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**Exploring Inclusivity through  
the Intersections of Gender,  
Language, and Identity:  
a framework for young people  
taking 1:1 singing lessons**

BMPF7010

15 years as a  
singing teacher  
in Sheffield

Increase in number of  
pupils exploring their  
gender

# Context

Music  
lessons can  
be a highly  
gendered  
experience—  
Leibetseder's  
(2022)

Peripatetic  
teachers often  
lack resources,  
as noted by  
Palkki (2019)

Deepen my  
understanding  
of the needs of  
gender  
expansive  
voices

Design and test an  
inclusive singing  
framework

# Aims and Outcomes

Develop  
qualitative  
data skills  
and data  
collection  
methods

Maintain  
objectivity and  
compassion

# Methodology

- Capturing participants' perspectives (Hall, 2005).
- Importance: Addressing the underrepresentation of adolescent voices (Orton & Pitts, 2019).
- Potential Bias: Acknowledging confirmation bias and using Hall's naturalistic framework.
- Critical Theory: Methods include observation and interviews to challenge assumptions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).
- Paradigm: Critical paradigm focusing on knowledge and power dynamics (Tenny et al., 2022; Boswell & Babchuk, 2023).
- Ontology & Epistemology: Exploring reality (Singh et al., 2019) and how knowledge is shaped by social values (Brown, 2022).

# Methods

- Systematic synthesis and evaluation (Booth, Papaioannou, & Sutton, 2016; Fink, 2005).
- Papers from 2000 onwards for historical context (Cayari, 2018).
- Focus Groups: Challenges and strategies for discussing sensitive topics (Norris et al., 2012; Horner, 2000; Morgan, 1997).
- Process: Small groups, neutral locations, transcription and coding (Roberts, 1997).
- Semi-Structured Interviews: Flexibility and in-depth exploration (Taherdoost, 2022).
- Combining methods for triangulation (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021; Thurmond, 2001).
- Self-Reflection Journal: Capturing thoughts to inform focus group and interview questions.

# Key Research Questions

·Do singing teachers feel comfortable?

·Do singing teachers feel there is a need for support and guidance?

Could the FWF enhance lessons, encourage pupil autonomy and positively empower students?

Do pupils engaged in singing lessons feel that their gender and identity are linked to language?

·Could a framework enhance inclusivity in 1:1 singing lessons for 11-18-year-olds with a focus on gender, language, and identity?

# Literature Review

The benefits of singing are highlighted by Cooksey & Welsh (1999) and Finney (2000).

The unregulated nature of singing education in the UK (Blum, 2016) leaves teachers unprepared.

Teachers are worried about integrating gender-expansive terminology into lessons (Cayari, 2018; Sims, 2017).

Focus on healthy techniques.

# Literature Review

Garratt and Spano (2021) suggest teachers must create safe environments for students to explore their vocal identities.

Research suggests acknowledging gender choices and using our skills to work with the voice as it sounds on the day.

GRBASI Perceptual Scale (Sherwell, 2009) and Chris Johnson's Vocal Assessment Method (VAM) emphasise listening to and understanding student's voices.

# Data collection

Timeline Adjustments due to conference invitations.

Participants: 36 were invited, 17 with parental consent, 14 participated, and 3 in focus groups.

Teacher Interviews: Different backgrounds

Data Handling: Transcription (otter.ai), redaction, and coding (Delve software).

Findings Presentation: Qualitative data analysis to answer research questions (Smith & ELMP Research Methods Seminar Series, 2021).

# Coding

Coding Process:

Methods: Deductive, inductive, and in vivo coding.

Analysis: Rhizomatic analysis highlighting key “hot spots” (Gravett & Winstone, 2019).

Themes: Gender, identity, language impact, teacher support, feedback on FWF, progression in music lessons.

# Ethics

Ethics and Insider Research:  
Ensuring participant  
safeguarding and objectivity  
(Oswald & Grosjean, 2021;  
Saidin, 2016).

This project has received  
ethical approval from UWTSD.

- Ensuring informed consent
- Confidentially and anonymity
- Ensuring no risk of harm
- Awareness of power imbalances
- Respect for participants
- the Integrity of research
- Transparency

# Qualitative Data Presentaion

Detailed interviews to fictionalise adolescents' experiences in UK  
music lessons to capture shared experiences  
– Legg (2013).

Clandinin and Connelly (2002) advocate for narrative inquiry to reveal  
personal dimensions often lost in quantitative data.

# Findings and Discussions

## The impact of gender, identity and language within singing lessons

### Teacher Experience:

"There'll probably be lots more teachers who have got much more individual experience of difficulties in that area" P1.

"the hardest thing is not necessarily even with students that are non-binary or who are not identifying as the gender they were born with; it is more to do with the differences in voice and how you actually teach those based on what it is instead." P2

"form their musical identity" P3

"gives ownership of what their voice sounds like, and also gives students an ability to understand on a day when their voice is not doing what they wanted to do, that actually their voice is different from what it normally sounds like" P2

# Findings and Discussions

## The impact of gender, identity and language within singing lessons

### Pupil Experience:

“I feel like music is, like, very deeply ingrained within me” FG3

“builds up at least more than half of my identity. I use it wherever I go” FG1

“it’s how I feel feelings” FG2

“comfortable to, like, you know, go wrong. Like, I’m not trying to go wrong, but I know that there’s not going to be any like shame if I do” FG3

“I think sometimes the words I’m using to describe things maybe could be a bit more like descriptive” FG3.

# Findings and Discussions

## The impact of gender, identity and language within singing lessons

### Discussion

Highlight the need for better tools and support in singing lessons.

Drawing from the Framework for Work (FWF) – weeks two and three, incorporating tools such as the GRBASI scale and Chris Johnson's Vocal Assessment Method (VAM) could address these challenges.

Integrating these tools can help balance teacher guidance with student autonomy, enhancing the connection between a student's voice and their identity

# Findings and Discussions

## Highlighting a need for support and regulation for teachers

### Teacher Experience:

“I am not a professional enough musician to be able to teach that” P2

“I think the hardest thing is just trying to find things that are appropriate for everyone” P2

“We need a set of things that we know work and that we pass on to the students, if you do this, there's this, this, this and this that will make sure you achieve a healthy or a part of a healthy voice building” P1

“There's no legislation, and there's no framework, and there's no base framework” P2

# Findings and Discussions

## Highlighting a need for support and regulation for teachers

### Pupil Experience

“Back in primary school, we had one teacher, she was really nice, called [redacted], but she taught us quite open-jawed singing. And that worked for soft songs, but when it came to the more wordy songs, I was trying to sing with my jaw quite open, and it meant that the words weren't coming out properly. And then it meant that I tightened my jaw. And then it meant it was hard in the future to have my jaw loose again for the long notes” FG2.

“I think that there should be some sort of guidelines” FG2

“it's not just a random person coming in and you have to listen to them” FG3.

# Findings and Discussions

## Highlighting a need for support and regulation for teachers

### Discussion

Both focus group and interview participants agreed on the need for clear regulations and frameworks for singing lessons.

Blum (2016) suggests that the absence of a clear framework can leave both teachers and students feeling vulnerable.

The need for standardised resources to ensure safe and effective vocal instruction which encourages a positive learning environment.

# Findings and Discussions

## Feedback on the Four Week Framework

### Teachers Experience

“This framework is just highlighting those, those beginning levels that we all wish everybody did in a really nice, healthy manner” P3

“I think it's really, it's really good that, you know, we're focusing on descriptors rather than labels” P3

“I think it's really good that we're ... wanting to put the ownership of their voice on them, rather than it coming from us” P3

“the language to be able to express themselves” P1

# Findings and Discussions

## Feedback on the Four Week Framework

### Pupil experiences

“I made up tons of different terms for different things in singing, we've got blobfish jaw, spider monkey jaw, all sorts” FG2

“It just feels like I'm more in control of, like, how I'm expressing myself and things like that” FG2.

“I feel like I'm in control of kind of what I want from my own singing journey. It's not someone else just deciding what my singing journey needs to look like” FG2.

“I think it means that I can probably communicate to you that maybe stuff that you didn't know” FG3.

# Findings and Discussions

## Feedback on the Four Week Framework

The GRBASI Perceptual Scale (Sherwell, 2009) and Chris Johnson's Vocal Assessment Methods (2020) were well-received by participants, helping them connect voice and body.

These tools enabled better self-assessment, with participants gaining awareness of bodily sensations and tension during singing.

Using non-gendered language and fostering teacher-student dialogue creates an environment supporting personal and vocal growth.

Building a supportive relationship between teacher and student enhances persistence, accuracy, and continuous learning.

# Findings and Discussions

## The current landscape for progression in singing lessons

### Teacher Experience

So the only thing that anybody else has got anything to measure that against is exams”  
P2.

“I think I think there should be more freedom in certainly in the exams” P1.

“there is definitely some leniency with like, just songs and things like that... you can pick from these three keys, which is better than it was” P3.

# Final Discussion

- Interview participants raised concerns about graded singing exams, prioritising goal-based learning over skill-building and enjoyment (Tse, 2024).
- My objective is to cultivate a love for singing, but exams can demotivate students and discourage practice.
- Pintrich and Schunk (1995) suggest exams motivate through goal achievement, but negative experiences can reduce engagement.

# Final Discussion

- There is a need for a framework.
- Salaman (1994) questioned the value of music exams, stating they fail to nurture holistic musicianship.
- Tse (2024) found that exams emphasise assessment and certification, creating societal standards that teachers rely on for structure.

# Final Discussion

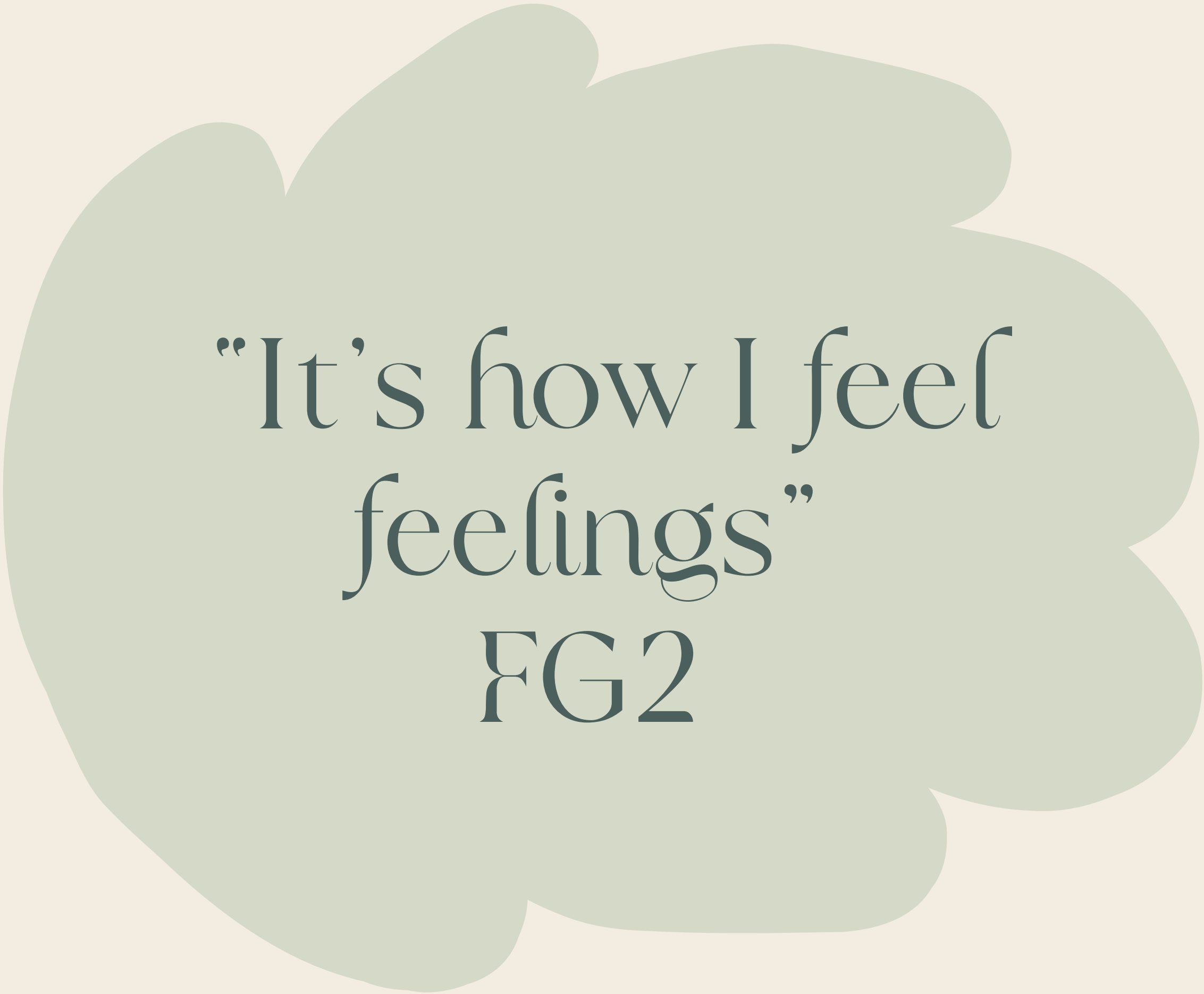
- Interview participants highlighted the need for frameworks that go beyond exams, allowing for more exploration and creativity in lessons.
- Quotes from participants:
  - “There should be more freedom in exams” (P1).
  - “Exams are the only measure we have” (P2).
- This feedback will influence the development of new teaching frameworks that better support skill-building and student engagement.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

- Peters (2020) notes confirmation bias can arise when we inadvertently search for data that supports our beliefs.
- Michel (1999) stresses the importance of 'telling it how it feels.'
- Mitigation efforts: direct quotes & triangulation (Carter et al., 2014)
- Include unfamiliar participants
- Extend research timeframe for deeper analysis (Easton et al., 2000)

# Conclusion and Recommendations

- Me: Ambitious goals, imposter syndrome, but positive feedback kept me going
- My: Time constraints affected depth of findings
- More: Critical feedback encourages further FWF development
- Must: Inspired to pursue a PhD, balancing research with personal commitments



*“It’s how I feel  
feelings”*

*FG2*

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