

Student name: Barbara Reggio

Student number: 2129716

Module no: BMPF7010

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Project Proposal

Context and Position

I have been a peripatetic singing teacher in secondary schools (ages 11-16) for just over three years. I currently work as a self-employed teacher in a girls' school and as an employed teacher for a Music Education Service across three co-educational schools. Through my teaching, I have developed a particular interest in adolescent vocal change (AVC), and my recent research has focused on better understanding this process to support my students (Henwood, 2023; Sweet, 2015).

My previous literature reviews on adolescent singing have explored voice-stage classification, the physiological and biological processes of puberty affecting the voice, age-related trends in the onset of vocal change, pedagogical approaches to support changing voices, the implications of vocal change for school curricula and singing, and vocal identity. The latter topic, especially adolescents' perceptions and attitudes towards singing, and the challenges they face, has

captured my specific attention. These themes resonate strongly with observations from my weekly teaching practice and conversations with students.

Adolescents, particularly boys, may experience increased vulnerability during vocal change, as their voices become unpredictable and difficult to manage (Ashley, 2013), potentially affecting confidence (Ashley, 2010). They may feel embarrassed or fear ridicule and criticism (Sweet, 2010), and become reluctant to sing in higher registers due to concerns about being perceived as 'girlish' (Ashley, 2013; Cooksey, 2000b; Ashley, 2006).

Adolescent girls also experience vocal fluctuations, embarrassment and frustration (Harrison, 1978), alongside tension and discomfort. These difficulties may be alleviated through vocal exercises and appropriate information about vocal change (Sipley, 1994), particularly through individual singing tuition (Baker, Rakena and Purdy, 2022). Furthermore, girls' voices may be categorised by vocal leaders as alto or soprano, potentially neglecting individual vocal development (Sweet, 2018).

In this context, the purpose of this study is to explore adolescent singing students' self-perceptions of their changing voices and how these relate to their singing experiences. The project will aim to highlight students' own perspectives, providing insight into how they understand and experience vocal change within their secondary school singing education.

Justification and intended impact

Relatively few studies have explored the perspectives of adolescent singers as active research participants, especially female students (Orton and Pitts, 2019). Although significant research has examined adolescents' experiences of choir singing, considerably less studies focus on individual singing lessons or small-group tuition. This is particularly relevant to peripatetic singing teachers, whose teaching contexts can substantially differ from those of choir directors and classroom music teachers. For example, Williams, Welch and Howard (2021) investigated vocal change in an adolescent boy; however, the participant was a cathedral chorister rather than a student receiving individual singing lessons in a secondary school.

Within secondary schools, participation in choirs and individual singing lessons can have a close and mutually influential relationship (Jorgensen and Pfeiler, 2008). I have frequently observed this in my own practice, for example, students receiving individual lessons have later also joined choirs, extracurricular activities and wider musical opportunities, while choir members have approached me for individual lessons to develop their vocal technique. This interaction suggests that understanding adolescents' individual experiences and perceptions of vocal change may have implications beyond the singing lesson.

The findings of this study may therefore be relevant not only to peripatetic singing teachers, but also to choir leaders, music teachers and, more broadly, school music departments. Greater

understanding of how students perceive and experience AVC could support more responsive approaches to singing tuition and help create environments where students feel comfortable and confident using their voices. Such approaches may also contribute to address the continuing decline in boys' participation in singing identified in the literature (Cooksey, 1977a; Freer, 2006), while supporting female singers' confidence and continued development.

Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to a more inclusive, student-centred approach to adolescent singing education, enabling young singers to better understand their changing voices and engage with singing with greater confidence.

Project aims

The aims of this research activity will consequently be :

- To deepen my knowledge and understanding on AVC through a focused literature review with particular attention to themes of vocal identity and singing confidence
- To investigate the relationship between AVC, students' self-perceptions of their singing abilities and singing identities
- To explore the differences and similarities of adolescent singing students' self-perceptions within the context of individual and small-group singing lessons

Outline intention

Acknowledging singing students' experiences in their own words will be central to this investigation. The study is underpinned by a relativist ontology, acknowledging that reality may be understood differently according to individuals' experiences, social interactions and contexts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

A constructionist epistemology and interpretivist theoretical perspective recognise that knowledge and meaning are constructed through individuals' experiences and interactions with their social and contextual worlds (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative methods will therefore explore how participants understand, interpret their experiences and make sense of their realities.

Participants will be volunteer singing students aged 11-16 attending individual or small-group singing lessons in secondary schools. Boys and girls will be invited to participate, with the Music Education Service approached to signpost schools where I do not teach, specifically to support the recruitment of male participants. No particular stage of vocal development will be required. Students will self-report their experiences of AVC through the initial questionnaire, since

physiological vocal development will not be independently assessed. Students not meeting these criteria or providing parental consent will be excluded.

An inductive research design will use an initial survey questionnaire to provide an overview of students' awareness and self-perceptions of AVC, singing experiences, and engagement with singing lessons, while identifying potential participants for the next phase of the study. Participants may then volunteer for a semi-structured individual interview to expand on these findings and explore their perspectives in greater depth. Questionnaires will be distributed by letter or email according to each school's preference, while in-person interviews will be audio-recorded to facilitate transcription and analysis.

Timeline

The project timeline has been revised following the postponement of the study; the original Gantt chart is included in Appendix 1 for reference.

TASKS	2025							2026									
	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT
Ethics form																	
Research proposal																	
Literature Review																	
Write survey questionnaires																	
Liaise with Music Teacher and Education Service																	
Send consent forms and questionnaires																	
Determine common themes and organise initial coding																	
Write reflections and observations																	
Individual interviews																	
Examine data and code findings from interviews																	
Write introduction and methodology report																	
Write research findings																	
Complete and review project draft																	
Submit final study report																	
Create presentation																	
Project presentation																	

Ethics and Insider research

Participation will be voluntary, with parental consent sought in accordance with the UWTSD-approved ethics form (Appendix 2). The consent form will clarify that the project is separate from the students' school programme and that participation and responses will not affect their learning, grades, relationships with teachers or singing lessons. I will act as a researcher rather than a practitioner, including in schools where I teach, emphasising that participation and responses will not affect the teacher-student relationship, as existing relationships may influence students' willingness to provide honest responses.

To minimise potential risks, responses will remain confidential and participants will be assigned codes. As topics such as low singing confidence may evoke negative memories or feelings, participants may pause, stop or reschedule interviews, or withdraw without repercussions. Audio data will initially be recorded on my password-protected iPhone before being transferred to a password-protected laptop alongside relevant research documents. Physical paper records will be securely stored at my private residence, and alphanumeric participant codes will be used to safeguard confidentiality. Any emotional distress or safeguarding concerns disclosed will be immediately referred to the relevant teacher and school safeguarding officer.

As participants may include both students I teach and students unknown to me, my researcher position will vary between insider and outsider depending on the context. An insider position may offer benefits through established relationships, professional awareness, contextual knowledge, and familiarity with participants' experiences (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010), however, my knowledge of adolescent singing may also inform my perspective and interpretation of the data; therefore, reflexivity will remain relevant throughout the research process.

Individual learning outcomes

- To gain a deeper understanding and awareness of the real-world experiences and/or obstacles faced by adolescent singing students in the secondary school context, including outside of my school work allocation
- To network and build relationships with Head Teachers of the Music Departments involved and hopefully disseminate main research findings and, if needed and requested, suggest areas for improvement and actionable insights
- To engage in a dialogue with my Music Education Service employer, provide feedback and evaluation of key study findings and previous research on the topic, with the hope to present relevant information, tailoring to specific audiences, such as practitioners and/or students.

Project report

Introduction

My interest in adolescent vocal change (AVC) arises directly from my professional practice as a singing teacher. When I began my Master's studies, I taught primarily young adults in a private studio, however, in recent years, I moved into peripatetic singing teaching within secondary schools, working with students aged 11-16. This change in teaching context has prompted me to develop my understanding of AVC and consider how my teaching could better support students experiencing vocal change.

My previous research projects have comprised narrative literature reviews examining female (Module 4) and male AVC (Module 5). These reviews explored physiological and biological development, voice classification, age-related trends, acoustics, pedagogical approaches and the historical development of research in the field, as well as a brief examination of adolescents' experiences of vocal change. Cooksey (1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1977d; 2000a; 2000b) and Gackle (1991; 2006) provided influential frameworks for understanding AVC, emphasising developmental variation and the importance of responsive, individualised pedagogy. Most recent research has explored adolescents' experiences of singing (Dilworth, 2012; Mercado and Draut, 2023), including emotional challenges associated with vocal change, such as frustration, embarrassment and insecurity, which may have lasting effects on young people's singing experiences (Killian, 1997; M.C. Kennedy, 2004; Sweet, 2015; Sweet and Parker, 2019). Vocal change may also affect confidence amongst adolescent girls (Sweet, 2018; Sweet and Parker, 2019); while gender, social influences and others' perceptions may also shape musical identity, social acceptance and participation (Orton and Pitts, 2019; Freer, 2015; Freer, 2016).

Despite this body of research, relatively little attention has been given to adolescents' own perspectives regarding confidence, self-perception and continued engagement with singing, as well as their emotional wellbeing (Blagojević and Habe, 2026). Furthermore, research has largely centred on choral experiences or classroom settings, with less consideration directed toward individual or small-group singing tuition. These gaps have particularly captured my attention, reflecting observations from my teaching practice and conversations with students.

The focus therefore shifts from the processes of AVC to how young singers experience and perceive these changes, particularly in relation to confidence, emotion and singing identity.

The present research project, 'A study on adolescent vocal identity: self-perceptions of singing students with regards to their changing voice and singing activities,' represents the next stage of this research. It examines how male and female singing students aged 11-16 understand and experience vocal change within their singing activities, and how these experiences relate to confidence, participation, and developing vocal identity. In particular, the study addresses the

perspectives of students receiving individual or small-group singing tuition, an area comparatively underexplored in the existing literature.

Accordingly, the research is framed around two questions:

- How do adolescent singing students perceive and experience their changing voices in relation to their singing activities?
- How do these experiences relate to their confidence, participation and developing vocal identities?

More broadly, the study aims to inform student-centred singing environments in which adolescents feel comfortable using their changing voices. Greater awareness of their experiences could promote confidence, participation, and positive singer identities, while helping to address disengagement associated with negative experiences and the development of non-singer identities (Whidden, 2009; Ruddock and Leong, 2004). The findings may be relevant to peripatetic singing teachers, choir leaders, music teachers, and school music departments.

Ultimately, the project aims to support my development as a more reflective and informed student-centred practitioner, with a deeper understanding of how adolescents experience and negotiate their changing voices.

Personal Learning outcomes

- To deepen my understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by adolescent singing students in secondary schools, including contexts beyond my own teaching allocation.
- To develop professional relationships with participating Heads of Music and, where appropriate, share key findings and practical recommendations.
- To engage in dialogue with my Music Education Service employer, sharing relevant findings and previous research and adapting their presentation for different audiences, including practitioners
- To develop my ability to translate research findings into practical resources that support adolescent singers
- To strengthen my teaching practice through ongoing reflective and reflexive engagement

Literature Review

Research into adolescent vocal change (AVC) has traditionally focused on physiological development and pedagogical responses, particularly in relation to adolescent boys. More recent research has broadened this focus to adolescents' singing experiences, including confidence, self-perception, identity, participation and social belonging. While much of this literature is situated within choral contexts, this shift is highly relevant to the present study, which examines 11-16-year-old male and female students receiving peripatetic school tuition. Investigating this specific instructional setting is crucial; as Baker, Rakena, and Purdy (2022) demonstrate, individual singing lessons yield significantly higher perceived vocal ease and effective skill acquisition than small-group tuition, directly impacting how adolescents negotiate vocal transition.

Vocal development and responsive pedagogy

Foundational research established influential frameworks for understanding adolescent vocal development. Cooksey (1977a, 1977b, 1977c, 1978) focused predominantly on the changing male voice, informing approaches to vocal classification, repertoire and pedagogy. Gackle (1991, 2000a, 2000b, 2014) contributed influential frameworks for understanding female vocal development, classification and repertoire, while Sweet (2015) further explored the changing female voice. Collectively, these studies challenge approaches that treat vocal maturation as uniform or predictable.

Harrison (1978) provides holistic pedagogical recommendations supporting adolescents' self-esteem and musical engagement during vocal transition. The need for this flexible pedagogy is reinforced by Kennedy (2004), who advocates confidence-building approaches, and Dilworth (2012), who recommends research-informed, adaptable strategies for adolescent boys addressing vocal health, confidence and continued participation. Sweet (2016) similarly emphasises responsive support for girls, while Friar (1999) highlights informed teaching and repertoire selection as means of enabling adolescents to sing safely and confidently throughout vocal change. Siple (1994) and Sweet (2018) further advocate developing students' understanding of vocal anatomy and physiological change. Complementing these approaches, teaching tangible skills like breath control offers a stable technical foundation during vocal instability (Freer, 2018). Mercado and Draut (2024) extend this through an anatomy-informed, student-centred approach to female vocal development.

Although physiological knowledge is fundamental to safe pedagogy, these studies also suggest that technical intervention alone may not address the emotional and social meanings adolescents attach to their changing voices. The literature therefore increasingly supports a shift from teaching *about* vocal change towards responding to the individual experiencing it.

Emotional experience, confidence and self-perception

Research increasingly identifies AVC as an emotional as well as physiological experience. Sweet (2015) found diverse emotional responses among adolescent female singers, including frustration, embarrassment, fear and pride. Freer (2016), examining male choristers, similarly identified difficulties associated with reduced vocal control, highlighting potential effects on confidence and perceptions of vocal capability. Although male and female vocal development differs physiologically, both bodies of research identify uncertainty, loss of control and confidence as significant experiences.

Sweet (2018) further found that female singers retrospectively associated AVC with fear, frustration and insecurity, with implications for confidence and singer identity extending into adulthood. Sweet and Parker (2019) similarly demonstrate that female vocal identity develops through interactions with others and that adolescent experiences may continue to influence self-perceptions later in life. While these retrospective accounts provide valuable insight into the longer-term impact of vocal change, they may not fully reflect adolescents' perceptions while they are experiencing vocal change.

Collectively, this literature suggests that confidence during AVC is not simply an internal characteristic but is shaped by vocal experiences, teacher responses, social relationships and opportunities for successful musical participation.

Gender, identity and social expectations

Gendered expectations are particularly prominent in research concerning adolescent boys. Ashley (2002) found that male state-school students could negotiate masculine identity by emphasising the effort, talent and skills involved in singing, enabling participation to be understood as compatible with masculinity. Conversely, Harrison (2007) identifies gender stereotypes, peer culture and role models as factors discouraging boys from activities perceived as feminine.

Importantly, negative attitudes towards singing may precede noticeable AVC. Warzecha (2013) noted that boys' negative attitudes could emerge during primary school. Specifically, Welch et al. (2009) found that primary-school girls view singing more positively than boys, whose confidence drops before vocal change. Crucially, school-based attitudes decline with age despite rising personal engagement, particularly among boys. These findings complicate explanations that link disengagement primarily to physiological change, suggesting that social and educational experiences may already shape singing identity.

Freer (2006) emphasises the teacher's role in listening to adolescents' experiences and recognising the relationship between vocal change, identity and belonging; indeed, without

adjusting to these developing voices and social identities, schools and teachers often marginalise or lose adolescent boys, whereas better-informed education may maintain them (Freer, 2007). Freer (2010b) utilises the concept of 'possible selves' to address the 'missing males' problem, a framework Freer (2015) subsequently applies to European boys to show how future identity perceptions may influence responses to voice change and choral participation. Similarly, Freer (2009b) suggests that educators can help boys develop attainable and meaningful identities as singers. Elorriaga (2011) found that boys were more likely to remain involved when changing voices were experienced as a positive and socially accepted expression of masculinity. Demorest (2000) advocates engaging rehearsals, male choirs, role models and performance opportunities, while Lucas (2011) identifies enjoyment and perceived singing ability as important influences on boys' participation. Similarly, Young (2012) highlights the importance of building a supportive institutional ecosystem and peer culture that normalises secondary school-based singing, while Whorton (2016) notes that prioritising performance physicality and whole body engagement builds boys' confidence, fostering a positive connection to their instrument.

However, gender alone does not determine participation. Orton and Pitts (2019) found that boys held fixed perceptions of singing ability, whereas girls recognised how effort, ability, and confidence interact socially. Legg (2013) similarly highlights how institutionalised gender expectations influence secondary school engagement. Together, these findings indicate gender intersects with wider social and school cultures rather than operating independently.

Participation, belonging and singing context

Singing serves as a vital social context for identity development, fostered through shared musical, social and cultural experiences. Durrant (2005) highlights singing as a mechanism for self-discovery, expression and emotional release. Similarly, Parker (2010, 2011, 2014, 2018) consistently associates choral participation with belonging, social bonding, teamwork, and enhanced confidence, describing it as a transformative experience that supports positive interpersonal relationships. This sense of community is echoed by Sweet (2010), whose study illustrates how the shared environment of a choir explicitly foster positive social participation and singing identity among adolescent boys.

However, collective participation may also create tensions between individual needs and group expectations. Sweet (2018), for example, notes that female singers may experience their individual vocal needs as secondary to the choir. This highlights an important distinction between group singing and the individualised attention available through one-to-one singing lessons.

This distinction is central to the present study. While literature heavily examines choral contexts, the current participants receive individual or small-group tuition. Although small-group lessons may provide opportunities for interaction, particularly where students know one another, these social experiences differ from the collective identity and peer culture of a choir. Conversely, individual and small-group tuition allows greater adaptation of repertoire, technique and expectations to students'

changing voices. Choral literature remains relevant, however, as some students' experiences often span both settings. Complementing Baker, Rakena and Purdy's (2022), focus on these instructional settings, Monks (2003) is uniquely significant to the present study because it examines adolescent singers' self-image, vocal identity and musical expression within secondary school individual singing tuition, rather than predominately choral contexts.

Lamont et al. (2003) further identify tensions between young people's informal musical lives and formal music education, including resistance to peer-facing singing and non-preferred repertoire.

However, Kennedy (2002) demonstrates that positive peer socialisation, singing enjoyment alongside preferred repertoire directly drive boys' choral engagement. Participation and continued involvement are therefore driven not merely by vocal ability, but by whether the singing context is experienced as personally and socially meaningful.

Teacher support, agency and continued engagement

Across the literature, teachers emerge as influential in shaping adolescents' experiences of vocal change. Freer (2006; 2016) stresses the importance of listening to adolescents and employing a responsive pedagogy tailored to individual experiences rather than relying on standardised approaches. Furthermore, Freer (2010a) argues that choral improvisation fosters musical creativity and autonomy by shifting the teacher's role from directing musical outcomes to facilitating exploration, collaboration, and shared decision-making. Providing students with a sense of enjoyment, motivation, and autonomy can foster experiences of flow that support continued participation (Freer, 2009a); similarly, Freer (2025) associates continued engagement with challenge, musical reward, vocal skill, control and autonomy, while male role models may also help non-participants envision themselves as singers. Complementing this focus on student autonomy, Higgins (2025) highlights that female vocal change causes psychosocial distress and a perceived loss of control, arguing that autonomy-supportive pedagogy restores singer agency. Furthermore, retrospective accounts demonstrate that AVC may have lasting effects on confidence and participation, while highlighting the importance of appropriate instruction, peer support and male role models for participants (Freer, 2022). This choral experience is further mediated by broader socioeconomic and cultural factors (Freer, 2024).

The significance of teacher support is reinforced by research into non-singers. Whidden (2009) found that negative social and educational experiences, including teacher feedback, could undermine confidence and contribute to long-term non-participation. Welch (2006a) argues that non-singer identities are largely socially generated and that teachers can either undermine or support developing identities. Welch (2006b) similarly conceptualises musical development as emerging through interactions between individual potential, experience and opportunity. Expanding

on student agency, Paul, Juncos and Wynter (2024) suggest that through acceptance and commitment coaching, adolescent singers can develop psychological flexibility to help them manage performance anxiety and focus on personal values rather than perfection or external approval.

Synthesis and research gap

Overall, the contemporary literature demonstrates a significant shift from viewing AVC primarily as an isolated physiological process toward understanding it as a multidimensional experience that deeply intersects with confidence, emotion, identity and social expectations. Research across male and female singers indicates that adolescents' subjective perceptions of their changing voices are shaped not merely by physical maturation, but heavily mediated by interactions with teachers, peer dynamics, musical contexts and opportunities for personally meaningful participation.

However, a critical limitation remains: the vast majority of this literature is situated almost exclusively within large choral contexts. Consequently, there is comparatively little empirical attention dedicated to exploring how adolescents navigate their changing voices across different individualised singing activities, particularly within the distinct educational environment of secondary-school peripatetic tuition. While Monks (2003) and Baker, Rakena, and Purdy (2022) provide vital historical and contemporary exceptions by highlighting the unique value of one-to-one instruction, further exploration of these micro-level instructional settings is urgently warranted.

The present study directly responds to this identified research gap by examining how 11-16-year-old male and female singing students perceive and experience the nuances of vocal transition across the entirety of their school-based singing activities. Situated within a secondary-school peripatetic framework, this research places the lived experiences and perceptions of the adolescents themselves at its centre. By investigating this underrepresented cohort, the study aims to significantly extend current understanding of how individualised, small-group, and collective music-making contexts uniquely relate to student confidence, continued participation, and a developing sense of vocal identity during adolescence.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used to explore adolescent singing students' self-perceptions of vocal change and singing activities, establishing the study's ontological, epistemological and interpretivist foundations. A **relativist ontology** recognises that reality is not singular, fixed or universally experienced, but comprises multiple realities shaped by individuals' experiences, social interactions and contextual environments (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). This was relevant to the present study, which explored how adolescent singing students perceived and made sense of vocal change. Rather than assuming uniformity, the study acknowledged that students experience and understand their changing voices and singing confidence differently. These differing experiences were understood as multiple, contextually situated realities, reflecting the social and educational contexts in which students construct their identities as singers (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

A **constructionist epistemology** complements this position by recognising that knowledge is context-dependent and shaped by individual perspectives and experiences (Crotty, 1998). Participants' accounts were therefore understood as situated interpretations rather than objective representations of a universal reality. Differences between participants' accounts were considered analytically significant, providing insights into how individual, interpersonal and contextual factors shape perceptions of vocal change, confidence and identity. From this perspective, students' understandings of their experiences were shaped by the social and educational contexts in which they participated; for example, perceptions of the singing voice could differ when singing alone, in the classroom or in front of peers. These contextual differences are vital to exploring adolescent singer identity, as self-perceptions may be influenced by peers, family, teachers, musical cultures and wider social expectations. This constructionist position informed the use of reflexive thematic analysis, interpreting participants' accounts as situated and context-dependent rather than objective reflections of reality. The analysis acknowledged the researcher's active role in interpreting data and developing themes, recognising that these interpretations were shaped through engagement with accounts, research questions and the wider context (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

An **interpretivist theoretical perspective** complements this epistemological position by seeking to understand how adolescent singing students construct meaning from their experiences and develop perceptions of themselves as singers (Crotty, 1998). The study aimed not to establish an objectively measurable or universally applicable definition of vocal identity, but to explore how students interpreted their changing voices and singing activities within their social and educational contexts. Differences between accounts were viewed as meaningful variations rather than inconsistencies requiring resolution. This perspective prioritised participants' viewpoints, recognising the importance of their language, meanings and contexts in understanding their experiences.

A qualitative methodological approach was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth exploration of how adolescent singing students perceived and made sense of vocal change, confidence and developing vocal identities (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Qualitative inquiry is concerned with understanding the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to their experiences within particular contexts (Creswell and Poth, 2018), which aligns with the study's relativist ontology and constructionist and interpretivist positioning.

The data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA), an interpretive approach distinct from other pattern-based methods like grounded theory or qualitative content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). RTA explicitly treats the researcher's subjectivity as an analytic resource rather than a source of bias (Braun and Clarke, 2019; 2022). The rationale for, and application of, RTA are outlined in the Data Analysis section at the conclusion of this chapter.

Researcher positionality

An important feature of this study is the researcher's dual position as an insider researcher and the participants' singing teacher. Familiarity with the context, including its terminology and practices, provided contextual understanding and supported rapport with participants (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Mercer, 2007). This was particularly relevant when discussing personal experiences of vocal change, singing confidence and self-perception. However, insider research requires critical, reflexive consideration of how the researcher's prior knowledge, relationships and assumptions shape the research process, influencing data generation and interpretation (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). Furthermore, researching one's own students created an inherent teacher–student power dynamic requiring careful consideration of participants' autonomy and potential influence (Hancock, 2026).

To make this positionality explicit, the following section adopts a first-person voice. I am a professional singer and singing teacher, and my established relationships with participants provided contextual familiarity and rapport while shaping my perspective on their vocal experiences. My insider knowledge and relationships with participants were recognised as integral to the research process rather than factors to separate from it. Reflexive consideration was given throughout to how my dual role may have shaped research interactions, participants' accounts, and subsequent data interpretation.

Participants and sampling

Initially, five schools were selected through the researcher's music education service provider using convenience-purposive sampling: one where the researcher currently taught, one where teaching was due to commence, one with previous teaching involvement, and two with no teaching involvement. Eligible participants were male and female singing students aged 11-16 receiving individual or small-group tuition in secondary schools; vocal change was self-reported rather than independently determined. Following this initial recruitment, two additional schools where the researcher worked were contacted directly, including a girls-only school initially omitted because the study aimed to include both male and female participants. Due to the limited timeframe, vocal change could not be verified, so eligibility criteria were relaxed for feasibility. While participants were not individually selected, volunteering students were expected to meet core eligibility criteria and provide relevant insights.

Participant recruitment

Of the seven schools approached, three initially agreed to support the study. At one of these schools, where the researcher had no direct teaching relationship, a written invitation (Appendix 3

and 4) student assent form (Appendix 5 and 6) and parental consent form were provided. Only one student returned a completed questionnaire and parental consent form. However, because the student did not provide written assent, she was excluded. This resulted in 15 female student volunteers from the remaining two schools; no Year 11 students participated.

Students were invited to participate, with parental consent (Appendix 7) sought by letter through the schools. Information sheets outlining the study, anonymisation and data protection procedures were provided to parents and students, with the latter written in accessible language (Appendix 8). As all 15 students were taught by the researcher, the study was also explained verbally in person, allowing students to ask questions before providing verbal assent. Parents could address further questions through the school. Both students and parents were informed that participation was voluntary and would not affect education or teacher-student relationships.

Methods and data collection

Data were collected through a paper questionnaire followed by optional individual semi-structured interviews, with topics informed by broad themes in AVC research. Individual interviews were used rather than focus groups to minimise peer influence and provide privacy. The questionnaires comprised closed questions to introduce topics and open-ended questions inviting participants to articulate their perspectives, giving them two weeks to reflect in a familiar setting. At the end, participants were invited to volunteer for an individual follow-up interview. Most participants completed both research phases, though some chose interviews only, and others questionnaires only. To provide written proof of their choice (Appendix 9), interview-only participants signed the questionnaire's final interview invitation page.

Interview questions broadly followed the themes explored in the questionnaire. The semi-structured format enabled participants to explore individual meanings in greater depth, while allowing relevant issues to be pursued as they arose. Participants' accounts were understood as shaped through researcher-participant interaction (Miller and Glassner, 2011). Interviews took place individually at school and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Together, the questionnaires and interviews generated contextualised accounts of participants' perceptions of vocal change, singing experiences and vocal identity.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the UWTSD research ethics committee before recruitment. Parental/guardian consent was obtained following provision of the study overview, data handling protocols and withdrawal rights, alongside an age-appropriate participant information sheet to support informed student verbal assent. Participation was voluntary; students were assured that non-participation would not affect their academic progress to address potential power imbalances.

Interviews were conducted individually in a private space at school. Anonymity was maintained by applying pseudonyms to transcripts and reporting, removing identifying details, and securely storing audio recordings and transcripts. Participants and guardians were informed of the limits of confidentiality regarding disclosures indicating a significant risk of harm, in accordance with safeguarding procedures. The sensitivity surrounding singing ability, performance and peer judgement was addressed by allowing participants to decline any questions without penalty. These measures supported participant autonomy and wellbeing throughout the study (BERA, 2024).

Data Analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data generated through the paper questionnaires and individual interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2019) approach to reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). This approach was selected because its theoretical flexibility aligns with the study's constructionist and interpretivist positioning, proving more appropriate for exploring subjective meaning than bounded methods like interpretative phenomenological analysis or qualitative content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021a). Coding operated along a continuum between inductive and deductive orientations (Braun and Clarke, 2022). While predominantly inductive and data-driven, it iteratively incorporated my insider knowledge and contextual expertise as an active interpretive lens, recognising that coding does not occur in a theoretical vacuum (Braun and Clarke, 2019; 2022).

RTA conceptualises analysis as an active, interpretive process in which the researcher generates themes through deep engagement with the dataset, rather than treating themes as objective features existing independently within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Braun and Clarke, 2022). Within this reflexive framework, this interpretive and subjective approach is considered essential for quality practice, deliberately rejecting a rigid application of predetermined frameworks in favour of an organic generation of codes (Braun and Clarke, 2021b). The researcher is therefore an active participant in the analytical process rather than a neutral analyst with subjectivity recognised as an integral aspect of interpretation.

This understanding was particularly relevant given my position as the participants' singing teacher. My subjectivity, insider knowledge and existing relationships with participants were not treated as influences to eliminate, but as aspects requiring ongoing reflexive examination. Reflexivity involved considering how my experiences, assumptions and relationships shaped my engagement with their accounts and the development of themes. This reflexive approach was consistent with both the study's philosophical positioning and its recognition of the researcher as an active participant.

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) six phase framework:

Phase 1: familiarisation with the data. I familiarised myself with the dataset through manual transcription and repeated reading of the questionnaires and transcripts. Interview transcripts were

generated using the transcription feature in Microsoft Word and manually checked word-for-word against the original audio recordings to support transcriptional accuracy and facilitate engagement. Where written words in the questionnaires were difficult to decipher, I sought typographical clarification from the participants during their individual interviews, or approached questionnaire-only participants briefly in a neutral manner. This process also provided opportunities to record initial observations and reflect on my assumptions concerning participants' experiences of vocal change.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes. I generated initial codes across the questionnaire and interview data (Appendix 10), identifying features relevant to the research questions, including accounts of changing voices, confidence, self-consciousness when singing, experiences of singing with others, perceived vocal ability, and interactions with peers and teachers.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes. Related codes were examined for broader patterns of meaning and clustered together to develop candidate themes.

Phases 4 and 5: Developing, reviewing, refining, and naming themes. This involved repeatedly reviewing and refining candidate themes against the coded extracts and the dataset as a whole. Themes were reorganised, combined, or discarded where appropriate. This recursive process relied on ongoing interpretation and reflexive engagement with the text, documented through an evolving thematic framework (Appendix 11) (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Phase 6: Producing the written account: The finalised themes were developed into the interpretative narrative presented in the following chapter, addressing how secondary school singing students understood and experienced vocal change, and how these experiences contributed to the construction and negotiation of their vocal identities.

Reflexivity was embedded throughout the analytic process, with ongoing consideration of how my experiences, assumptions, prior understandings and position as a researcher-teacher shaped my engagement with participants' accounts and the development of the thematic analysis. Consistent with the study's philosophical position, the resulting themes were understood as interpretative constructions shaped through this reflexive engagement and situated within the individual and social contexts of participants' experiences.

Analysis of findings

Introduction

The following analysis uses Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis to explore how secondary-school singing students describe their singing experiences through AVC, interpreting how they understand and negotiate these changes in relation to singing ability, vocal control, learning, confidence and social situations. Through iterative coding and theme development, I constructed an overarching central argument, 'Negotiating a changing voice: uncertainty, social

exposure and the navigation of vocal agency', and developed 3 main themes, capturing the ways participants understood vocal instability not simply as a physical change, but as an experience intertwined with perceptions of competence, social judgement, performance and confidence. Across participants' accounts, AVC is constructed as more than a physical alteration in pitch, range or vocal quality. Its significance extends beyond the physical voice, involving the negotiation of vocal control, performance demands, identity and social confidence. Students continually work out what their changing voice means for them as singers: vocal instability can feel unpredictable, alter their sense of control and temporarily undermine their perceptions of competence. This uncertainty becomes particularly significant when singing is socially exposed, observed or evaluated by others, with peers and audiences acting as real or perceived judges of vocal ability. However, many students negotiate these changes by developing strategies to manage rather than overcome them, through singing lessons, increased practice, adaptation, repertoire choice, support, acceptance, technical understanding and successful performance experiences. In some cases, these experiences gradually foster a sense of agency and confidence. The themes are not intended to represent mutually exclusive categories but illuminate different dimensions of the same experience. Vocal change, technical uncertainty, social comparison, embarrassment, confidence and agency frequently interacted with one another. Hence, AVC is not a linear movement from difficulty towards improvement, but an ongoing process in which uncertainty, disruption, adaptation and possibility coexist.

Overarching central analytical argument

Negotiating a changing voice: uncertainty, social exposure and the navigation of agency

Thematic map

Theme 1: The disruption of vocal control: negotiating uncertainty and an unfolding new horizon

Theme 2: The voice under observation: comparison, judgement and vulnerability

Theme 3: Learning to work with the changing voice: developing agency

Theme 1: The disruption of vocal control: negotiating uncertainty and an unfolding new horizon

I interpreted participants' accounts as constructing vocal change as a disruptive force to previously familiar and established experiences of vocal control, while simultaneously opening up an unfolding horizon of new vocal possibilities. Rather than representing a straightforward progression

from instability towards mastery and control, I read these accounts as an ongoing, fluctuating negotiation between uncertainty, loss, adaptation and shifting capacity.

Participants frequently described their changing voices as unpredictable and difficult to control. Voice cracks were prominent across interview and questionnaire data. Participant K described uncertainty over whether she was singing 'from my chest or from my throat or from my head', while also reporting that individual notes could become 'one note' rather than remaining distinct. These experiences positioned the changing voice as something that could temporarily resist the singer's intentions, consistent with Monks' (2003) finding that vocal change can affect vocal identity. Other participants described changes in range and vocal quality. N reported strain, voice cracks and difficulty reaching previously accessible notes; J experienced pain when singing higher and difficulty sustaining notes; O similarly found high notes harder to sustain and more likely to crack, while L recalled a period when her voice became 'raspy' and singing became painful, although this subsequently returned to normal.

Questionnaires sometimes suggested no vocal challenges, or responses were often brief or vague, whereas interviews revealed difficulties less visible in the written data and enabled greater elaboration. I also felt that some students were reticent to discuss their vocal challenges. I therefore interpret the apparent absence of vocal difficulties in questionnaires cautiously, as interviews sometimes revealed experiences initially unreported or clearly expressed.

Vocal change was not, however, experienced exclusively as a challenge, instead, I interpret the accounts as characterised by an ongoing interplay of contradictions and tensions: increased and reduced range; vocal improvement and deterioration; voice cracks and improved control; increased vocal awareness and uncertainty; perceived poor ability despite external recognition; confidence in groups but not alone; confidence alongside embarrassment; challenge and motivation, vulnerability and agency. G, for example, felt that 'my voice has slightly deteriorated' while also reporting that 'my lower range seems to have increased and my singing in head voice is a bit more supported.' Similarly, K described having 'good days' and 'bad days' while recognising that her skills had 'significantly improved.' I read these apparently contradictory accounts as significant rather than inconsistent: they suggest that participants experienced vocal development as fluctuating, relational, contextual and multidimensional; improvement, therefore, did not necessarily produce a stable sense of vocal control.

Several students also identified new vocal possibilities alongside these difficulties. Participant I reported gaining access to higher notes, while H could sing higher despite perceiving her speaking voice as lower; D associated a lower voice with greater ability to sing repertoire she enjoyed; L initially felt frustrated by an inability to reach high notes but later became able to do so. Together, these accounts suggest that the changing voice can involve not only some uncertainty and the disruption of predictable vocal outcomes, but also the emergence of new vocal possibilities.

This interpretation is shaped by my dual positionality as researcher and singing teacher. My familiarity with my students' voices and pedagogical development may have enabled me to recognise nuances in range, control and vocal quality, while also shaping how I interpreted their accounts. I therefore understand these themes as co-constructed through my engagement with participants, and remain mindful that students may have also voiced their experiences in response to my role as their teacher and their desire to meet expectations of vocal ability, progress and development.

Theme 2: The voice under observation: comparison, judgement and vulnerability

I interpreted participants' accounts as constructing the adolescent singing voice as deeply social. Confidence and participation were shaped not only by technical skill, but by who was listening, peer groups, and the room's physical setup. While being watched and fearing judgment could make students feel vulnerable, performing anonymously or having supportive friends could act as a protective shield. This social circle became a context for ongoing boundary negotiation, where sustaining a developing musical identity was continually weighed against the social stakes of peer acceptance and friendship loss.

Negotiating vocal adequacy: comparison, exposure and embarrassment

The emotional significance of vocal change became apparent as students situated their voices in relation to others. Participants compared their singing with peers and interpreted social reactions as indicators of vocal competence. Participant I described a discrepancy between how her voice sounded to herself and how she imagined it sounded to others, feeling more comfortable in larger groups and less comfortable when her voice was more exposed. This suggests that confidence was shaped not only by vocal experience but by perceptions of how the voice might be socially received, with greater vocal visibility increasing the risk of negative evaluation. J recalled feeling embarrassed because she believed her friends were good singers while she was 'not very good at singing.' Similarly, C felt she was 'not the best singer', while E identified qualities in other singers, such as clarity and the ability to belt higher notes, that she perceived herself as lacking. B described hearing someone sing particularly well and thinking, 'she's better than me', which prompted embarrassment. These accounts suggest that students constructed vocal adequacy through social comparison, with embarrassment emerging alongside a perceived gap between their current vocal abilities and an imagined or observed standard of competent singing.

The voice was simultaneously personal and public. J described her voice as not sounding good and reported greater confidence when singing alone at home, suggesting that perceived environmental safety enabled more positive engagement with her voice. Confidence therefore

appeared to shift according to the social circumstances in which singing occurred. K similarly demonstrated the relationship between social pressure and vocal **control**. At home, where there was 'no pressure', K repeatedly attempted a passage until the voice crack disappeared. In contrast, singing in front of a teacher or other students created pressure to 'get it perfect', which K felt made the voice crack worse. Vocal instability therefore appeared not simply as an individual technical problem, but as something intensified by perceived expectations of others; the social gaze could amplify the very instability students feared would be noticed.

H's experience further illustrates how a brief vocal event could acquire emotional significance in a public setting. During karaoke with family, H experienced an unexpected voice crack and stopped singing. Her cousins laughed, prompting embarrassment, but subsequently reassured her that it was normal, allowing H to resume singing. This demonstrates how a voice crack could temporarily disrupt participation, while social reassurance could normalise the event and facilitate recovery. Overall, embarrassment appeared to arise from more than vocal difficulty, including anticipated judgement, increased pressure, reduced vocal security, heightened awareness of instability, potentially leading to withdrawal or self-monitoring. This pattern is particularly significant in adolescent singing, where vocal change can make the voice less predictable at a stage when students become increasingly conscious of peer perception.

Questionnaire data support the prominence of this pattern, with most participants reporting embarrassment about their voice, while interviews revealed considerable variation in its intensity and context. Embarrassment appeared to arise through social comparison, perceived judgement, performance expectations, vocal unpredictability, and the visibility of the adolescent singing voice, rather than vocal difficulty alone. Students could tolerate, repeat, and experiment with vocal difficulties when alone, yet the same experiences could become embarrassing in front of peers, friends, or family. This resonates with Lamont et al. (2003), who identified a gap between young people's informal musical lives and formal educational contexts, including resistance to peer-facing singing.

Negotiating vulnerability under the social gaze

Singing was fundamentally social and relational: participants evaluated their voices not only through their own experience, but also through imagined, perceived, and actual responses from peers. Judgement was experienced both as an event and an anticipation; several participants felt judged without receiving explicit negative comments, yet the possibility of judgement shaped singing behaviour, confidence, and self-perception. This suggests that fear of judgement can influence behaviour even in the absence of overt bullying or mockery.

A significant finding was the distinction between actual, perceived, and anticipated judgement. Some participants described direct negative comments, while others interpreted ambiguous social cues, including silence, staring, laughter, facial expressions, or audience characteristics, as evidence of judgement. L provides a clear example: during a music lesson, she could not see the

other students because they were behind her, yet believed they were judging her because her voice was cracking: 'I don't think, I don't know if they judged me, but like, I can't see their face... but I think they did.' Although uncertain, she had subsequently heard someone at the back, suggesting that her perception was not entirely imagined. More importantly, the uncertainty itself became threatening: her inability to see the audience did not remove the possibility of judgement, but left her to interpret what might be happening behind her. J similarly described anticipating criticism despite having received no negative comments, stating, 'I just, like, probably thinking, like, this is so bad.' She agreed that she thought peers might judge her, suggesting that the absence of overt criticism did not necessarily create psychological safety; imagined judgement became incorporated into her own evaluation of her singing. Participant I described interpreting peers' unsmiling facial expressions as evidence of inadequacy: 'whenever ... there's kind of like stares, I feel like I'm singing bad' and 'when they just stare at me, like they're not smiling or something, I feel like it's bad.' Hence, ambiguous social cues could disrupt an otherwise positive relationship with singing.

Other participants reported direct experiences of mockery. K described pupils repeatedly singing the same section of her song while deliberately altering the notes to exaggerate her past performance: 'while they were mocking it, they were messing up the notes to make it seem more exaggerated.' Although K later acknowledged that the song may not have suited her voice and that 'it was a really stupid song', she distinguished between the validity of the feedback and its humiliating delivery: 'it wasn't right how they acted. It was right of what they thought about the song though.' She interpreted the experience as judgement rather than constructive criticism, explaining: 'they weren't right to show their opinion on it.' The findings therefore suggest that the manner and social context of feedback determined whether it became developmental or damaging. While K later conceded that the piece may have been ill-suited to her vocal characteristics and represented an inappropriate repertoire selection, this interpretation may have been shaped by peer hostility rather than a purely objective assessment of her voice and song choice: 'I just chose it because I liked it at the time.' H similarly recalled a pupil in primary school repeatedly telling her that she could not sing and should stop. Although these comments continued over an extended period, H eventually became more confident and less affected by them. This demonstrates that judgement may not inevitably determine participants' longer-term confidence; confidence may shift according to who is listening, where singing occurs, what is being sung, and how secure participants feel in their vocal skills.

Audience was an important condition shaping participants' experiences of singing. Participants differentiated between audiences, suggesting that perceived risk and confidence varied according to who was listening. Trusted friends, familiar peers, younger pupils, family members and choir members were not experienced in the same way as older or, in some cases, less familiar pupils. Thus, the same act of singing could be experienced as enabling or constraining depending on whether the audience was perceived as supportive or critical. K offered a clear account of this relationship: singing in front of her own year group had become easier because, as she explained, 'my year doesn't do anything to me.' She added, 'it really helps. It means I can do whatever I want. They won't judge me that much.' Here, acceptance appeared to do more than reduce discomfort; it

created a sense of social permission to participate freely. K also distinguished between younger and older students, positioning younger pupils as a less threatening audience: 'they're little kids, what are they going to say to me?' Her account suggests that perceived social power shaped vulnerability, with the potential judgement of some audiences carrying greater significance than others.

While some participants located psychological safety within familiar peer groups, B offered a critical nuance, suggesting that familiarity could sometimes operate as social surveillance rather than comfort. For B, singing outside school was less threatening because of the anonymity it offered: 'because I feel like outside of school, there's no one you know inside of the school.' B's preference for strangers revealed that familiarity could introduce social vulnerability. Within school, performing poorly would risk disrupting an established peer identity. Anonymity, instead, would act as protective shield, lowering the stakes by separating musical expression from daily social consequences. Therefore, psychological safety appears to depend less on familiarity with the audience than on the level of social risk involved. This protective shield was also found by blending into a group. G, for example, although feeling self-conscious when singing with others, felt that performing with the choir protected her from the vulnerability of voice cracks by providing shared anonymity: 'if I mess up when I'm singing in a choir, you can't really hear it.' The collective sound shields individual singers, masking mistakes and supporting confidence. Collectively, these accounts indicate that managing vulnerability relies heavily on spaces where individual visibility—and therefore individual risk—is minimised.

In contrast to the protective 'shared anonymity' of a choir, individual vocal lessons can heighten feelings of exposure under an external gaze. This was demonstrated during a warm-up exercise with participant I, whose lesson took place in a studio featuring a transparent glass panel exposed to an adjacent classroom. Commenting on this layout, participant I remarked, 'I just don't really like the area and how people just stare at you... cause it looks kind of weird and stuff... I wouldn't mind if they heard it, but I just don't want them to see... who's singing.' This reveals a tension between auditory and visual privacy during vocal training. While singing is an acoustic act, her concern centred on being seen rather than heard. The glass panel removed her privacy, turning an intimate lesson into an accidental public performance. Her fear of looking 'weird' while making the facial and physical movements needed to sing suggests that students may need visual privacy to feel safe. Participant I further linked this exposure to peer hierarchy, noting that older pupils were a source of heightened criticism: 'the older the years are, the more like, the more comments you'd get.' Importantly, this anticipated threat did not depend on direct criticism; she was deeply concerned that older students might discuss her singing with others, suggesting that the possibility of becoming the subject of peer conversation could itself generate anxiety. This event matches a pattern I have observed across many years of teaching singing: some students have felt deeply uncomfortable being watched during lessons by passing students through the room's glass door. As an educator, I recognise that these glass panels are often a non-negotiable safeguarding requirement designed to maintain visibility and institutional safety. However, this creates a pedagogical dilemma: while the physical layout cannot be altered because of essential safety

policies, permanent exposure can cause students to feel a loss of control, potentially disrupting the trust and sense of safety needed to practice freely.

Across these accounts, confidence can therefore be understood as relational rather than exclusively individual. Although participants described singing as personally meaningful and something they would continue despite others' opinions, their willingness to express themselves was shaped by how particular audiences were perceived. Peer influence was experienced in contrasting ways: peers could provide affirmation and encouragement while also generating the possibility of embarrassment, rejection or diminished confidence. Acceptance appeared to legitimise participants' identities as singers, reducing the social risk associated with musical self-expression. In this sense, I interpreted singing confidence not simply as a fixed individual characteristic but as something negotiated through participants' perceptions of whether their social environment would accept and tolerate their singing.

Negotiating belonging: peer affirmation, friendship and vocal identity

Across the accounts, supportive friendships constructed singing as a socially safer space in which participants could participate, experiment and develop their identities as singers. Friends encouraged choir participation, offered musical feedback and normalised singing, functioning as a social scaffolding for musical engagement.

Participant I distinguished between close friends and the wider peer group, responding, 'my close friends, yes,' when asked whether peers accepted her as a singing student. I interpret this distinction as suggesting that friendship provided a more secure social context for expressing her musical identity. Her encouragement of a friend to join choir illustrates how peer relationships could function in contrast to judgement, sustaining engagement in singing. D similarly described positive peer validation: a friend told her that her voice was really similar to a popular singer, which D said 'inspires' her. From my reflexive perspective as her teacher, this appeared significant because its influence extended beyond reassurance to shape how D understood her vocal ability.

Peer affirmation may therefore support a positive musical self-concept, enabling participants to see themselves not simply as young people who sing, but as capable singers with a developing musical identity. Taken together, these accounts suggest that peer relationships formed an important social context for developing and expressing singing confidence. This echoes Parker (2018), who found that female choir participation could support confidence, self-expression, belonging and interpersonal relationships. Rather than confidence being confined strictly to the individual, I interpreted it as relationally constructed through acceptance, affirmation and encouragement.

A further dimension of the participants' social circle concerns the tension between maintaining peer relationships and sustaining a musical identity. B's account illustrates that peer influence was not merely pressure to conform. She distinguished between criticism that could be dismissed, such as singing being 'not cool', and a direct threat to friendship: 'if they were saying, oh if you do singing

lessons, we're not going to be friends with you ... I'll probably leave singing.' The latter was sufficiently consequential to make her reconsider participation, suggesting that the meaning attached to peers' responses depended on their perceived social consequences. B's comment, 'I feel like I still want to hang out with my friends', captures the competing pull between musical aspirations and maintaining peer connections. C instead linked potential friendship loss to changing her behaviour: 'because they wouldn't be my friends anymore.' Her account highlights tensions between peer acceptance and commitment to singing, while also suggesting a willingness to prioritise her developing musical identity over unsupportive friendships.

Rather than reducing peer influence to pressure to conform, these accounts suggest that musical participation is continually negotiated in relation to vocal identity, belonging and valued social relationships. Peer influence was therefore neither solely positive nor negative; its significance depended on the social consequences attached to it.

The social legitimacy of participation: gendered meanings and peer expectations

While the previous sections explored how the participants negotiated their own vocal changes and personal anxieties, their self-perceptions were also informed by who was absent from the singing space. Although this study ultimately recruited an all-female sample, asking participants to reflect on the low involvement of boys in choirs and singing lessons revealed how they perceived the social landscape of singing. This sub-theme therefore shifts the focus from individual confidence to the social legitimacy of participation.

A further pattern concerned perceptions of low male participation in singing. K associated this with concerns about how singing might be interpreted by peers, suggesting that some boys may not view singing as 'manly' or 'masculine' and may fear judgement from friends or potential romantic partners. This supports Legg (2013) Harrison (2007), who identify gendered and peer expectations as barriers to boys' participation in singing. Participant I similarly suggested that some boys might prioritise fitting in or appearing 'cool', even if they privately enjoy singing. J, however, offered a different interpretation, suggesting simply that singing might not be 'their thing.'

These accounts should not be interpreted as establishing a single explanation for boys' participation. Rather, the variation itself is analytically significant: participants constructed gender as one possible social lens through which participation in singing was evaluated. The issue was therefore not simply that fewer boys were perceived to sing, but that singing could carry gendered social meanings affecting its perceived legitimacy. In contrast, Ashley (2002) and Eliorriaga (2011) show that boys may reconstruct singing as compatible with masculinity through skill, effort, achievement and socially accepted masculine identities. For participants in the dataset, participation was constrained primarily by anticipated judgement of vocal ability, while they also perceived that boys could face questions about whether singing was compatible with masculine peer identities. This shifts the analytical focus from confidence alone towards legitimacy: who can participate in singing without having to explain, justify or defend that participation?

Theme 3: Learning to work with the changing voice: developing agency

I interpreted participants' accounts as constructing agency through an evolving capacity to understand, manage and navigate their changing voices within social, pedagogical and musical contexts. Agency involved making meaningful choices while negotiating structures shaped by teachers, peers and institutional expectations. Vocal knowledge became significant when embodied and actionable, enabling participants to reinterpret uncertainty, manage technical challenges and develop confidence. Motivation was similarly relational: personal enjoyment and passion were supported, but sometimes constrained, by family, friends, peers, teachers and opportunities to participate. Participants also constructed multiple possible musical selves, ranging from private and recreational singing to performance, creative activity and potential careers, shaped by their preferred levels of visibility, social safety and autonomy. Overall, developing agency did not mean gaining complete control over the changing voice, but building the confidence, knowledge and capacity to negotiate when, where, with whom and how singing could remain meaningful.

Participants' accounts suggest that AVC was experienced through the interaction of the changing body, developing vocal skills and the social contexts in which the voice was heard. Rather than simply physiological change, it involved learning to understand, trust, manage and publicly inhabit a changing voice. Alongside uncertainty and vulnerability, participants described developing ways of managing their voices; singing lessons were particularly significant in this process. K described her vocal skills as having 'significantly improved', explaining that lessons helped her understand difficulties with breathing, physical tension and high notes; hence, technical knowledge appeared to make previously elusive vocal difficulties more understandable and manageable. Practice similarly supported developing control: H described learning to move between registers through repeated practice and adapting to a style of singing, while B reported that breath management had become easier.

Agency: having a voice also means having a choice

Agency also involved adapting to changing vocal demands. Several participants adapted their repertoire to accommodate vocal shifts, and I interpret repertoire choice as an important condition shaping engagement and perceived musical agency. Participants frequently valued selecting songs they liked. F offered comparative evidence, noting that participation in a singing group increased when members could vote on the repertoire. Similarly, J compared individual lessons, where she could choose songs, with choir, where repertoire was predetermined and unfamiliar. K described reduced motivation when singing teachers assigned songs from a graded book,

preferring music she enjoyed outside lessons, and likened a disliked song as a 'wall' preventing her from reaching her 'true potential.' For L, willingness to perform 'depends on what we're singing': although she would participate in a musical, she was less inclined to perform a 'boring song' in which she would simply 'sit like, straight and just sing'. This echoes Lamont et al. (2003), who identified resistance to non-preferred repertoire among secondary students. This suggests that engagement was shaped by the relationship between repertoire and personal interest, with choice influencing enjoyment and agency. However, the data do not support a simple causal relationship between having limited choice and withdrawal. J, for example, continued participating despite disliking some repertoire because she still loved singing, suggesting that restricted choice might instead result in less enthusiastic engagement rather than withdrawal from participation. Repetition revealed a similar tension: L initially valued repeating songs as it enabled improvement, but found practice tedious after several lessons. In contrast, K valued structured warm-ups and feedback because she could notice measurable vocal improvement, while C favoured varied warm-ups. Taken together, these accounts suggest that participants valued progress, challenge, and development, when these remained personally meaningful. This sense of meaning was also physical; H selected repertoire within a more manageable range to reduce strain, while J expressed frustration when a teacher selected a song that was too high and valued having a choice of repertoire. Repertoire, therefore, functioned not simply as a technical consideration, but as a psychological condition shaping motivation, vocal investment, and a willingness to perform. Therefore, agency was not the absence of structure, but the ability to exercise meaningful choice within it. This supports Higgins' (2026) finding that autonomy-supportive pedagogy can strengthen girls' agency during vocal change. Participants clearly valued teacher expertise, feedback, and technical development, while also requiring a degree of control over what they sang to sustain their involvement.

Across the accounts, confidence and agency appeared to develop through understanding, practising and adapting rather than complete control of the changing voice. For D, a lower voice represented both change and opportunity, as she expressed acceptance of her voice as unique. L described moving from frustration at being unable to reach high notes in Year 7 to accessing more notes through training: she conceptualised this improvement through personal agency and skill acquisition, stating, 'I think I just got the hang of it... I trained it more', suggesting that she understood progress through effort and developing technical mastery. This resonates with Orton and Pitts' (2019) finding that girls viewed singing ability as something that could be developed through practice and effort. Technical development did not, however, equate to confidence; the findings indicate that vocal competence and confidence were not synonymous, challenging the assumption that students who are technically more capable necessarily feel more confident and vice versa. Vocal confidence remained contextual and relational, shaped by several factors such as audience, repertoire, vocal support and previous experience. G, for example, worried about cracks and strains, feeling embarrassed and afraid of failure when her voice behaved unpredictably in front of others, while also considering herself capable and confident in her singing abilities. J, by contrast, had a poor perception of her vocal skills, felt technically uncertain, and compared herself negatively with friends while nevertheless taking prominent performance roles.

Hence, confidence was not experienced as a stable personal attribute: students could be confident in one context and vulnerable in another.

Confidence also developed through strategies for managing vulnerability. For C and F, singing lessons provided a valuable framework for building confidence, with C indicating accumulated experience, and F highlighting how warm-ups, tailored advice, and direct support made a difference. Participants described selecting suitable repertoire, practising difficult passages, relying on ensemble support and continuing after mistakes as ways of maintaining control. A advised another singer to continue after a voice crack and 'act like it didn't happen', arguing that continuing could enable the performer to 'redeem' the mistake. This offers a counter-narrative to perfectionism: the meaning of a mistake can change through what happens afterwards, suggesting that confidence may involve managing imperfection rather than eliminating it. Similarly, B described feeling nervous at the beginning of a concert, worrying that her voice might fail, but reported feeling fine after approximately 30 seconds; A reported that she might feel nervous before performing in front of a crowd but 'once I'm singing, I feel great'; K described moving from shaking legs during an early performance to later feeling that she 'didn't care' and O depicted an initially 'frightening' and 'scary' experience that became better as it progressed. These accounts suggest that repeated experience may change participants' relationship with anxiety, rather than remove it.

Performance was consequently experienced as emotionally ambivalent. Participants described it as simultaneously anxiety-provoking, nerve-wracking and enjoyable, or frightening but confidence-building. For C, being recognised through singing was 'empowering' and 'it felt good to get recognised'. M described feeling 'supported, confident and proud of myself', while H stated that she 'love[s] performing on stage' and feeling excited. Performance therefore represented both exposure and possibility: visibility could create vulnerability to judgement while also enabling recognition, pride and affirmation.

A similar tension was identified in participants' dynamic negotiation of musical identity and peer belonging'. Many demonstrated agency by resisting peer influence, stating that 'they can't control what I do' and 'I'm not going to let them decide what I do'. Yet this autonomy coexisted with an awareness that peer acceptance mattered, revealing a tension between autonomy and belonging: participants wanted to remain authentic to their musical interests while also maintaining social acceptance.

Negotiating agency within the lesson structure

Participants constructed individual and small-group lessons as offering different possibilities for developing agency, despite having limited control over the lesson structure. Individual tuition was associated with focused attention and greater opportunity to work on the changing voice. A and G associated individual lessons with more time for personalised feedback, musical development and ownership of learning, while E found group singing made it difficult to 'hear myself' and focus on

improving her voice. However, agency was not constructed solely through individual learning. For others, peers provided enjoyment, modelling and reassurance: D recalled that, when younger, a peer could 'cheer me up', F and J associated group singing with enjoyment, friendship and inspiration, B described singing with a classmate as making her 'voice ... more natural and free', while H valued hearing 'different styles' and 'different voices' as opportunities for learning.

These accounts also reveal the vulnerability of being heard while the voice is changing. B recognised that vocal change might make students reluctant to sing before peers, and D preferred individual tuition because it provided 'more space for improvement' and reduced self-consciousness when her 'voice cracks', although she felt that group singing had helped her learn. My interpretation was also reflexively informed by my professional experience of non-participant students who, after singing in small groups, expressed greater vocal freedom and self-expression during occasional individual tuition. This led me to consider how social conditions may shape students' willingness to use and explore their voices. I therefore interpret participants' preferences not as reflecting a straightforward distinction between individual and small-group singing, but as expressions of different ways of negotiating agency within an externally determined structure. Individual tuition could afford privacy and focused vocal exploration, while peer learning could enable social support, modelling and shared musical engagement. Agency was thus constructed not simply through choice, but through negotiating the conditions in which the changing voice could be heard, explored and developed.

Vocal knowledge becomes meaningful when embodied, actionable and normalising

Across the dataset, participants differed in how they imagined vocal knowledge affecting confidence and motivation. A key pattern was that knowledge became meaningful when connected to embodied experience and translated into action. Simply knowing that the voice changes during adolescence was not necessarily perceived as useful; participants valued knowledge when it offered ways of understanding and responding to those changes.

K distinguished between abstract information and practical strategies: 'You're just telling me what happens and I can't really control it', compared with 'If you tell me how to manoeuvre around it... or what effects it has on my singing, then that would help.' For Participant I, AVC was an interesting but relatively detached 'sciencey' topic, while O already experienced singing as enjoyable and viewed additional knowledge as secondary. L similarly emphasised experiential learning: 'I won't really get it until I practice it with someone.' This partly contrasts with Mercado and Draut's (2024) emphasis on anatomy-informed pedagogy, as participants valued knowledge primarily when it was practically applicable. The value of vocal knowledge was therefore conditional on participants' existing relationships with singing and their ability to make knowledge actionable.

A second pattern concerned knowledge as a means of normalising vocal change. For some participants, understanding adolescence offered an alternative interpretation of vocal difficulties,

shifting them from evidence of personal inadequacy towards experiences associated with development. G suggested she would feel 'a lot more like okay with my voice like straining or cracking' if she understood these changes as related to puberty. Likewise, B described vocal change as 'a normal thing for everyone', while F connected knowledge with understanding the causes of vocal changes and identifying ways of responding to them. For N, questionnaire data suggested that information could help her understand changes in her body and what she was able to do. Within this pattern, vocal knowledge may support young students through explanation rather than certainty: it does not remove unpredictability, but may alter its meaning, so that uncertainty can be understood as part of vocal development rather than as a sign of failure.

Knowledge was also constructed as a resource for agency. F suggested it would enable her to 'use my voice the way it's meant to be used', while A associated technical knowledge with confidence: 'if you know more about your voice or how to sing things such as technique... you would be more confident', referring to having 'the tips' needed to perform. From this perspective, vocal education may support agency when knowledge enables young people to make decisions about their voices rather than simply increasing what they know.

Importantly, this did not displace the pleasure of singing: D emphasised 'just having fun in general.' Vocal education may therefore be most meaningful when it integrates knowledge with embodied practice, agency and enjoyment, rather than positioning technical knowledge as valuable in its own right.

Regarding the potential reach and impact of a vocal-change workshop among non-singing students, findings suggest that vocal information may create possibilities without guaranteeing public or formal participation. Participants constructed information about AVC as potentially increasing interest and confidence among non-singing students. L suggested that learning what the changing voice can do could encourage students to 'try it out', while F felt greater understanding might challenge assumptions that their voice was 'not good enough' and encourage singing. C similarly described vocal change as 'interesting' and potentially inspiring. However, participants also recognised that information alone might not overcome disinterest or anxiety: J considered it irrelevant to students who did not care about singing, D anticipated concerns about embarrassment, while K suggested that some non-singing students might experiment privately at home, connecting with the earlier finding that home could provide a low-pressure space for vocal exploration. In this sense, vocal-change knowledge was therefore perceived as potentially opening possibilities for participation, but its impact depended on students' existing interests, confidence and perceived competence. However, uncertainty in some responses across questions concerning the impact of AVC information, including one participant's difficulty understanding the question, prompted reflexive consideration of question clarity across questionnaires and interviews.

From my reflexive perspective as a singing teacher, this dynamic highlights a potential limit of educational outreach: information may lower barriers to understanding, but cannot eliminate the social risks adolescents may associate with singing. Non-participation in formal school singing may

therefore reflect not simply a lack of musical interest, but differing ways of managing vocal identity, confidence and peer evaluation. This prompted me to reconsider whether successful outreach should be measured only through recruitment into formal singing provision, or also through enabling young people to explore their voices safely and autonomously.

Across the wider dataset, young people's experiences of singing can therefore be understood as an ongoing negotiation of vocal agency and legitimacy. Where and with whom singing occurs, its perceived visibility and consequences, interpretations of changing voices, and access to practical knowledge all shape this negotiation. Vocal education may consequently matter not simply because it increases knowledge, but because embodied and actionable knowledge can help young people reinterpret uncertainty, exercise greater agency and imagine further possibilities for singing.

The foundations of motivation: personal passion and social circles

Participants' motivation to engage with singing was primarily constructed around personal passion and enjoyment, while encouragement and reinforcement were provided by their social circles, including family, friends and peers, as well as from teachers and school-based opportunities. The data complicate a simple intrinsic/extrinsic distinction: participants often described singing as something that 'came from' themselves, while their motivation was also shaped by relationships, opportunities to improve and future aspirations.

For many, singing lessons did not create this personal passion for singing but provided a formal context through which it could develop. Participation can therefore be understood through a dynamic sequence of interest, participation, skill development, increased confidence, leading to a motivation to continue. Motivation appeared self-reinforcing when participants recognised their own progress. This emphasis on optimal learning, motivation and engagement also features in Freer's (2009a) study of adolescent boys.

I interpreted motivation as developing not in isolation but as shaped and supported through participants' immediate social circles. Participants' immediate social circles could play a dual role, acting as powerful sources of encouragement while simultaneously introducing social risks and complex peer pressures. For some, family members acted as sources of modelling, encouragement and emotional reinforcement. Rather than replacing young people's own motivation, significant others appeared to amplify it by making musical participation feel legitimate, possible and worthwhile.

Friends and peers similarly made participation more attainable by introducing opportunities and reducing the psychological distance between wanting to sing and joining. However, peer influence was ambivalent: elsewhere in the dataset, participants described embarrassment, fear of

judgement and concerns about others' opinions. The same social environment could therefore encourage participation through friendship while inhibiting it through perceived judgement. This may indicate that motivation cannot be understood independently of the social context in which it is acted upon; a student may be highly motivated to sing while finding the social conditions for participation difficult.

The findings also suggest a distinction between motivation to sing and motivation to access singing lessons. Students may already want to sing, while teacher encouragement, invitations, friends or visible opportunities make participation conceivable. Teachers and institutional opportunities therefore appeared to support the expression of existing motivation rather than generate motivation in themselves. Ultimately, participants did not just experience vocal change; they actively used singing lessons to build personal autonomy, shaping how they understood and projected their musical identities into the future.

Possible musical selves: navigating aspirations and imagined futures

Motivation was also oriented towards imagined future selves. Participants connected singing with performance, confidence and potential future musical involvement. E wanted to do 'something in music in the future', while F described secondary school as a time when she wanted to perform in concerts. B linked lessons with her band and increasing performance opportunities.

This suggests that participants were not only asking whether they enjoyed singing, but whether they could become more skilled, confident or more performance-ready. D linked improvement with confidence in her voice, while E associated confidence with performing to audiences. Singing lessons could therefore provide spaces for participants to explore possible identities, as singers, performers, musicians, or simply as young people who feel confident using their voices. Taken together, these findings extend the earlier account of motivation by showing how personal enjoyment, social relationships, opportunities and imagined futures interacted in participants' engagement with singing.

Participants' accounts reflected how they imagined their relationship with singing beyond school. Across the dataset, these imagined futures were conditional, situated and plural, rather than defined by a simple choice between becoming a singer and discontinuing singing. Participants described possible futures ranging from private or recreational singing to choirs, bands, theatre, charitable performance and potential artistic careers. This connects with Freer's (2009b; 2015) concept of possible musical selves.

For some participants, singing formed part of an explicitly aspirational musical future. F imagined becoming an artist and writing and recording her own songs, while H considered theatre auditions

and making music without necessarily pursuing it as a career; E anticipated continuing through music clubs or bands. Others positioned singing primarily as a recreational: B intended to continue lessons and potentially study music, G wanted to remain involved in choir and develop her technique without pursuing singing professionally, and C imagined singing through karaoke and informal experiences with friends. Other accounts suggested more occasional or context-dependent forms of engaging with singing. D considered using singing for charity fundraising, while participant I was uncertain about continuing beyond school and preferred singing with people she knew, and J imagined singing at home or continuing lessons. K described singing as a 'hidden talent' while imagining the possibility of an open-mic performance. This can be interpreted as a possible self that is latent, tentative, with the potential to be revealed through a specific future opportunity,

Taken together, these accounts suggest that participants' musical identities were flexible rather than binary. Valuing singing did not necessarily involve adopting a professional musical identity, while uncertainty about public performance did not indicate a lack of musical engagement. Instead, participants constructed possible musical selves around contexts compatible with their preferred levels of visibility, social safety and autonomy.

An important pattern concerned the relationship between visibility and confidence. Although public performance could represent social risk, some participants also understood it as an opportunity for personal development: F expressed a desire to perform to 'different audiences', rather than only school audiences, while B suggested that performing in front of more people could 'build your confidence', and provide opportunities to meet 'new people, new friends.' Unfamiliar audiences were therefore not necessarily experienced exclusively as threatening. Performing beyond established school relationships could create opportunities to construct a different social and musical identity.

However, context shaped the meaning of performance. L could imagine performing for children but was less enthusiastic about a formal business environment, associating this with authority and an undesirable setting. Thus, participants were not simply accepting or rejecting performance; they evaluated particular audiences and environments according to how safe, appropriate and manageable they perceived them to be.

From a reflexive perspective, these patterns can be understood as participants actively negotiating their possible musical identities. Their accounts demonstrate agency in deciding when, where, with whom and how singing might remain part of their lives. Singing could therefore be retained as a hobby, social practice, creative activity, performance opportunity or potential career, depending on the context. The apparent contradictions within participants' accounts are consequently significant: a participant could aspire to perform while simultaneously avoiding particular audiences; value singing while rejecting professionalisation; or experience anxiety about visibility while viewing performance as a means of developing confidence. Rather than treating these positions as

inconsistent, the analysis suggests that participants were negotiating the boundaries of desired visibility and perceived social risk.

Overall, the theme demonstrates that participants imagined multiple possible musical futures rather than a single trajectory towards or away from singing. Their future musical selves were shaped by contexts in which singing could remain meaningful, socially safe and personally autonomous. This highlights the value of educational provision that accommodates different reasons for engaging with singing, including personal autonomy, enjoyment and well-being, alongside aspirations for public performance or musical progression.

Conclusion

This study explored how adolescent singing students experienced their changing voices within the social, pedagogical and musical contexts of secondary school. The reflexive thematic analysis developed the overarching argument that negotiating a changing voice involves uncertainty, social exposure and the navigation of agency.

Theme 1, 'The disruption of vocal control: negotiating uncertainty and an unfolding new horizon', constructed vocal change as fluctuating rather than linear. Participants experienced disruption to previously familiar vocal control alongside emerging vocal possibilities, suggesting that development involved negotiating uncertainty rather than simply progressing towards greater vocal control.

Theme 2, 'The voice under observation: comparison, judgement and vulnerability', highlighted how this uncertainty became particularly significant when the voice was socially exposed. Participants' confidence was shaped by comparison, anticipated or actual judgement, audience and perceived social safety. The changing voice was therefore experienced as both personal and public, with social relationships capable of either constraining or supporting musical identity.

Theme 3, 'Learning to work with the changing voice: developing agency', explored how participants responded to this uncertainty through choice, practice, motivation, experience, knowledge, relationships, and imagined futures. Agency was not constructed as complete control over the changing voice, but as a developing capacity to negotiate when, where, with whom and how singing could remain meaningful. Vocal knowledge was most meaningful when embodied and actionable, while confidence emerged as contextual rather than simply a consequence of technical competence.

Taken together, the themes suggest that agency is constructed not through overcoming the changing voice, but through learning how to negotiate it. The relationship between the themes is therefore not a linear developmental sequence, but an ongoing and recursive process in which participants could experience agency in one context and vulnerability in another. The findings consequently position AVC as a negotiation between the changing body, the individual singer and the social environment.

Implications for singing pedagogy

Supporting adolescents through vocal change involves more than technical instruction. Students may benefit from opportunities to develop an informed and meaningful understanding of their changing voices and ways of working with them, with vocal knowledge presented as a resource for interpreting vocal experiences rather than as a means of eliminating uncertainty.

The findings highlight the value of flexibility and student agency within singing provision. Students may benefit from negotiating aspects of their learning, including repertoire, performance and levels of social visibility, while still being supported by teacher expertise. Differing preferences for individual or small-group singing suggest that students' agency operates within the structural constraints of school provision; where the format of lessons cannot be chosen, students may instead adapt to the available context and find ways to sustain meaningful engagement. Similarly, musical development need not be defined only through technical progression or increasingly public performance; enjoyment, autonomy, confidence, social connection and continued informal engagement may represent equally meaningful forms of musical development.

For teachers, attention to the social conditions in which vocal exploration takes place is therefore important. Repertoire, grouping, performance opportunities and peer relationships may influence how safely students feel able to experiment with their changing voices. Supporting adolescent singers consequently involves creating pedagogical conditions in which different musical identities and trajectories can be explored without requiring a particular outcome.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study was based on a small number of participants and therefore offers a situated interpretation rather than a broadly representative account of adolescent vocal identity. The participants were also drawn from a particular geographical and cultural context, meaning that their experiences may reflect the social and educational conditions of that setting. Older secondary-school year groups were not represented due to a lack of volunteers. Future research could therefore seek representation across the full secondary-school age range to explore whether experiences of vocal change, identity and agency shift across adolescence. Peripatetic singing provision in secondary schools and students' self-perceptions of AVC also remain relatively under-examined in the literature, warranting further research in these areas.

The study did not include male participants, as the few adolescent boys receiving singing lessons chose not to participate; their under-representation in school choirs and singing lessons is also reflected in my teaching experience and the literature. Future research could therefore explore current boys' experiences of AVC in singing lessons and the longer-term benefits and meanings of

these experiences through retrospective interviews with former male students. Longitudinal research could further examine students' perceptions of AVC over time.

Finally, the study was conducted from an insider-researcher position, with the researcher also acting as a singing teacher in the research context. While this provided valuable contextual knowledge, participants' responses may have been influenced by their teacher relationship. Future research could therefore adopt an outsider or combined insider-outsider perspective to explore whether different researcher-participant relationships influence participants' accounts of adolescent vocal identity.

Researcher Reflection

The findings prompted me to reconsider my initial assumption that individual or small-group singing lessons would necessarily provide a safer and more private space for students to work through AVC and express themselves more freely than within the wider social environment of choir. Instead, the findings highlighted how social exposure, constraints and confidence-related challenges may also be present within the micro-context of singing lessons.

Undertaking this research has influenced my practice as a singing teacher by deepening my understanding of how students experience vocal change, including aspects of their perspectives that may not be visible within lessons. This has increased my confidence in responding to individual experiences and enriched my teaching relationships. The research has also encouraged me to recognise the social and emotional dimensions of their singing alongside technical development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

TASKS	2025							2026		
	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
Ethics form										
Research proposal										
Literature Review										
Write survey questionnaires										
Liaise with Music Teacher and Education Service										
Send consent forms and questionnaires										
Determine common themes and organise initial coding										
Write reflection journal and observations										
Individual interviews										
Focus groups										
Examine data and code findings from interviews and focus groups										
Write introduction and methodology report										
Write research findings										
Complete project draft										
Review and submit final study report										
Create presentation										
Project presentation										

Appendix 2

PG2 / E1 FORM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months

for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part

Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to

pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form

(and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A

researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained

prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken

on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and

society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities

undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and

undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing

within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity.

Please see

Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1 Full Name: Barbara Reggio

2 Tick all boxes that apply: Member of staff: ☐ Honorary research fellow: ☐

Undergraduate Student ☐ Taught Postgraduate

Student ☒ Postgraduate

Research Student ☐

3 Institute/Academic

Discipline/Centre: WAPPAR

4 Campus: Carmarthen

5 E-mail address: 2129716@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

6 Contact Telephone Number: 07885 462681

For students:

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7 Student Number: 2129716

8 Programme of Study: MA Professional Practice (Voice Pedagogy)

9 Director of Studies/Supervisor: Louise Emanuel/Julie Crossman/Debbie Winter

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1 Has the research activity received approval in principle?

(please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)

YES ☒ **NO** ☐

Date

2 If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known):

Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source

prior to seeking ethical approval Research Degrees Committee ☐

Institute Research Committee ☐

Other (write in)

WAPPAR Ethics Board

Representative

☒

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of

this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology).

Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.

1 **UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice** ☒

2 **UWTSD Research Data Management Policy** ☒

3 *[List any other relevant documents here]* ☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their

personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and

continue to section E.

1 Institution

2 Contact person name

3 Contact person e-mail address

4 Is your research externally funded? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

5 Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

Are you specifically employed to

6 Voluntary undertake this research in either a

paid or voluntary capacity? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

7

Employed **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

8 Is the research being undertaken

within an existing UWTSD Athrofa

If YES then the

permission question **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

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Professional Learning Partnership

(APLP)?

below does not need

to be answered.

9 Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?

(If YES attach copy)

If NO the application cannot continue

YES ☐ NO ☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10 Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system? YES ☐ NO ☐

If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1 Indicative title: Adolescent vocal change and vocal identity

2 Proposed start date: 14/07/25 Proposed end date: 02/03/26

Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section)

Ensure that you write for a Non-Specialist Audience when outlining your response to the points below:

- *Purpose of Research Activity*
- *Proposed Research Question*
- *Aims of Research Activity*
- *Objectives of Research Activity*

Demonstrate, briefly, how **Existing Research** has informed the proposed activity and explain

- *What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge*
- *How it addresses an area of importance.*

3

Purpose of Research Activity

The purpose of this qualitative research activity is to investigate adolescent vocal change and vocal identity experienced by female and male (assigned at birth) singing students and/or choristers in secondary schools.
(this box should expand as you type)

4

Research Question

How is vocal change experienced by adolescent students and what are the students' self-perceptions regarding their adolescent voice, their vocal identity and their involvement of singing activities in their school?

(this box should expand as you type)

5

Aims of Research Activity

To deepen my knowledge on adolescent vocal change

To investigate the relationship between adolescent vocal change and vocal/singing identity

(this box should expand as you type)

6

Objectives of Research Activity

To consolidate my knowledge on the adolescent changing voice

To research existing literature on adolescent vocal change and its impact on students' vocal identity and confidence in singing and performing

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To question my participants on their singing/choir experience, investigate their self-perceptions regarding their adolescent voice change and explore their thoughts and feelings regarding their singing (this box should expand as you type)

Proposed methods (maximum 600 words)

Provide a brief summary of all the methods that **may** be used in the research activity, making it clear

what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed

appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for

you to complete your project.

7

1) Literature review to explore and guide my research

2) Survey questionnaire (online or letters) to assess general awareness and self-perceptions of vocal change,

singing experience and involvement in school choir/singing/ music lessons; survey questionnaires responses will not be anonymised to enable me to select relevant interviewees for the following interview stage

3) Semi-structured interviews to deepen on initial findings, which will be audio recorded

4) Focus group to gain further insight and investigation, which will be audio recorded

Location of research activity

Identify all locations where research activity will take place.

8

The research will take place in London, in the school environment

(this box should expand as you type)

Research activity outside of the UK

If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research, then please state this.

9

(this box should expand as you type)

10

Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents **NOT** publicly available?

NO ☒

YES ☐

If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales.

11

(this box should expand as you type)

Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015? YES NO

12 A prosperous Wales ☐ ☒

13 A resilient Wales ☐ ☒

14 A healthier Wales ☐ ☒

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15 A more equal Wales ☐ ☒

16 A Wales of cohesive communities ☐ ☒

17 A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language ☐ ☒

18 A globally responsible Wales ☐ ☒

19 If YES to any of the above, please give details:

(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

Will the research activity include: YES NO

1 Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument? ☒ ☐

2 Use of interviews? ☒ ☐

3 Use of focus groups? ☒ ☐

4 Use of participant diaries? ☐ ☒

5 Use of video or audio recording? ☒ ☐

6 Use of computer-generated log files? ☐ ☒

7 Participant observation with their knowledge? ☐ ☒

8 Participant observation without their knowledge? ☐ ☒

9 Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent? ☐ ☒

10 Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive? ☐ ☒

11 Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem? ☐ ☒

12 Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities? ☐ ☒

13 Use of procedures that involve deception? ☐ ☒

14 Administration of any substance, agent or placebo? ☐ ☒

15 Working with live vertebrate animals? ☐ ☒

16 Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment? ☐ ☒

17 Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.

Details of any other primary data collection method:

☐ ☒

(this box should expand as you type)

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

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If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

Who are the intended participants:

YES NO

1 Students or staff at the University? ☐ ☒

2 Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)? ☐ ☒

3 Vulnerable adults? ☐ ☒

4 Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required) ☒ ☐

5 Prisoners? ☐ ☒

6 Young offenders? ☐ ☒

7 Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper? ☐ ☒

8 People engaged in illegal activities? ☐ ☒

9

Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.

Details of any other participant groups:

☐ ☒

(this box should expand as you type)

Participant numbers and source

Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?

I expect approximately approx. 15-20+ participants

10

How many participants are expected?

(this box should expand as you type)

Singing students in secondary schools (perhaps also including students who dropped out of choir/singing sessions)

11 Who will the participants be?

(this box should expand as you type)

12 How will you identify the participants?

I will identify participants according to their level of interest and motivation to take part in the research

I will contact the Music Agency I work for to preferably suggest schools where I do not teach in order to avoid bias, then contact the schools directly (also parents' consent will be required); I will also directly liaise with another secondary (only girls) school where I currently work as a self-employed singing teacher.

(this box should expand as you type)

Information for participants: NO

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YES N/A

- 13 Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 14 Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 15 Will you obtain written consent for participation? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 16 Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 17 If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed? ☐ ☐ ☒
- 18 Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 19 With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 20 Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 21 Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 22 If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation
(this box should expand as you type)

Information for participants: YES NO N/A

- 24 Will participants be paid? ☐ ☒ ☐
- 25 Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants? ☒ ☐ ☐
- 26 Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study? ☐ ☒ ☐
- 27 Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims? ☐ ☒ ☐
- 28 If YES to any question, please provide full details
I will use my iPhone to audio record interviews and focus group as well as observation of singing activities
(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.

If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.

Yes ☐

1 Full risk assessment completed and appended? No ☒

2

Risks to participants

For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm,

transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information

Risk to participants: *How you will mitigate the risk to participants:*

April 2022' 7 PG2 Ethical Approval Form Questionnaires will be emailed or sent via post by the school, or by myself through my university email address (depending on school's decision; there may be a risk of not reaching the right person.

In case I am asked/allowed to email participants from my university email address (and/or school email address in the school where I currently work), I will ensure to pay maximum attention when emailing my participants and making sure that all details are correct; I will also make sure that no unnecessary or compromising details are included in any communication

Students' interviews, focus group will be audio recorded so there will be a risk of some personal data disclosed; if questionnaires are completed

in paper form, there may be a risk for them to be misplaced.

I will mitigate this risk by making sure I use a code for all the participants; data will be initially recorded with my password secured iPhone and then transferred to and stored on my password secured laptop of which only I have access, and which will be stored separately in a safe place at my flat. Questionnaires will be also safely stored on my password secured laptop, or if in paper form, they will be kept in safe place at my flat (using a code once again for participants).

The methods used (questionnaires, interviews, focus group) may include themes such as low confidence in one's voice and vocal skills and feelings of being ridiculed by one's peers, negative singing experiences or trigger unpleasant memories, thoughts and feelings, so there will be a risk for the participants to reflect on the above and react, feel embarrassed, sad or cry

I will mitigate by making sure the participants are aware of their options such as pausing and/or stopping the questionnaire, interview, and focus group at any time, postponing the sessions at a later stage if some time off is required or completely withdrawing from the research with no consequences whatsoever

(this box should expand as you type)

3

(this box should expand as you type)

If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities

(this box should expand as you type)

4

Risks to the investigator

For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest

Risk to the investigator:

How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:

There may be a risk of being emotionally distressed and feeling vulnerable when interviewing and/or observing and interacting
I am aware that there may be a risk of feeling emotionally vulnerable when dealing with my participants around discussions of low confidence, feelings of mockery and derision

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5 with my participants since my research may include disheartening topics such as feelings of being ridiculed, judged, hopelessness on ones' vocal identity, fear of singing
and I will mitigate the above through seeking support, if required

(this box should expand as you type)

(this box should expand as you type)

University/institutional risks

For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection

Risk to the University:

How you will mitigate the risk to the University:

Data protection

(this box should expand as you type)

This will be mitigated by ensuring that all data are coded to protect participants' anonymity and ensuring that data are safely stored in my laptop which is password protected and is only accessed by myself. All data will be destroyed at the end of the project.

6 *(this box should expand as you type)*

Environmental risks

For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems

Risk to the environment:

How you will mitigate the risk to environment:

(this box should expand as you type)

(this box should expand as you type)

Disclosure and Barring Service

If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.

YES NO N/A

7 Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate? ☒ ☐ ☐

8

If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.

001663765110

1 Feedback

school email address, if applicable)

(this box should expand as you type)

2 Informed consent

Describe the arrangements **SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality**

What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?

Upon prior agreement with the individual school and in the situation where myself and the parents, guardians and carers are not allowed to exchange email addresses and liaise directly, they will be able to contact the school to be provided with further details and results of

my final report; if allowed, I will be providing them with my university email address (or to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.

Before gaining formal consent via email, I will inform students' parents/guardians/carers about the nature of my research and its purpose and provide them with any details regarding time

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involvement, duration, methods used and any other relevant information. If they authorise their children to participate and authorise me to proceed, a formal consent form will be then sent for them to sign, before starting with the next step, and send the online questionnaire.

(this box should expand as you type)

3 Confidentiality / Anonymity

Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.

To ensure anonymity, I will use a code for each participant, and this will be safely stored in a password secured file on my laptop

I will not name participants or the organisations to which they belong or are affiliated with.

(this box should expand as you type)

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?

YES NO

“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier

1

such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or

x ☐

to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.

If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:

2

Personal data that will be collected include the email addresses and names of participants; the signed consent forms and the audio recordings made as well as the transcriptions of these will also need to be collected and represent personal data.

(this box should expand as you type)

Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)? **YES NO**

3

“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ –

(a) racial or ethnic origin,

(b) political opinions,

(c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,

(d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),

(e) physical or mental health or condition,

(f) sexual life,

(g) genetics,

(h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),

☐ x

If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:

4

(this box should expand as you type)

Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?

YES NO

5 Manual files (i.e. in paper form)? ☒ ☐

6 University computers? ☐ ☒

7 Private company computers? ☐ ☒

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8 Home or other personal computers? ☒ ☐

9 Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks? ☒ ☐

10 “Cloud” storage or websites? ☒ ☐

11 Other – specify: ☐ ☒

12

For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:

All data will be audio recorded via a password secured iPhone, then transferred and kept in a password protected computer storage on my personal Mac laptop which will not be shared. Audio data will be transcribed. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and

this list will be kept securely in the password protected folder.

Manual forms (paper annotations, questions for semi-structured interviews/focus group, data on paper questionnaire, if applicable), will be safely stored, and any participants’ names will be coded.

(this box should expand as you type)

Data Protection

Will the research activity involve any of the following activities: **YES NO**

13 Electronic transfer of data in any form? ☒ ☐

14 Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team? ☐ ☒

15 Sharing of data with other organisations? ☐ ☒

16 Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK? ☐ ☒

17 Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers? ☒ ☐

18 Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals? ☐ ☒

19 Use of data management system? ☐ ☒

20 Data archiving? ☐ ☒

21

If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):

All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected personal MAC laptop which will not be shared. All data transfers will be encrypted, and password protected. All participants will be given a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality and this list will be kept securely in the password protected

folder. Paper annotations and /or paper questionnaires data (manual forms) containing a unique identifier, will be safely stored.

The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted. In accordance with the DPA2018, participants will have the right to ask to see what data is held relating to them, and this data will be deleted immediately if the participant requests this, in which case the data will not be used in the project.

(this box should expand as you type)

22 List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:

Myself, as the only researcher

April 2022` 11 PG2 Ethical Approval Form **PG2 / E1 FORM**

(this box should expand as you type)

23 List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:

Myself, as the only researcher

(this box should expand as you type)

24

Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data,

where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.

All data will be encrypted and kept in password protected storage on my personal MAC laptop which will not be shared. If questionnaires are collected in paper form, personal names will be deleted and will be replaced with participants' unique identifiers and will be safely stored.

The data will be stored until the completion of the project and then deleted.

(this box should expand as you type)

25 Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see <https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/>). If so please explain. *(Most relevant to academic staff)*

N/A

(this box should expand as you type)

26 Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/>) **YES** ☒

27 Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding **YES** ☒

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SECTION K: Declaration

The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.

In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/>

1 **Signature of applicant:** Barbara Reggio

Date:

02/07/2025

For STUDENT Submissions:

2 Director of

Studies/Supervisor:

3 Signature:

Date:

For STAFF Submissions:

4 Academic Director/ Assistant

Dean:

Date:

5 Signature:

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒ I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.

☒ I have completed **ALL RELEVANT** sections of the form in full.

☒ I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle

☐ I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (**where appropriate**)

☐ I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) **ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE**

ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT

☒ I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet

the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.

☒

I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to

pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form

(and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

April 2022` 13 PG2 Ethical Approval Form **PG2 / E1 FORM**

April 2022` 14 PG2 Ethical Approval Form

Appendix 3

Dear Parent, Carer/ Legal Guardian,

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My name is Barbara Reggio, I currently work as a peripatetic singing teacher for couple of secondary schools in (a n d I u s e d t o w o r k a t i), and in > a s self-employed. I am also in my final year of completing my Master's degree in Vocal Pedagogy through the Voice Study Centre in partnership with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. As part of my final exam, I am conducting research on adolescent vocal change. The aim of my study is to explore students' self-perceptions of their changing voice and vocal identity during adolescence, and how their self-observations and attitudes may influence their motivation, engagement, experience and confidence during individual/small group singing lessons and singing performances. During puberty and adolescence, both female and male singing students experience vocal fluctuations, and may report a loss in confidence in their vocal skills as well as an increase in embarrassment, frustration and vulnerability. The inherent broad purpose of my study is to provide singing students with better support in future, emotionally, socially and pedagogically, and to enable them to thrive in their singing activities.

This study will include two phases:

1. 2. Your child completing a paper questionnaire (please see questions here attached), which can be enclosed in a sealed envelope (provided) and handed in to their Music Department Teacher/ Subject Leader < by 12th March 2026.

Your child attending an individual interview with myself (approx. 20-30 minutes) to discuss their answers, and gain a deeper understanding on the topic, which will take place on Thursday 19th March 2026 at school.

This research study has received ethical authorisation by my University' Ethics Board. As I work in schools as a singing teacher, I already hold the required enhanced DBS certificate.

Children's participation will be completely voluntary and their refusal to participate will not affect their education or treatment. Information provided by participants will be kept confidential, their names will be redacted and no information will be identifiable as theirs, also in case my research study (or part of it) may be published in future. While experiencing adolescent vocal development, some students may feel embarrassed about their voice and vocal identity, about singing and performing, feeling judged by teachers and/or mocked by their peers, so their emotional vulnerability may transpire when discussing this topic, and I will mitigate the above through seeking support, if required.

Participants may withdraw from this research at any time, and for any reasons, without any repercussions; they may choose to omit questions (from the printed questionnaire) and/or not answer selected questions during their in-person interview; they may also volunteer to complete the questionnaire, but decide not to participate in the interview. Due to participants' eligibility criteria, study validity, and time constraints, please be aware that not every student may be asked to be interviewed after completing the questionnaire.

More detailed information on this study, as well as on how the data will be managed, transferred and stored, and steps that will be taken to address and minimise potential risks to the participant, is provided on the consent form here enclosed.

For further information and questions about the study, prior your consent and as follow-up, please do not hesitate to contact me on my university email address: 2129716@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

If needed, should you have any concern about the well-being of your child during the study at any time, please do not hesitate to contact myself, the school and the safeguarding team.

If you consent to your child taking part in this study, and your child also agrees (a student's agreement - informed assent is also enclosed), please kindly sign and date the consent forms, allow your child to complete the questionnaire, then enclose all documents into the envelope provided, seal it and kindly remind your child to deliver it the Music Department Teacher/ Subject Leader at the latest by 12th March 2026.

Thank you for your time and considering your child's participation in this research study

Kind regards

Barbara Reggio

MA student at University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)

2129716@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Appendix 4

Dear Parent, Carer/ Legal Guardian,

Due to the very low number of printed questionnaires returned, a short individual interview is now being considered as a more effective way for participating students to share their singing experiences, and their opinions on vocal change and vocal identity during adolescence. Once again, participation is completely voluntary, and both you and your child can decline with no consequences whatsoever.

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My name is Barbara Reggio, I currently work as a peripatetic singing teacher for couple of secondary schools in (and I used to work at recent past), and in as self-employed. I am also in my final year of completing my

Master's degree in Vocal Pedagogy through the Voice Study Centre in partnership with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. As part of my final exam, I am conducting research on adolescent vocal change. The aim of my study is to explore students' self-perceptions of their changing voice and vocal identity during adolescence, and how their self-observations and

attitudes may influence their motivation, engagement, experience and confidence during individual/ small group singing lessons and/or singing performances. During puberty and adolescence, both female and male singing students experience vocal fluctuations, and may report a loss in confidence in their vocal skills as well as an increase in embarrassment, frustration and vulnerability. The inherent broad purpose of my study is to provide singing students with better support in future, emotionally, socially and pedagogically, and to enable them to thrive in their singing activities.

This study will include one phase only :

1. Your child attending an **individual interview** with myself (approx. 20-30 minutes) to share their singing experiences and their opinions on vocal change and development during adolescence, which will take place **on 15th April 2026 at school**.

This research study has received ethical authorisation by my University' Ethics Board. As I work in schools as a singing teacher, I already hold the required enhanced DBS certificate.

Children's participation will be completely voluntary and their refusal to participate will not affect their education or treatment. Information provided by participants will be kept confidential, their names will be redacted and no information will be identifiable as theirs, also in case my research study (or part of it) may be published in future. While experiencing adolescent vocal development, some students may feel embarrassed about their voice and vocal identity, about singing and performing, feeling judged by teachers and/or mocked by their peers, so their emotional vulnerability may transpire when discussing this topic, and I will mitigate the above through seeking support, if required. Participants may withdraw from the interview at any time and for any reasons, without any

repercussions, and they may choose not to answer specific questions if they do not want to. Due to participants' eligibility criteria, study validity, and time constraints, please be aware that not every student may be asked to be interviewed, even if they agree to participate.

More detailed information on this study, as well as on how the data will be managed, transferred and stored, and steps that will be taken to address and minimise potential risks to the participant, is provided on the consent form here enclosed.

For further information and questions about the study, prior your consent and as follow-up, please do not hesitate to contact me on my university email address: 2129716@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

If needed, should you have any concern about the well-being of your child during the study at any time, please do not hesitate to contact myself, the school and the safeguarding team.

If you consent to your child taking part in this study, and your child also agrees (a student's agreement - informed assent is also enclosed), please **kindly sign and date the consent forms**, then enclose all documents into the envelope provided, seal it and kindly remind your child to **deliver it to** , Music Department Teacher/ Associate Subject Leader **by 13th April 2026**.

Thank you for your time and considering your child's participation in this research study.

Kind regards

Barbara Reggio

Peripatetic Singing Teacher & MA student at University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD)

Email: 2129716@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Appendix 5

Participant study information and student's agreement (informed assent)

Dear Singing Student,

Hello, my name is Barbara Reggio. I work as a singing teacher in a few secondary schools. While working with adolescent students during individual (or small group) singing lessons, I have become very interested on the topic of adolescent vocal development, and the vocal changes that young students may experience, or may have experienced in the past. I am also a (mature) student myself, in my final year of completing a Master degree about the voice and vocal training, so I have decided to carry out a research study on adolescent vocal change.

What is this study about?

The study is about your experience of vocal change. I would like to know your thoughts and opinions about your changing voice and your vocal development during your adolescent years, and how you feel about your voice. I would also like to ask you about your singing experience, your motivation and your engagement in singing, and level of confidence during individual (or small group) singing lessons and singing performances.

Is this study meant for me? Why have I been invited take part?

You are invited to participate in this study if you think you have experienced or you are still experiencing adolescent vocal change, for example if you have noticed any change in your singing such as: your voice becoming breathy, unstable, unpredictable, strained, hoarse, husky, presenting noticeable register breaks, decreased vocal range, sudden voice 'cracks', changes in tone quality, not being able to reach some notes compared to the past (these questions are in part two of the survey questionnaire).

If I choose not to participate in this study, will my academic progress be affected?

No, your participation will be completely voluntary, and if you do not want to take part, your education will not be affected, there will be no bad consequences for either you, your teachers or your school.

Will there be any direct personal benefit for me if I decide to take part?

No, there will be no direct benefit to you. If you take part voluntarily, your valuable contribution will benefit my research study and expand information about adolescent vocal change.

1If I decide to participate in this study, what do I need to do?

Your parent, carer/ legal guardian has also been given information to read about this study and a form to sign if they allow you to participate. After reading the information and the questionnaire, if

2

they give you permission to take part, and you also agree, there will be two things for you to do:

1. **Answering the questions** (you will find questions on the survey questionnaire paper).

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. Then you can ask your parent/carer to put all these documents back into the envelope and close it, so that your answers will be kept confidential. You can then give this envelope back to your main Music Teacher in school **by 12th**

March 2026.

2. Participating in an interview with myself at your school on Thursday 19th March 2026.

We will discuss your answers from the questionnaire, and I will ask you some questions about your singing experiences, get to know your thoughts, feelings and opinions about vocal change and your singing. Your views are important!

Can I reply to the questions on the survey questionnaire paper, but decide that I do not want to attend the individual interview?

Yes, you can decide not to take part in the following interview. Just circle 'no' at the end of the questionnaire paper, when you will be asked if you want to take part or not.

Will the interview at my school be certain?

Although I will try my best to interview as many students as possible, I may not be able to interview them all, for example if there is not enough time.

Will my name be mentioned in the study?

Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in my study, I will use a fake name, so that your identity will be protected, and I will make sure that no information that you provide will reveal who you are, even in case my study gets published. The answers you give both on paper and during the interview are confidential. However, if you say or write something that may be a risk to yourself or other people, I may need to report it to your teacher and/or the safeguarding team at your school.

What if I don't want to answer specific questions on the paper questionnaire or during the interview?

If you don't want to or don't feel comfortable with any of the questions, you are completely free to avoid them and not answer them

2What if I decide to take part in the interview, but then change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time. If you decide at any point even during the interview that you want to leave, you can do so, and you don't need to give me an explanation.

Will the interview be recorded? And who has access to the recording and the completed questionnaire?

Yes, I will be use my own iPhone to record our discussion to help me remember what happened during our interview, when I write my study. I will be the only one having access to the recording and the completed questionnaire and I will keep all your information given very safe.

For any other questions or concerns, please talk to your parent/carers and they can direct them to me. I will be very happy to answer all your questions!

Thank you for your time and if you decide to take part in this study, thank you for your contribution!

To agree to take part in this study, please tick yes or no below

YES/ NO

Name of student

Date.....

Name of Researcher: Ms Barbara Reggio.....

Date.....

Appendix 6

Participant study information and student's agreement (informed assent)

Dear Singing Student,

Due to the very low number of printed questionnaires returned, **I would like to invite to a short individual interview (on 15.04.26), as a more effective way for you to share your singing experiences, and your opinions on vocal change and vocal identity during adolescence.** Once again, **your participation is completely voluntary, and you can decline with no consequences whatsoever.**

Hello, my name is Barbara Reggio, I am a singing teacher in a few secondary schools, and I used to teach singing at . While working with adolescent students during individual (or small group) singing lessons, I have become very interested on the topic of adolescent vocal development, and the vocal changes that young students may experience, or may have experienced in the past. I am also a (mature) student myself, in my final year of completing a Master degree about the voice and vocal training, so I have decided to carry out a research study on adolescent vocal change.

What is this study about?

The study is about your experience of vocal change. I would like to know your thoughts and opinions about your changing voice and your vocal development during your adolescent years, and how you feel about your voice. I would also like to ask you about your singing experience, your motivation and your engagement in singing, and level of confidence during individual (or small group) singing lessons and singing performances.

Is this interview meant for me? Why have I been invited take part?

You are invited to participate in this interview **if you think you have experienced or you are still experiencing adolescent vocal change**, for example if you have noticed any change in your singing such as: your voice becoming breathy, unstable, unpredictable, strained, hoarse, husky, presenting noticeable register breaks, decreased vocal range, sudden voice 'cracks', changes in tone quality, not being able to reach some notes compared to the past.

If I choose not to participate in this study, will my academic progress be affected?

No, your participation will be completely voluntary, and if you do not want to take part, your education will not be affected, there will be no bad consequences for either you, your teachers or your school.

1Will there be any direct personal benefit for me if I decide to take part?

No, there will be no direct benefit to you. If you take part voluntarily, your valuable contribution will benefit my research study and expand information about adolescent vocal change.

If I decide to participate in this study, what do I need to do?

Your parent, carer/ legal guardian has also been given information to read about this study and a form to sign if they allow you to participate. If they give you permission to take part, and you also agree, there will be one thing for you to do:

Participating in an interview with myself at on 15th April 2026

I will ask you some questions about your singing experience during adolescent vocal change and your opinions and feelings on your vocal development, any challenges or positive outcomes. Your views are important!

Will the interview at my school be certain?

Although I will try my best to interview as many students as possible, I may not be able to interview all of you, for example if there is not enough time.

Will my name be mentioned in the study?

Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in my study, I will use a fake name, so that your identity will be protected, and I will make sure that no information that you provide will reveal who you are, even in case my study gets published. The answers you give during the interview are confidential. However, if you say or write something that may be a risk to yourself or other people, I may need to report it to your teacher and/or the safeguarding team at your school.

What if I don't want to answer specific questions during the interview?

If you don't want to or don't feel comfortable with any of the questions, you are completely free to avoid them and not answer them.

What if I decide to take part in the interview, but then change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time. If you decide at any point during the interview that you want to leave, you can do so, and you don't need to give me an explanation.

Will the interview be recorded? And who has access to the recording and the completed questionnaire?

Yes, I will use my own iPhone to record our discussion to help me remember what happened during our interview, when I write my study. I will be the only one having access to the recording and I will keep all your information given very safe.

For any other questions or concerns, please talk to your parent/carers and they can direct them to me. I will be very happy to answer all your questions!

Thank you for your time and if you decide to take part in this interview, thank you for your contribution!

To agree to take part in this study interview, please tick yes or no below, include also the other documents that your parents/carers will read and sign into an envelope (provided) and return them to , your Music Department Teacher/ Associate Subject Leader by

13th April 2026

YES/ NO

Name of student

Date.....

Name of Researcher: Ms Barbara Reggio.....

Date 24/03/26

Appendix 7

Provided separately

April 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Barbara Reggio, your daughter's singing teacher, would like to invite your daughter to take part in a questionnaire and possibly a follow up interview to contribute to her masters research on vocal pedagogy and adolescent vocal change. The research aims to explore students' self-perceptions of their changing voice and vocal identity during adolescence, and to investigate how these self-observations and attitudes may influence their motivation, engagement, experience and confidence during individual (or small group) singing lessons and performances.

Data from this study will be available should you want to request it and student names will always be anonymised. A full copy of the final research will also be available for those who wish to access it.

If you are happy to consent for your child to take part in this research please complete this consent form and the one overleaf. The full consent form is attached on the next page.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Ms [REDACTED] & Ms Barbara Reggio

Curriculum Leader Music - Singing Teacher

Student Name: [REDACTED]

Parent/Carer Name: [REDACTED]

Please tick:

☒ I consent to my child taking part in this research

☐ I do not consent to my child taking part in the research

Please return this slip to Ms [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]

Headteacher: [REDACTED]

t: [REDACTED] f: [REDACTED] e: [REDACTED]
w: [REDACTED]

Appendix 8

Singing student informative sheet

Dear Singing Student,

What is this study about?

The study is about your experience of vocal change. I (Ms Reggio, your singing teacher) would like to know your thoughts and opinions about your changing voice, your singing experience and confidence, and vocal development during your adolescent years.

Is this study meant for me? Why have I been invited take part?

You are invited to participate in this study if you think you have experienced or you are still experiencing adolescent vocal change, for example if you have noticed any change in your singing such as: your voice becoming breathy, unstable, unpredictable, strained, hoarse, husky, presenting noticeable register breaks, decreased vocal range, sudden voice 'cracks', changes in tone quality, not being able to reach some notes compared to the past.

Will my name be mentioned in the study?

Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in my study so that your identity will be protected, and I will make sure that no information that you provide will reveal who you are, even in case my study gets published. The answers you give are confidential. However, if you say or write something that may be a risk to yourself or other people, I may need to report it to your teacher and/or the safeguarding team at your school.

If I choose not to participate in this study, will my academic progress be affected?

No, your participation will be completely voluntary, and if you do not want to take part, your education will not be affected, with no bad consequences for you, your teachers and your school.

What if I don't want to answer specific questions? And can I complete the questionnaire but decide not to attend the individual interview?

You are free at all times to choose the questions you want to answer both on paper and during the interview. Yes, you can also decide not to take part in the following interview, and you can change your mind at any time.

Will the interview be recorded? And who has access to the recording and the completed questionnaire?

Yes, I will use my own iPhone to record the interview to help me remember when I write my study. I will be the only one having access to the recording and the completed questionnaire, and I will keep all your answers very safe.

In case you are given consent, and decide to take part in this study, thank you in advance for your time and contribution.

Appendix 9
(Provided separately)

27. Would this improve your confidence in singing? Yes/ no. Why?

Y

28. Do you think that if non-singing students received instructions on how the voice functions and information on adolescent vocal change, would they feel more inspired in joining singing lessons? Yes/ no. Why?

Thank you for your interest in this study and for taking the time to participate!
All your answers will be kept confidential.

If you would be interested in taking part in an individual interview with myself (Ms Reggio, your singing teacher) in June, please circle yes or no below, and contact either myself or Ms [REDACTED], your Music Department Head Teacher

YES/NO

Appendix 10

Provided separately

Appendix 11

Thematic Framework

[Navigating the blocks: choices, strategies, and perseverance in singing \(35\)](#)

Making choices; strategies to keep singing despite obstacles/hindrances/blocks; agency in action; perseverance

[Catalyst, barrier, or uncertainty? Perceived potential impacts of vocal change information on young singers \(74\)](#)

The dual impact of adolescent vocal change information on singing confidence, motivation, efficacy (positive, negative and uncertain perceptions)

[Adolescent vocal change information: impact on non-singing students \(31\)](#)

Perceptions of singing students about the potential usefulness/impact of providing AVC information to students not currently attending singing lessons or choirs (positive and negative responses)

[No impact of AVC information on non-singing students \(4\)](#)

Perceptions of singing students about the potential usefulness/impact of providing AVC information to students not currently attending singing lessons or choirs (negative responses)

[Positive impact of AVC information for non-singing students \(9\)](#)

Perceptions of singing students about the potential usefulness/impact of AVC information for students not currently attending singing lessons or choirs (positive responses)

[Positive impact/influence of potential AVC information on singing confidence \(5\)](#)

Singing students' perceptions on the potential impact of receiving information about adolescent vocal change on their singing confidence (positive responses)

[No impact/ influence of potential AVC information on singing confidence \(6\)](#)

Singing students' perceptions about the potential impact of receiving information about adolescent vocal change on their singing confidence (negative response)

[Positive impact/influence of potential AVC information on motivation to sing \(6\)](#)

Perceptions of singing students about the potential usefulness/influence of AVC information on their motivation to sing (positive responses)

[No impact/influence of potential AVC information on motivation to sing \(7\)](#)

Perceptions of singing students about the potential usefulness/influence of AVC information on their motivation to sing (negative responses)

[Gaps in adolescent vocal education \(8\)](#)

Limited knowledge of adolescent vocal change in secondary school; more focused on general puberty changes during science class

[Embodied vocal technique \(18\)](#)

Applied vocal pedagogy: information about singing and the adolescent voice needs to be practical, functional, helpful to sing better, vocal technique focused, not just theory

[Access, motivation and experience \(0\)](#)

Summary. Adolescent perspectives on why they started lessons, how they access them, and what they enjoy or dislike about the process.

[Access Obstacles: roadblocks to lessons and choir participation \(4\)](#)

Obstacles to accessing singing lessons/choir

[Time barriers \(4\)](#)

Competing priorities: clashing activities and exam demands; having to choose

[Access barriers: the waiting list \(3\)](#)

Waiting list to join singing lessons

[Easy access to singing lessons and choirs \(37\)](#)

Easy joining/access to singing lessons/ choirs (own and others' access to singing lessons)

[Access: fostering curiosity and engagement for non-singers \(34\)](#)

What may attract potential new students to engage and attend singing lessons and/or choirs

[Incentives for engagement \(1\)](#)

Fostering curiosity and engagement through incentives

[Word of mouth engagement \(1\)](#)

Fostering curiosity and engagement through word of mouth

[The role of promotion for engagement \(3\)](#)

Fostering curiosity and engagement through visual and written outreach; targeted advertising

[Gendered perceptions: perceived barriers to male engagement in school singing \(4\)](#)

Female adolescent participants' explanations and insights regarding the lack of male peer participation in singing lessons and choirs

[Lesson impressions: likes and dislikes \(31\)](#)

Participant feedback regarding preferred and non-preferred elements of singing lessons and activities; enjoyment, appreciation, dislike, boredom and frustration

[Awareness of technical growth \(1\)](#)

Awareness of progress; awareness of vocal improvement

[Pedagogical feedback reception \(3\)](#)

Participant responses to receiving constructive critique and technical guidance on their vocal skills.

[Disliked elements \(5\)](#)

Participant expressions of dislike in singing lessons

[Warm-up exercises \(6\)](#)

Adolescent feedback regarding the vocal warm-up exercises.

[Repertoire autonomy \(33\)](#)

Choosing repertoire songs; discussing the ability or freedom to pick preferred songs for their singing lessons; having choice.

[Motivation and inspiration \(68\)](#)

Reasons, drivers, external or internal influences prompting participants to start singing lessons; desires and goals.

[Vocal ability, social context, and performance \(0\)](#)

How students perceive their own vocal capabilities and how those perceptions are shaped by peer relationships, social environments, and the live performance space.

[The performance experience \(99\)](#)

A broad category capturing how adolescent singers perceive and navigate singing in public or educational performance settings while undergoing vocal transition; diverse emotional and psychological impacts to performing during AVC

[Performance anxiety and vulnerability \(12\)](#)

Nervousness and fear of public failure due to an unpredictable changing voice; feelings of exposure; lack of safety; fear of making mistakes, or being judged by audiences

[The somatic and emotional experience of nervousness \(19\)](#)

Experiencing performance nervousness as both an emotional burden and a physical response; triggered by AVC; anticipated criticism; worrying

[Diminished confidence in vocal capacity and outcomes \(31\)](#)

Low self-efficacy regarding one's changing vocal skills, leading to reduced confidence when performing for audiences; performance-related self-doubt/ passing auditions; feeling inadequate

[Positive performance confidence and readiness \(22\)](#)

Experience-led confidence; positive feelings toward performing when supported by prior singing experience and knowledge of repertoire; stabilising factors, fostering positive singing self-perception and good feelings despite vocal changes.

[Audience dynamics and environmental contexts \(29\)](#)

General: familiar versus unfamiliar audience, settings and contexts differently shape students' psychological and vocal experiences; contrast between known, supportive versus strange or high-stakes factors, affecting self-perceptions

[Familiar environments as catalysts for safety and comfort \(38\)](#)

Feeling psychologically safe and emotionally comfortable when singing in known contexts or in front of familiar audiences, which helps mitigate fears of vocal judgment; low-stakes atmosphere: feeling safe to navigate one's changing voices without intense anxiety.

[Perceived family support \(5\)](#)

References to the role, presence, and impact of family members in supporting the student during performances; encouraging

[The pressure of proximity: discomfort and vulnerability with known audiences and familiar contexts \(14\)](#)

Students feel exposed and unsafe when singing in front of people they know; heightened fear of judgment; feeling uncomfortable in the presence of familiar crowds and contexts; peers, family, or school causing discomfort

[Anonymity as a shield: comfort in unfamiliar performance contexts \(12\)](#)

Preferring to be singing in front of strangers, unknown settings or blending into a choir, anonymity as a protective buffer reducing pressure and social stakes found in familiar school environments; strangers having no past expectations of the student's voice; less risk of long-term social judgment; younger students are not felt as a threat

[The threat of the unknown: environmental uncertainty and the desire for control \(20\)](#)

Discomfort and uncertainty in unfamiliar performance settings, with unknown crowds, dealing with new repertoire, leading to a desire to control unpredictable variables.

[The sanctuary of home: low-pressure practice and creative safety \(14\)](#)

Perceiving the home environment as an inspiring, secure space free from external judgment, allowing students to practice and explore their changing voices without performance pressure; psychological safety, fostering inspiration and a relaxed state

[The external stage: mixed experiences of performing in external venues \(41\)](#)

Students' varied self-perceptions and evaluative responses, both positive and negative, when performing in non-native school environments or other external settings.

[Future intentions: navigating external performance opportunities \(11\)](#)

Students' diverse and conditional responses regarding their desire to pursue future singing opportunities outside of school, dependent on the specific context and setting

[Future singing selves \(32\)](#)

Students imagine who or what they want to be as a singer in the future; broad view of their perceived musical paths; perceived opportunities for future performances both within and outside of school environments/ short- and long-term

[Peer influence, social dynamics and singing self-belief \(58\)](#)

How peer relationships, social boundaries, and acceptance, both positive and negative, shape students' perceptions of their own singing potential; sense of belonging; positive peer support; negative peer social dynamics; singing potential/ identity

[Imagined social boundaries and future conformity \(9\)](#)

Speculative thoughts about potential peer pressure to stop singing; imagined conflicts where peers do not accept singing; hypothesising peer rejection or pressure to quit; social conformity versus singing participation

[Resilience to judgment \(18\)](#)

Resilience, internal validation, belief in one's singing potential despite potential criticism, negative feedback, or social judgment from peers; self-assurance, and self-belief

[Unsupportive peers: mockery, criticism, and judgment \(25\)](#)

References to peers acting in an unkind, judgmental, or unsupportive manner; destructive social boundaries and negative external pressures challenging adolescents' vocal confidence.

[Supportive peers: acceptance, safety, and friendships \(27\)](#)

References to positive peer relationships, inclusive peers and schoolmates offering emotional support and encouragement. Social acceptance, feeling safe, supporting and inspiring friendships

[Exposure to peer ridicule and judgment \(53\)](#)

Judgment and mockery; negative interactions disrupt students' sense of safety and confidence; past concrete incidents and projected contexts

[Projected vulnerability to anticipated peer judgment/mockery \(44\)](#)

Hypothetical fears of future judgment, peer mockery, laughter, harsh vocal criticism; feeling judged with no prior or certain experience; ambiguity; anticipation; fear

[Vocal skills self-perceptions \(40\)](#)

Broadly, how adolescent vocal students perceive their own voices and singing abilities during individual-small group lessons and ensemble activities; evaluating their vocal skills during vocal mutation

[Sustained phonation / breath management \(1\)](#)

Student self-perceptions regarding how long they can sustain a single note or phrase without running out of air.

[Vocal range expansion/ wide range \(6\)](#)

Student self-perceptions regarding having, developing, or utilising a broad vocal range, and how they feel about their agility across that range.

[Secondary school transition / past versus present \(32\)](#)

Comparing their current voice and singing ability to how they sounded in the past, noting changes, feelings, or shifts in confidence since starting secondary school or in the recent past; self-perceptions on their vocal journey over time

[Social comparison of singing ability \(14\)](#)

Students evaluate their own voice and singing ability by contrasting themselves with peers, classmates, or other singers, noting feelings of adequacy and inferiority

[Vocal self-consciousness / embarrassment \(51\)](#)

Expressing feelings of awkwardness or embarrassment about the sound of one's voice, or when singing in front of others; feeling vulnerable

[Singing confidence self-rating \(1-5 likert\) \(17\)](#)

Self-rating their overall singing confidence on a 1-to-5 scale; (from survey questionnaire)

[Adolescent vocal change: perceptions and obstacles \(0\)](#)

Broadly, capturing student awareness of biological voice changes; positive adaptations, negative perceptions, and physical or acoustic challenges experienced during both singing and speaking.

[Vocal awareness / welcome versus unwelcome changes \(51\)](#)

Broadly, noticing structural or qualitative shifts in one's voice. This captures students dual reactions: the positive acceptance of vocal maturity and the frustration over unpredictable shifts

[Constructive perceptions of vocal shifts \(12\)](#)

Reflections on vocal changes that are perceived favourably, successfully embraced, or specifically not viewed as a physical or psychological challenge; adapting easily or feeling empowered by ones' changing voice.

[Lower register access / deeper singing and speaking voice \(7\)](#)

Gaining access to lower pitches, a deeper timbre, or a new chest voice register; newly acquired lower register in both singing and speech; lower voice as a source of pride, growth, or excitement.

[Perceived voice disruptions and challenges \(48\)](#)

Describing experiencing physical, acoustic challenges, limitations, or unpredictability in either the singing or spoken voice.

[Vocal 'cracks' and register breaks \(24\)](#)

Experiencing sudden, unpredictable acoustic breaks, or involuntary shifts in registration; instability

[Limited note duration / short breath capacity \(2\)](#)

Being unable to sustain long musical phrases

[Upper register tension: inability to reach high notes \(6\)](#)

Feeling physical strain, tightness, effort in their throat when trying to access or sustain higher pitches

[Pitch differentiation issues \(2\)](#)

Struggling to distinguish between separate musical pitches during singing

[Perceived vocal agency; unpredictability; loss of control \(10\)](#)

Student self-perceptions regarding their sense of agency over their changing vocal mechanism; perceived altered ability to stay in control; desire for vocal stability

[Tightness and constriction \(5\)](#)

Describing a feeling of vocal strain; aching

[Narrow vocal range \(4\)](#)

Inability to access a lower/higher vocal register; the voice compared to what students could previously sing; narrowing of overall vocal range

[Challenging register transitions \(4\)](#)

Struggling / adapting to navigate the transitions between vocal registers.

[Belting restrictions and limited volume \(4\)](#)

Inability to belt safely, sing loudly, or project their voice; desire to increase vocal power

[Loss of high tone fullness / breathiness in upper register \(2\)](#)

Inability to produce a rich, resonant, or full sound when singing high notes.

[Vocal breathiness \(3\)](#)

Unsupported sound in their voice; weak sound

[Vocal phlegm \(3\)](#)

Noticing the presence of phlegm; belief that it is the primary cause of their vocal cracks

[Breath management \(2\)](#)

Struggling with breath control or feeling that they are running out of air too quickly

[Vocal raspiness \(1\)](#)

Describing one's voice sounding raspy or husky.

[Students' singing background \(0\)](#)

Broadly, capturing the baseline experiences and school contexts of the participants: singing engagement, total years of experience, current academic Year group, specific preferences regarding individual versus small-group singing lesson formats.

[Singing engagement \(0\)](#)

Student involvement in singing pursuits, including preparing for graded singing exams and auditions, participating in school or community choirs, or attending after-school singing clubs and activities.

[Exam and audition preparation \(3\)](#)

Mentioning the preparation linked to auditions; not passing an audition successfully.

[Choir/ ensemble participation dynamics \(20\)](#)

Students' involvement in choirs/ singing ensemble; explain the barriers, preferences, and personal choices that lead them to not attend choir.

[Extracurricular singing / out-of-school activities \(21\)](#)

Discussing their current participation to out-of-school activities, or express future intentions; possibilities.

[Year group cohort and GCSE involvement \(0\)](#)

Student's current academic year in secondary school, alongside any references to their enrolment in Music GCSE courses

[Year 10 cohort \(1\)](#)

Year 10 enrolled status

[GCSE music option / future curricular intentions \(4\)](#)

Choosing GCSE Music, transitioning into the course, or actively thinking about selecting it in the future.

[Year 9 cohort \(3\)](#)

Year 9 enrolled status

[Year 8 cohort \(7\)](#)

Year 8 enrolled status

[Year 7 cohort \(3\)](#)

Year 7 enrolled status

[Small group lesson attendance \(14\)](#)

Shared learning environment; adolescent singers mention participating in small group singing lessons

[Individual singing lesson attendance \(2\)](#)

Adolescent singers mention participating in individual singing lessons

[Lesson format preferences / individual versus group rationales \(30\)](#)

Capturing student dialogue around their preferred learning environment; including responses to being asked which format they would rather have; discussion on perceived benefits and limitations of current lesson format

[Preference for individual singing lessons \(13\)](#)

Explicitly stating a preference for solo instruction over group formats; desire for individual attention, a private space to make vocal mistakes without peer judgment, or a learning pace tailored to their own voice.

[Preference for small group singing lessons \(10\)](#)

Explicitly stating a preference for group instruction over solo formats; desire for peer support, fun, the comfort of shared learning, a collaborative environment

[Length of singing attendance \(16\)](#)

Indicating the total time duration a student has been consistently attending singing lessons