions (Robinson, 2022);

7.4.1 What knowledge did you get from your analysis?

The knowledge I gained from the analysis is that even when I have a solid foundation of knowledge and have previously completed similar work, I still tend to procrastinate and delay

decision-making. I have also learned that I should utilise more of the tutor sessions, something I have struggled to schedule in this module. One of the most important things I have learned is that I suffer from imposter syndrome in many aspects of my life. Imposter syndrome is when people “feel that they aren’t as competent or intelligent as others might think—and that soon enough, people will discover the truth about them.” (Psychology Today, 2024). This is linked to many of my personality traits and procrastination can go hand in hand with this (Psychology Today, 2024).

7.4.1 How are you going to use this knowledge in the next instances?

To overcome imposter syndrome, Mosunic (2023) suggests recognizing the thoughts as they come, practising mindfulness, framing negative views differently, seeking support where possible, and practising self-compassion. I will utilise my tutor more and try various mindful exercises whilst working on my next module.

7.5 Identify

Stage 5 is identifying and combining the knowledge gained from the previous 4 stages, this is the opportunity to create an action plan for future situations using the following questions (Robinson, 2022).

7.5.1 What have you learned so far?

From completing the previous 4 tases of this reflective cycle I have learned that, when it comes to academic work, I can get overwhelmed at any point and this leads to procrastination and delayed decision-making. In the future, I need to find techniques that will help with this and utilise them in my everyday routine.

7.5.2 How will you use this learning in future similar situations?

In the future I will make sure that I start projects as early as possible, giving myself enough time to complete research to a high standard even if I get overwhelmed. I will also try and utilise my tutor more and my peers as this could mean I get more support with the parts I struggle with, leading to less procrastination in specific sections.

Independent Study:

Teaching Gen Z to sing: teaching with empathy and understanding for the new generation.

Word Count: 4134

1. Introduction

In singing lessons, a functional student-teacher relationship is acknowledged to be of high importance since without compatibility in this situation, a student's development may suffer the consequences (Serra-Dawa, 2014). One study identified that the student-teacher relationships observed in their research were more like friendships or therapeutic relationships rather than those of traditional student and teacher (Gaunt, 2004). Gaunt (2004) also briefly argues that this rather non-traditional relationship helped foster artistic development and emotional expression. Furthermore, in her study comparing the approach of singing students and teachers with other instrumental studies, Burwell (2007) found that singing teachers use more effective language and appeal to the student's imagination more, a unique approach. From this research it is clear that the student-teacher relationship is one of great importance in singing however, with the younger generation, also known as “Gen Z” coming of age and into singing lessons, it poses the question of how teachers of older generations will identify and form appropriate relationships with a generation described as “radically different” to their predecessors? (Mawhinney and Bett, 2019).

1.1 Defining Generations

A generation is identified as a group that shares birth years as well as significant life events at various stages of development and although there is diversity within these groups, each generation will likely “share certain thoughts, values, and behaviours.” (Tolbize, 2008).

As of 2024, there are seven categories defined as generations [figure 3] and generational names are based on when the time the generation turns 18 (Beresford Research, 2024).

Generations	Born	Current Ages
Gen Z	1997 – 2012	12 – 27
Millennials	1981 – 1996	28 – 43
Gen X	1965 – 1980	44 – 59
Boomers II (a/k/a Generation Jones)*	1955 – 1964	60 – 69
Boomers I*	1946 – 1954	70 – 78
Post War	1928 – 1945	79 – 96
WWII	1922 – 1927	97 – 102

Figure 3 (Beresford Research, 2024).

For the purpose of this research, most of the focus will be on comparing and understanding Gen Z to their predecessor, the millennial as, through personal observation, the majority of students coming to private singing lessons are of this generation. The study will also focus, in the majority, on singing lessons in higher education as, through a previous preliminary literature review it was found that more substantial and credible research has been done in this area.

1.2 Who are Gen Z: an overview.

Born between 1997 and 2012, with an age range of 12 to 27 years, in an age of global connectivity, events that shaped Gen Zers are on a global scale including terrorism and war, social networking, the Great Recession, gun violence and climate change (Tanner, 2024). From the 9/11 terrorist attacks to, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, these global events have shaped and influenced the youngest generation into a generation with defining characteristics such as being interested in environmental issues and embracing a diverse variety of genders and sexualities as well as having poor mental health (Klein, 2023).

Gen Z is the first generation to have grown up with endless information and connectivity being born after the World Wide Web made its first public appearance in 1995 (Katz, et al, 2022). The difference between Gen Zers and older generations is that Gen Zers have never known a world without technology and this can blur the lines between online and offline life for them (Katz, et al, 2022). Often referred to as “digital natives”, this generation expects to be connected at all times including in their education (University of Massachusetts Global, 2024).

Diversity is also a common theme when discussing the needs of Gen Zers and although diversity is and should always be important regardless of generation, in a survey relating to job opportunities 75% of Gen Zers who responded said they would “think twice” before applying for a role in a company who failed to promote diversity and equality (Jeffery-Morrison, 2023). Chaney (2024) notes that the fact Gen Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse yet is the reason for this fight for diversity, they are also more diverse when it comes to sexuality, religion and gender and this, arguably makes them more “progressive” as a generation.

The final common theme noted when researching Gen Z is that they experience more mental health issues than in previous generations. From social media exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic, 91% of Gen Z state they have experienced stress, anxiety or depression (Amber Student, 2023). With better mental health being associated with better outcomes in the classroom, this may translate to the singing studio also (Williams, 2023). With Gaunt (2023) describing student-teacher relationships as “therapeutic”, this is an important theme to explore in further detail.

1.3 Implications

From the information gathered in the preliminary literature review, three themes will be explored in more detail concerning voice pedagogy and the implications for both students and teachers in this field The digital age, diversity and mental health. Techniques and methods will then be examined and appropriate recommendations will be made to engage Gen Z in the singing studio setting and make an empathetic approach to teaching voice a priority regardless of which generation the teacher is from.

2. The Digital Age

Technology has developed rapidly from the advent of electricity to the smartphones connecting people today and has played a significant role in influencing society, behaviour and the way we communicate (Olujinmi, 2023). While all generations born before Millennials are considered “Digital Immigrants” because they were not born into a digital era and therefore had to adapt to it, Millennials and Gen Z are often referred to as “Digital Natives”, born into a digital age (Norton, 2021). The difference however between Millennials and Gen Zers with regards to their digital lives is that Millennials grew up with the rapidly evolving world of technology from dial-up internet, to broadband and beyond whereas Gen Zers have never known a world without the high functioning technology of the modern day (Slack, 2022). Norton (2021) notes that the difference can be likened to the fact that Millennials remember asking a neighbour for a cup of sugar and Gen Zers can’t remember a time they couldn’t have a cup of sugar delivered to their door within 15 minutes via an app. With technology in mind, there are two subcategories to explore concerning singing lessons and they are; Technology as part of a singing lesson and communication preferences.

As Gen Zers view technology as an integral part of their everyday life so much so that it can be argued that they are dependent on such technology as smartphones, tablets and internet access (Selig, 2024), what technology can be included in the singing studio to enhance a singers experience?

When considering the impact of the digital age on singing lessons, one of the most current areas of interest is that of online lessons have become more prevalent since the COVID-19 pandemic. While online lessons provide the potential to give more people greater access to singing lessons, teachers also find delivering this kind of lesson more challenging due to the limitations of software and delay in sound from device to device (King, et al, 2018). With screen time being valued to such a high extent, it could be assumed that Gen Z would prefer online lessons and communication however a study showed that members of Gen Z use online communication so much that they place a higher value on face-to-face interaction and the majority, 72% to be precise, prefer in-person communication (Jha, 2020). On the whole, in-person lessons are considered more effective as, with singing instruction, a certain amount of physical touch, with consent and careful listening and watching is needed to optimise the learning experience (Boddie, 2020). This is something reiterated by Loeb (2024) when he states that in online singing lessons, one of the disadvantages is that you do not have the physical presence or feedback from your teacher as you do in person. On the other hand, having an online option could be appropriate for those trying to build their singing lesson clientele and encourage the Gen Zers who feel more comfortable in a virtual setting to start their singing journey. Research shows that there are some advantages of online singing lessons such as learning in the same place that you practice, as research shows a higher level of information retention (Flippo, 2020).

Another way of incorporating technology into the singing studio is to involve audio equipment for both live and production aspects of voice pedagogy. Currently, basic equipment can be bought and set up at a relatively low cost and, as contemporary music is arguably a recorded medium, learning to do so will help singers achieve more authenticity when using live equipment and

recording (Cafaro and Arneson, 2020). This approach to including technology in lessons would appeal to Gen Z as research shows they are constantly looking for ways to be authentic and true to their own personal brand (Frances and Hoefel, 2018).

Apps are another way Gen Z engage in learning activities is through apps, research showed that 33% of Gen Zers watch lessons online, 10% of all apps on the iTunes store are classed as educational and 80% of those educational apps being designed and marketed at kids (Critical, 2016). Apps could be used to ensure students practice and that they are practising appropriately as most learning occurs when a set task is well-defined and could ensure that students' practice time is used constructively and efficiently to get to the ultimate goal of expert-level performance (Zhukov, 2009). It is important, however, to explain to students that educational singing apps have limitations and that many argue that these apps rarely warm up the voice correctly and can not guide students on an individual basis but as a practice tool they can be very effective at inspiring vocal exercises, tracking progress and give some good tips on occasion (Oren, 2024).

Using technology for lyrics and sheet music is an effective way to incorporate the latest technology simply. Doing so has many benefits including portability, convenience and interactivity (Roland, 2024). With 97% of Gen Zers owning laptops and 98% of them owning smartphones (81% owning one before their 16th birthday), there would be no extra cost for singing teachers to supply the device on which they read lyrics or sheet music (Kedet, 2024). This switch to "paperless" teaching would also appeal to Gen Zers on another level as they, along with Millennials, have the greatest concern about climate change compared to older generations, even having stronger emotions over the cause as it will directly impact their future (Cardiff University, 2023).

There is technology available that is more specific to the singing studio, one being technology that measures acoustic qualities. One such technology is a software called VOXed as observed and discussed by Welch et al (2004). This software gives real-time, visual feedback to singers as they vocalise on areas such as formant, posture and projection which data shows is helpful for both student and teacher, live and as a recording for future review and discussion (Welch et al, 2004). The interpretation of this analysis however would require some understanding of voice science and therefore may only be useful to those studying at a more advanced level, perhaps in a conservatoire or degree-level programme of study (Howard, 2005). It is also worth noting that this technology can not replace a teacher as there are areas such as stagecraft, repertoire and performance craft that technology has "little to offer" (Howard, 2005).

3. Diversity

Gen Z is the most diverse generation to date when it comes to gender, race, ethnicity and neurodiversity and they believe, generally, that diversity is essential for inspiring innovation and growth (Sadeghi, 2023). With singing in particular, singing songs from diverse cultures allows singers to learn and foster understanding of other cultures as well as our own (Ilari, 2013). Particularly important in a multicultural society, children who sing songs from a variety of foreign cultures increase their knowledge and understanding of these cultures (Chen-Hafteck, 2016).

On the other hand, a theme explored quite regularly in today's society is cultural appropriation when it comes to exploring and choosing repertoire for singers and choirs. Cultural appropriation is defined as “the unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, etc. of one people or society by members of another and typically more dominant people or society.” (Oxford Dictionary, 2024) and, about singing, can be a point of contention when, for example, when songs are used as a gimmick to draw in new singers to studios or choirs when in their own culture they would have been highly respected (Cho, 2015). If cultural appropriation is present in music, or any other subject for that matter, classrooms it can lead to disrespect of the culture being approached and, in turn, this can lead to prejudice, discrimination and racism (Howard, 2020). Something Gen Z would not tolerate as in the majority they demand social justice and diversity in all aspects of their life (Bakhtiari, 2022).

Since Gen Z demand social justice more than any other generation and most believe racism to be a high-priority issue (The Annie E Casey Foundation, 2024), being culturally sensitive in the singing studio should also be a high priority. Bicknell (2009) agrees that although the ethical obligations of musicians and composers have been studied to some extent, singing should be more closely observed as they have a moral obligation to their audience to approach the choice of repertoire in a respectful and understanding manner. In the educational setting of a singing studio, to combat any cultural issues that may arise, Benson et al (2022) recommend the following to singing teachers:

- “(1) embracing intentional pedagogical practices;
- (2) avoiding cultural appropriation or cultural approximation;
- (3) continuing to seek education;
- (4) acknowledging our areas of excellence, knowing what is beyond the scope of our expertise, and having the courage to ask for help;
- (5) naming courses and programs accurately and (6) developing an equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging statement for the voice studio.”

Doing these things will ensure that the culture within the studio is safe and all students feel secure enough to learn, take risks and share their identities, all of which are important for a singer's growth and education.

The Musicians Union (2023) recommends diversifying repertoire in music lessons to promote inclusivity and accessibility. They suggest exploring music from diverse backgrounds, and musicians from different cultures, using music to explore social issues and learning the history of these cultures alongside their music. This will encourage cultural appreciation rather than appreciation as music will be used “to understand and learn about another culture to broaden their perspective and connect with others cross-culturally (Holmes, 2016).

Another area of diversity that is important to Gen Zers is that of gender. Gen Zers embrace gender fluidity and are 92% more likely than older generations to protest against companies for reasons to do with diversity meaning not only do they embrace this stance, they fight for it. (Kreacic, 2023). More specific to the singing studio, gender can become an issue when preparing students for examinations and choosing characters to portray in Musical Theatre in particular. Gender affects the pitch, range and frequency of a voice on average (Hope, 2023) therefore most,

not all, songs written for male or female characters will fit a male or female voice. Surprisingly the London College of Music examination board gives no specific guidance on this important issue however for both popular music vocal and music theatre examinations changing the key of the song is allowed except for “music such as opera and operetta” because a certain key is expected to portray the style (London College of Music, 2019). While the ABRSM board also do not mention gender specifically, in their Musical Theatre for Singers syllabus, they do have a section committed to diversity and their plan to continue raising awareness of diversity in music (ABRSM, 2023). As there is no guidance on this matter, it can be assumed candidates can sing any gender of song and transpose if appropriate, this would also be an acceptable way to approach choosing repertoire in lessons making the singing studio gender inclusive and neutral. Applying the same principles that Benson et al (2022) recommend to gender equity in the singing studio would help make it a safe space for all genders on the spectrum. It would also allow young people to explore their voice without the limitations of being put into a gendered voice classification at a young age as some suggest this limits the potential of vocalists (Thurman, 1988).

Accessibility to singing lessons for diverse groups of people is important in other cases such as disability, socioeconomic status and other educational needs. While Gen Z is the target of this study, the benefits of inclusion of all cultures, races and the needs of people who participate in any form of performing arts will only engage them in the arts and keep it alive for generations to come (Walker-Kuhne, 2021). Furthermore, organisations that do not make significant efforts to diversify their clientele will see diminished participation therefore diversity, and the inclusion of differing groups of people in society can only have a positive impact on the performing arts industry including singing lessons regardless of the generation that is participating (Lazzard, 2019).

4. Mental Health

Research shows generational differences when discussing mental health and data shows that during the global pandemic, boomers showed more resilience in this area than Gen Z who experienced stronger impacts due to their level of development (Grelle, 2023). Often using the word “snowflake”, it is easy for older generations to label Gen Z as weak or lazy because their poor mental health means they are more likely to be out of work, however, with one in three 18-24-year-olds reporting symptoms of mental health conditions it could be argued that this is a more serious situation for the young generation (Tapper, 2024). Research shows that even before the pandemic in 2020, mental health was becoming more of an issue for Gen Z and the reasons for this span from social media to trauma meaning there is no simple answer or explanation (Tapper, 2024). Regardless of the cause, the above research shows mental health is an issue that strongly affects Gen Z and therefore should be taken into consideration when interacting with and teaching singing students of this age.

According to the Sing Up Foundation (2024), plenty of research proves singing can be beneficial for mental health and well-being for all ages and backgrounds. Singing Lowers cortisol which, in turn, relieves stress, improves depression, improves confidence and lessens feelings of loneliness (Sing Up Foundation, 2024). When considering that most mental health problems will appear

before the age of 25 years of age, it is surprising to read that this age group (12-25 years) have the worst access to mental health care, even with evidence that early intervention can transform a younger person's life by receiving care that is introduced early on (McGory and Mei, 2018). With this in mind, advertising the benefits of singing for mental health on a singing studio's social media might encourage a Gen Z follower to participate and engage in lessons as a way to "self-medicate" if they are feeling low or depressed as they, as a generation, tend to seek out quick fixes (Tapper, 2024). To ensure the safety and well-being of all involved in the singing studio, it is suggested that a course in mental health first aid is taken to ensure the leader of the class or one-on-one session can spot the warning signs of more severe mental health issues and know how to direct and guide them towards any further support they need (MHFA, 2023). Mental Health First Aid England (2023) provides training for those who work with youth and higher education students to "listen, reassure and respond, even in a crisis - and even potentially stop a crisis from happening." Again, this training would prove invaluable when advertising your skill set as a teacher and providing a safe space for the younger generation to explore their voice and excel in performing arts as a vocalist.

A concept associated with Gen Z, and younger Millennials, is that of "trigger warnings". Trigger warnings are "a statement at the start of a piece of writing, video, etc. alerting the reader or viewer to the fact that it contains potentially distressing material (often used to introduce a description of such content)." (Oxford Dictionary, 2024). While some people who work with young people are desperate to help in any way, others argue that by using things like trigger warnings, teachers are creating a more fragile generation who are never allowed to build resilience (Schlott, 2023). In current literature, trigger warnings are contentious, and both sides of the argument are passionate about their views on the use of them in performing arts. Some argue that theatre is meant to shock and sometimes disturb, any pre-warning of such scenes would take away from the overall experience (Harrison, 2024). However, trigger warnings can make the classroom more inclusive for those with past trauma and other mental health disabilities and it is important to note that they are not intended to censor or avoid any material deemed problematic (University of Michigan, 2024). In singing lessons, songs may broach some sensitive subjects and forewarning students can be used to promote intellectual, emotional, and physical boundaries and show students respect (Spencer and Kulbager, 2018).

Charles et al (2022) through a systematic review provide a table of trigger or content warnings which are categorised and sub-categories [Figure 4] that could be useful in the singing studio.

Figure 4 (Charles et al, 2022)

Category (n) and definition	Sub-categories
1. Violence (n = 536) Content contains violence	Violence; War; Weapons; Terrorism; Police brutality; Motiveless killing; Sexual violence; Animal cruelty; Torture; Genocide
2. Sex (n = 332) Content contains sexual themes, including nudity, sexual content and relationships	Nudity; Mild sexual content; Explicit sexual content; Relationship conflict; Reproductive health
3. Stigma (n = 328) Content depicts negative stereotypes about or attitudes towards a specific group, such as racism or sexism	Racism; Anti-religious (sub-categories: Anti-Semitic; Anti-Christian; Islamophobia); Colonialism; (sub-category: Slavery); Classism; Sexism (sub-categories: Misogyny; Misandry); Transphobia; Gender-identity; Sexuality (sub-category: Homophobia); Anti-disability
4. Disturbing Content (n = 236) Content contains imagery, sounds, or effects that may frighten, disgust or scare	Disturbing content with threat; Horror and terror; Disturbing imagery; Medical content; Human bodies and functions
5. Language (n = 235) Content contains language which is sexual, crude or offensive	Sexual language; Adult humour; Swearing; Offensive language
6. Risky Behaviours (n = 200) Content depicts risky lifestyle behaviours	Drug misuse; Alcohol misuse; Tobacco; Gambling
7. Mental Health (n = 108) Content relates to mental health issues	Mental health; Eating disorders; Trauma; Self-harm and suicide; Depression; OCD; Panic attacks; Anxiety (sub-categories: Spiders; Snakes; Insects; Needles; Eye contact; Irregular patterns); Hair pulling
8. Death (n = 49) Content relates to human death or dying	Death; Accidents; Natural disasters
9. Parental Guidance (n = 47) Content may not be appropriate for children	Online access; Cyber-bullying; Competitive content; Imitative content; Upsetting content; Non-realistic violence
10. Crime (n = 38) Content depicts or relates to criminal activity	
11. Abuse (n = 37) Content depicts or relates to abuse	Child abuse; Emotional abuse; Physical/sexual abuse; Neglect
12. Sociopolitical (n = 27) Content includes social or political issues	Injustice; Political issues; Nazism; Class issues
13. Flashing Lights (n = 27) Content includes strobe or flashing lighting	
14. Objects (n = 4) Content contains specific objects	

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Giving students a pre-warning of sensitive topics will give them time to prepare or let their teacher know they do not wish to sing the song at all but it is also important to ensure students understand the difference between “emotional trauma and intellectual discomfort” as the latter is fundamental in a students development, especially in a university setting. However, the most compelling argument for the use of trigger or content warnings in an educational setting is that there is an assumption that students will engage with whatever material a teacher provides and there is a power dynamic at play where students may be worried that their grade or student-teacher relationship will be affected (Hayliger and Burnham-Bialik, 2024). Giving students fair warning with a quick discussion on the subjects outlined in the table above will offer students autonomy over learning and mental health issues.

5. Conclusion.

Overall, it is clear from this research that Gen Z are a diverse, conscientious, unique generation shaped by many aspects of their upbringing. When considering their needs and wants in the singing studio three areas of research consistently stood out, technology, diversity and mental health.

Addiction to technology, most prominently smartphones, has become more of an issue for the younger generation than any other generation before them as they have never known life without such technology (Mason et al, 2022). Including technology in the singing studio can help engage

students whilst making them feel comfortable as well as providing real-time feedback in some cases with singing-specific software.

When engaging Gen Z, they have made it clear that they are more likely to use a company or service if they think diversity within that organisation is a priority (Jeffery-Morrison, 2023). Ensuring diversity in the music, composers and topics studied will also ensure inclusivity and awareness of other cultures often leading to positive impacts and progression in general (Theatre Life, 2023). Communities can only benefit from singing studios being inclusive and diverse with research showing positive impacts on mental health and well-being through diversity being prioritised in the performing arts (Nyashanu et al, 2021).

Strategies to support the mental health of students from Gen Z are important as they are the generation most at risk for mental health symptoms. In a study recently conducted, 27% of Gen Zers said their mental health was “fair to poor” compared to 15% of millennials and 13% of boomers (Laderer, 2022). Singing has a positive impact on mental health and could be a big selling point for this generation to take up singing lessons either as one-to-one or in further or higher education however, teachers must have some training to support them to the best of their ability.

This area of study is relatively new and further research, specific to the UK cohort of Gen Zers would be beneficial as this generation develops and more enter singing studios and higher education.

To conclude, this study's research, strategies and recommendations will help engage Gen Z and create a supportive, empathetic, respectful and understanding in the singing studio whilst fostering an appropriate and effective student-teacher relationship.

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