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Voice Image: developing a new construct for vocal identity

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Music

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Abstract

This study sought to understand the nature of a singer's relationship with their voice, a construct I call *voice image*. Voice image is defined as: a complex, multidimensional construct that includes self-perceptions and attitudes (i.e. thoughts, feelings, and behaviours) with regard to the voice. This definition is modified from Avalos et al's (2005) definition of body image. The relationship a singer has with their voice is complicated. Vocal pedagogy texts may acknowledge that this relationship exists, but they do not offer teachers guidance or information. Music education and music psychology research address singer or non-singer identity, stereotypes and personalities of singers, and aspects of singer identity as individual ideas. My research seeks to link these items holistically while exploring additional aspects of the self/voice formation and function. Through a thematic analysis of eleven interviews of individuals who had received at least an undergraduate degree with voice as their primary instrument, I sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the voice self-perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (or voice image) of classically trained singers between the ages of 22 and 35?
- What are the domains of voice image?
- How is voice image formed?
- How does voice image evolve?
- Why does voice image matter?

I developed four themes in response to these questions: The Box, Qualities of - or Barriers to- Professional Success, Singer/voice Relationship, and Coping with Threats to Voice Image. These themes show that voice image is multifaceted and complex, and changes throughout an individual's lifetime. Voice image has the potential to change the way singers are taught and has additional ramifications for those recovering from vocal injury, dealing with trauma related to singing experiences, or who are undergoing vocal changes.

Keywords

Voice, voice pedagogy, identity, musician identity, singer identity, voice image

Summary for Lay Audience

In this thesis, I develop a concept I call *voice image*. Voice image is like body image, but for your voice. In other words, voice image is the relationship that an individual has with their voice. For this study, I interviewed eleven people ages 22-35 who had at least a bachelor's degree in music with voice as their instrument. I looked for themes across the interviews, compared themes, and developed a construct of what voice image looks like according to the data from my interviews. The four main themes were labelled: The Box, Qualities of- or Barriers to- Professional Success, Singer/voice Relationship, and Coping with Threats to Voice Image. These themes show that voice image is complicated, and changes throughout a person's lifetime. This research provides a foundation for the concept of voice image upon which research can build. Voice image affects people who are professional singers but might also have implications for people recovering from voice injuries or those who are going through vocal changes. Current literature about singing and teaching singing does not address this complex psychological issue; I hope to change that through my research.

Acknowledgments

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Many people patiently listened for many years to my chattering about voice image. To Leanne, Kelly, Teri, Jaclyn, Marcie, Anna, Chelsea, Melina, Katelyn & Nigel, James & Sarah, and so many other dear friends. To my family: Mom, Dad, Mel, Marc, Steve, and Jen. To everyone who has loved and supported me through this life-changing pursuit: Thank you.

And to Zach, who always knew I could do it.

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Preface

My involvement with this research question, like many qualitative researchers, is intensely personal (see Ary et al., 2014) . Through my own experiences of voice image, singer identity, and the voice generally, I became aware that to identify primarily as a singer and to put most of one's sense of self-worth on that identity can be dangerous and unhealthy.

I attended Memorial University of Newfoundland's School of Music for voice and received both my bachelor's and master's degrees from that institution. After finishing my B.Mus. I had no plans to return to school. Given my remote location in Newfoundland, Canada, and my financial circumstances, a career in performance seemed out of reach. Without daily practice, my singing technique predictably declined. I found myself becoming insecure about my voice and uncomfortable singing in front of others or even alone. Since childhood, I had always felt confident and positive about my voice; this sense of insecurity was new to me. It no longer felt good to sing as my vocal tension increased with lack of practice. Also, I noticed a change in my sound as the range became more limited and the quality of the tone was not as rich. Whenever I sang, I was consumed with thoughts about technique. I often felt that I did not sound very good and was reluctant to sing around others. I knew that these negative feelings would only increase as I no longer practiced or studied voice.

In addition to feelings of insecurity around declining vocal technique I faced, for the first time, the realization that my identity as a person and sense of worth was primarily constructed around having a "good" singing voice. This made the transition from pre-professional to

amateur singer difficult. Many of my friends and family identified me primarily as a singer, an identity which I previously had accepted and encouraged. Shifting that identity was very difficult; I felt I had no other interests and did not think of myself as skilled at anything other than singing. At this time, I remember feeling that those around me only saw me as a “singing head”. I was a person with no other identity to cling to. Eventually I found other interests and was able to shift away from a singing identity. This diversification of my own identity, and a recognition of inherent worth and talents apart from singing, was crucial to improving my mental well-being. Despite these positive changes, singing remained a sensitive subject.

The second experience occurred during the first year of my master's degree in voice performance and pedagogy, also at Memorial University. While conducting research for a paper about vocal health, I had a life-changing interview with an anonymous participant. This individual had completed an undergraduate degree in classical voice. They had then gone on to be a lead singer in a band which had enjoyed moderate success across Canada. Graciously, they agreed to an interview for my class paper on the self-chosen topic of people’s perceptions of vocal health.

I recall asking the participant about their vocal health and how they coped with vocal fatigue and whether their classical training had helped in this new genre. The participant commented that their music school experience had been a difficult one, filled with frustration surrounding an inability to overcome certain technical difficulties. They struggled frequently with vocal fatigue, and the entire mood of our conversation on this subject was negative. The participant said when they left music school, they knew they would never sing classically again.

After joining their band, this participant felt much happier about their voice. The mood of our conversation shifted into a positive tone as we discussed this aspect of their vocal journey. The participant stated they no longer experienced issues with vocal fatigue, and their sound more was powerful and the singing experience more enjoyable than when they were training classically. Additionally, they said if they were to cause vocal injury, it might have a positive effect on their career by making their voice more memorable (this has worked for many singers such as Carole King, Macy Gray, Brian Adams, and Stevie Nicks).

Hearing this participant's perspective on singing and their own lived experience was eye-opening for me. Classical singing had previously been presented to me (and is often presented) as the "healthiest" or "most natural" way to sing. I was intrigued by this person's experience of being happier with their sound (and themselves) after they began to sing in what I perceived to be an unhealthy way. This happiness contrasted sharply with their painful, frustrating experience of classical voice training.

I realized through this interview experience that physical vocal health is clearly not the only factor in longevity and overall satisfaction with the singing voice. The mental aspect of vocal health matters immensely. Yet it is not well understood, nor is it a subject often broached in classical voice training. In my experience, vocal health and technique was treated as a purely physical equation. The role of the brain and mind were discussed insofar as they affect the nervous system, or the ability to feel certain muscles or gestures for singing.

My own shifting identity and struggle to enjoy singing showed me how all-encompassing singing as an identity can be. It also emphasized to me that singing identity needed to be part of

a larger, more diversified self-concept. As I explored this topic, I realized that little was known about singing identity at all. My encounter with this study participant during my master's degree changed my life, both personally and professionally. Collectively, these experiences piqued my curiosity and laid the groundwork for my doctoral research in voice image and vocal self-concept.

Through a review of body image literature, I developed a definition of body image by using Avalos et al's (2005) definition of body image. Voice image as it is currently developed is defined as: a complex, multidimensional construct that includes self-perceptions and attitudes (i.e. thoughts, feelings, and behaviours) with regard to the voice. As a construct, voice image is my attempt to understand and organize the ways in which an individual relates to their voice, is influenced by personal and social constructs around the vocal sound and its perceived value, worthiness, professional marketability, and many other factors. The ways in which these factors influence individuals and their relationship with their voices – which is their relationship with themselves as the voice is part of the body and part of the person – is the goal of this study and of the development of voice image.

1 Introduction to the Study

Some singers feel that they have insurmountable difficulties in their training. Many teachers feel that a student has stalled technically because the information has not been presented in a way that the student understands, or that they simply do not have the motivation to overcome technical obstacles. In my opinion, encountering, understanding, and working through the concept of voice image may present a third option. A student has all relevant information, understands it, and has the motivation to succeed, but their voice image is threatened by this information. Perhaps they are unable or unwilling to allow themselves to alter their voice image. Without understanding what voice image is, how it forms, how it changes, and why it is important to singers, I expect that many singers will continue to be thwarted in their pursuit of artistic excellence by a lack of information and understanding of this important aspect of their experience.

The proposed study intends to examine the way a singer experiences their voice image. I intend to explore how voice image develops. It may develop through observations, feedback from others, role models, cultural expectations, and other experiences. I will also explore the role of voice image in overcoming technical and performance barriers. A singer's voice image might affect their ability to move past technical issues and become the singer they hope to be. Not only this, but a negative voice image might affect a singer's overall satisfaction in the field they have chosen to pursue. Classical singing is a competitive and psychologically challenging field. A positive voice image could help singers navigate their profession in a way which promotes personal well-being.

I expect that many students and teachers would experience a faster, happier, and more productive development in technique and artistry if they had language with which to discuss a singer's voice image. Singers with a positive voice image may be resilient and flexible. Singers with a positive voice image would be more open to technical advancement, and less prone to feel threatened by the suggestions and feedback of their teachers and peers. This study aims to develop a comprehensive, working theory of voice image. Future research could suggest tools for singers and teachers to better understand this relationship between the self and the voice and empower singers to navigate the path to improved mental well-being through an improved voice image.

2 Literature Review

In this section I review studies that have examined concepts related to voice image. No theory currently exists to explain the ways in which an individual's self-perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs all integrate into a voice image. I begin with an overview of vocal pedagogy texts. Notably, pedagogues may acknowledge the importance of the relationship between the self and the voice (see: Miller, 1996; Salaman, 1999; Ware, 1998) but none give advice on how to approach this sensitive topic. Some pedagogues discourage any discussion of that relationship, citing professional boundaries and encouraging students to seek assistance from a psychologist or psychotherapist. Others offer assurance that it is an individual's responsibility to address their own voice-self relationship.

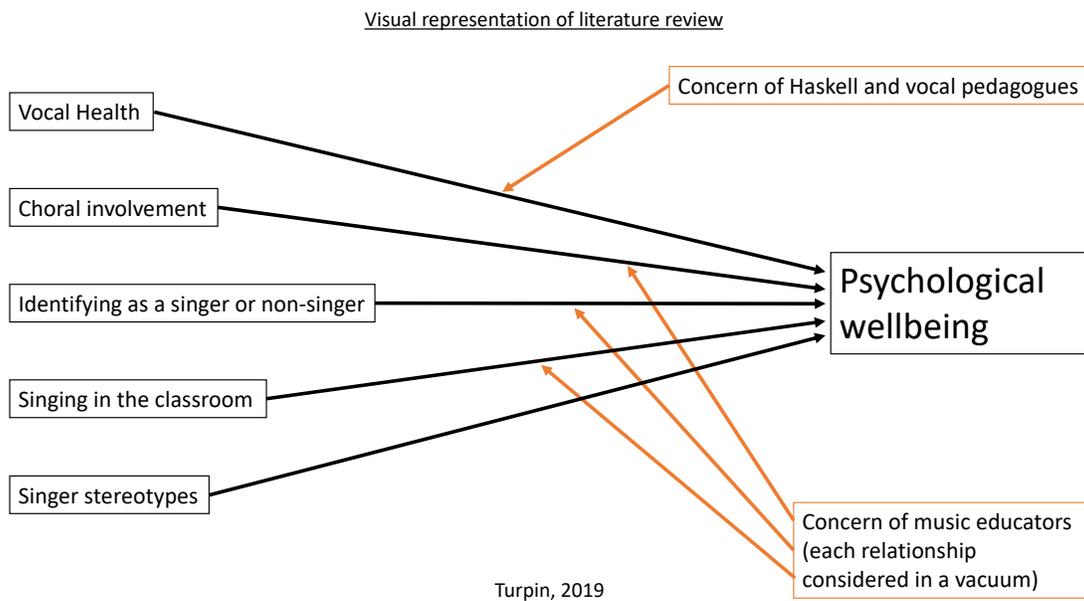
Further areas addressed in this literature review are singer identity (vs. non-singer identity), vocal self-perception, and singer personality and stereotypes, the voice as seen in speech language pathology and therapy perspectives, and body image literature.

When I began this research, I thought a singer's concept of their own voice might function similarly to body image. Body image research was used in this study as a foundation from which to build the interview schedule, understand what kind of questions might be relevant to exploring voice image, and understanding terminology about the self and body image. Both the body and the voice are integral ways in which we express ourselves, present ourselves to others, and are perceived by others. Ultimately, my study developed in a different direction. Thematic analysis develops the themes from the data, so approaching the interview analysis with pre-formed definitions of terms I thought I may find would have been an inappropriate use

of the research method. Although I did not use the terms from body image in my analysis, I have included my exploration of body image literature and the definitions I imagined in the final section of this literature review to be transparent about the ways in which my research developed and the biases inherent in any researcher’s analysis of others’ stories.

Figure X below shows the current state of research on the voice-self relationship as it pertains to psychological wellbeing.

Figure 1: Visual representation of current literature



2.1 Dearth of Attention to Voice Image in Vocal Pedagogy

Pedagogy greatly benefitted from the progress made in voice science in the last hundred years. Vocal pedagogy texts focused primarily on singing technique informed by voice science (Doscher, 1994; McCoy, 2012; McKinney, 2005; Miller, 1996; Salaman, 1999; Smith, 2007; Vennard, 1967; Ware, 1998). However, what many of these texts do not address is voice psychology, particularly in the area of a singer's experience of their own voice. In singing pedagogy, the mind's relationship to singing was generally discussed only in relation to performance situations, particularly performance anxiety. Performance anxiety's effect on the voice was a much-discussed aspect of vocal training. Singers learned coping strategies to aid in overcoming anxiety in performance situations (Dornemann & Ciaccia, 1992; Emmons & Thomas, 1998). What teachers and their students did not discuss, however, and what pedagogy books either ignored or only hinted at, was the importance of the singer's own concept of and relationship with their voice.

Pedagogues seemed aware of the complex relationship singers had with their voices. Interestingly, they did not attempt to explore this relationship in any detail or offer advice to teachers on approaching this subject with students. Whether they felt this was outside the purview of their expertise, or whether they were simply unaware of the need for deeper exploration, pedagogues hinted at and assumed knowledge of a complex self-voice relationship. In her book *Unlocking Your Voice*, Esther Salaman (1999) wrote:

In my experience we are all difficult in our relationship with our own voices, as though the voice were 'another person,' deeply connected in an emotional love-hate

relationship with ourselves: 'How are you, how's the voice?' you hear yourself asked - and you will give two answers! (p. 56)

Salaman did not attempt to explain the origin of this difficult love-hate relationship, nor did she offer any advice on dealing with such a personal and important issue, but rather continued her chapter on the importance of daily vocal warmups.

Salaman was not alone when she did not offer tools for teachers and students to explore issues related to singing and the voice. Pedagogue Joan Patenaude-Yarnell stated: "The emotional and physical well-being of singers has significant bearing on the healthy function of the singing voice, making it inevitable that the teacher will be faced with issues that are nontechnical" (2004, p. 395). Yet she offered teachers and students no tools for approaching these issues. Additionally, Wormhoudt's book warned singers and teachers that the psychological aspect of singing could negatively affect technique, and that it was crucial to be aware of one's psychological state in singing (2001, p. 15). Again, though she acknowledged the issue, she offered no explanation for how to understand or resolve psychological conflict. The voice was treated as a reflection of the self and outside the self, and not as a part of its composition.

Ware (2001, p. 15) included an entire chapter on psychology in his vocal pedagogy book. Like Wormhoudt and Salaman, he acknowledged the link between the self and the voice. Ware went a step further and discussed internal and external selves, mental imagery, right/left brain theory, risk-taking and flow, but then diverged into goal setting, motivation, and types of intelligence. His goal in this chapter was to identify and address "psychological entanglements"

that prevented technical advancement. It was not the goal of Ware's book to conduct an in-depth exploration of socio-cultural influences on the singer. Additionally, some of his psychological advice was somewhat dated. For example, he stated that IQ testing was used to determine how successful an individual is likely to be in the future. This was a hotly contested statement (see Dweck, 1999). Ware's approach to psychology and the voice was useful for understanding that the voice and the self were intertwined, and that it sometimes prevented singers from achieving their goals. However, it was far from the purpose of his book to explore the social, cultural, and personal aspects of how the voice and self relate to one another.

In his foundational text *The Structure of Singing*, renowned voice pedagogue Richard Miller referenced the psychological aspect of singing under the book's section on new students. "The sound I make is very much a part of me; even if it is faulty, it is mine. To let someone attempt to alter it is to allow invasion of a very central part of my person" (Miller, 1996, p. 207). Miller then encouraged teachers to have an honest, open discussion with the student about their reluctance to change the voice through altered technique despite the student's knowledge that their current technique was not optimal. This discussion was presented as a simple matter, one to get out of the way so that the real learning of technical improvement can begin. As with Salaman, Miller made no attempt to help teachers through this difficult conversation and gave no guidance for identifying or broaching this personal matter.

But I cannot be too harsh on these prestigious pedagogues whose works have advanced the field and informed many singers. The primary goal of *The Structure of Singing* and *Unlocking Your Voice* was to offer advice on coordinating the physiology of the body to encourage better

singing and to develop healthy practice habits. The purpose of these books was not the psychology of singing. Miller and Salaman were clearly aware that the psyche played an important role in a student's ability to learn and grow as a singer, yet they offered no resources to readers for further exploration of this important topic. My research will help teachers better understand their role in the psychological growth of singers by creating a resource tool for them.

In contrast to Miller's approach, some popular pedagogical texts actively discouraged discussion about non-technical or artistic matters. Smith's book *The Naked Voice* directly discouraged discussion of emotional or psychological aspects of singing. He stated that the nature of teaching singing would affect these areas of life without the need to discuss them (2004, p. 207). It is my opinion that to repress discussion of these important topics is to neglect one of the most important aspects of any holistic philosophy of vocal pedagogy. The unconscious neglect of the psychological and emotional aspects of singing leads to maladaptive behaviours (Smith, 2007, p. 163), and results in an educational setting and workplace which are unable to offer tools or support for voice-related mental health or improved personal well-being. Voice image will help teachers better understanding when it would be appropriate for them to aid and advise a student in their exploration of the voice and self, and when referral to a specialist such as a therapist is needed.

Discussion of the psychology of singing and singer identity was outside the scope of most vocal pedagogy texts. Despite the dearth of information and advice about voice image from vocal pedagogues, the concept of voice image could have very important implications for

singers, singing teachers, and other voice care professionals. Additionally, voice image could enrich the perspective of singers by illuminating an important aspect of their personal, professional, and artistic identity, which may be adversely affecting their personal well-being and careers.

2.2 Singer Identity

Studies indicated that identification as a singer or non-singer occurs early in life (Sandgren, 2002). The formation of a singer/non-singer identity was the subject of much attention (Eccles et al., 1993; Lamont, 2002; Welch, 2017). Once a singer identity was established, other studies investigated the further development of a singer identity throughout pre-professional training and professional work (Knight, 2010; Monks, 2003; Pascale, 2002; Schumann, 2014; Stephens, 2012). Other pertinent studies investigated perception of one's own vocal sound, or tonal image (Bennett, 2009; Oakland, 2014; O'Bryan, 2015). This important research can inform the formation of voice image, even if it does not directly discuss the topic.

Singer vs. Non-singer identity. Identity as a singer occurs in childhood. For many researchers, the singer/non-singer identity was the primary meaning of singing identity. Stephens defined singing identity as “a person's concept of his or her singing self-image” (Bella & Berkowska, 2009; Cuddy et al., 2005; Haskell, 1987; Parker, 2009). Later, they continue the definition:

A subcategory of an individual's overall personal identity. This domain-specific identity relates to an individual's concept of himself or herself in relation to the activity of

singing. More specifically, it also refers to an individual's label of his or herself as a singer or as a non-singer. (p. 12)

The present study posits that voice image is far more complex than the singer/non-singer spectrum. Voice image provides a space for this larger complexity. Figure 2 illustrates the domains Stephens explored in relation to singing perception.

Figure 2: Visual representation of Stephens (2012) conceptualization of Singing Perceptions

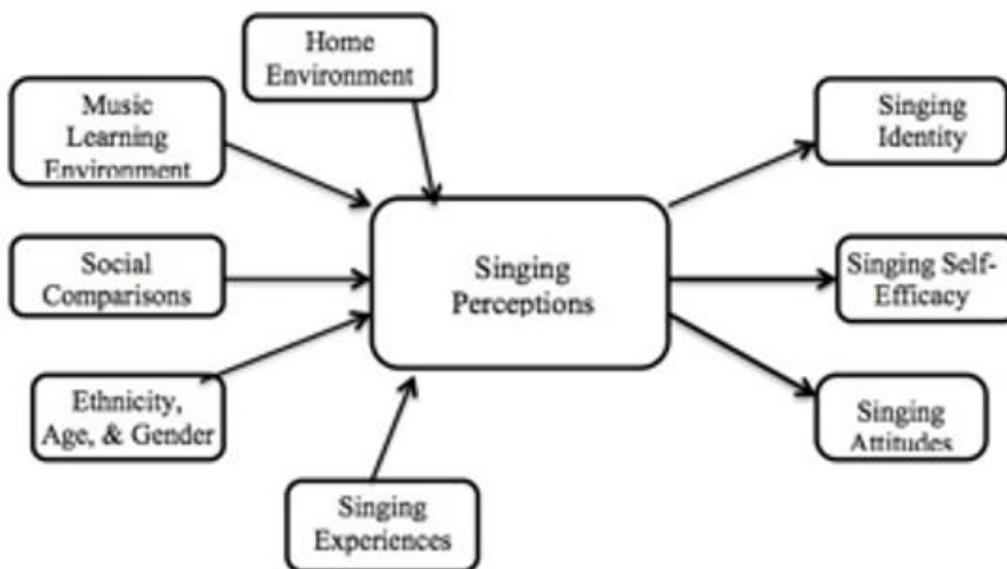


Figure 2. Visual representation of the proposed predictors and conceptualization of Singing Perceptions.

Their concept of “singing perception” was limited to whether an individual identified as a singer or non-singer. This represents just one aspect of the larger concept of voice image.

Stephens's research did demonstrate that the elements proposed in Figure 2 contributed to singing perceptions.

Schumann's research with adolescents indicated that an individual's decision to identify as a non-singer depends on several factors, including quality of sound, lack of involvement, lack of confidence, and non-enjoyment (2012, p. 7). The factors that contributed to the individual's identification as a singer included the involvement/frequency, enjoyment, quality of sound, external opinions, and accuracy (p. 46). Although quality of sound was featured in both these lists, Schumann noted that participants had difficulty in describing their own voices after listening to a recording (p. 55). Participants who were able to describe their voices used words such as high, low, loud, soft, and off-key (p. 37). Some participants used terms incorrectly or seemed confused as to the meanings of the terms they themselves had selected to describe their voices (p. 27). Schumann urged music educators to help students obtain better vocabulary to describe their voices but did not indicate what would constitute improved vocabulary.

My exploration of voice image among trained singers could help develop a vocabulary to describe the voice and an individual's perception of their voice. I posit that vocabulary from body image literature may be particularly useful as voice image is developed and described. Terms developed for voice image would describe attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and quality of life vocabulary about the voice. Some of these terms are discussed further in "Body Image as a Framework for Understanding Voice Image" below.

It is my hope that the exploration of voice image will begin the development of a vocabulary with which we can describe our relationship to our voice. The beginning of that

exploration is being able to describe how we sound, but also how we think and feel about our voices. This inability to describe the voice has contributed, I believe, to overlooking voice image as an important facet of vocal pedagogy.

Ongoing expansion of singer identity. Identity as a singer or non-singer is one aspect of voice image, but the identity continuously shifts throughout a person's life. The studies above explored singer/non-singer identity which is determined largely in early childhood and difficult to change thereafter without conscious intervention. The following studies explored the identity of singers after the singer identity is established.

Perhaps the most important and influential contribution relevant to the concept of voice image was O'Bryan's study (2015). Using narrative thematic analysis, O'Bryan explored one singer's experiences and demonstrated that her development as a singer throughout her undergraduate degree affected her sense of self-efficacy, singer identity, and her career prospects. O'Bryan used the singer's thoughts and beliefs about their voice to show how those thoughts and beliefs affect self-efficacy and singer identity. Themes which represented elements of her participant's experience were discussed, such as Singer Identity and *Fach*, Body Image, Belonging to the Community of the Conservatorium, and Teachers and the Conservatorium. Many of these themes are reflected in my own thematic analysis.

Bennett in their study "Academy and the Real World: Developing realistic notions of career in the performing arts" (2015) recommended that musicians (not singers specifically) diversify their identity to include non-performing musical involvement. The study asserted that

musicians gained a sense of self-meaning from the prestige given to those who frequently perform. The reality of many musicians' lives, however, was quite different. Bennett says,

In reality, artists meet their needs through acting in multiple concurrent roles and often combine high- and low-skilled positions as required: hence it is particularly important to advocate a non-hierarchical view of the range of occupations available to them. (p. 312)

By encouraging a non-hierarchical view of the many roles working musicians fill to support themselves and their art, a positive identity as a musician and a sense of success could be developed.

This research agrees with Oakland's (2009) chapter on "Negotiating an 'Opera Singer Identity,'" which explored the formation of an opera singer identity. The chapter concluded that the opera singer identity is a professional identity. Ultimately, Oakland recommended that teachers and students encourage the 'opera singer identity' to be a personal identity, which they believed will result in a less fragile identity. Creating a more stable identity would enable singers to defend against threats to that identity, including the ability to defend and process criticism, change, uncertainty of employment, and other challenges, which resulted in a happier, mentally healthier individual.

These studies indicated that singer identity is an ongoing negotiation. Themes around belonging, perceptions of others, and body image were identified by O'Bryan. Bennett encouraged musicians to diversify their definition of success and what being a 'real' musician means. Oakland encouraged singers to make the singer identity a personal and unchangeable

aspect of their identity to encourage mental well-being and continued positive outlook on the self and being a singer.

Tonal Image. A singer's perception of what their voice sounds like, and what it ought to sound like, contributed to voice image. This tonal image was understood to be made up of socio-cultural influences, as well as the physiological abilities of the singer to hear and produce a desired sound. Cooper's (2014) article on "voice suicide" and book titled "Change Your Voice, Change Your Life" (1970), used the term "voice image" to describe a person's idea of what their voice should sound like. The term did not gain widespread usage and in the present study is used with different meaning attached. I would describe Cooper's concept as a *tonal image* of the voice, i.e. what a person thinks their voice should sound like. He said,

Though voice image is probably a new concept to you, it is one of the most vital, pervasive, meaningful, and controlling factors in your life. It pertains to sound and persona. It designates the way you perceive your own sound and the way you perceive others' sounds, as well as the interpretive judgments you apply to those sounds. (p. 5)

What followed was Cooper's observation that changing the tone of the voice can change how one is perceived and lead to professional and personal success and satisfaction. A kind of "How To Win Friends and Influence People" for the voice.

This contrasts with the definition of voice image as a multifaceted construct. This construct includes elements of how the speaker or singer believes their voice is perceived, but this is only one facet of the larger whole. The purpose of studying voice image in my research is

not to bring personal and professional success. Those are noble goals and may be a side-effect of improved understanding of voice image, but ultimately it is a non-sequitur to the work I am attempting to do. In this research, I hope to help people's mental health and well-being through a deeper understanding of themselves. Whether or not that deeper understanding results in professional success is an aside to my purposes here.

Furthering the concept of voice image as a complex, multifaceted construct was Haskell's (1984) article "Vocal Self-Perception: The Other Side of the Equation". From the perspective of a speech therapist, Haskell described singing perceptions as "the physical and psychological experience of one's own voice" (p. 172). He identified two primary levels of voice self-perception, sensory monitoring and vocal self-identification, as illustrated in Figure 3 below.

The self-perception of one's own vocal tone as well as learned behaviour contributed to Haskell's concept of vocal self-perception. Haskell's term "vocal self-perception" is, I believe, misleading in that many people understand the term to refer only to aural and sensory feedback. Haskell acknowledged this concern, but his approach to this topic had only the goal of physical vocal health in mind. His conceptualization was not concerned with the individual's mental health or how the concept of a negative or positive perception of one's own voice contributed to overall well-being. As a speech therapist, Haskell's primary concern was the physical vocal health of an individual. The impact of psychological health on the voice was considered a minor and peripheral contributor. I posit that psychological health of the

individual contributes to their vocal health in an essential, important way, and that the psychological well-being of an individual is partly formed by their relationship with their voice.

Figure 3: Haskell (1984) showing his concept of vocal self-perception

VOCAL SELF-PERCEPTION

TABLE 1. *Vocal self-perception*

Level I: Sensory monitoring	
Auditory feedback	Self-hearing of pitch, loudness, quality, and duration
Tactile-proprioceptive feedback	Sense of touch, pressure, movement, and position associated with voice production
Level II: Vocal self-identification	
Acoustic pattern	} Learned behavior determined by { Vocal modeling Cultural factors Self-concept Attitude towards own voice
Physiologic pattern	
vocal set =	

Several studies related to voice image peripherally through other aspects of identity in singing and music. Parker’s (2009) study indicated that choir membership helps improve students’ sense of self (not specifically singing identity). Many studies have been done (see Cuddy et al., 2005; Dalla Bella and Berkowska, 2009; Knight, 2010), which considered self-reported tone deafness. For some individuals, perceived ineptitude with pitch matching persisted despite empirical evidence that they can reliably match pitch (Knight, 2010). However, none of these specifically addressed the concept of voice image. Parker discussed a sense of self, and Cuddy et al. discussed aural perception of the voice only. An individual’s ability to identify themselves as tone deaf or not may be an aspect of their voice image, however this may only be a small part of the person’s overall conceptualization of their voice.

2.3 Personality and Stereotypes of Singers

Marchant-Haycox (1987), Kemp (1992), and Wilson (1984) all discussed the personality of singers. Marchant-Haycox applied the Eysenck Personality Profiler to singers and found they reflected many of the same traits as dancers, actors, and instrumentalists (in an unfortunate error, Marchant-Haycox's instrumentalist group is labelled "musicians" as distinct from "singers"; p. 1065). Singers' similarity to all other measured groups was explained by the fact that their profession incorporates aspects of each group (e.g. acting, dancing, and music).

Kemp (1996) explored singers' personalities as part of a larger project on musicians' personalities. He noted that singers face unique challenges with their instrument, "The singer's instrument is personal, invisible, and very complex, and in a performance it is the vocalist's personality that is presented, together with any vocal defects that are perceived as belonging directly to him or her" (p. 173). The link between the singer's personality and their voice may be a contributing factor to voice image.

Wilson's (1984) study administered a questionnaire to professional singers in which they indicated which personality traits they associated with various voice types (soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, bass). The results of his study showed that stereotypes about singers' personalities were almost unanimously agreed upon in the singing community. These stereotypes were often negative (DeMaris, 2012; Eustis, 2005; Kemp, 1996; Wilson, 1984), and some singers refused to identify as particular types because of the negative attributes associated with them (Jordan, 2010). Some of these stereotypes included poor musicianship skills, a tendency toward hypochondriasis, a need to be the centre of attention, a 'diva'

attitude, and a lack of intelligence. These stereotypes, combined with the unseen nature of the voice as an instrument, can even lead singers to be excluded from the term “musician” (Jordan, 2010, but see also Wilson’s 1984 work and other studies which separate singers from musicians). These assumptions about singers informed the social interactions singers have with other musicians.

Wilson (1984) indicated that stereotypes around voice types (particularly: soprano, tenor, mezzosoprano, and bass) were heterogeneous among the classical singer population. Stereotypes are common within each *fach* (Simeonov, 2015; Varga, 2020). These stereotypes extend beyond personality and ability even to expectations around the size and type of body a given voice type has. An example of this can be seen in the expectation that a *soubrette* will have a small, slim body type. In opera, common roles for soubrette voices include maids, little sisters, and many secondary female characters whose temperaments are generally witty, sarcastic, funny, scheming, or cheerful. Soubrettes rarely play villains. A dramatic soprano, on the other hand, is expected to have a large body type. Dramatic sopranos usually play tragic leading ladies, wives, or old ladies. These two examples are only from the soprano *fach*. There are many other stereotypes around other *fächer* in soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone, and bass voices. Whether or not body type influences *fach*, stereotypes regarding *fach* and casting indicate that those who fit the expected norms have a greater chance at professional success.

The studies discussed above each examine what I believe to be individual aspects of voice image, however they do not express the entirety of the concept. Stereotypes and

personality as they relate to the voice are part of voice image. It is my belief that current research does not represent the complexity of the individual's relationship with their voice. Voice image integrates concepts from the literature on singer identity, vocal self-perception, singer personality and stereotypes, as well as our understanding of socio-cultural influences, vocal training, and biological factors such as aural and physical feedback through hearing and sensation in the body. Currently, there is no theory in which these aspects of self and the voice can coalesce, or a theory that explores deeply the individual's experience of having a voice. The nature of the self-conceptualization of the voice is what I wish to explore through the concept of voice image.

2.4 Body Image as a Framework for Understanding Voice Image

As a new construct, voice image is without a vocabulary of its own. I believe that the body image literature provides a useful framework and vocabulary to begin discussing voice image. Although our body is a physical entity, our perception of our bodies and others' varies and changes. The way we perceive our bodies changes how we act in the world. For example, body dysmorphia causes an individual to be "excessively concerned about, and preoccupied by, a perceived defect in his or her physical features" ("Somatic Symptom and Related Disorders", 2013). Similarly, a vocalist could become preoccupied with perceived defects in their vocal features. The rate of vibrato, for example, or the timbre of their voice.

Our voices and the sounds they create are physical and acoustic phenomena. As with our bodies, our perception of our voices changes how we act in the world. Although our voice is a physical mechanism and part of our body, our voices are unseen and, unless one has received specific training, the physiology of the voice is shrouded in mystery. To voice scientists and pedagogues the voice is seen as infinitely complex and imperfectly understood. The voice is understood by vocal pedagogues to be a complex and multifaceted construct consisting of both perceptive and physical components. Therefore, using a body image framework makes good sense to use in the initial exploration of voice image.

Body image as a conceptual framework lends itself very well to the conceptual development of voice image, as the following section will demonstrate. Body image is defined by Avalos et al. (2005) as:

[...] a complex, multidimensional construct that includes self-perceptions and attitudes (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) with regard to the body. It involves many individual albeit related components, such as (but not limited to) appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, body esteem, and accuracy of size perception (Thompson et al., 1999). (p. 285)

Modified, this comprehensive definition provides a framework for the concept of voice image:

Voice image is a complex, multidimensional construct that includes self-perceptions and attitudes (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) with regard to the voice.

Such a definition would give a starting point for research into this concept.

When a new concept such as voice image is being developed, it is important to allow the concept to be developed from themes grounded in the data of participants. However, one cannot gather data without asking questions, and it can be difficult to know what questions to ask about a subject previously unexplored. It is not my intention to try and squeeze voice image into body image theories and concepts. Such an attempt would be contrary to the research method used in this study. Because this area has not been explored holistically, I allowed my research to be informed by previous studies on tonal image, singer/non-singer identity, and what little research existed on singer identity after the singer/non-singer identity was established.

Many dimensions of body image are potentially mirrored in voice image. I propose that dimensions of voice image fall into two categories: contributors, which include dimensions that create voice image, and outcomes, which include dimensions that result from voice image. For example, an individual is told by an important person in their life that they have a bad voice. This acts as a contributor and fosters a negative voice image. The outcome of the negative voice image is that the individual no longer sings in public, or perhaps experiences anxiety when singing, especially in the presence of the important other. Dimensions from the body image literature that could be mapped onto the concept of voice image are described below. These dimensions are not an exhaustive representation of voice image. Rather, they provide a sample of the possible dimensions of voice image.

Table 1: Body Image definitions and their potential voice image counterparts.

Term From Body Image Literature	Potential Term in Voice Image
<p>Appearance Control</p> <p>Refers to an individual's conscious or unconscious changing or modifying of the appearance to compensate for a perceived deficit. (Cash, 2011)</p>	<p>Voice Appearance Control</p> <p>Refers to an individual's conscious or unconscious changing or modifying of the voice to compensate for a perceived vocal deficit.</p>
<p>Body Image</p> <p>"[...] a complex, multidimensional construct that includes self-perceptions and attitudes (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) with regard to the body. It involves many individual albeit related components, such as (but not limited to) appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, body esteem, and accuracy of size perception." (Avalos et al., 2005)</p>	<p>Voice Image</p> <p>A complex, multidimensional construct that includes self-perceptions and attitudes (i.e. thoughts, feelings, beliefs) with regard to the voice. It involves many individual albeit related components such as (but not limited to) voice evaluation, voice orientation, voice esteem, and accuracy of vocal perception.</p>
<p>Body Image Investment</p> <p>"pertain[ing] to the cognitive and behavioral importance that individuals place in their physical appearance". (Cash, 2011, p. 130)</p>	<p>Voice Image Investment</p> <p>Pertaining to the cognitive and behavioral importance that individuals place in their vocal "appearance".</p>
<p>Body Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction</p> <p>The perceived discrepancy between a person's current body and an ideal body. (McKinley, 2011)</p>	<p>Voice Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction</p> <p>The perceived discrepancy between the singer's voice currently and an ideal voice.</p>
<p>Body Schemas</p>	<p>Voice Schemas</p>

Cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of the self-related information, continued in an individual's social experience. (Cash, 2011)	Cognitive generalizations about the voice, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of the voice-related information, continued in an individual's social experience.
<p>Self Objectification (Body Image)</p> <p>Viewing the oneself as an object to be watched from an outside perspective. (McKinley, 2011)</p>	<p>Self Objectification (Voice Image)</p> <p>Viewing the voice as an object to be "watched" or monitored from an outside perspective</p>

2.5 Attitudinal Components in Voice Image

An important part of applying the concept of voice image is understanding how singers feel about their voices and what importance they place on those feelings, or their attitude about their voice. In body image, this involves evaluative and investment components (Cash, 2004). Similarly, for singers, the exploration of voice image attitudes is also comprised of two parts: an evaluative and an investment component. In body image, the evaluative component reflects judgments, or evaluations, of one's own body such as body satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The attitudinal component reflects the importance one places on those comparisons.

2.6 Evaluative Components

Voice image satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Body image satisfaction/dissatisfaction is paralleled in voice image satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Voice image

satisfaction/dissatisfaction is the perceived discrepancy between the singer's voice currently and an ideal voice. It is important to note that a singer may acknowledge that their current voice does not match their ideal voice, but the prospect may or may not bother them. The level of importance they place on their voice image satisfaction/dissatisfaction is their voice image investment.

Voice "Appearance" Schemas. Cash and Labarge state, "Schemas are cognitive structures that organize experience and action, and their content is reflected in implicit rules, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions that determine the substance of thought, emotion, and behavior" (1996). They noted that persons who are highly schematic in a certain dimension process information about that schema differently than those who are aschematic (1996). It followed from these definitions that voice schemas reflect cognitive structures that organize experience and action, and their content is reflected in implicit rules, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions that determine the substance of thought, emotion, and behavior. For example, a professional singer is someone highly schematic in voice image. They have formed cognitive generalizations about their voice, its value, abilities, and *fach*. An example of someone with low voice image schema might be an accountant, someone who has never really thought about their voice or the impact it might have on them socially and personally.

Singers who are highly schematic in voice "appearance" or "sound" schemas would be especially sensitive to input regarding their appearance or sound. Many pedagogues and voice educators assume that the individual seeking voice lessons has a significant personal investment in how their voice sounds (see: Miller, 1996; Patenaude-Yarnell, 2004; Ware, 1998).

Cooper (1984) advocated that the way one's speaking voice sounds is a key aspect to success in life. Other schemas for singers might be observed in the assumptions made about one's voice type (or *fach*). Other voice schemas - such as the role of culture and professional expectations in determining how we expect a voice to sound, or the role of physical appearance in how we expect a voice to sound, or the role of the voice in the way we expect someone to appear physically, merit exploration. Schemas around voice and positions of authority (such as teachers, coaches, stage and music directors) or subordination (such as students, underclassmen, understudies) need development, as well. Understanding these schemas in singing, and their importance to individual singers, may help pedagogues better understand how to help their singers as they navigate vocal growth, change, and a life in which one is primarily defined by one's voice.

Voice objectification and surveillance. McKinley described the way in which women and girls are culturally encouraged to view themselves as "objects to be watched and evaluated in terms of how their body fits cultural standards..." (McKinley, 2011, p. 49). This self-view from the perspective of an outsider was referred to as self-objectification and has been associated with many negative effects (for an extensive review, see: Roberts et al., 2018). One primary consequence is that girls and women learn to chronically monitor how their bodies appear to others, anticipate being evaluated based on their appearance, and try to control how their bodies appear to others. A high level of body surveillance, or the habitual monitoring of how the body appears to others, has been associated with more body shame and disordered eating in girls and women (McKinley, 2011, p. 49).

Objectification and surveillance are dimensions of body image which are also expressed through voice image. Voice surveillance refers to the monitoring of the voice in terms of how it is perceived by others. Singers are constantly concerned with how their voices sound to others, which suggests they would experience high levels of voice surveillance. While this is necessary in an occupation that is based primarily on vocal communication and perception, this can lead to compulsive and maladaptive voice surveillance. Maladaptive voice surveillance may manifest in any behavior which is motivated by excessive concern about how others perceive oneself. An example of this is excessive self-awareness of technical faults which hinders performance (Emmons & Thomas, 1998). It may also manifest in a fear of singing in front of others.

A culture of voice objectification and surveillance is prevalent among singers. Singers learn that their voice is an important part of how others see them, and that others (e.g., fellow singers, teachers, the audience, family members) are listening, watching, and evaluating their singing, and even their speaking. Singers are often told not to “listen to themselves” while singing. It is well understood that a person does not hear their own voice, speaking or singing, as others do. The person vocalizing is the producer and resonating chamber of the voice; therefore, they experience sympathetic resonance which reaches the inner ear through the body. Outside listeners do not experience this sympathetic resonance, resulting in a different aural perception of the sound. This explains why many people who listen to a recording of themselves are surprised at the sound of their own voice; usually, the reaction is negative (Haskell, 1987; Schumann, 2014).

Relatedly, Sandgren's (2002) study of psychosomatic issues among Swedish classical singers showed that many singers, particularly men, "check" or "test" the voice, particularly upon waking up in the morning (p. 13). This voice checking was motivated by a compulsive fear of losing the voice and is labelled as a maladaptive behaviour (p. 13). Any vocal dysfunction discovered through voice testing led to feelings of shame and guilt due to a sense that the singer had not properly cared for the voice (p. 13). Sandgren's research indicates that this maladaptive practice is widespread and does not appear to contribute to a positive relationship with the voice.

2.7 Investment

Voice image investment. The investment component of body image attitudes is shown in part through appearance investment. Body image investment is defined as "the degree to which body concerns are important and influence thoughts about self-worth" (Forand et al., 2010), p. 380). Appearance investment assesses the degree to which the body concern of appearance influences thoughts about self-worth.

Appearance investment could find a parallel in voice image investment, which measures what importance the individual places on their evaluations of their own voice. The exploration of voice image investment examines how singers feel about their actual voice in comparison with their concept of their ideal voice. A singer may know that their current vocal abilities do not match their ideal, and experience voice image dissatisfaction. Perhaps the singer does not find that discrepancy a source of anxiety or sadness or consider it to be a defining factor in their life, indicating a low voice image investment.

Positive rational acceptance. Cash (2011) also mentions positive rational acceptance, in which individuals engage in mental and behavioural actions, which reaffirm their positive body image and encourage acceptance of oneself and one's experience (p. 45). As a coping tool, positive rational acceptance can reflect lower instances of body-dysmorphia and associating appearance with self-worth, and an increase in quality of life (Cash, 2011; Trindade et al., 2018). Singers who use this coping tool may exhibit overall improved mental health compared to those whose primary coping is vocal appearance fixing or avoidance.

Internalization of cultural voice standards. In her chapter on "Feminist Perspectives on Body Image" McKinley states that the internalization of body standards "makes it appear as though cultural standards come from individual women's own desires" (McKinley, 2011, p. 49). Internalization of cultural standards can make it seem as though the expectation to fulfill these standards comes only from within the person, negating the very real external pressures from others. Additionally, failure to meet these standards results in lowered self-worth and sense of inherent inadequacy or defectiveness. In the same way, internalization of voice standards may blind the singer to external pressure to live up to certain voice standards. Singers may feel that failure to live up to voice standards reflects on their value and adequacy or worthiness as a person and may be unable to critically reflect on the standards which they pursue.

Self-discrepancy theory. The framework of self-discrepancy theory as presented by E. Tori Higgins (1987) is useful in interview question development and theory development for voice image as it relates to voice image investment and evaluation. This framework presents

three different domains of the self: actual self, ideal self, and ought self (Higgins, 1987, pp. 320–321). The actual self is how a person currently perceives themselves. The ideal self is an idealized version that the person has of themselves. The ought self is who the person believes outside influences such as teachers, parents, friends, or the culture generally, expects them to be. Self-discrepancy theory explores what comparisons individuals make between these selves and the importance they place on the similarity or differences between these selves. These domains could be seen in voice image particularly as individuals process the inevitable difference between their perception of their voice and others' perception of and feedback about their voice. Exploration of these domains could particularly help elucidate sources of negative and positive voice image.

2.8 Behaviours

Social comparison. Social comparison in body image is associated with an increase in negative feelings about the body (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Heinberg & Thompson, 1992). Exposure to others is not shown to have a negative effect in and of itself (Cusumano and Thompson, 1997). Consideration of others is usually conducted in an “upward perspective”, where individuals generally only compare themselves to those whom they perceive to be better or have more desirable traits. A highly competitive profession, singers often compare themselves to other singers. The effect this may have on the singer's voice image could influence their motivation and self-perception.

Experiential avoidance. When coping with challenges to body image, some individuals use experiential avoidance, which refers to when an individual takes action to avoid distressing situations. Hayes defines it as: “[T]he phenomenon that occurs when a person is unwilling to remain in contact with particular private experiences (e.g., bodily sensations, emotions, thoughts, memories, behavioral predispositions) and takes steps to alter the form or frequency of these events and the contexts that occasion them” (Hayes et al., 1996, p. 1156). Experiential avoidance can be an appropriate coping mechanism, however, it can also be a maladaptive coping strategy. This term refers not only the avoidance of physical experiences and encounters, but also to the avoidance of distressing thoughts or feelings (Hayes, 1996).

In singers, experiential avoidance could manifest in experiences, thoughts, and feelings which are a perceived source of negative emotions about their voice. Anecdotal evidence suggests that singers avoid things like listening to recordings of themselves, which provoke intense inner criticism and feelings of inadequacy. Singers who do not progress technically may be avoiding feelings of uncertainty and insecurity that allowing new kinesthetic feelings and new muscular coordination of the new technique may cause. Additionally, a new technique may change the way the singer sounds, and the uncomfortable feelings of not sounding as one is used to sounding may trigger experiential avoidance. Ways in which singers may employ experiential avoidance could be: avoiding situations in which one would feel exposed (singing solos, public speaking, singing in lessons or coaching), suppressing unwanted thoughts and feelings, or dissociation (Hayes, 1996). The short-term effects of experiential avoidance seem positive, but as a long-term mechanism it usually worsens the recurrence of negative thoughts and feelings (p. 1156).

Appearance fixing. Appearance fixing involves altering whatever physical aspect is deemed unacceptable. Cash describes it as concerning “efforts to change one’s appearance by concealing or correcting a physical feature perceived as flawed” (Cash, 2005, p. 197).

Appearance fixing is associated with believing that physical appearance influences personal worth and sense of self; it is shown to have a negative effect on the quality of life (Cash, 2005).

Similar concerns and corrective actions are applicable to voice image. Many individuals take steps to avoid situations of potential embarrassment regarding the voice, such as public speaking or singing in front of others. Voice fixing occurs in instances when an individual modifies their voice to correct a perceived flaw. For singers, voice fixing occurs in instances when an individual modifies their voice to correct a perceived flaw. In the speaking voice, this could manifest as an individual making their voice higher or lower if they feel that their natural pitch is somehow unacceptable. In the singing voice, this can manifest in classically trained singers modifying their singing voice to conform to what they deem an acceptable sound.

Singers are concerned especially with altering of the singing voice to seek an “optimal” sound for their singing genre of choice. Voice “appearance fixing” for women may manifest in speaking in a higher voice to sound more feminine or youthful, or in some cases, more ‘singer-y’ (Ko et al., 2006). It may also manifest in speaking lower in the range to sound more authoritative, or in the use of vocal fry. Although the prevalence of vocal fry has been noted in young women in North America, it is not fully understood why women increasingly use vocal fry in speech (Delfino, 2015). For men, voice appearance fixing may also manifest in diverging from the voice’s naturally comfortable speaking range to conform or diverge from cultural standards

of masculinity (Ko et al, 2006). Individuals may feel that the voice is improved by altering perceived negative aspects or exaggerating perceived positive aspects of the voice. This may occur to avoid teasing, or in an effort to adhere to or break away from cultural norms regarding the way men and women's voices ought to sound. Haskell (1987) states that most individuals change their voice quality in different situations, such as when speaking with children (p. 172). The concept of vocal appearance fixing could help us understand why people alter their voices and what factors influence the decision to alter the voice.

2.9 Summary

Many vocal pedagogy authors acknowledge the relationship that singers have with their voices is frequently fraught. Addressing this topic is viewed as secondary to understanding the physiology of the physical voice. Voice science is of course an essential component to effective teaching, but it is not the only aspect. Voice image develops a concurrent stream which teachers can be aware of to help students improve as singers as well as maintain mental health and wellness.

Studies in singer/non-singer identity, singer stereotypes, and musician identity do not adequately develop a theoretical framework for a singer's voice image. Bennett (2009), O'Bryan (2015), and Oakland (2014) discuss aspects of singer identity beyond the basic concept of the singer/non-singer identity. These studies represent aspects of voice image; the present study seeks to begin development of a larger framework through which these aspects of identity can be holistically viewed.

Vocal pedagogy texts provide little information or advice to teachers and students about navigating the complex relationship with the voice and self-identity. There is no clear language or lexicon currently in use for singers to discuss their relationship with their voice. Scholarly work on the construct of body image provides a rich framework which could be applied to understanding a complete and holistic concept of voice image. In this study, body image research was used as a foundation for understanding what kinds of questions to ask and to imagine what voice image might look like; however, body image language and definitions were not used in analysis and no attempt was made to fit interview data into a preexisting framework. Approaching my thematic analysis with a preexisting framework would be outside the best practices of that research method. This is further explained in the Method section below.

My study represents an important step in furthering knowledge in voice identity and voice image. Previous research has developed aspects of this voice image, but in a disjointed manner without addressing the aspects of identity holistically. By exploring the interaction between voice and self, vocalists will further their self-knowledge and have an increased sense of well-being. In addition, I expect they would experience greater satisfaction in the workplace and, potentially, more professional success.

3 Method

3.1 Process of thematic analysis

Clarke and Braun (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6) outline their most recent approach to reflexive thematic analysis in a six-stage format:

1. Data familiarization and writing familiarization notes
2. Systematic data coding
3. Generating initial themes from coded and collated data
4. Developing and reviewing themes
5. Refining, defining, and naming themes
6. Writing the report

My progress through these six stages (much like Dante's *Inferno*) is clearly outlined in the following sections. These six steps are guidelines and often not linear; revisiting of previous steps is a normal procedure of the method. Though not listed among the six critical steps in reflexive thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006, 2016, 2019) have described additional steps as essential to pre-research work: epistemological positioning, defining what constitutes a theme or code, whether latent or semantic coding was used, and whether research had an inductive or deductive orientation (Clarke and Braun, 2006 & 2019). These additional considerations are discussed in subsequent sections.

3.2 Philosophical and Practical Positionings and Orientations

Thematic analysis can be used from a variety of epistemological perspectives, but it fits well with the constructivist epistemology (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I conducted this research from a constructivist standpoint. Ponterotto (2005) defines the constructivist standpoint, “Constructivists–interpretivists advocate a transactional and subjectivist stance that maintains that reality is socially constructed and, therefore, the dynamic interaction between researcher and participant is central to capturing and describing the “lived experience” (Erlebnis) of the participant” (p. 131).

The effect of the constructivist standpoint on the process of thematic analysis affects several domains such as researcher reflexivity, thematic development, and the study’s stance toward validation and reliability criteria and hypotheses. Reflexivity, the process of thematic development, and reliability/validation/trustworthiness are discussed in subsequent sections.

3.3 Rationale for Thematic Analysis

This study was developed, and interviews were conducted, with the intention of utilizing grounded theory methodology (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As the study progressed, it became clear that time limitations and other circumstances would require that the number of interviews conducted would be fewer than anticipated. 11 interviews were conducted, a number my supervisors and I deemed insufficient to develop a theory adequately grounded in the data (Terry et al., 2017). Additionally, these constraints did not allow adequate time for the

deep thought necessary to develop a theory. Therefore, it was proposed to switch to reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020; Terry et al., 2017).

Thematic analysis is well-suited to this project for several reasons. Voice image and singer self-concept is an area with very little scholarly research. As a doctoral student in music, I am a novice researcher who has begun their training in qualitative research methods. Thematic analysis is an accessible method for beginner researchers (Terry et al., 2017). It also requires creativity and an ability to develop codes and themes based on the interviews along with the researcher's own perspective. Objectivity is not the goal of reflexive thematic analysis, or indeed of qualitative research generally (Ary et al., 2014; Morse, 1997; Terry et al., 2017).

Creativity is an essential part of the theme-development process; developing themes and codes is comparable to baking a cake rather than discovering diamonds on a beach (Braun & Clarke, 2016). These themes and codes do not exist outside the researcher. The researcher doesn't "discover" themes as if discovering diamonds on a beach, but rather develops them from conducting systematic research on data gathered. Data, in this case interviews, are more like ingredients for a cake which the researcher puts together to create the cake itself. The cake doesn't exist without the baking process; we would never say a baker "discovers" a cake!

Because I have a background in performance art, creativity is a personal trait which I have always valued and have taken steps to develop throughout my academic studies. For thematic analysis, this disposition towards creativity will prove an invaluable asset for research and thematic development.

3.4 Inductive Approach

I will be using an inductive approach to thematic analysis. This involves developing themes from the data in a way that is very similar to grounded theory. I will be using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) which approaches themes from a constructivist standpoint (see the “Research Philosophical Assumptions” above). This inductive approach allows for themes and codes to be developed by my interpretation as the researcher of participants’ experiences and stories. Explaining participants’ experiences, along with my own, will help those who have not experienced or explored their own voice image to understand it better (Ary et. al., 2014).

3.5 Positionality & Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is an essential part of qualitative research and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Shaw, 2005; Terry et al., 2017). Qin states,

While reflexivity can make us more aware of power relations between researchers and participants in the research process, the concept of positionality reminds researchers that given attributes such as race, nationality, gender, and power are culturally ascribed. (Qin, 2016)

It is essential for me as a researcher to disclose my own positionality as it relates to my interpretation of the data. The intersectional lenses through which I interpret the world and interact with others inescapably influences my interpretation of my participants’ interviews.

I identify as Canadian, white, a cis-gender woman, queer and bisexual, middle-class, highly educated, a doctoral student, a feminist, a former Christian, raised in a strict and religious household, homeschooled, and politically and socially liberal but formerly conservative. Music-related identities include a singer, soprano, lyric soprano, classical singer, musician, performer, and vocal pedagogue. I enjoy singing and performing and have received encouragement and praise for performing and the sound of my singing voice throughout my childhood and into adulthood. Indeed, being a singer was a primary identity for me for many years. As previously stated, I experienced struggles with my identity as a singer after my bachelor's degree which I worked through over several years. These identities shape how I relate to, interpret, and interact with my participants' stories.

One of the most obvious influences over my decision to research this topic, and in my interactions with participants, is that I am a singer myself. Involvement in the culture of classical singing and classical music personally, academically, and professionally gave me insight into layers of possible meaning and the significance of the stories of my participants whose experiences were like my own. Conversely, this identity could cause me to misinterpret participants' intended meanings.

For example, I believe strongly that the power dynamics between singing teachers and their students is one of the most unexamined contributors to singer's positive self-evaluation and acceptance of their voices. As I coded data and constructed themes, I found many instances of power dynamics between my participants and their singing teachers. Perhaps if this dynamic was not so interesting to me, I wouldn't have coded so much information about

this. Who can say? But the fact remains that, try as one might to be aware of one's biases and the effect they may have on research, it is not possible to see everything.

I identify as a professional classical singer and musician. Because of this identity and experience, I was able to approach participants as an "insider" (Qin, 2016). This identity gave me advantages in some very explicit ways; participants confided in me things they felt non-singers or those without formal university training in classical singing wouldn't understand (e.g. John, Sabrina, Diana). This identity also had disadvantages. Sabrina, a professional singer and singing teacher, made some assumptions of shared knowledge which I did not understand. I was unable to clarify the assumptions as she interpreted my question of clarification as a joke.

Researcher bias is understood to be not only an unavoidable aspect of research, but something to be embraced and treasured. Braun and Clarke (2020) express the role of the researcher subjectivity beautifully, "[R]esearcher subjectivity is conceptualized as a resource for knowledge production, which inevitably sculpts the knowledge produced, rather than a must-be-contained threat to credibility" (p. 8). It is my intention through this research to explicitly list my identities and histories which I believe have some relation to this research. Perhaps all identities and lenses influence interpretive research such as this. Through this transparency I do not intend to undermine my own authority to practice this research, but to strengthen the rigour with which I conduct thematic analysis.

3.6 Development of Central Theme

Reflexive thematic analysis is used to identify “key, but not necessarily all, features of the data” (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297). Data identification and theme development are guided by the research question; however, it is common for research questions to change and develop during the research process (Clarke and Braun, 2017). This study is such a case. The original questions were developed with grounded theory in mind. As the study progressed, some minor redevelopment was necessary.

My original research questions were as follows:

- What are the voice self-perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (or voice image) of classically trained singers’ between the ages of 22 and 35?
- How can we use these experiences to develop a theory of voice image?
- What are the domains of voice image?
- How is this voice image formed?
- How does voice image change?
- Why does voice image matter?

Despite the change from grounded theory to thematic analysis, most of these questions remained salient to my research process. Exceptions include the question “How can we use these experiences to develop a theory of voice image?” and “Develop tools to aid singers in understanding their voice image and navigating towards a more positive or healthier voice image.” The latter intent is not appropriate for thematic analysis, as this method does not develop a theory, but seeks to identify important aspects of the research. The themes

developed in this study will ideally provide a foundation on which further research may build a theory of voice image. Although this research has potential for guiding singers and singing teachers' discussion of the psychology of the voice and being a singer, it does not, however, provide a sufficient foundation to develop practical tools for the voice studio or singers.

The following are research questions that remained salient to the research process and continued to be relevant throughout the interviewing, coding, and analysis processes:

- What are the voice self-perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (or voice image) of classically trained singers' between the ages of 22 and 35?
- What are the domains of voice image?
- How is this voice image formed?
- How does voice image change?
- Why does voice image matter?

These questions, along with more coding-specific questions guided my research such as "What's going on here?" "What surprised me about this interview?" "What are they trying to tell me?" "What assumptions are they making?" "What assumptions am I making?".

As themes were developed, I chose to develop themes using "How is voice image formed?" as the central question. The other questions were addressed through the structuring of the thematic mind map (see Appendix II for the complete mind map).

3.7 Design

This study used semi-structured interviews (see Appendix I) to explore aspects which I believe contribute to an individual's voice image. This study received approval from the Human Research Ethics board of Western University. Participants for this study were not considered a vulnerable group. The nature of the study, while personal, posed no danger to the well-being of the participants. Reflexivity and reflection were engaged through memos after each interview and throughout the study's duration.

3.8 Participants

Requirements. This study recruited classically trained singers ages 22-35 who had completed a minimum of an undergraduate degree in music from an institution in the United States or Canada. Individuals who did not have an undergraduate in voice, but who had obtained a masters or doctorate in voice were still eligible to participate in this study. Selecting participants for some homogeneity allowed for a more focused look into voice image as it presented in this group.

Rationale. The age-range was selected to encompass a period in singers' careers generally labelled as a "young artist" or "emerging artist" in the field. The education requirement was intended to find participants who have sufficient experience with training and singing to have developed clear ideas about their own voices and experiences. I thought individuals with formal vocal training would have a vocabulary to talk about their own voices.

These criteria were developed to narrow the scope of the research, as it was neither possible nor advisable to approach this study with broader requirements such as “any self-identified singer” or “any self-identified singer who has completed an undergraduate with voice as the primary instrument.” Therefore, it was deemed necessary to focus on a smaller group of “singers” with the recognition that this narrowing necessarily limited the range of experiences and excluded perspectives important to developing a holistic concept of voice image. Further research is necessary to include and explore experiences which contribute to developing a viable theory of voice image that adequately reflects the immensity of any group’s relationship to their own voices.

All participants in the study had received an undergraduate degree with voice as their primary instrument. Individuals were between the ages of 22-35 years old. Participants had trained in the United States or Canada. One participant had completed studies in the United States or Canada but was living abroad at the time of interview. All other interviewees resided in North America.

A degree from an institution in the United States or Canada was required with the idea of narrowing the university experience. Music education can be very different between countries; even between the US and Canada there can be a range of requirements and experiences at the university level. I wanted to narrow down my pool of participants in ways that would encourage some homogeneity of background.

Interviewees were chosen with a preference for individuals whom I do not know well, who do not attend Western University, and to interview even numbers of men and women.

These additional criteria were to prevent a similarity of experience based on attending the same university. I wished to avoid developing a theory about how students at Western University conceptualize their own voices. Additionally, preserving the anonymity of students within the same faculty could prove difficult based on specific experiences which may make them identifiable to readers. I also wished to interview individuals from diverse backgrounds within the confines of the study.

11 participants were interviewed, and this was deemed an appropriate number for thematic analysis based on suggestions from research (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Guest et al., 2006) as well as the richness of the data collected. Classical singing is a female-dominated profession; more women than men inquired about participating in this study. The participants included five men and six women. Gender was assumed by the researcher based on presentation; participants were not asked to identify their gender own identity or their pronouns, a regrettable oversight. To aid in preserving anonymity, no specific data about participants' exact age, or history was collected, although participants' histories were often deeply explored in the interview. Participants self-identified as fitting the limitations of the study's criteria. Through semi-structured interviews, some information was disclosed about degrees obtained and current employment. This information is listed below.

Table 2: Participant Information

Pseudonym	Highest Degree Obtained	Current Employment
John	<i>Master of Music</i>	<i>Server</i>
Sabrina Sterczer	<i>Master of Music</i>	<i>Voice teacher, performer</i>
Katy Lane	<i>Master of Music</i>	<i>Voice teacher, server</i>
Jessica	<i>Master of Music Education</i>	<i>PhD student</i>
Larry	<i>Bachelor of Music</i>	<i>Masters student</i>
Dorian	<i>Doctor of Musical Arts</i>	<i>Voice professor</i>
Diana	<i>Masters of Music Therapy</i>	<i>Music therapist</i>
Southpaw	<i>Master of Music</i>	<i>Performer</i>
Blueberry	<i>Bachelor of Music</i>	<i>Voice teacher</i>
Bruce	<i>Bachelor of Music</i>	<i>Masters student</i>
Catherine	<i>Master of Music</i>	<i>Voice teacher, performer</i>

3.9 Materials

This study used semi-structured interviews to explore participants' experiences, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, actions, and reactions regarding their voices. The interview schedule (see Appendix I) was developed partially from questionnaires in body image studies, particularly Wood-Barcalow et al. (2010). The interviews were kept confidential and anonymous.

Interviews were conducted in person or using video chat platforms. All interviews were audio recorded. Coding was completed by hand and entered into an electronic spreadsheet. No coding-specific software was used.

3.10 Procedure

Participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. Personal contacts were recruited, the study was posted on my personal Facebook account, I encouraged friends to share the study poster with colleagues, and the study was posted on the National Association of Teachers of Singing web page for surveys and research. This resulted in an incredible influx of interest by potential participants. Over 40 individuals contacted me about the study within the first three days of posting. From this positive response, 11 individuals were interviewed. These 11 individuals were selected based on promptness of response. I also tried to interview roughly even numbers of men and women. Time constraints were an additional factor to limiting the number of interviews conducted. The thick, rich data collected in these 11 interviews provided enough data to reasonably saturate the thematic analysis.

Each interview lasted between 60-120 minutes. The interviews were conducted in-person or via a video chat platform. This was done to enable me to use body language and visual cues to encourage trust and build rapport between myself and the interviewees, many of whom were meeting me for the first time. It also provided me with body language and other visual cues which affected my interpretation of participants' implied meanings. I felt that part of collecting thick, rich data included visual cues, and that they would be an important part of making meaning from participants' interviews.

Once data was collected, I began Braun and Clarke's six-step process: Data familiarization and writing familiarization notes, systematic data coding, generating initial themes from coded and collated data, developing and reviewing themes, refining, defining and naming themes, and writing the report (2006). These steps are non-linear, particularly in the theme generation, refining, and naming phases. The transcription, coding, and theme generation took me the better part of two years.

I coded the first interview and consulted with my co-supervisors for guidance and reassurance. As a neophyte researcher, I took care to have my co-supervisors monitor my work for quality. Once the first interview had been reviewed with them, I transcribed and coded several more. After each interview I took time to enter codes into the spreadsheet and write memos regarding my thoughts, feelings, and reactions to each interview and the coding process.

Interviews were transcribed manually by me using InqScribe software. Transcribing the interviews aided in my familiarity with the data. I transcribed non-verbal cues such as long

pauses, laughter, and gestures when used in the place of words (e.g., pointing at the throat instead of verbally referring to it). For clarity, I did not transcribe many filler words (e.g., “like,” “um,” “you know”) and fragments of repeated sentences when the repeat was not deemed an important aspect of the idea being communicated (i.e., the repeat was not for emphasis). Each transcript underwent initial transcription, and then a second review of the transcript while listening to the recording to ensure quality and accuracy.

During the second review, I also took notes and further familiarized myself with the data. This second review often generated overarching ideas about important subjects that had come up in the interview. It also gave me a chance to reflect on first-glance similarities across interviews and make initial memos of these ideas. This coincides with Braun and Clarke’s “data familiarization” stage.

The interviews were coded by hand and subsequently entered into a spreadsheet. This spreadsheet tracked codes and the number of occurrences across interviews and within each individual interview. I frequently reviewed codes to collapse similar codes into one another throughout the research process (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Gibbs, 2018). This is the second stage of “systematic data coding” (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Codes were generated using several techniques. General coding categories such as emotions expressed, beliefs, actions, and reactions were identified. Emotions expressed by participants were coded, as were beliefs, actions, and reactions about their voice, other people’s voices, or general singing culture. One factor in deciding the importance of a code was based on frequency across interviews. Although some topics were discussed across interviews,

not all of them were considered important (e.g. many participants discussed moving to another city, but that was deemed unimportant for research). If a code was mentioned many times in only one interview and then never again in other interviews, it was not deemed “important.” Although the code appeared many times, it was only by one person who emphasized that topic.

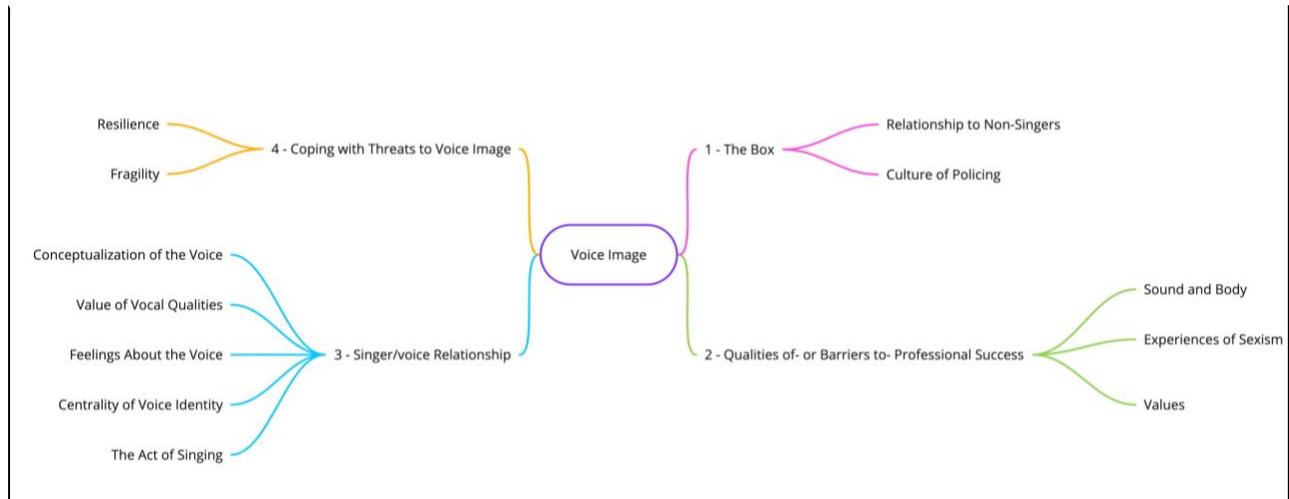
Phases three, four, and five (generating initial themes from coded and collated data, developing and reviewing themes, refining, defining, and naming themes) were iterative. I began to group codes together under themes which seemed to describe them. Themes were developed from codes which seemed important to me, and which occurred more than twice between interviews (see Appendix II for number of occurrences of each theme across interviews). Using Miro’s mind mapping software, I uploaded all my themes and thoughtfully considered ways to organize them. I was guided by the number of occurrences of a code or theme within the interviews, but also by my own assessment of what seemed important. I trusted that my background in singing, training in research, creativity, and curiosity would allow me to construct themes and their relationships which others would find convincing and compelling.

4 Results

I developed themes from the interviews that were guided by the following questions:

- What are the voice self-perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (or voice image) of classically trained singers' between the ages of 22 and 35?
- What are the domains of voice image?
- How is this voice image formed?
- How does voice image evolve?
- Why does voice image matter?

These themes were organized into a mind map using the software Miro. Figure 3 below shows a simplified version of the mind map. The complete mind map can be viewed in Appendix III. The Themes which I identified included: The Box, Qualities of- or Barriers to- Professional Success, Singer/voice Relationship, and Coping with Threats to Voice Image. In the following sections, I define and describe the four major themes as well as their sub-themes.

Figure 4: Simplified Mind Map

Using quotes from participants to support each theme and subtheme, this study begins to name and reveal voice image as a multifaceted, extremely complex construct.

Some of the concepts identified are multifaceted and appear in more than one theme. Repeated discussion of concepts explores them from a variety of angles. An example is the subtheme of *fach identity*. This sub-theme was relevant for two core themes: The Box, and Qualities of and Barriers to Success. In The Box, the discussion of *fach identity* centers around the social impact of *fach identity*. In Qualities of and Barriers to Success, *fach identity* is seen from the angle of value in the professional realm.

4.1 Theme 1: The Box

Table 3: Theme 1 The Box

<p>The Box: how singers are affected by, and relate to, other singers and non-singers through cultural norms, stereotypes, and power structures.</p>			
Theme	Subtheme	Definition	Sample quote
<p>1.1 Stereotypes, cultural expectations, and the freedom of non-singers</p>			
	Singer stereotypes	Stereotypes about being a singer create a box that singers either accept and perpetuate or reject.	“I’m a singer but I’m not one of those singers. I’m smart, I promise!” - Blueberry
	Classic karaoke problem	Singers feel pressure from non-singers to perform or sound a certain way because they’re supposed to be “better” than other people at singing. This pressure creates a box of performance expectations.	“There’s an expectation and there’s a societal expectation that if you are a professional you will sound a certain way.” - Jessica
	Non-singers don’t understand	Non-singers don’t understand what it’s like to be a singer. Singers create a box for themselves to be separate from non-singers.	“It’s hard for me to relate to non-singers because you feel like you’re talking at them” - Sabrina

	Emasculation	Being a singer is emasculating. This creates a box about gender and singing and who is allowed to do singing.	"I think the expectation is that if you're gonna be a male singer you are somehow less masculine." - John
	Non-singer freedom	Singers sometimes feel restrained in their singer-box and envy the perceived freedom of non-singers.	"Yes, I think it would be... it's sometimes much easier [to not be a singer], I think. Not always having the voice around all the time." - Bruce
1.2 Culture of policing: maintaining power structures within singer sub-culture			
	Community of singers or Alt-Singer	Singers create a sub-culture box of who is "in". Some singers reject that box and others embrace it. But you have to act and be a certain way to be allowed into the box of the singer sub-culture.	"So I feel lonely, here anyways. Because I don't have other people that I can commiserate with, I guess. About what it's like to be loud all of the time [...] always having to think about your vocal resonance when you are speaking." - Sabrina
	Inter-singer comparison	Singers frequently compare themselves to one another. Through values of elitism and perfectionism, the box of cultural norms and expectations is upheld or dismantled.	"When I started to learn there were other possibilities [as far as what ideal voices could sound like], that was when I could finally accept myself." Dorian

The Box describes how singers are affected by cultural norms, stereotypes, and power structures. It describes how singers' attitudes towards non-singers as well as fellow singers create a cultural box into which they must fit to be accepted. Stereotypes about singers which are held amongst singers, the music community at large, and non-musicians create this Box. The Box serves to maintain power structures and the status quo of those power structures. This theme also describes how singers are affected by cultural norms both through singer sub-culture and larger cultural beliefs and ideas about the role of singing and what it means to be a singer.

The Box is a complex theme, but necessarily so. The term was initially taken from Katy Lane's interview. In subsequent interviews, two other participants used the same term. Katy struggled throughout her music degrees because teachers could not determine her *fach*. She described this experience as causing a lot of anguish regarding her identity as a singer. When she first used the term "the box" it was while describing an impactful experience in which she was encouraged to not worry about her *fach*, but to simply sing and express herself. She says,

My coaches had said, "You don't have to worry about the singing anymore, your singing technique is fine, you just let that go on autopilot and now it's very text-based". [...] and it felt *good* [...] it was an interesting, refreshing way to remind myself oh, yes, I do still like singing and maybe it doesn't need to be this... fit everybody into a box sort of thing.

The Box was a term used also by Catherine. She expressed gratitude that her teachers hadn't pushed her into a box, but then later expressed that she'd always felt pushed into the box of being a coloratura. Blueberry resisted efforts from others to put her into a box,

One of the first serious comments I got about my singing voice was that I was a Mozart voice and being a fifteen-year-old I was like, what's that supposed to mean? [laughs]

And I was kind of like, thanks, but also don't put me in a box.

Larry described it as a stencil "Everyone wants to fit a stencil." and Bruce said, "There's something comforting about a label, and just knowing what you are, knowing who and what you are. And so, instead of just being "Bruce", okay, it's "Bruce, he's a light lyric tenor".

Interestingly, all participants discussed The Box either directly or elements of it, such as perfectionism, comparison, elitist attitudes, *fach* change, *fach* envy, belittling other *fächer*, or the satisfaction of being in-demand

Sub-themes of The Box are Relationship to Non-Singers and Culture of Policing. These sub-themes explore ideas around social belonging, either as a singer or, more broadly, a musician or artist. Relationship to Non-Singers describes participants' interactions and views towards non-singers. Singers that I interviewed created boxes for themselves and felt that non-singers expected them to fit boxes created by the non-singers, particularly around a "diva lifestyle" and performance expectations. Culture of Policing describes the relationship participants had towards other singers. Singers created a singer sub-culture box with its own "in" groups and "out" groups. This concept of "in" and "out" groups mirrors Jordan's (2010) findings regarding an individual's identity as a singer and/or musician. Singers also compared themselves to one another through the lenses of elitism. This was particularly expressed through the perceived value of various *fächer* and perfectionistic standards within the community.

4.1.1 1.1 Stereotypes, cultural expectations, and the freedom of non-singers

Participants' attitudes toward non-singers were complicated and interesting. In addition to strengthening singer identity by a "they don't understand us" mentality, it also contributed to a sense of loneliness and isolation. Singers felt an expectation from non-singer friends to act or sound a certain way. This was particularly noticed at karaoke nights or other performance contexts. Some participants felt misunderstood and belittled by instrumentalists, particularly regarding musicianship skills. There were also cultural aspects around masculinity and singing. Lastly, singers sometimes envied non-singers' "freedom" to not think about and constantly monitor their voices and bodies.

Singer Stereotypes. When asked about singer stereotypes, participants agreed on a general image. Singers are stereotyped as stupid, dramatic, hypochondriacal, and inept. While some participants rejected these stereotypes outright, others felt that these stereotypes had a kernel of truth. Stereotypes about arrogant tenors encouraged Larry to specifically act opposite to that attitude,

Knowing about these stereotypes has been a motivator to stay as humble as I possibly can at all times and to be really supportive of my peers just because the last thing I want is to have a reputation that I'm cocky or I think that I'm better than anyone else.

Stereotypes around singers' lack of intelligence caused Blueberry to focus on musicianship skills to "buck the stereotype". Despite this effort, she still found that instrumentalists did not expect her to keep up with their "shop talk". Blueberry felt she had to prove to them that she truly was a competent musician. She said, "I'm a singer but I'm not one of *those* singers. I'm smart, I promise!"

Some participants believed that stereotypes around singers had a kernel of truth. John thought that a "diva" attitude among singers was necessary to protect their voices and create armor to deflect rejection and hurtful stereotypes. Sabrina said,

I mean, there's the whole thing that sopranos are ditzy. But guess what? If you have to sing that many Bs and Cs in a row your brain's not gonna work very well, either! Honestly, it comes down to science. The frequency that is going through your head is going to... it really is scientific, but you know they say that they're ditzy, that they can't read music.

On the same subject of ditzy sopranos, Catherine said,

If they wanna see me as the ditzy blonde they can go right ahead, but if they spent any time getting to know me they would go "Wow! She's a business owner who runs her own teaching business! And is an opera singer on the side and actually is super intellectual, pays her own bills, and has it together in many capacities in her life, way to go!"

Stereotypes influenced singers' thoughts about themselves and their interactions with other musicians and non-musicians.

The Classic Karaoke Problem. Singers felt pressure to act and sound a certain way around non-singers. Diana hilariously called this "The Classic Karaoke Problem" and I used the term to describe the sub-theme. She said,

I also feel a lot of pressure because I'm often around people who are less trained than me. So it's like the classic karaoke thing of, like, you're the classically trained vocalist at karaoke [...] There's these weird anxieties of, like, I'm supposed to be good, but, like, I *am* good. But, like, you know [exhales] [...] There's always, like, "Do they think I should be better, do they think..." They listen to you with different ears. And I don't like it [laughs].

Singers felt that in performance situations of any kind, as well as everyday interactions, they had to perpetuate others' ideas about how trained singers should sound, act, and exist in the world. I think that this concept of seeing others as an audience even when in a non-performance situation is fascinating.

Non-singers don't understand. In addition to this pressure to perform, participants also had a sense that non-singers just didn't "get" what it's like to be a singer. At the time of the interview, Sabrina was living in an area relatively isolated from other singers. She expressed a sense of feeling misunderstood by non-singers and a desire to be with other singers. Sabrina said,

So I feel lonely here anyways. Because I don't have other people that I can commiserate with, I guess. About what it's like to be loud all of the time [...] always having to think about your vocal resonance when you are speaking.

John simply said, "I feel that people don't really understand us [singers]."

Participants felt that non-singers couldn't understand what it is like to be a singer. I think this encouraged an "us vs them" mentality. It also fostered feelings of alienation from friends and family who do not understand what it's like to be a singer. In addition, I think the feeling of being misunderstood perpetuated singers' perfectionistic tendencies and the need to appear flawless before others, whether fellow singers, employers, or friends and family.

Emasculation. Another aspect of participants' relationships to non-singers centered around societal expectations of gender and singing. All the male participants described feeling that singing was emasculating. Some participants acknowledged this as internalized toxic masculinity. Other participants felt these messages were received from the culture at large and they worked to reject them. John said, "I think the expectation is that if you're gonna be a male singer you are somehow less masculine." This idea surprised me because within singing culture men receive so much encouragement, praise, and privilege just for being men. I had not considered that even after deciding to become singers, men might still feel emasculated in some way.

In these interviews, I perceived that men had a fear of judgement from others because they had chosen singing as an instrument or career. A particularly poignant example of this is

that John and Bruce separately described a time where they had lied about what instrument they were studying in school. They didn't have a clear answer as to why they had lied, but mostly it was to avoid judgement, further questioning, and, I think, a fear of violence.

Non-singer freedom. Singers envied non-singers' freedom to not think about their voices. Constant monitoring of vocal health weighed on participants. Catherine said, "I also think that there is a little bit of a burden carrying around your instrument with you in the day-to-day." When asked if he ever wished he were not a singer, Bruce said, "Yes, I think it would be... sometimes much easier I think. Not always having the voice around all the time."

The burden of vocal monitoring, of having the body as the instrument, was a source of stress and anxiety in singers. The lack of freedom made singers feel that they were trapped in a space they did not want to be in. They envied those who were not constrained by the care of the voice. In voice image, this would lead a singer to see their voice as a burden, as something that constrains them in uncomfortable ways, as something to be escaped.

4.1.2 1.2 Culture of policing.

Community of Singers or Alt-Singer. The term *alt-singer* is quoted directly from Blueberry's interview, she said "I was definitely an alt-singer. I didn't really fit in with the other singers cause they were kinda bitchy and judgmental, so I mostly I hung out with the instrumentalists." Her statement struck me because it was a term I had never heard before, yet one I immediately related to as a singer. Alt-singers would reject the boxes created for them by the singer sub-culture. An alt-singer would reject stereotypes and embrace their opposites –

although maybe not in all circumstances. The term alt-singer reminded me of the well-worn, misogynistic phrase “I’m not like other girls.” In this case, for Blueberry, the term alt-singer meant not being bitchy and judgmental like the singers at her school. This identity as “other” fits in well with Jordan’s (2010) study about identity as a singer or musician. Because singers are often associated with negative stereotypes around personality (i.e. bitchy and judgmental, or incompetent musicians), this negative stereotype encourages singers to reject their singer identity in favour of more positively seen in-groups, such as identifying as musicians generally instead of as singers specifically (Jordan, 2010, p. 76).

Other participants mentioned this sense of not belonging to other singers. For Sabrina, this sense of non-belonging sprang from being a dramatic voice type. Dramatic *fächer*, such as dramatic sopranos, are a relatively rare voice type. Sabrina expressed that this rarity made her feel as though her experiences of voice type and training did not fit in with the experiences of her peers at school. She said, “I don't know if our world is trained to hear, our present world, is trained to hear what a dramatic voice is like and then next what to do with them.”

Although having a rarer voice type had significant social and professional advantages, developing that rarer voice type had difficulties of its own. Sabrina struggled to find a knowledgeable teacher who could help her develop her voice appropriately. She also struggled with thinking she had an ugly voice and said that she had felt jealous of lighter-voiced singers in the past. To Sabrina, it seemed that lighter-voiced peers had beautiful voices and their training and identity with their voice type came easily and naturally. I believe

that Sabrina's struggles to find a teacher and to identify her voice type caused her to feel isolated because other singers with more common voice types could not relate to her struggles. I believe these experiences and beliefs contributed to an alt-singer identity.

In contrast to this idea of non-conformity, many singers expressed positive associations when hanging out with fellow singers. All participants expressed positive associations with singers from a young age. These positive associations were through family (Jessica, Dorian, Sabrina, Diana, Catherine, Southpaw), choral involvement (Jessica, Bruce, Dorian, Blueberry, Diana), or high-school musical theatre involvement (Larry, Dorian, John, Katy Lane). Reflecting the general trajectory of participants' voice images, this association appears to be positive early on. However, it becomes increasingly complicated emotionally and regarding their singer identity as they journey through undergrad and into the working world. Although early associations are overwhelmingly positive, singers receive more mixed emotional messaging about their singing and identities as singers after they enter university. This comes in the form of teacher criticism and feedback, competition with fellow singers, and introduction to and participation in singer sub-culture.

The relationship to a community of singers brought both comfort and loneliness when a community of singers could not be accessed. Sabrina discussed feeling lonely and misunderstood without a community of singers around her. Southpaw describes a feeling of camaraderie with his fellow choristers. John enjoyed hanging out with other singers, "Crazy singers are fun!" When asked what her voice provided her, Jessica said "A way of being with other people." Identifying as a singer and accessing spaces for singers helped participants feel a

sense of belonging and community that was generally positive. Singer community provided Jessica a refuge through difficult high school years. Identifying as part of the singing community helped participants through difficult times, and a sense of identity and belonging.

Inter-singer Comparison. This theme involves elements of inter-singer comparison, elitist ideas around classical singing and musical theatre held by teachers and students alike, and an expectation of perfection from the singer and others.

Participants often compared themselves to other singers in overt and covert ways. Although they did not always compare themselves to other singers in every context, when comparison occurred, it was detrimental to the participant. Because he often experienced vocal fatigue, John referred to his voice as “wimpy.” Because a big identifier for her voice was “loud,” Sabrina called her voice “strong” and was surprised at times when it was not strong or when she discovered that her voice could also be soft. These judgements about the voice were formed in comparison to others’ voices. John felt his voice was weak or wimpy because he believed he experienced more vocal fatigue than his peers. Sabrina identified her voice as strong because she was louder in comparison to her colleagues and peers.

This culture of constant comparison caused fragmentation of the sense of community. When singers were able to look past comparing themselves to others, they were able to find a generous and welcoming community of like-minded fellow singers. John said,

As much as singers can drive me nuts I love them [both laugh]. I love them so much, like, they're the most fun, right? Like, it's just fun. You know, when you can get away from yourself and you can, sort of, not care as much about where you are at in terms of your development versus another person. Then it's just fun [laughs].

Elitism also impacted singers' view of their social and moral standing as singers. This was particularly expressed toward singing musical theatre or being a musical theatre singer. Larry stated, "I really love doing musicals and stuff. And I basically dropped that like a bad habit, because it's like, what it was made out to be." This sentiment was echoed by John and Katy Lane. Southpaw mentioned another source of elitism. He seemed to assume general agreement that being a soloist is considered preferable to being a chorister. In Southpaw's experience, he had to learn to accept his career path as a chorister as the right choice for him and recognize it as something valuable despite what the larger singing culture believed. Singers felt that they had to adhere to an identifiable and rigid hierarchy of vocal value within singing. Those who could not, or chose not to, be performers struggled in a way that those who did pursue performing did not.

Aspects of perfectionism came up with ten of the eleven participants. They wrestled with cultural and personal expectations of perfection, which crushed their expression, incited mental breakdowns, and, in one case, caused them to de-identify as a singer. Jessica said:

I think that a lot of my anxiety about my voice has come from these stereotypes of, there is a perfect sound, there is a way that one should sound as a classical singer and this is why I don't define myself as a classical singer anymore.

Katy Lane, who was trained classically, performed as a musical theatre singer, and then decided to pursue a non-music career, said, “It was a constant feeling of never good enough, like, wow I’m going into another lesson where, oh yeah, here’s *another* thing I’m doing wrong.”

The expectations of perfection stem from expectations of what voices ought to sound like. As Jessica said, there is an idea of what voices should sound like, and singers are constantly being compared to that ideal, even if it is unattainable. Singers are often unable to measure up to that vocal ideal, and some find the burden of perfectionism crippling.

Another important aspect of the Culture of Policing was how singers related to others with the same *fach* or different *fächer*. Several singers described undergoing one or more *fach* changes. Although *fach* change is common and normal, some singers experienced anxiety and angst around their experiences of *fach* change. I noticed interesting comparisons and jealousy or condescension towards other *fächer*. Singers gave conflicting answers about contentment with their own voices. Many held both an appreciation for their own voice type and envied or desired to experience voice types vastly different from their own (e.g. a female soubrette wishing she could be a lyric baritone). For some singers, this represented a desire to have a voice type that was easier to achieve success. For others, it simply represented the desire to have the ability to create a sound they loved hearing others make.

Summary

The Box represents the ways in which singers are affected and relate to other singers and non-singers through cultural norms, stereotypes, and power structures. The two sub-

themes, Culture of Policing and Relationship to Non-Singers show the varying ways singers adhere to or reject these norms as they relate to non-singers and the singer sub-culture. These stereotypes and norms impact how singers view their voices and themselves. Cultural norms inform how singers act and interact with others.

For singers like Blueberry, rejecting singer sub-culture was a way to be taken seriously as a musician and avoid a perceived “mean girl” culture that existed among the singers at her school. For other participants, like Sabrina, embracing a singer identity and the stereotypes involved provided a sense of belonging. Despite this affiliation and affection for singer identity and the sub-culture, Sabrina’s unique experiences around her rare *fach* caused her to feel alienated from other singers at times.

Singers see their voices as fitting in with or standing out from narratives around the value of *fach*, gender stereotypes, and expectations of what a trained classical singer will sound like in casual settings, such as a karaoke night with friends. Simply becoming aware of the norms of singer sub-cultures is enough to cause shifts and changes to voice image, which are of course informed by other aspects of identity not related to singing. Layers of identity and meaning are added to their voice image through The Box and all it represents.

4.2 Theme 2: Qualities of- or Barriers to- Professional Success

Table 4: Theme 2 Qualities of- or Barriers to- Success

Qualities of- and Barriers to- Professional Success: Aspects of singers' experiences that contribute to success or failure professionally or at school			
Theme	Subtheme	Definition	Sample Quote
2.1 Sound and body: The ways in which sound and body affect potential for success			
	<i>Fach</i> Identity	The role of voice type in professional success.	"I've always really thought of myself as a baritone. So there's a lot of psychological comfort. I was never quite comfortable with the idea of switching to tenor." Dorian,
	Appearance Matters	The role of appearance in professional success.	"For example, I am a dramatic soprano and I'm tall, white, and have blonde hair. Literally, I fit the stereotype of what they're looking for." Sabrina
	Health	The role of health in professional success.	"Honestly, I just believe that sometimes you need to take time, you need to listen to your body, there isn't anything else we can do and that's one of the flaws of being a professional voice user, is that even though it is such a

			wonderful profession and it gives back so much and it's so great to be in the arts, you know, you will have to take time, and if you don't your body's gonna show you that you didn't." Catherine
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2.2 Experiences of Sexism and Sexist Attitudes: The ways in which gender impacts the potential for success

	Easier for Men	Fewer men in classical singing makes it easier for them to succeed professionally.	"It's easier for men to succeed in this profession because, generally speaking, there are few of us who enter it." Dorian
	Fungibility of Women	There are many women in classical singing, making it difficult for an individual to succeed professionally.	"If you're just an ingenue-type soprano, you're like the bottom of the barrel soprano." Blueberry
	Women's Appearance and Body	Women's appearance and body type influences their professional success.	"[My teacher] was really focused on my body. Like, she thought I was too skinny. She told me that my body was distracting from my face and I needed to gain ten pounds, or I needed to wear clothes that made me look larger until I did so. [...] Literally this is burned into my brain is that, like [my teacher said to me] "Your

			body is distracting from your face”.” Diana
2.3 Values: The ways in which personal values impact professional success			
	Commitment	An individual’s commitment to professional singing influences professional success.	“Any time you’re making an excuse as a singer you’re not really believing in what you’re doing. You’re always trying to put a cushion there for rejection, right?” Sabrina
	Hard Work Doesn’t Pay Off	There are aspects of professional success outside the individual’s control.	“I felt like I was doing really good work. I was getting callbacks, I was booking a few things but they weren’t paying very well [...] I was making people cry in auditions from how good stuff was. So I started to get frustrated with that challenge of like, it’s because I’m not tall enough, or thin enough, or tan enough, or whatever it was.” Katy Lane
	Resources	Financial stability and instability, relationship difficulties, as well as the desire to have a family influence professional success.	“You can book a pretty well-known theatre here and get paid maybe two hundred bucks for ten weeks of work. I can’t afford that, I just can’t do it anymore. I think that people can keep doing that if they have a lot of access to money, that just wasn’t my case.” Katy Lane

This sub-theme describes concerns about succeeding or failing as a singer either professionally or in school. It explores the qualities that singers believe are necessary for success or contribute to failure. Qualities in vocal sound and qualities of the body and appearance were perceived to greatly influence the likelihood of success. All participants described experiences of sexism and sexist attitudes. Gender was a major factor in success, with men receiving significant advantages. Participants' values and the presence and importance of other life goals such as having children or purchasing a home also contributed. The sub-themes of Qualities and Barriers to Success are: Sound and Body, Experiences of Sexism, and Values and Personality.

4.2.1 2.1 Sound and body

Fach identity. *Fach* identity is an essential component to success in classical singing. Opera singers are generally expected to adhere to the *fach* system and the repertoire they choose indicates their *fach*. *Fach* is assigned based many characteristics such as vocal range, vocal weight, and rate of vibrato. While *fach* identities can change throughout a singer's life, many singers identify strongly with their particular *fach*. One of my participants had a tattoo of a former *fach*. *Fach* identity is necessary for auditioning and marketing purposes. A singer's *fach* indicates what operatic roles they sing best. Once colleagues have chosen a *fach* those left unassigned may feel insecure about their voices. Bruce described a fear of being without a *fach* identity:

It's comforting in knowing who you are, but then also, you want to, kind of, stand out, to have something to say, not just be another line of many music students that have no idea what their voice is, and are just gonna go somewhere else or something like that.

Rarity of *fach* was acknowledged as an advantage, and all participants who were currently pursuing performance opportunities sought to identify an aspect of their singing that was considered unique. *Fach* and other tonal qualities were ways in which singers perceived their voices to be rare or special. Rarity was particularly important to participants when asked to describe the hierarchy they identified among voice types. All participants acknowledged the existence of a hierarchy, not intrinsically, but culturally and professionally. Interestingly, the perceived order of the hierarchy was quite different across participants. Tenors, countertenors, and male voices were most often at the top, with mezzo, contralto, coloratura soprano voices near the top or middle, and lyric soprano voices usually at the bottom.

Participants who identified as tenors – John, Larry, and Bruce – acknowledged themselves as rare voice types and placed their voice type at the top or near the top of the hierarchy. All three discussed how being a tenor afforded them opportunities for performance or recognition amongst teachers and colleagues which other voice types (notably female voice types) did not receive. The rarity of their voice type was a source of pride and a major element that contributed to their success. Lack of success for other singers was sometimes connected to having a more common voice type, or a supply-and-demand model. Bruce, the tenor and master's student, said, "I've experienced and seen where they've been a little bit more

protective of the tenors because we need them to stay. Or the sopranos, it's okay, they're a dime a dozen."

Notably, only male participants discussed struggling with stagnation and complacency. As Bruce stated, "It allows me to maybe be a little too comfortable with my voice thinking, Oh, that's okay. I'll always have a job." This stagnation and complacency were echoed by Dorian, Southpaw, and Larry. For Dorian and Larry, stagnation or perceived complacency was the result of several months' where singing wasn't required for their job or schoolwork. For Southpaw, stagnation came with job security and a sense of adequacy without needing to excel.

Appearance Matters. Another contributing factor to success or failure as a professional singers is appearance. Body type and voice type are expected to adhere to certain expectations as dictated by cultural standards within opera. Participants identified stereotypes around *fach* and physical appearance. Female participants identified very specific appearance-related requirements including but not limited to: height, weight, age, and hair colour. Meeting these requirements was perceived as an essential aspect of success in singing.

Catherine, a coloratura, took steps to maintain an appearance in keeping with her *fach*. According to Catherine, the expected appearance for a coloratura soprano was slim, petite, and blonde. Catherine mentioned a teacher telling her "The blonde suits your *fach*", and while she would have preferred a different hair colour, she continued to dye her hair blonde as a professional requirement. She compared the physical requirements to other jobs "It's like having the requirements for a certain job, or, meeting those requirements."

Catherine and Diana mentioned acquaintances whose physical appearance did not match their voice type, and who had experienced struggles professionally as a result. Diana's story was particularly poignant. She described a fellow student in tears because she'd recently undergone a *fach* re-classification from soprano to mezzo. This colleague was reduced to tears because her body type did not match her new voice type.

Sabrina, a dramatic soprano, said, "I am a dramatic soprano and I'm tall, white, and have blonde hair. Literally, I fit the stereotype of what they're looking for." Matching the visual stereotype of one's *fach* was considered an advantage and contributing factor to success. Katy Lane, who had identified as a soubrette in the past, described that her voice type frequently plays the role of the witty maid in operas. Traditionally, the role of the maid in operas is portrayed by younger women. Katy Lane received the comment "No one is going to want to see a 35-year-old chambermaid." The mismatch of appearance and voice type was perceived to be a significant barrier to professional success.

Male participants' discussion of voice type and success did not include appearance-related requirements. Appearance-related issues were linked to masculinity/emasculatation rather than an advantage or deficiency for success in singing. While discussing vocal health and general physical health, Larry mentioned "Body image was a thing, as a performer." He didn't elaborate, and I believe he was referring to pressure on singers generally to be fit and to adhere to societal standards of beauty to be considered hireable.

Health. Physical health was recognized as an important part of success in singing. The optics of illness was a source of great concern. Singers often felt that illness reflected on them

personally, that they were doing something wrong. This led to feelings of shame and concern about what others thought of them. Sabrina said, “If our voice doesn’t work properly our self-worth goes down so much, and it’s stupid.” Health was nearly always discussed with regards to its social and professional implications. Singers’ discussions of poor health centered around concerns that others, whether employers, colleagues, or fellow students, would perceive the ill-health as a personal failing or a professional failing.

While singers felt a strong responsibility to care for their physical health, their lived experiences showed how little control they actually had over the health of their voice. Despite constant vocal monitoring and efforts to promote good health, everyone becomes ill sometimes. Singers feared that a cold or bout of laryngitis would result in lost income and a reputation of unreliability. To prevent illness, singers did many things to preserve their health. Drinking specific teas, wearing scarves, keeping warm, drinking a lot of water, not going outside in bad weather, and taking supplements and homeopathic remedies were all mentioned. Singers who experienced an illness that affected their voice caused them to feel depressed and to have a generally low mood.

Any failure to maintain health was seen as a personal and professional failing. This feeling of doing something wrong was both an internal belief of personal failure and a sense that others were judging them. Singers recognized the absurdity of this belief but felt powerless to change the narrative. Bruce described feeling sometimes that singers who went on vocal rest were lazy or cheating. He reflected in our interview that, intellectually, he knew singers were not lazy or cheating, but he felt compelled to avoid being seen as “one of those

singers.” This belief resulted in avoidance of vocal rest when needed. Other participants did not mention perpetuating these ideas towards other singers. Failure to maintain vocal health was seen primarily as having done something wrong and therefore a professional and personal failing. This perceived wrongdoing by becoming sick was also seen to impact their employability. This idea caused feelings of shame and a deep fear of how illness might impact their careers or success at school.

Additionally, health issues were seen as a private matter and a taboo topic of discussion. Health was identified as a culturally taboo topic by several singers. Disclosing vocal health or long-term health struggles to other singers and colleagues was perceived to impact their career negatively, with singers being labelled lazy or unreliable. None felt empowered to take action and work to change that taboo. Fear of judgement from others influenced singers’ likelihood of disclosing vocal health struggles to other singers. Blueberry mentioned frequent illness causing her to feel that other singers were judging her. “She’s always having these vocal problems or she’s out being sick, she must be doing something wrong.” Catherine disclosed some non-singing health issues she had recently experienced. She was initially reluctant to share, even in an anonymous interview, because she feared that if word got out about her illness – even though it was largely under control by the time of our interview – employers might consider her unreliable.

The power of illness as taboo made singers feel isolated and alone when they struggled vocally. Jessica sought help from speech-language pathologists and Otorhinolaryngologists for a persistent vocal issue. She disclosed her illness to very few people. Telling

colleagues, superiors at work, or even her speech-language pathologist about her struggles felt like an admission. “It means that something’s wrong with you, you know?” Jessica struggled with imposter syndrome and a sense of fraudulence in her singing-related work. She did not discuss her vocal struggles with colleagues at work and was reluctant to sing in aspects of her graduate work that required singing. Jessica deeply feared judgement from others and that they would confirm her imposter syndrome. She said, “There are situations where I... worry that it will cost me something [to disclose vocal health issues].”

The concept of vocal illness reflecting negatively on the singers’ worth as a person and professional viability stems from primary identification as a singer (I.e. Being a singer is my primary identifier and other aspects of self are not as important or valuable). This leads to the theme Centrality of Voice Identity, which will be discussed later. Singers felt shame, feared judgement and the label of being unreliable, which might prevent them from being hired or re-hired.

4.2.2 2.2 Experiences of Sexism and Sexist Attitudes

Sexist attitudes, I.e. the privileging of men over women, was a significant point of discussion in the interviews. All participants acknowledged that men generally had an easier time achieving success in classical singing than women, particularly tenors. The reason for this was frequently acknowledged to be because fewer men enter classical singing as a profession and statistically there are more roles available for men in standard operatic repertoire (Varga, 2017) . Not only were men privileged, but women were disparaged and easily replaced. The

fungibility of women impacted women's views of their own voices and the potential for success in an extremely competitive environment.

Easier for men. All participants felt it was easier for men to find professional success. In general, men were described as "having it easier" than women in both professional and social aspects of singing. The rarity of men in the field created a scarcity mindset, in which men were perceived as irreplaceable and women as fungible. Female participants, particularly sopranos, described an overwhelmingly competitive workplace because of the large number of sopranos in the field. In contrast, men acknowledged that there were far fewer men than women in the field and that they benefitted from this relative scarcity. Dorian stated, "It's easier for men to succeed in this profession because, generally speaking, there are few of us who enter it."

Fewer men in classical singing spaces provided a workplace in which men were a highly valued commodity. Bruce, when discussing how stereotypes about voice types might affect him, said, "It allows me to maybe be a little too comfortable with my voice thinking, Oh, that's okay. I'll always have a job." Additionally, Bruce and I talked about his struggles to manage the large number of performance opportunities that came his way. Part of his development as a young artist involved learning to turn down performance offers to select those which interested and benefitted him most.

The tenors I interviewed (John, Larry, and Bruce) all discussed additional privilege for being a rare and sought-after voice type in classical singing. Katy Lane put it bluntly for singers in musical theatre, "Nobody cares about baritones and basses really anymore it's like all tenors,

all the time.” Although all men benefit greatly from their relative rarity in the singing workplace, even within male voice types, rarity matters in professional contexts.

Fungibility of Women. In contrast to Bruce’s experience, the women I interviewed described a fiercely competitive workplace requiring excellence in singing and meeting certain expectations around physical appearance. Women represent the majority of aspiring classical singers from a very young age and throughout their lives. This creates a highly competitive professional environment, one which harms women in a variety of ways. One example of this harm is the concept of women as fungible. Bruce put it poignantly, “I’ve experienced and seen where they’ve been a little bit more protective of the tenors because we need them to stay. Or the sopranos, it’s okay, they’re a dime a dozen.”

Women’s Sound and Body. Women also experienced a lot more body- and voice-related policing, shaming, and advice that related to their ability to succeed professionally. Blueberry said:

I was told, we were all told, you’ve been told, you know “you gotta wear hose, you gotta wear heels but not too tall, and also not coloured, and don’t wear black to an audition, but also don’t wear too many colours to an audition, also your dress has to be modest, also, like, you gotta have straps because you’re gonna be distracting otherwise.” And it’s like all this dumb BS that has nothing to do with our capabilities as singers.

Diana echoed the sentiment that body size matters, “I don't know how many times I heard the whole thing “You have to be able to fit into the dress of the person who wore it before you.” I believe she is referring to the concept that the person before you is your size or smaller. Garments can be taken in significantly but not let out significantly, and companies may be reluctant to build a new costume for a singer whose measurements mean they cannot fit into the previous singer’s costume. These messages were received from teachers, peers, and mentors. But dress was not the only issue female participants discussed. Body type and size mattered greatly (see also “appearance matters”). Diana had particularly traumatic experiences with a teacher who thought she was too thin and commented “Your body is distracting from your face.” She continued:

I really remember more of the things they said to me that really weren't about my voice [...] Like, it's about the shape of my eyes, or about the way I dress or about... like, how I say my name.

Women’s speaking voices were also the subject of discussion. Several people acknowledged that a lower speaking voice was perceived as more powerful (Diana, Catherine, Katy Lane, Southpaw). Southpaw acknowledged, “Where a man sounds bright and clear a woman sounds shrill. Where a man sounds authoritative a woman sounds bossy.” These judgements represent additional barriers to women achieving professional success in singing.

Voice image is inherently linked with gender identity. The men and women in this study were impacted by views of gender.

4.2.3 2.3 Values and Personality

This theme discusses aspects of values and personality that affect professional success. Participants talked about values surrounding commitment to the art as well as extra-musical values around the importance of resources such as financial security and the ability to support a family. The ability to cope with challenges and uncontrollable aspects of the career such as getting cast for roles, the market value of one's *fach*, and challenges to one's identity as a musician and singer greatly affect professional success.

Commitment. Commitment to singing was a commonly expressed value. This value was expressed in a variety of ways such as strategizing for self-care and developing regular practice routines (Larry, Dorian), to a renewed decision to take singing more seriously (Larry, Katy Lane), a decision to focus on choral rather than solo work (Southpaw), persevering in a career despite its interference in other life goals (Sabrina), and the realization that a love of singing is not the only thing necessary to be successful in a career in music (John). Each of these participants demonstrated that commitment is a necessary aspect of a singer's success, and that their decision to remain in singing is informed by a sense of commitment to the art. The more commitment singers to pursuing professional work, the more important and central their voice image may become.

I identified in some participants an even stronger aspect of commitment: a perception that it was necessary to persevere at all costs. Catherine, Sabrina, and Katy Lane all discussed their thoughts around a value they'd heard expressed by peers and mentors. This value was generally summed up in the follow way: "In order to succeed in music, you must want to do this

more than anything else. You can never give up. If there is anything else you think you might want to do, then do that. Music is difficult and you will never have the commitment or drive to succeed if you have a divided loyalty.” Each of these three women reacted differently to this idea. Sabrina felt encouraged by mentors and teachers whom she felt believed in her. She says, “It is not easy and it is not for the faint-hearted, at all *at all*. It is *hard hard hard*, and it will destroy you.” For Sabrina, this solidified her determination to persevere and succeed.

Conversely, Katy Lane felt overwhelmed and trapped by the same sentiment. She discussed feeling pressured to never give up, no matter what the cost may be to her personal life or mental health. This pressure to persevere caused her to assume poor mental health was simply part of being a singer. Eventually, she recognized this as an unhealthy view of the profession and decided that while others may be able to cope with music “destroying” them, she opted out of professional singing and pursued another career.

Catherine presented a middle ground on this concept. When a teacher told her “If there’s anything else you want to do, you should pursue that instead of music”, Catherine thought “There are a lot of other things I can do, but I wanna do this, you know?” This sense of choosing music with the knowledge that she could just have easily pursued other paths seemed to provide a sense of calm and balance. She never felt trapped in a music career, as Katy Lane did, but neither did she feel the drive to sacrifice and the sense of noble sacrifice that motivated Sabrina.

This concept of “persevering at all costs” seemed a more intense value than the general commitment to singing expressed by many of the participants. Those whose commitment to

success in singing was tempered by a commitment to other goals such as having a family or seeking financial stability seemed to have a well-balanced view of the role of their identity as a singer.

Hard work doesn't pay off. Participants struggled with feelings of helplessness when their hard work did not pay off. Despite their best efforts, participants still experienced failures. Many were able to acknowledge that the decision which determined success (e.g. being cast in a role) was outside their control but they still struggled with a sense of personal failure. Southpaw eloquently expressed his feelings when, after years of trying, he was unable to get work as a soloist, "That horrible feeling that I just wasted all of this time and effort trying to get to an unattainable place."

From a different perspective on the futility of hard work, Sabrina discussed the perils of being a rare voice type. She, and many others like her, struggled to find a teacher who could accurately identify and adequately nurture their students' voices,

The disadvantage is obviously that you have to wait a really long time, you have to fight the good fight to get there because[...] there are few dramatic sopranos[...] that are identified properly and nurtured properly at a young age.

While many participants internalized failure as personal inadequacy, even while acknowledging that their failure was out of their control, Blueberry took a different approach. She expressed a sort of complacency toward hard work. She gave two examples of performances. For one she worked very hard to prepare the best performance possible; for

another, she did little to prepare. She reported receiving the same exuberant feedback from audience members and colleagues. For the latter recital, some colleagues told her that they could see her hard work was paying off. Eventually, she took a cavalier approach to preparation, feeling that the audience could not accurately perceive the work she put into a performance.

Resources. Financial stability and instability, relationship difficulties, as well as the desire to have a family, greatly impacted singers' decision to pursue professional life, and their success within that career.

Katy Lane and Sabrina seemed to view having children as something that would negatively affect their professional goals, although both expressed a desire for children. Larry also said he would like to have children someday, but that he wanted to pursue singing first. He seemed to view having children as something that would limit his career. He said, "Do I really want [to have kids and settle down] right now? You know, I'm twenty-four, I wanna do cool stuff [laughs]."

Financial stability was also a major concern. For Katy Lane, the realization that life as a performer was unlikely to provide any financial stability, combined with the realization that this instability would prevent her from having a family, motivated her to seek a different career. She describes the career shift as very painful but knew it would foster other, more important goals. For Sabrina, financial instability was seen as part of the job. She decided to wait until she had an established career before having children (likely in her late 30s). Larry said that financial uncertainty was one of the most difficult parts of being a professional singer.

4.2.4 Summary.

Aspects of sound and body – health, *fach* identity, and appearance – impact singers' belief in their ability to achieve professional success. These aspects of sound and body all influence an individual's voice image. It is important for singers aspiring to professional careers that their voices and bodies be marketable. For them to be marketable they must match cultural expectations around *fach*, they must be reasonably healthy and cannot have a long-term or recurring illness that might interfere with their ability to perform. External messages about voice type, body type, and health as necessary components of success impacted the way participants viewed their own voices.

Financial resources, as well as relationship goals and difficulties also impacted singers' view of their voice. Satisfaction in achieving goals and dissatisfaction in feeling unable to achieve singing or non-singing goals were important to singers' satisfaction with their voices. When singers felt they were succeeding professionally, they felt happier with their voices. When singers were unable to pursue singing for financial reasons, or when they struggled with the financial instability of a professional singing career, it came back to the perception of the "goodness" of their voice. Some singers were able to rationalize these thoughts by acknowledging that many aspects of professional success were outside their control. Others found themselves overwhelmed and unhappy as they navigated the rejection, competition, financial investment, and appearance-related judgements inherent in the field of professional singing. Success in their career – landing a role, booking gigs, getting into a desired school – helped singers feel more positively about their voices. This positive feeling was precariously

predicated on many factors outside the singers' control, such as whether they were hired to perform a role.

These qualities and barriers to success all impacted participants' decision to continue pursuing a career in singing or to seek other work. But it also impacted their view of themselves. Whether they felt that they were "good enough" to realize the dream of being a singer. Those who decided to pursue other career paths struggled with the shift in their identity as a singer, often feeling like failures or copouts. When participants accepted that their value as singers and human beings lay outside of documentable professional success, they seemed to be more at peace with their identity. For those who continued to pursue professional singing, a strong determination was needed in the face of enormous criticism, rejection, and failure, difficult interpersonal relationships in the workplace, personal and family sacrifice.

4.3 3. Singer/voice Relationship

Table 5: Theme 3 Singer/voice Relationship

Singer/voice Relationship: the ways in which singers relate directly to their own voices			
Theme	Subtheme	Definition	Sample Quote
3.1 Conceptualization of the Voice: How participants express their relationship towards their voice.			
	Voice as person	Participants talk about the voice as if it were another person.	It's a marriage between the voice and the singer [...] I'm sure there are people that have divorced their voices. - Bruce

	Voice as object	Participants talking about the voice as if it were an object (e.g. a sweater, a pillow, a tool)	[Now she feels like] a sweater that's in the closet that I don't wear that often. And then I put her on and people are like "Wow!" - Blueberry
	Voice as part of self	Participants talking about the voice as part of themselves.	We talk about [the voice] as if it's a separate entity but it's not, it's a part of who we are, right? - John

3.2 The Act of Singing: How participants relate to the act of singing.

	Singing vs. Performing	Participants differentiating between singing and performing.	I identified as a singer, but I had a large struggle thinking of myself as a performer. - Diana
	Singing is fun	Participants talking about singing as fun and enjoyable.	It is this thing that anybody can do to feel good. - Katy Lane
	Singing is work	Participants talking about singing as work and a source of income.	"I feel like singing is work now. Singing is not always about fun. For me it's about, you know, working." Larry
	Communication	Participants talking about singing as a means of communication.	"It's my connection to people. It's the way that I engage with the world and it's my bridge into people's psyches, and my voice is pretty important to me. - Diana

3.3 Centrality of Voice Identity: The place of singer identity within participants' larger identity.

	Singing as Primary Identity	Participants talking about being so deeply identified with singing that it feels as if they <i>are</i> singing.	[responding to “Do you think of your voice as a different entity from yourself?”] No, unfortunately, they’re way too closely intertwined. I’ve always felt that my voice is me, which is to my detriment in many many ways. - Sabrina
	Threat to Singer Identity	Participants talking about threats to their identities as singers.	There were a couple auditions where they would just say “Yeah, you’re not the voice type we want. We think you’re way too light, we think you’re a tenor, we think you’re...” stuff like that, and it was just kind of an assault on my identity as it were. - Southpaw
	Diversify Identity	Participants diversifying their identities beyond being singers.	“People would always comment on how great my voice was, that was just kind of like, the compliment [...] it’s like, great, thanks, but are you seeing anything else that I’m doing cause I’m kind of wanting to focus on this other stuff.” - Katy Lane
3.4 Value of Vocal Qualities: Participants placing or perceiving the value of various vocal qualities in their own voices.			When I started to learn there were other possibilities [as far as what ideal voices could sound like], that was when I could finally accept myself. - Dorian
3.5 Feelings about the voice: How participants feel about their voices.			

	Pain	Painful feelings of discouragement, dejection, criticism, and trauma around their singing voices.	"I honestly don't know how I felt about my voice at that point in time. I've like, block a lot of that out." – Diana
	Joy	Feelings of joy around experiences of being validated, experiences of self-love, and taking pleasure in singing.	"What I like about my voice is it's the thing that brings me the most joy out of anything" – John

This third main theme discusses the ways in which singers relate directly to their own voices. Sub-themes are Relationship and Function, The Act of Singing, Centrality of Voice Identity, Value of Vocal Qualities, and Feelings about the voice. Relationship and Function illuminates ways in which singers have described their relationship toward their own voices and how their view of the function of their voice influences their thoughts about themselves and actions in the world. The Act of Singing describes the ways that singers perceive the act of singing and the meaning and significance of that action for them personally. Centrality of Voice Identity describes the role of the voice in a participants' conscious sense of self. Value of Vocal Qualities describes the personal value and significance of vocal qualities (this is discussed as separate from these values as they pertain to professional success, but these are highly interrelated). Finally, Feelings about the Voice describes how participants feel about their voices.

3.1 Conceptualization of the Voice.

Conceptualization of the Voice describes how people express their relationship towards their voice and how that affects their actions and beliefs. Many singers described their voices as objects, tools, places, and persons separate from themselves. These ways of describing the relationship between the self and the voice often indicated the quality of the relationship with the voice.

Voice as Object. The way singers objectified their voice, particularly their choice of the object, indicated how singers felt about their voices at that time. Participants who described the voice as a tool generally had a more distant, rational, or protective stance towards their voice. Participants who described the voice as home, a sweater, or a gift, used those terms when they felt good towards their voice or were repairing their relationship with their voice after traumatic experiences. Individuals who had experienced trauma around their experience of singing and their voice tended to have a story where they closely identified their voice and themselves, experienced the pain and trauma, and then pushed the voice away from themselves.

Voice as person. Participants also described their voice as if it were another person or entity with whom one could have a relationship. Katy Lane described the voice as a “friend and business partner”. Initially, she related to her voice as a friend, someone to comfort her during difficult high school years. As she entered university and the professional world, her voice became like a business partner. She had viewed the voice like someone that she had relied on to provide for her financially, but who hadn’t been able to stand up under the

strain. Blueberry said she felt at one point in her story like her voice was betraying her, as though it were capable of secret thoughts and plans and desires. Dorian described a point at which he felt like he couldn't trust his voice, as though it were a friend who had drifted away. Bruce suggested people could be married to or divorce their voices. Sabrina described it as a companion, as home, as a person in whom she could trust and find refuge.

John described his relationship with his voice, "I... had a really healthy, good relationship with my voice right through high school until university." And then during his university training, "I guess you would maybe classify our relationship at that point as on-again, off-again." He concluded with his current feelings towards his voice, "Me and my voice are really great friends at this point." This description of the shifting of his voice image was reflected in other participants' stories. These relationship-based statements emphasized that many singers think of their voices as separate from themselves.

Voice as part of self. These same singers also described their voices as an inherent part of themselves. Singers frequently mentioned separating the voice from themselves as a method of dealing with criticism, instruction, and trauma. In those cases, singers generally felt that separating themselves from their voices was a healthy act. In other situations, though, singers felt that it would be harmful or unhealthy to separate the voice from themselves. John says, "We talk about [the voice] as if it's a separate entity but it's not, it's a part of who we are, right?" Sabrina summed up this dichotomy between the voice as self and as other, "Our voice is us. We bring it on our journey every day through life." The voice is inherently part of the self

but also separate from the self. This complex relationship is impacted by singers' experiences with others and the coping skills they use as they encounter challenges to their voice image.

3.2 The Act of Singing.

Singers described and conceptualized the act of singing in several different ways. Singing was described as fun, as work, and an important aspect of communication.

Singing vs. Performing. Two singers, Diana and Katy Lane differentiated between singing and performing. I had not made this distinction myself and was intrigued by the possibilities of this conceptualization. Diana said, "I identified as a singer, but I had a large struggle thinking of myself as a performer." Many singers enter university with aspirations to become professional performers. The ability to perform well may be viewed as the pinnacle of musicianship. At a university level, entering the performance stream is a sign of advanced musicianship. Many universities require an audition after the first or second year of university. Entrance to the performance stream is at the discretion of jurors. Given that Diana was rejected from the much-coveted performance stream in her undergraduate, it is interesting how this distinction may have helped her cope with that rejection. Viewing her singer identity as separate from a performer identity was crucial to her navigation of this important rejection.

For Katy Lane, the distinction between singing and performing came at a time when she was deciding whether to seek help for an eating disorder. She said, "[T]he actual act of singing was never really affected by the eating disorder but the act of performing was." For Katy Lane, the identity as a singer and the identity as a performer were separate. For others, and certainly

for myself, they are the same. I was intrigued by this separation of performing and singing. Katy Lane had performed as a singer but had also acted in plays and other non-singing performance opportunities. I believe this encouraged the development of a singer identity as separate from a performing identity.

The distinction between performing and singing seemed to help these two women adjust to careers in non-performance fields while still maintaining their identity as singers. As Katy Lane left her performance career to pursue a non-music career, she was able to maintain her identity as a singer. For Diana, a separate singer identity likely developed after rejection from the performance degree path she had envisioned for herself. This separation of singing and performing enabled her to protect her voice image as she moved into a non-performance career as a music therapist.

Singing is fun. Singers also described the act of singing as fun. John said, "Our job is to play." Jessica found that after vocal injury and the difficulties with identity and singing which followed, "There are moments when I'll sing something and it'll feel good and, comfortable, you know, then I remember that I really like singing." Southpaw said, "Singing live I actually really enjoy it. I enjoy the sound of my voice while I'm singing. It's a very nice sensation, and I often really enjoy performing for an audience." And lastly, Blueberry stated, "When I'm singing well, I enjoy hearing the sound that comes back." This enjoyment of the act of singing was a delightful theme among singers.

Singing is work. Singers also described the act of singing in terms of work and income. When asked what their voice provided them, several participants' immediate response

was “income”. The ability to support themselves through singing brought feelings of satisfaction and legitimized their decision to pursue singing professionally. Alternatively, Blueberry said, “I wish that I hadn’t *only* been a singer because now it’s very difficult to find a job.” Those who attempted to make a living singing, or who had expected to be able to do that and then switched, found that they were ill-prepared for other work without pursuing further schooling or training in a separate field.

Singers found deep meaning in their singing-related work. Catherine said, “I love the idea of making a difference in people’s lives and I can do that through singing.” Southpaw made a similar statement, “I feel that my voice can be an instrument to help people understand emotions in a more full and complete way. And I think that’s important work.” Singing as meaningful work was deeply important to these and other participants. Using singing to help others connect with their emotions and share artistic insights. John put it poignantly, “Because ultimately we are making music, we are doing the thing that is the most beautiful that human beings do, I think.”

Communication. Importantly, singers described the act of singing as an exciting avenue for communication. Diana called it “Core human expression.” Singers recognized that the voice was an essential part of how they communicate, both in expressing themselves and in how that artistic expression is received by others. This causes the voice to be closely linked to singers’ identities. This contrasts interestingly with more dispassionate expressions of the voice as a tool. It was both a tool for communication and an essential part of the self and the way they were seen in the world.

3.3 Centrality of voice identity.

Participants' identities as singers often shifted throughout their lives. For many, it started as an identity core to their sense of self. As they entered university this identity came under threat through increased criticism and competition. Some singers were able to navigate this challenge to identity rather smoothly, learning resilience skills and incorporating helpful aspects of criticism and competition while rejecting unhelpful aspects. Jessica said, "[My voice] is a central and grounding part of my identity, whether I want it to be or not [...] It's inextricably connected to both my physical and mental, and my emotional health." This centrality of voice identity was seen as a necessary and inevitable part of being a singer. John said, "We talk about [the voice] as if it's a separate entity but it's not. It's a part of who we are, right?"

Being Singing. Two aspects of the centrality of voice identity were singers becoming solely focused on their identity as singers, so that it seemed as if the singer *was* singing, and singers who allowed for diversity in their identities. In discussing her vocal journey, Blueberry told me about the transition from being a happy, competitive high school singer to a voice undergraduate student. This shift and the intensity of music school was fraught for her, she said, "[Singing] turned from my like, "Oh that's neat" thing to my identifier [...] And then it became a burden." Blueberry explained that this burden triggered depression, mental breakdown, and drastically altered her relationship with her voice to one more distant, more emotionally complicated than it had been before. Diana and Jessica had similar experiences around their identities as singers and their relationships with their

voices. Jessica advised singers to “Recognize that [your voice] is a part of you but it is not all of you.”

Singers felt it was difficult to separate the self from the voice because of the nature of the instrument. Since the voice is part of the body and therefore part of each person, they felt that the body as the instrument added an extra layer of complexity to their identities. Constant vocal monitoring weighed on participants. Blueberry said,

It’s not like another job where you go home at the end of the day and you don’t think about it until the next time you to do the job. When you’re not at work you’re still working on your voice and thinking about your voice and about the job.

Many participants felt that their experience of being a musician was differentiated from instrumentalists because the body was their instrument. They carried their instrument with them everywhere and were unable to not think about it, though many expressed a desire to do just that. The voice changed how they spoke, where they went (many avoided loud bars and restaurants), and other activities like how much alcohol they consumed, whether they went out when the weather was poor, and how they cared for themselves when they were ill.

Some participants expressed a belief that singing was inherently a different experience from being an instrumentalist, and more fraught with complications. If they didn’t like their voice, they couldn’t exchange it for a new one, they couldn’t upgrade, they couldn’t put it down when they were done practicing. They felt that their technical and performance faults were put on display in a more vulnerable way in performance situations. Some amusingly stated that

they had an upper hand over instrumentalists because singers couldn't lose their instrument or worry about it being stolen. There was a sense of relief that the voice went with them wherever they were, they could never forget it at home. But some stated that they took this advantage for granted sometimes. Jessica said, "I think sometimes we forget that it's no different than a professional athlete [...] we take it for granted, that it's always gonna be there."

Threat to singer Identity. Some participants reported that they lived in fear of vocal illness or injury; it was the worst outcome imaginable for many. They took many precautions against illness and injury. Some felt that instrumentalists and non-singers did not understand or sympathize with the singer's need to constantly monitor and maintain the health of their instrument and therefore themselves. Labels of "diva" and "hypochondriac" irritated some singers, who felt that they were doing what was necessary for their instrument.

Diversify Identity. For most participants, diversifying their identity helped their mental wellness. Singers described feeling shame, depression, and struggles with self-worth when their voices didn't function the way they wished, or when they were ill. Prioritizing non-musical goals such as having a family or financial stability, pursuing other interests and careers made them less prone to extreme emotions surrounding their identities.

3.4 Value of Vocal Qualities.

Singers' perceptions of the social and personal value of various vocal qualities affected how they thought of themselves. Singers valued vocal weight, they valued beauty in the sound according to their stylistic preferences, and *fach* identity. Many of the aspects of Sound and

Body discussed earlier also impacted singers' sense of identity and self-worth in addition to affecting their professional prospects. Fitting into stereotypes about their sound and body and striving to attain an ideal sound for their voice type allowed them to find work. When their singer identity was closely linked to their sense of self, it became important to fit into stereotypes. Conforming to these stereotypes affirmed participants' self-worth, which was based on being a singer.

Singers often mirrored the opinions important others expressed about their voices. When Diana felt that her teachers didn't like her voice, she struggled with self-worth and trusting that her voice had value. Dorian said, "I think that what people say about my voice is kind of the way I think about it." Sabrina reflected a similar view, "People were getting excited about my voice and I was very excited about my voice." And then later in the interview, "I cling to those moments of people seeing the potential in my voice."

The feedback that singers received about the value and quality of their voices was important and treasured information. Catherine said, "I try to hold those [moments of positive feedback] because when those things, when people say those things that are really positive, that's where you wanna focus your energy."

When asked to recall a time someone said something memorably positive about their voice, participants generally recalled very specific instances. Equally, singers remembered details about negative feedback regarding their voices. This question seemed to encourage extremes of emotions, elation when validated by others, and insecurity and low mood when others criticized or rejected their voices. When singers were able to find a sense of inner

validation of their vocal qualities, they were able to have a more balanced view of their singing identity and their intrinsic worth as people. Catherine said “There are a lot of other things I can do, but I wanna do this, you know?”

3.5 Feelings about the voice.

Singers’ feelings about their voices were an essential aspect of their relationship with their voices. Emotions were generally expressed as either painful or joyful. Singers experienced insecurity and a variety of distressing emotions around their experiences of their voice. Negative emotions singers experienced included discouragement and dejection, reactions to criticism, and trauma around the voice.

Pain. Challenges to identity as a singer such as vocal illness and malfunction and shifting away from singing as a professional pursuit caused some singers to feel depressed. Blueberry said,

I started no longer doing well in competitions, and that mixed with the blow of not getting into the school I wanted right away and messing up my five-year plan, I became big D Depressed and then I didn’t know what to do about it.

Rejection from her top school as well as difficulty in competitions was challenging to her identity as a good singer (hilariously self-described as “the hottest potato”). Blueberry internalized these rejections and challenges as reflecting on her worth as a singer and person. This depression escalated until she eventually sought professional help and ended up shifting away from a performance-focused, voice-focused life.

Participants also experienced depression and low mood from illness, temporary voice loss due to traumatic experiences such as a death in the family or shifts from primarily identifying as a singer to identifying as a singer only peripherally.

Discouragement resulted from rejection and engendered a sense of helplessness in participants. After years of unsuccessful attempts to break into the opera profession in Europe, Southpaw described his feelings, “[T]hat horrible feeling that I just wasted all of this time and effort trying to get to an unattainable place.” Other singers described similar feelings of discouragement after rejection and failure. Diana said, “[Not getting into performance] was just, like, pretty confusing, cause they just didn’t like it, my voice. And I didn’t really feel like there was anything I could do about that.” Feelings of discouragement caused participants to reevaluate their singing identity, life goals outside of singing, and recognize that much of what contributed to their idea of success was outside of their control (i.e. being hired after auditions, being accepted to the performance degree stream).

Displeasure in singing, losing the enjoyment they once had, deeply impacted many participants. Training as a singer and experiences in the professional world led participants to lose the enjoyment of singing. John said, “I also wish I wasn’t a trained singer because it’s taken, sometimes, it takes away from the enjoyment of music.” Blueberry made a similar statement, “Maybe once I get sick of that [other job], then music will be fun again, and something that I seek out for more than just, like, money.” Dorian also commented, “There’s a joy there that sometimes I lose because I’m so stuck in the analytical side of things.”

This shift troubled participants, and there was a sense of loss. As singers progressed through formal training, sometimes the enjoyment of singing was lost. The loss of enjoyment was replaced by self-criticism and an analytic attitude towards the voice as a tool. The shift of their singer identity from a source of enjoyment to a source of pain, discouragement, and insecurity was deeply sorrowful and difficult for participants.

Participants expressed deep emotional trauma around experiences they had relating to singing. Katy Lane described a time when a visiting voice teacher grabbed her throat in a coaching to assess whether her larynx was lowered. She went on to describe,

And then for about a month and a half I was told not to sing any of my rep and to keep myself singing no higher than a C5 [...] and I was not allowed to do anything if my larynx was moving. Like, I had to be able to inhale, pull it down, keep it down, and sing.

This controlling language of being “allowed” to sing, and the language she uses to describe her technique of pulling the larynx down and keeping it down emphasizes how she felt trapped within classical singing. This technique required control, but the locus of control was mostly placed in teachers who she felt had the power to control her voice. It was also necessary to constantly monitor the voice and body to keep the larynx lowered, and this obsessive focus on technique caused Katy to find she no longer enjoyed singing. For Katy, freedom was found by leaving classical singing behind and pursuing other singing genres. Our discussion of her time in the classical world was coloured with this kind of language of control and others – particularly teachers – having control over what she was allowed to do with her own voice.

Diana was another interesting case of emotional trauma around the voice. After being rejected from the performance stream in her undergraduate degree (the only singer in her year who did not get in), receiving unwelcome comments about her body from her voice teacher, watching other singers being publicly criticized to the point of tears in classroom settings, and being yelled at by voice teachers, she said,

I honestly don't know how I felt about my voice at that point in time. I've, like, blocked a lot of that out. But yeah, the first year of my master's [in music therapy] felt like I was cutting off scar tissue. And then I was really angry about how my voice was treated, and, then I, like, compartmentalized hard and was like, we're not gonna deal with my voice in this way. Because if I just cut that off then I don't have to deal with those feelings about my voice and I can just love what it does here. And that was good.

The trauma of her undergraduate experience took years to work through, and I think through our interview Diana discovered she had not fully processed a lot of this trauma. She admitted she should probably seek therapy to process her experiences but expressed reluctance because she didn't want to have to explain what music school was like to a therapist who knew nothing about that experience.

Jessica and Catherine both mentioned times when outside trauma, for both participants it was the death of a loved one, caused them to be unable to sing for some time. For Catherine, this period passed eventually, but for Jessica, it compounded into a long-term vocal condition which caused further trauma to her identity as a singer and person. The vocal illness, and the

subsequent fallout because she no longer felt confident or safe singing in front of others, deeply impacted her identity as a singer and perception of her own voice.

For Blueberry, the crushing pressure to succeed, perfectionism, and a shifting view of her place in the hierarchy of singers triggered a mental breakdown. She recalled a time during her undergraduate degree when she reluctantly gave in to pressure to sing a solo in a church service. After the solo, she had an epiphany,

Then I went and sat back in my chair. And I was feeling really bad, like, feeling used, but then also, like, more than that, feeling bad. And then I asked myself, hey, why are you feeling so bad? And then what came to me was that *I hate music now*. And then... and then that was terrible. And then I started to, like, I freaked out and started sobbing and then had to leave. And then I realized that things were not well, and then I went to the hospital and I was like, please help me.

The trauma of this realization and subsequent breakdown still affected her years later and fundamentally changed the way she related to her voice. During recovery she was placed on vocal leave at school and she found it difficult to listen to her peers sing. At the time of our interview, years after the experience described above, she still had difficulty finding joy in singing, an activity she had once highly identified with and loved.

Joy. External validation was an important source of confidence for participants. Positive feedback from teachers, colleagues, and audience members helped singers feel validated in their artistry. Validation and support from important others, whether colleagues,

teachers, or audience members, deeply impacted singers. Dorian said, “A lot of my problems technically have just been that I'm getting in my own way. And it's my voice teachers who have successfully peeled off the extra stuff that I put on.”

Participants described experiences that reflected the power differential between singing teachers and students. Some perceived teachers to have great power to help or hinder their students' progress, and to influence how singers felt about their voices. Positive audience reactions were often treasured memories for singers and helped bolster their confidence in the face of criticism or threats to their singer identity. Jessica recalled a time when a teacher encouraged her to focus on her beautiful lower range instead of on what she was unable to do after her vocal injury. Diana received encouragement from a professor to enter a national competition, this validation of her voice, especially after feeling many professors did not like it, stayed with her. Catherine said, “I try to hold [positive feedback] because [...] when people say those things that are really positive, that's where you wanna focus your energy.” This conscious choice to focus on positive feedback was one aspect of Catherine's remarkable resilience to threats to her singer identity and deeply held sense of self.

Internal validation and care of the self, which I labelled “self-love” was also an important aspect to feeling confident in a singer identity. One of the last questions in the interview schedule was *What advice would you give to someone who is struggling to accept their voice?* Participants encouraged other singers to love themselves and their voices. Sabrina said, “You have to learn to love your voice before anybody else will love it. You have to learn to

find it beautiful.” She later said, “I dislike that it took me so long to love [my voice], I guess, cause now I love it!”

For Jessica, compassion was an important attitude to take towards her voice. She recognized it as a fundamentally important aspect of her vocal journey. This sense of self-love brought singers a gentleness and warmth toward their own voices. This love allowed them to accept the “imperfections” of their voices and to see the value in their voices.

A sense of ease was a contributing factor to singers’ feelings of well-being toward their voices. John and Jessica each described situations in which they were able to sing without “restrictions” or “focusing on the technique”. This sense of freedom allowed them to take artistic risks outside their comfort zone. Taking these risks often resulted in feelings of expressiveness and ease in their technique that made them feel happy with their voices and themselves as artists. John said,

I started questioning whether or not [singing] was something I actually wanted to do. And then I would have, I think we all a little bit go through this, but I would have days, sometimes weeklong stretches where I’d be like [in a cranky voice] I hate this I don’t wanna practice, blah blah blah. I don’t like singing. [in his normal voice] But then, it only takes that one practice session of going in and singing and being like, just going in sometimes I would go and sing whatever I wanted and it did not matter. I wasn’t *really* practicing but I just needed to remind myself sometimes that I did love it.

All participants made statements to the effect of “I enjoy singing”. The enjoyment of the act of singing, of having a good singing voice, of using the voice as an avenue for self-expression was an essential aspect of participants’ experiences. Often, the enjoyment of singing is what compelled them to pursue musical studies at the university levels. Acceptance of the way the voice sounded in the moment of the act of singing was an integral aspect of the enjoyment of the voice. Dorian said,

The interesting this was that when I finally accepted that I was a lyric voice, I actually did get a lot bigger because I stopped trying to push so hard, and the tension just kind of melted away. And I enjoyed singing a lot more after that. I wasn’t so frustrated with my instrument, just not doing what I wanted it to do.

Jessica and Diana, both of whom had difficult relationships with their voices, found enjoyment in their voice. Jessica said, “There are moments when I’ll sing something and it’ll feel good and, comfortable, you know, then I remember that I really like singing.” And Diana said, “I think I have a very soothing voice, which I love. And it’s also, it’s a sexy voice it just does stuff, I like it.”

Singers’ discussion of how much they enjoyed singing was one of the most satisfying and heartwarming aspects of these interviews. With training came confidence and pride in their singing abilities. Southpaw said, “I am a master of my craft.” Dorian expressed feeling a sense of pride in his voice and vocal abilities. Many participants felt that their training had given them the ability to develop their own voices (although many qualified that this was only to a certain

extent) and felt confident that they had what it takes to develop and understand their own voice.

4.3.1 Summary.

Singers' relationship with their voice is at the centre of voice image. Feelings about the voice, the centrality of voice identity, the conceptualization of the voice, and the act of singing all influence singers' relationship towards their voices. This relationship decides how they react to social and professional expectations, the location of singer identity in their overall identity, and how they cope with threats to their voice image.

4.4 4. Coping with Threats to Voice Image

Table 6: Theme 4 Coping with Threats to Voice Image

Coping with Threats to Voice Image			
Theme	Subtheme	Definition	Sample Quote
4.1 Resilience: Participants' ability to bounce back psychologically from difficult experiences, criticism, and self-doubt.			
	Vocal Maintenance	Participants maintain their voices to promote wellbeing.	"It needs love and support, otherwise it's gonna stop doing what I want it to do." - Catherine
	Reframing	Examining feedback and perceptions participants initially had accepted as negative.	"There was definitely a long period of time where I was like, there's something wrong with me. This is wrong that I cannot do this. I cannot label myself as a musician if I cannot make this sound [...] And so, I've

			started thinking a lot about the context of the words "wrong" versus "different" and, it has bothered me that we can make that differentiation in all of these other places in our lives. So why, as a singer, was I so caught up in this? So yeah, I've gotten better at thinking about that. But it's not every day. There are days where it's really hard." - Jessica
	Diversify Identity	Participants diversify their identity beyond simply being a singer.	"It's a struggle of realizing [...] I wasn't the sum of my voice, that that doesn't define oneself." - Bruce
	Agency	Participants exercise their agency for their wellbeing.	"If you're going to be successful in any way you have to be your own teacher, right?" - Sabrina
	Support from Others	Participants receive support from significant others.	"A lot of my problems technically have just been that I'm getting in my own way. And it's my voice teachers have successfully peeled off the extra stuff that I put on." - Dorian
4.2 Fragility: inability to bounce back psychologically from difficult experiences, criticism, and self-doubt.			
	External Locus of Control	Participants feel they are externally controlled.	A teacher told her "Everything she's been doing [technique-wise] up to this point is wrong." - Katy Lane

	Survival-based Skills	Participants focus on survival rather than thriving.	“There was less for them to critique when you’re doing super (I think “modern music”)... cause they wanted me to sound like, you know, your traditional Mozart opera things and I couldn’t be the sound they wanted in that.” - Diana
	Vocal Monitoring	Participants obsessively care for their voices to the point of anxiety.	“[My voice is] just something I have to monitor a lot. I have to make sure I’m always drinking a lot of water, I have to make sure I am not talking too much over the course of the day. I have to make sure that I avoid loud environments [...] Having to sort of lock yourself in your room and not talk to anybody or socialize throughout the course of the day.” - John

This final theme describes how participants coped with threats to their voice image. Threats to voice image include criticism, vocal changes, perceptions regarding vocal and self-worth (see Theme 2: Qualities of- or Barriers to- Professional Success), failure, stress, and interpersonal difficulties. This section has two sub-themes, resilience and fragility. Singers coped with threats to voice image in helpful and unhelpful ways.

4.1 Resilience.

Richards and Dixon (2020) describe resilience as, “[A] dynamic process of positive adaptation in the face of adversity” (p. 878). Sub-themes of resilience in this conceptualization of voice image include self-care actions, diversifying identity, agency, vocal maintenance, and support from others. Resilience for voice image reflects an ability to adapt psychologically from difficult experiences, criticism, and self-doubt. The ability to adapt, protect, and shift voice image is a necessary skill for a singer’s health and well-being.

Vocal Maintenance. Singers’ perceptions of vocal care and maintenance had both positive and negative connotations. I labelled positive attitudes towards voice care “Vocal Maintenance” and negative attitudes “Vocal Monitoring” (see Theme 4.2: Fragility).

Singers took specific actions to care for their sense of vocal identity. Some of these actions included warming up appropriately (Blueberry), being “ultra-prepared” for performance events (John), attention to bodily needs such as adequate sleep, hydration, eating healthily, and exercise (Southpaw, Catherine, Sabrina, John, Bruce). For Katy Lane, self-care meant leaving the professional singing world to pursue a different career. Being kind to oneself was an important part of self-care for singers. John, who experienced frequent vocal fatigue and illness, emphasized the importance of being kind and gentle to himself as he recovered. When asked “How do you care for your voice?” Catherine said,

So lovingly [laughs]. I treat it like a small child [laughs]. I’m very caring with my instrument. I try to make sure it’s hydrated, I try to make sure I get enough sleep, I try to work out, you know, I try to care for the whole instrument, I try to care for my mental

health, anything that can affect the instr... any that affects me emotionally, psychologically, physically, is gonna affect the instrument.

When singers were able to express a gentle, caring, nurturing attitude towards their voices they had less resentment around limitations required to preserve optimal vocal functioning. Examples of limitations on singers are avoiding loud bars and restaurants, avoiding smoky areas, vocal rest, always avoiding shouting or loud speaking, avoiding those who were ill, and taking homeopathic measures to preserve health such as herbal remedies and teas. Vocal Maintenance extended to how singers interacted with their families. One participant requested that a sibling not smoke around her or they would not be able to see one another as much as the participant would like, because she had to preserve her vocal health. Dorian said of his voice, "It's always with me, I can constantly monitor it. I'm in charge of keeping it healthy" (p. 10). The sense of ownership of the voice and a duty to keep it healthy was echoed by Southpaw, "I feel like it's my responsibility to maintain that [vocal] quality and maintain my part in the chorus." Avoiding illness or technical atrophy was seen as something the singer had the ability, and responsibility, to monitor.

Actions toward vocal maintenance often contributed to a sense of well-being and better mental health for singers. Sabrina said, "It's a gift to me that I have to take care of my body I have to think about my health." For these singers caring for themselves was a part of their job and a gift to themselves.

Reframing. I was particularly fascinated by the way singers reframed feedback and perceptions that they initially accepted as negative. Some participants took time to reexamine criticism, events, and perceptions to reframe them in a helpful way. Bruce said,

I would be shocked at how high, how nasal, how young it sounded, how immature [...] not the sound I wanted it to be. And now realizing that only in the last bit how that is not an actual negative thing.

He reframed perceptions about young, light, high, nasal voices as “not an actual negative thing” despite initial thoughts to the contrary. This allowed him to accept his own voice more deeply and protect his voice image by enforcing the idea that his voice has value. To cope with the difficulty of frequent vocal rest, John chose to focus on what he was able to do while resting. He said,

So I just try to, sort of, compensate and still, like, if I’m in a position where I don’t feel like I can speak for whatever reason I will oftentimes still... I’ll try to be nice to myself and go do something else that I wanna to like, cuddle up and read a book or watch Netflix or like, whatever. And sometimes, you know, I have been known to occasionally be like ah, screw it, I’m gonna go have a drink anyway and it’s usually fine.

Interestingly, John occasionally chose to ignore his usual vocal self-care routine to avoid feeling controlled by his vocal regime. Strategically ignoring or re-imagining what self-care for the voice looks like prevented him from feeling too stifled by the need for frequent rest. While caring for the voice was an important part of his well-being, and occasionally *not* caring for the voice by

going to loud bars, drinking, etc. helped him feel that he could relax the voice-care restrictions which he sometimes found stifling.

Accepting the voice in its current state is often a difficult journey for singers. The ability to accept the voice and enjoy the voice greatly impacted their voice image. Singers who could accept their voices had a more positive voice image. Dorian described deeply wishing to be a larger voice type. He struggled for many years to embody a voice type he hoped to grow into. When it became apparent his voice was not going to grow larger, he said,

The interesting thing this was that when I finally accepted that I was a lyric voice, I actually did get a lot bigger, because I stopped trying to push so hard, and the tension just kind of melted away. And I enjoyed singing a lot more after that. I wasn't so frustrated with my instrument, just not doing what I wanted it to do.

Once he was able to accept his voice he experienced an improvement in the relationship, a sense of enjoyment in the act of singing, more empowerment, and less frustration.

Diversify identity. This sub-theme, previously discussed in Theme 3.3 Centrality of Voice Identity, is an example of inter-thematic relevance. This theme is relevant to singer identity *and* how singers cope with threats to that identity. When singers diversify their identities, threats to voice image do not have as large an impact on their sense of self. Catherine said,

I guess from a really young age I sort of knew, or from a young singer's mind, so maybe in university or whatever, I sort of knew that, yes, I would like to work professionally in

singing, but I also would like to have a family, and there are many things I want in life. If you told me today “Catherine, you can be a famous opera singer but you won't have a family, you won't have good relationships with your existing family members. You won't have a husband, you know, you won't have these other things, but you will be a famous opera singer” I would say “No thanks!” Because I want more out of life.

This diversity of goals and identities, as not just a singer but also a friend, family member, businesswoman, and, someday, a mother, Catherine was better able to handle threats to her singer identity and evaluate challenges when considering her identity as more than singing and being a singer.

Agency. Singers' sense of self-efficacy and agency, or their ability to make meaningful changes and actions in their own lives and singing, was enormously important. Sabrina's advice to singers who may be struggling to accept their voices encapsulates this attitude,

The advice I would give to anybody who is struggling with their craft is, you have to mix it up [...] You have to change *something*. You're never gonna be able to move on if you keep running into that same wall, right?

Catherine echoed this sentiment,

They have to do what feels right to them, you know? And just be aware that they can sing anything they want with a healthy instrument [...] I would just say that every... the decisions you make about your voice and the choice you make for your voice are, and can be, endless.

Agency helped singers have a sense of control over their actions and success. Singers with a strong sense of agency were able to assess criticism without internalizing it as a comment on their self-worth. Agency also helped singers feel confident in making artistic choices that felt right for them, rather than doing what they thought others might want to see. This was particularly noticeable in Katy Lane's interview. She offered anecdotes in which she sang in a way she had chosen artistically, instead of what was expected from her by teachers or audition panels. Each time she did this, she felt satisfied with the artistic outcome of her performances and a sense of release from the restrictions of expectations.

When singers felt empowered to make their own choices and take charge of their vocal identities, they were better able to express boundaries, question feedback in a productive way, and feel a sense of vocal ownership and pride or comfort in maintaining their vocal instrument. Larry said, "Build your own skills for *you*. Don't build yourself so that you can finally compare to someone else" (p. 36). He felt that boundaries and ownership of one's vocal journey would result in satisfaction and success, and that comparison was the thief of joy.

Assessing feedback was another part of singer agency. Singers who felt empowered to critically assess incoming feedback and criticism, instead of automatically internalizing feedback, were better able to manage threats to voice image. Bruce described an experience with a teacher,

He blatantly said "I don't like your voice" and said that I was wasting my time. Realizing that I think it came out of frustration of, because at that point I was working through a

lot of weird technical stuff [...] I think that negative feedback came out of a frustration of not knowing how to help the voice.

Bruce was able to deflect the criticism by recognizing the teacher's words as coming from a place of frustration at the teacher's own inability. Whether or not this was the teacher's intended meaning, Bruce's reframing preserves a positive voice image. Bruce was able to acknowledge that he was experiencing difficult vocal-technique problems while simultaneously deflecting the teacher's comment as a comment on his worth or his voice's worth.

Support from Others. Support from teachers, friends, family, and important others greatly contributed to singers' resilience. A caring community helped singers feel understood, supported, and share the burden of singers' particular struggles with those who understood. Several participants went so far as to describe voice lessons as a form of therapy. Singers treasured moments of validation and positive reinforcement received from audience members, teachers, colleagues, and family. This support contributed to a positive voice image.

Teachers were an especially important avenue of support for singers. Singers described the role of their teachers as guides who helped them towards vocal realizations. They also described their teachers as much more than vocal advisors. Teachers helped singers find themselves, acted as essential support through difficult vocal changes and health issues, helped students embrace their strengths instead of obsessing over their weaknesses, encouraged them further down a chosen vocal path, encouraged and

supported singers in seeking professional therapy, and sometimes filled a therapeutic role. Teachers' influence on students' vocal journey and voice image cannot be understated. Validations offered by teachers were often treasured memories for singers.

Lessons were described as therapeutic by Sabrina, Jessica, and Larry. Larry said of his high school voice lessons, "I think taking lessons every week was almost like therapy. It was nice, it was just where I would go to relax and really feel like I was myself and really doing something for me." Sabrina's perspective was as the teacher of her students, she said,

It's just like as if you're a therapist, and like, I'm sure that people relate [sic] that all of the time. I feel like a therapist constantly, the amount of times students have come in crying or they cry during their lessons or, you know, they're really down because they got dumped or something and I'm like, "I know this affects your singing, okay? So let's use that and create something fantastic, or, if you're not up to it, that's okay too", right?

Singers in this study used the voice-teacher-as-therapist title in only positive ways to describe teachers who were emotionally supportive and able to support them through challenging circumstances. It is important to note here that although participants described this positively, I want to discourage teachers from taking on therapeutic roles for their students as a matter of professional caution. Voice teachers are not trained therapists and must be careful while supporting students to avoid acting in ways which may harm or misguide the student.

Singers also received support from their families. Although singers did not emphasize this fact, they all mentioned coming from supportive, music-loving families. Whether or not their parents were musicians themselves, they supported participants' decision to pursue music. Families encouraged singers in their singing as children and young adults. I think the importance of this early encouragement and ongoing support cannot be overstated in its contribution to singers' resilience. Blueberry says, "I think that voice teachers more than other instrument teachers really become life coaches as well as teachers. And like, counsellors as well as teachers. I learned a lot about how to present myself in the world."

4.2 Fragility.

In stark contrast to resilience, singers also expressed great fragility around their voice image. If resilience is the ability to bounce back from the trials and tribulations of singing and being a singer, then fragility is shattering under these challenges. Aspects of fragility in voice image include an external locus of control, survival-based coping skills, obsessive vocal monitoring, and internalizing criticism.

External Locus of Control. Singers who felt that their voices were under the power of some external locus of control – often their teachers – expressed struggling with the voice identity assigned to them by that external force. This was particularly vivid in Katy Lane's interview. She was among the many singers used phrases like "My teacher let me" or "My teacher allowed me" or "I was not allowed to" regarding singing technique and exploration. Katy struggled through her undergraduate and master's degrees with determining a *fach*. She felt frustrated that her teachers couldn't identify her *fach*, or would change

her *fach* and therefore all her repertoire, which prevented her from auditioning for professional work while in school. When she expressed concern at the lack of a package of arias (a necessity for auditioning), her teacher said

She said, “Well, our focus is on your recital. In this program, and, in this degree program your focus is on your recital.” Which I felt was a bit of a brush-off of like, you know my goal isn’t a recital, my goal is to work professionally.

Without the support of her teacher, Katy was unable to determine her *fach* or take control of her professional aspirations.

In singing it would be unthinkable to go against a teacher’s assessment of your voice or to decide you were a certain *fach* when your teacher disagreed with it. Such a determination would likely end the relationship, which many students perceive as a risky endeavor. John described a deeply upsetting experience with a teacher who he felt was forcing his voice into their vision of what it ought to be. Changing teachers was not an option for him, and he described the experience as “dehumanizing”. Larry experienced a different outcome from a similar situation. He switched teachers during his undergraduate degree because he felt his first teacher was pushing his voice in a direction he didn’t want to go. While the switch was stressful, he felt there were no hard feelings on either side. His transition to a new teacher whose goals were more aligned with his own was successful and smooth. Some participants perceived their teachers to have power over the student’s *fach* identity, repertoire choices, and professional prospects. These perceptions reflect some research on power dynamics in one-on-one teaching arrangements (Gaunt, 2011; Yau, 2019). When participants felt the relationship

was not one of mutual respect, with open communication, or recognition of the power dynamics in the relationships, students suffered.

Survival-based Skills. In response to threats to voice image, participants sometimes coped in defensive, survival-based ways which protected them from the threat but did not contribute to their thriving. These survival skills, or attempts at deflecting threats to voice image, were not always successful, and sometimes repressed the issue at hand. Diana's experiences with teachers whom she felt didn't like her voice caused her to repress and dissociate from herself vocally to avoid the threat to her voice image. She said,

[Not getting into the performance stream] was just like, pretty confusing cause they just didn't like it, my voice. And I didn't really feel like there was anything I could do about that. And [long pause] I think I just stopped thinking so much about my voice [...] I honestly don't know how I felt about my voice at that point in time. I've like, blocked a lot of that out. And then, yeah, first year of my master's felt like I was cutting off scar tissue. [sniffs] And then I was really angry about how my voice was treated, and... then, I, like, yeah, compartmentalized hard and was like, we're not gonna deal with my voice in this way. Because if I just cut that off then I don't have to deal with those feelings about my voice and I can just love what it does here.

I found this story to be truly heartbreaking. Although Diana was able to learn to view her voice in a different light – primarily as a tool in her music therapy work – she had “blocked out” the trauma and experiences of her undergraduate degree. This meant that in a situation where she was questioned deeply about her relationship to her voice – like in our interview – unresolved

trauma resurfaced, and she was able to see how those experiences had altered the way she interacted with her voice.

John described singer stereotypes as a defense mechanism against belittling from other musicians. He said,

I think in terms of stereotypes as well everybody thinks we're really pompous. But I also, like, in my own experience have seen that, right? I've seen the pompousness or whatever, but I kind of almost think that it's a defense mechanism, again, because we tend to be looked down on. In my experience.

This type of defense mechanism perpetuates stereotypes about singers as divas, but John's insight into a deeper reason for behaving like a diva other than self-aggrandization was something I had not considered. While diva-like actions may protect the singer from the inevitable criticisms and belittling from fellow musicians, it does not address the root issue, that singers are often not respected in the music community and are truly hurt when they become the butt of jokes made by other musicians.

Vocal Monitoring. Unlike vocal maintenance, a positive and caring attitude towards voice care, vocal monitoring reflects a negative, obsessive, hypochondriacal attitude towards voice care. Singers sometimes felt their voices were a burden, preventing them from engaging in activities they would like to do, or a burden which they carried with them and could not put down no matter how much they might want to. Bruce said, "There's many ways that having a

voice always around can be very hard, and especially if you're frustrated with your voice." John described his vocal care,

It's just something I have to monitor a lot, I have to make sure I'm always drinking a lot of water, I have to make sure I am not talking too much over the course of the day.

I have to make sure that I avoid loud environments, otherwise by the end of the day I have nothing left even if I haven't sung anything. Right? So that's tricky, and when I am in rehearsal for something and when I'm needing to use my voice in that capacity that can be really difficult. You know? Having to sort of lock yourself in your room and not talk to anybody or socialize throughout the course of the day.

This constant monitoring seemed a chore and a burden. Singers lived in constant fear of vocal illness and injury, and while some were able to navigate the care of the voice in a positive way, as a gift, others found it a source of constant worry and stress. Southpaw described fear of vocal overuse as one of the greatest challenges of being a professional voice user,

It's a matter of being extremely conscious of how your voice feels. Every little twinge of pain, every itch, every stretch, you notice and, is that serious or is that just a normal physiological response? Yeah. To most people, a cold is just a cold but to a singer it's the difference between a paycheque and no paycheque or going out there on stage and not going out there. The difference between not singing or shoving steroids down your throat to try and smash your way through one last performance.

Although Southpaw had an easy-going attitude towards voice care, his eloquent description of singers' worries and the consequences of illness and injury reveals the ever-present sense of danger and risk. Bruce said,

If I was not a singer, I don't think I would be so stressed out about it being, getting sick. Like, if I get a cold or get a sore throat, I can still play [my other instrument]. That's fine. I can still do a gig. Where if I get [sick] I can't perform it as best I would have. So [I am] a little bit more of a hypochondriac. If anyone even coughs without covering their mouth, I avoid them.

Many participants expressed a heightened awareness of their vocal health and overall bodily health as one inescapable aspect of being a singer. While some participants embraced caring for their voices and bodies, for others this care seemed to be a burden on their psyche.

Summary.

Participants' ability to cope with threats to their voice image greatly impacted their overall wellbeing. Threats were dealt with in a variety of helpful and unhelpful ways. Strategies and actions which seemed to promote a resilient voice image of reframing feedback, diversifying their overall identity to include more than just a singer identity, accepting support from others, and exercising agency over their voices and bodies. Some strategies that seemed to promote a fragile voice image were allowing others to control one's voice and body, focusing on survival as a singer rather than thriving, and an obsessive monitoring of the voice. These

strategies seemed to be developed in a variety of ways including modelling after teachers and other role models, learning from peers, the participant's disposition, and family influences.

4.5 Summary

The themes that emerged from this study indicated that voice image is exceedingly complex. Many concepts interact with one another in a variety of ways. The four themes I developed, The Box, Qualities of- or Barriers to- Professional Success, Singer/voice Relationship, and Coping with Threats to Voice Image are an initial conceptualization only. The themes presented in this section only address part of the rich, complex stories and ideas gathered in the interviews.

The Box addresses the ways in which singers are affected and relate to other singers and non-singers through cultural norms, stereotypes, and power structures. Towards other singers, there was comparison, perfectionism, and elitist ideas as singers vied for valuable *fach* or other singing-related abilities or categorizations. Stereotypes affected how singers felt about identifying as a singer (as opposed to identifying only as a musician). Some found comfort in the community of other singers. Others eschewed what they perceived to be a mean-girl clique in favour of an "alt-singer" identity, "not one of *those* singers". Towards non-singers, participants often felt an element of needing to perform, or being pressured to perform, which Diana called the "Classic Karaoke Problem". Non-singers expected singers to sound better than their untrained peers even in styles of singing they had not trained in and act in certain stereotypical ways. Male singers experienced tension against cultural norms regarding men and

singing, namely, that men do not sing. Finally, singers sometimes envied non-singers' freedom to act in ways singers could not for fear of tiring or injuring the voice.

The second theme, Qualities of- or Barriers to – Professional Success, explores aspects of singers' experiences that contribute to success or failure professionally or at school. Major sub-themes were Sound and Body, Sexism, and Values. Sound and Body discussed the hierarchy of *fach* in the professional realm, the advantages accorded to those who fit *fach* stereotypes, and the role of health status and the perception of health status in professional success. Sexism discussed how men were viewed as a scarce, necessary commodity and received advantages and privileges because of that status while women were viewed as common and fungible. In addition, women faced extra expectations around their appearance. Pressure to be a certain size and look a certain way with body type and hair colour influenced women's ability to be successful professionally.

The third theme, Singer/voice relationship addresses the ways in which singers relate directly to their own voices. Sub-themes were Conceptualization of the Voice, The Act of Singing, Centrality of Voice Identity, Value of Vocal Qualities, and Feelings about the Voice. Conceptualization of the Voice described the different ways singers described or conceptualized their voices. Sometimes the voice was another person, an object such as a sweater or a pillow, or simply as part of themselves bodily and psychologically. The Act of Singing described ways in which singers related to singing as an activity whether as work, fun, an act of communication, or as something separate from performance. Centrality of Voice Identity addressed how important participants viewed their identity as singers. For some,

singing was an integral and essential part of how they viewed themselves as people. For others, it was a more peripheral aspect of their identity. Singer identity shifted in importance throughout participants' lives. The final theme, Feelings about the Voice, is at the center of voice image. How singers felt about their voices was divided into two subthemes, Joy and Pain. Joyful feelings of validation, self-love, and pleasure were contrasted with painful feelings of criticism, discouragement, dejection, and even trauma.

The fourth theme, Coping with Threats to Voice Image identifies how singers cope with threats to voice image. Threats to voice image are met with resilience or fragility. Aspects of resilience were reframing criticism, exercising agency through setting boundaries, exercising control and responsibility of the voice, maintaining vocal health in caring ways, receiving support from others, and diversifying their identity beyond primarily a singer identity. Fragility involved allowing or expecting others to control the singer's actions, coping skills that focused on surviving without an aim to thrive, vocal monitoring with obsessive or negative tendencies, and internalizing criticism as reflecting their worth as singers and people.

These themes describe only some of the elements of voice image. The results of this study show a complex relationship between an individual and their voice. Further research in this field is warranted.

5 Discussion

This research sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the voice self-perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (or voice image) of classically trained singers between the ages of 22 and 35?
- How is voice image formed?
- How does voice image change?
- Why does voice image matter?

I interviewed eleven individuals between the ages of 22 and 35 who have received an undergraduate degree with voice as their primary instrument from an institution in the United States or Canada. Interviews varied from an hour to just over two hours long, with two hours being the usual length. These interviews provided rich data from which I developed several themes around voice image.

The four major themes are: (1) The Box, (2) Qualities of- or Barriers to- Professional Success, (3) Singer-voice Relationship, (4) Coping with Threats to Voice Image. These themes begin to describe the complexity of voice image by identifying many of the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and actions singers take to understand, protect, project onto, and dialogue with their own voices. This dialogue is two-fold, first, literally how participants perceive the sound of their own voices, but also the significance placed on the voice and its function in social, professional, and personal contexts.

Voice image describes the voice as a physical action, acoustic phenomenon, and part of the body, but also about the idea of the voice and what that means to study participants. Our voices are part of our bodies and integrate into our body image. Voice image has many parallels with body image. Cash (2004) states,

Body image refers to the multifaceted psychological experience of embodiment, especially but not exclusively one's physical appearance. (p. 1)

In the same way, voice image is more than the sonic impression of the sound upon the singer, but a socially constructed identity with serious implications for professional success and personal well-being.

5.1 Voice Image Formation

Voice image is initially formed at an early age and changes throughout one's life. Many studies show that singer identity is formed in childhood (Lamont, 1998/2002; Welch, 2017), becoming clearer as a person ages (Eccles et al, 1993). As stated earlier, identity as a singer can be changed and shifted (Knight, 2010; Numinnen et al., 2015). The present research includes the singer/non-singer identity as part of the larger, holistic concept of voice image. Data in this study indicated that voice image undergoes significant development and shifts even after the formation of a positive singer identity. An important distinction between previous studies and the concept of voice image is that identity as a singer is not a necessary component of voice image. Everyone has a voice image, whether they are singers, voice actors, motivational speakers, or in a field which does not require voice use or center around their voice. This study interviewed trained singers because they are more likely to have thought deeply about their

voices. Additionally, the voice-self relationship is more consciously present and important than in those for whom the voice is an unconscious part of their daily functioning. The immediate necessity for trained singers to think about their voices is a useful experience for this study. It means that singers have developed vocabulary to talk about their voices, their feelings about their voice, the act of singing and voice usage, and how these items and experiences impact their identity.

Aspects of voice image formation beyond a positive singer identity included *fach* identity and the perceived value of that *fach*; gender identity and the perceived value of gender as it relates to singing; relationship to the voice as self, other, or object; perceived professional viability of the voice; tools for coping with threats to voice image; and feelings about the voice and the act of singing. These elements shift in importance throughout the individual's life.

Voice image as explored in this study dealt primarily with the singing voice. Participants also discussed their speaking voices. Thoughts and feelings about the speaking voice were incorporated into themes where it was deemed significant. For singers, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and actions around the speaking voice were heavily influenced by the desire to care for the singing voice, minimize the potential for injury through poor speaking voice coordination, and thoughts about embodying or diverging from expectations regarding their speaking voice as it related to their singing voice.

5.2 Voice Image Change

Singers' conceptualization of their own voices is exceedingly complex. It appears to shift and change over time. Many of my participants experienced significant shifts in voice image beginning in their undergraduate schooling. The university experience provided many participants with their first exposure to classical singing culture and socialization with other singers. A shifting and reexamining of vocal identity during an undergraduate degree makes sense, as this tends to be a time of great personal growth and change (Yau, 2019).

Higher education also marked the first steps toward singing as a focus of their career goals; most participants originally aspired towards performance. Participants' experiences with their teachers and vocal coaches also initiated significant shifts in voice image. The experiences participants described between themselves and their voice teachers ranged from supportive to traumatic. Supportive experiences were essential to participants' development of positive voice image. Traumatic experiences contributed to negative feelings around the voice and promoted lack of enjoyment in singing.

Voice image seemed to be influenced by aspects of classical singer culture such as the value of voice type and gender, and stereotypes about singers as perpetuated by singers, other musicians, and non-musicians. Once an individual trained as a singer, they felt expectations were placed on them by non-singers to act or sound a certain way. This pressure to perform for others in daily life and group situations like karaoke nights seemed to increase after they

received their university training. One participant described this pressure as “The Classic Karaoke Problem”.

An example of voice image shifting through an individual’s life are the experiences of Katy Lane and Jessica. When Katy Lane moved from a career in performing to a non-music career, her voice image underwent a shift in importance. What had once been a central aspect of her professional identity transitioned to a non-professional identity and something peripheral to her daily life. She experienced these shifts as provoking feelings of failure, concern about what other musicians would think, and relief that she was moving away from what had been – for her – a lifestyle that exacerbated mental illness.

Katy Lane described her voice during high school as a coping mechanism and refuge for her as a struggling teenager. Jessica reiterated this concept of the voice as a refuge from difficult teenage years. Both women found that the shift to pre-professional training caused the voice to become more fraught as the stakes for failure and success were higher. The activity and identity which had been a refuge now became a source of anxiety and struggle. For Katy Lane particularly, this shift felt like her voice had betrayed her. Katy Lane found that when she began studying classical music, she started to view the voice as other, as something to control. She described this shift as going from a friend to a business partner and feeling that she couldn’t trust her voice in this new role. After university, Katy Lane began to view her voice as a means of communication and personal expression. Through changing her view of her voice from something to control for tonal outcome to emphasizing the voice as a means of

communication and “text-based singing” she felt that her voice became a part of herself again.

Voice image shifted throughout participants’ lives. Experiences such as familial and community support for their early singing experiences, singing involvement in high school, music school experiences at the university level, experiences of illness, and the pursuit and shifting of professional goals all impacted voice image. A positive singer identity is established early in life, but data collected suggest this identity may shift and change throughout life experiences.

5.3 Why Voice Image Matters

Voice image has varying importance to individuals. Participants in this study identified as singers and chose to pursue singing at a post-secondary level. For most of the participants, singing identity remains central to their sense of self. For a few, singing identity became secondary, particularly amongst participants who pursued non-performance or non-musical professions. However, even among those participants who were shifting into or had been pursuing non-performance careers, voice image appeared to deeply impact their view of themselves.

Discussion of voice image is an opportunity for singers to better understand themselves, their fears, their hopes, and their motivations. Through critically exploring and observing their voice image, singers can make choices which further their well-being and mental health. Voice image also encourages exploration of qualities and resources like resilience to criticism and the

stresses of a career in singing, processing traumatic experiences, and enables them to challenge potentially self-defeating or self-harming narratives about their voices and themselves.

5.4 Further Discussion of Results

This study explored aspects of voice image as described by the eleven participants. Some themes warrant further discussion because they either were unexpected, because they represent an aspect of voice image which was seen as helpful or harmful, depending on the individual speaking, or aspects of cultural and social impact on voice image that warrant change.

5.4.1 Unexpected Findings

These interviews were truly life-changing for me. Participants' vulnerability around their experiences, thoughts, and feelings about their voices and singing moved me deeply. As I moved through the theory development process, and at times even mid-interview, there were themes which I had not expected to find. These themes are discussed here to highlight their unusual content, to show the inescapability of unconscious bias of this research and myself as a researcher, and to call singers and teachers to action on these topics.

Singer and Non-Singer Identity issues. Self identification as a singer or non-singer and whether other identities exist between these two poles is a subject beyond the scope of this paper. Identification as a singer was not required to enter the study and some participants had a complex relationship with the label of singer. I assumed a singer identity in the construction of my interview schedule. When Jessica and Blueberry did not immediately and confidently identify as singers there was little room in my interview schedule to explore that

aspect of identity. Although both had trained as singers, and Jessica had pursued a performing career for many years, at the time of the interview both were beginning to move away from performance goals. Jessica planned to pursue a non-music career and Blueberry was undecided about her future with music. Future research in this area could explore the shifting voice image of those who leave performance careers.

Emasculation. A significant finding and one that surprised me was the concern, and the very notion expressed by men about singing being emasculating. The stories told by Bruce and John outlining times they had lied about what instrument they were studying in university pointed to some unacknowledged assumptions that I did not realize I had. I do not think internalized homophobia was the primary motivator, but rather a fear of the frequently violent consequences for men who do not present in stereotypically masculine ways. As a bisexual person myself, I understand the fear of violence from others due to homophobia. It was interesting to see these men grappling with the desire to be seen as masculine while embracing their presentation as artistic, expressive individuals.

This fear of emasculation by society combined with the enthusiastic reception and privilege accorded them in the classical singing world was a fascinating juxtaposition which I had not expected to find. Male participants perceived singing to be something that men “just don’t do”. For the men, this view developed early in life, usually in grade-school. According to the men’s descriptions, this view may prevent men not only from choosing singing as a career, but from even admitting they’re singers once they’ve decided to pursue singing. That this occurs indicates that singers and teachers should act as they are able to dispel myths

about dominant masculinity. Dispelling the myth of men as non-singers can encourage men to embrace singing as one of many aspects of masculinity and being a man.

5.4.2 Helpful and Harmful Views of the Voice

I had expected, naively, perhaps, that the data would clearly show which aspects of voice image were helpful or harmful to the participant. Instead, I found that whether a concept was helpful or harmful changed from person to person. Many participants expressed concepts such as the centrality of voice identity, vocal monitoring, or voice as tool or self as being helpful and/or harmful to them personally.

For example, the concept of persevering at all costs to become a singer was mentioned by several participants. Yet even in this small sample the effect of this idea upon participants was not universally helpful or harmful. Future research could explore in detail what makes an aspect of voice image helpful to some individuals and harmful for others.

5.4.3 Centrality of Voice Identity Discussed

The centrality of voice to the individual's identity did not appear to be an indicator of their relationship with their voice. This surprised me, as I expected that decentralizing the singing identity would lead to a healthier relationship with the voice. While many individuals, such as Blueberry, found that diversifying their identity or developing a sense of self beyond singing identity (i.e. I am not singing, I am myself) improved their mental well-being others, such as Sabrina, found immense comfort and purpose in primarily identifying with their voices. Future research could explore why this occurs.

All participants talked about singing as young children. All received positive feedback from family, elementary and secondary music teachers, and peers. These experiences led to positive affiliation as “singers,” which previous research has indicated (Abril, 2007; Apfelstadt, 1989; Schumann, 2014; Stephens, 2012). A notable exception to this is Larry, who felt his pre-pubescent soprano voice wasn’t “manly”, although he labelled that as toxic masculinity and an attitude he had overcome. All participants reported positive involvement with singing in school choirs, church choirs, and some sang competitively in music festivals.

Some participants talked about singing as their only “thing”. Blueberry talked about this, as well as Bruce, who said his parents put him in a church choir because he wasn’t good at sports. Several singers mentioned music as an alternative to sports, which I thought was interesting. Larry, who did both sports and music activities in high school, is a notable exception to this. As these participants grew up, singing became a more central part of their identity. Blueberry said,

[W]hen I was younger I would’ve said that it provided me with fulfillment and a sense of identity. But that’s not true for me anymore [...] And now my identity is not what I do, but who I am. And I think that’s just a healthier mindset to have in general no matter what your job or thing is.

This centrality of voice identity was harmful for some participants. When singing was not able to fulfill her and she was not as successful in university as she’d assumed, Blueberry experienced a crisis. In Blueberry’s case, it led to perfectionistic tendencies, an emotional breakdown, recognition of clinical depression, and recovery. For Blueberry, part of recovering a

sense of self and singer identity was de-centralizing singing as her identity. Realizing that singing was an activity, not an identity, and securing her identity in “who I am” instead of “what I do” helped Blueberry’s mental well-being.

In contrast to this, Sabrina identified highly as a singer. Sabrina said, “I’ve always felt that my voice is me, which is to my detriment in many many ways.” For her, the self and the voice were closely linked, and her identity as a singer was a central part of her sense of self. Jessica had a similar view regarding her voice, “It is a central and grounding part of my identity, whether I want it to be or not [...] It’s inextricably connected to both my physical and mental, and my emotional health.” For these participants, the voice was central to their identity.

Sabrina embraced her singer identity whole-heartedly but Jessica, who suffered from vocal injury and dysfunction, found her singer identity was more fraught and complex. Although that identity began to fade for her as her condition persisted and she sang less, the fear of singing, the grief of losing enjoyment of something that had been a comfort to her through difficult life experiences kept voice as a “Central and grounding” part of her identity. The singer identity for Jessica seemed more like a scar than a comfort. Identity as a singer seemed like a residual identity, one which she no longer prioritized. For Jessica, discussion of singer identity recalled painful memories of days when singing was more central to her identity than it was now. Singer identity perhaps recalled a sense of failure to become the singer she had hoped to be.

5.4.3.1 Vocal Monitoring

Vocal monitoring was another example of a helpful and harmful view of the voice. Sandgren's (2002) study associated vocal monitoring with unhealthy coping mechanism, but my participants did not all find this. For some singers, vocal monitoring and actions taken to care for the voice sometimes seemed like a burden. For others, it was a privilege and a source of comfort and pride. Sandgren describes singer's vocal monitoring in the following way,

Psychological problems concerned mainly the singers' constant worry about indisposition. Indisposition was described as an inability to sing satisfactorily or not at all. The worry was characterized by recurrent thoughts about and fears of losing their potential as singers and consequently failing to meet their own expectations or those of the audience and other important persons... This worry can also be interpreted as a fear of illness, i.e., hypochondriacal tendencies. These fears were reflected by irrational behaviors such as excessive use of vitamins and herbal products and avoiding places where they believed there was a risk of exposure to colds and other infections. (p. 13)

Sandgren categorizes singer's vocal monitoring and care as "hypochondriacal", a term which a couple of my participants also used. For participants like John and Bruce, caring for the voice was stressful and tiring. John even described times when he relaxed his vigilance against his frequently fatigued, "wimpy" vocal folds. When he decided to go against the self-imposed code of vocal care, he found relief and a sense of freedom which he envied in non-singers. Yet for Catherine and Sabrina, they expressed the monitoring and care required by their profession as singers as a privilege.

For singers, vocal monitoring brought both comfort and frustration. Singers sometimes envied those who did not have to worry about their voices or the impact it could have on their professional lives; sometimes they found comfort and pride in maintaining and monitoring their voices. This theme is an example of a helpful and harmful aspect of voice image.

5.4.3.2 Voice as Other

When asked “Do you ever think of your voice as a different entity from yourself? (e.g. do you ever talk about your voice as having thoughts or feelings or a health status that is different than that of the rest of your body?),” some participants saw that they viewed their voice as separate from themselves. Later in our conversation participants would catch themselves referring to their voices as a different entity. Whether or not they noticed, all participants referred to their voices as having thoughts, feelings, or an existence apart from themselves. Sometimes the voice was expressed in relational contexts, like a friend, or a romantic partner. Sometimes the voice was an object like a sweater or a tool. These varying conceptualizations seemed to have no inherent indication of trauma or wellness. Sometimes, separation seemed to be used as a coping mechanism against trauma and sometimes seemed to promote detachment of an aspect of the self which existed primarily in the professional sphere.

Diana said she thought about her voice as separate from herself, stating “My voice is a tool a lot of the time. It is not even an instrument.” For her music therapy work, she chose to view her voice as a therapeutic tool and to separate it from her sense of self. John stated, “One time I was like, “Oh, my voice is not doing this, it won’t let me do this blah blah” and [my vocal

coach] was like “*You’re* doing that!” [laughs] He was like “You have control over that! Your voice is not separate from you!”” It appears that John may have separated himself from his voice to cushion from failure or responsibility for the actions of the voice. This separation may have helped him deflect unwanted feelings, but it also seemed to prevent him from engaging with his own voice and body.

For Dorian, it enabled him to feel that he could objectively look at his voice to improve or use it in his work, like a craftsman with his tools. I believe this view was born out of an expression of professionalism as a teacher and professional singer. For Diana, I believe the concept of the voice as a tool was a protective mechanism. She had traumatic experiences around her voice not being good enough in ways she could not change. This experience seemed to deeply impact her because it came at a time when her voice and sense of self were closely related. This seemed to also communicate to Diana that if her voice wasn’t good enough, she wasn’t good enough. By viewing the voice as a tool, she could separate it from her sense of self and feel free to use it in her music therapy practice without addressing the lingering emotional trauma of her undergraduate experiences. This separation allowed her to feel safe in her vocal usage. By viewing the voice as a tool and other, it could no longer reflect on her self-worth. This highlights the need for further research in therapy for professional voice users who have traumatic experiences around their voices.

For some singers, incorporating the voice as part of the self was the path toward a sense of well-being. Sabrina described her voice as unavoidably a part of herself and she embraced that concept. Many participants seemed to embody a dichotomy of viewing the voice as part of

themselves, yet also separate from themselves. To receive criticism from teachers and others, separation of the voice from the self was necessary. In some singers, like Blueberry, Katy Lane, Diana, and Dorian this objectification of the voice promoted perfectionism, acted as a shield against traumatic experiences, or encouraged a work-life balance when the voice was viewed as a tool for work. For other singers like Sabrina, Catherine, and Jessica, incorporating the voice as part of the self led to a sense of well-being, self-compassion, and resilience against criticism.

The varied views of the voice as part of the self or separate from the self warrant further exploration in future research. For singers and teachers, I believe the recommended course of action at this stage is to recognize the existence of voice image and the importance of a person's relationship toward their voice. There is peril at this early stage that teachers may cause harm by trying to rectify voice image in others. Further research is needed to develop an understanding of why views may be helpful or harmful. Additionally, research is needed to develop tools for singers to assess their own voices and for teachers to help their students develop a healthy voice image.

5.4.3.3 Persevere at All Costs

Sabrina, Catherine, and Katy Lane all mentioned being told "If you can do anything else, you should do that." Sabrina mentioned a time when an adjudicator told her "Never give up! It will be very difficult, but never give up!" Singers were expected to persevere through the harsh professional climate, through rejection, competition, failure, poverty, overwork, and financial instability. For Sabrina, this exhortation to never give up and to seek other work if singing wasn't her first love only steeled her resolve. For Catherine, she chose a singing life

because she wanted to. She felt confident she would be able to incorporate singing and other life goals. For Katy Lane, the pressure to persevere no matter the personal cost was crushing.

These singers responded differently to similar ideas around perseverance in the performance field. In some cases, it acted as fuel to the passion of pursuing singing. For others it seemed hyperbolic statement of dedication when choosing a singing career was motivation enough. In another situation, the pressure to persevere at all costs encouraged mental illness, giving up other important dreams, and no work-life balance or separation. This perseverance, or lack thereof, relates to the centrality of voice image. Participants who viewed singing as the only thing they could do tended to feel more pressure to persevere at the cost of other dreams. Those participants whose singing identity was decentralized were able to persevere when they felt they were able to achieve balance with other identities and life goals.

5.5 Theme Interrelation

Implications of voice image as developed in this study primarily concerns classically trained singers who are still in music school or performing primarily in music theatre or classical singing. Many themes and sub-themes were interrelated on a wide variety of levels. In this section, I will highlight several of the most prominent interrelated themes.

Sexism and Coping. The theme of sexism contains aspects of emasculation, the fungibility of women, and women's sound and body. Living and participating in a culture of policing of sound and body, and sexism expressed through exalting men and belittling women had deep effects. My female participants frequently discussed fitting body types for their *fächer* and fierce competition for roles.

Sexism is a rampant issue in classical music, from misogynistic roles (Quick, 2015) to incredible disparity in the roles available for men and women in the most commonly produced operas worldwide (Varga, 2017). The disparity in male-to-female voice graduates is as much as 25/75 split (Varga, 2017). In addition, music students may be at higher risk of sexual abuse from their professors (Flaherty, 2013). Recent events regarding sexual assault allegations at prestigious music schools in the United States and Canada show a culture which protects perpetrators and discourages students from speaking up (Moon, 2021; Dobrin, 2020). Women's bodies are the frequent subject of fat-shaming in opera (Pilkington, 2015; Goodyear 2019).

These reports, along with the experiences of my participants, paint a bleak picture for those struggling against sexism and fat-shaming in classical singing. The number of times I have heard participants and colleagues refer to sopranos as "a dime a dozen" is startling. Women knew they were easily replaceable, and those who represented rarer voice types accented their unique qualities to further their professional goals. Those female participants who were not rarer voice types seemed to struggle with an impossible expectation from audition panels. It is a great challenge for teachers to help singers learn to navigate such a profession in which their voices and bodies are subject to criticism and humiliation with little recourse or accountability for those in positions of powers. Not all who aspire to perform become performers; appearance is a contributing factor to professional success or failure. Teachers and university curricula could foster open dialogue about appearance-related pressures in professional contexts.

5.6 Linguistic concerns

Voice image, as a new concept, is without adequate vocabulary. Singers may not have language to express or conceptualize their experience of their voice. This difficulty in language complicates the exploration of voice image's relationship to the self. In my personal experience described at the beginning of this document, I viewed my own voice as myself. I *was* my voice. This connection and equation of singing with the self is familiar in the common statement by singers "We are our instrument" (see O'Bryan, 2015). When singing was no longer the center of my existence, I struggled to find a sense of self and identity apart from singing and my voice. It is my intent that this research will begin the development of language to express a person's experience of their own voice. However, this vocabulary will require much further development. In the current study, an inability to verbally express their experience may have impacted the development of the themes.

5.7 Limitations

This study was limited by a small sample size which represents a tiny fraction of singers. In this interest of preserving anonymity, this study did not provide many demographic details about participants. Particularly, this study failed to collect gender identity information or ask participants about their pronouns. Gender was assumed by the researcher; this is acknowledged as a grave error.

It is very important to acknowledge that these themes are much more interrelated than I have been able to describe in this monograph. Many themes interact with one another on a variety of levels. Decisions were made in order to clarify aspects of participants' experiences as

I understood them, but I was simply unable to flesh out all significant data. I truly did not know what to expect from these semi-structured interviews, but I found the depth and richness of the data far exceeded my humble abilities to realize in a way which reflected its full complexity. It is my hope that future research will further illuminate and develop relationships among these themes and others I have not explored.

5.8 Contribution and Impact of this Study

This study's significance spans several domains. First, I have identified voice image as a useful construct and provided evidence for it through the lived experiences of these participants. Second, I have shown that this concept is relevant to singers yet is not covered in pedagogy texts. Due to its potential impact on singers this construct should be considered a necessary part of vocal curriculum. Teachers should be encouraged to think creatively about how to incorporate this idea into their teaching.

This research has significant implications for vocal pedagogy. There is little information about the relationship between the voice and the self in vocal pedagogy texts. The consideration of that relationship is, I believe, an essential part of developing healthy and resilient singers. As such, pedagogy texts provide an ideal method of dissemination and discussion of this concept. Incorporating this concept into vocal pedagogy will establish voice image as an integral part of vocal health. It is my hope that the present study will encourage singers and teachers of singing to explore and question their own voice-self relationship, and to create supportive spaces to discuss that relationship and develop it in a positive direction.

This study provides a foundation for a plethora of future research. Further development is needed on the construct of voice image. Research could also explore how we can encourage a positive relationship towards one's own voice. This could be done through larger and more diverse samples to further illuminate what voice image is and how it is constructed. It could also explore voice image through interviews and surveys. Potential samples could include singers who did not train classically or at a university level, teachers of singing, other professional voice users such as motivational speakers, actors (stage, film, and voice actors). Other potential samples could include transgender and non-binary persons, including those who have undergone hormone therapy treatment and those who have not done so. Future research could also develop voice image assessment tools for psychologists and vocal pedagogues.

This study provides the groundwork for future development of voice image as a concept. A grounded theory study could help develop and clarify a theory of voice image, measurements for aspects of voice image could be developed, and further exploration into the complexity of the formation of this concept in a wider variety of individuals. This study looked only at a very specific group regarding age, education, and location, and other studies could explore the variety of experiences from teachers, people younger and older than the 22-35 age range of this study, singers without university training, singers during their university training, and music professors specifically.

In some studies, participants struggled to describe their voice and did not have sufficient vocabulary to express themselves (Schumann, 2014). I hoped that by interviewing individuals

with formal education in singing I could a) avoid a lack of vocabulary to express their relationship towards their own voice and b) develop vocabulary which could be used to aid non-singers and those not formally trained in singing to adequately express their voice image. While a glossary of terms is not the aim of this study, further research can build upon the themes and sub-themes in this study to help others express their ideas of their relationship to their voices

6 Conclusion

This study sought to develop a concept of voice image. Voice image is a complex expression of the relationship between the self and one's voice. It includes aural perception, identity as a singer or non-singer, sociocultural aspects of being a singer, and feelings, beliefs, and actions around the voice. Through thematic analysis, this study identified four primary themes which could be elements of voice image. These themes are The Box, Qualities of- or Barriers to- Success, Singer/voice Relationship, and Coping with Threats to Voice Image. These four themes represent elements of the relationship to the voice. These themes provide a framework upon which further research can build. I firmly believe voice image is a tool which can help singers and many others productively dialogue about their relationship with their voice, furthering personal happiness and wellness. This tool should be incorporated as part of an holistic approach to vocal pedagogy. It is my hope that further studies will develop voice image as an holistic way to view the voice's relationship to the self.

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8 Glossary

Baritone: A male voice of medium range.

Bass: A male voice of low range.

Coloratura: A *fach* classification. Coloratura singers are noted for easy agility in their high ranges. Coloraturas are able to sing fast, high passages with ease. In this document “coloratura” most often refers to a coloratura soprano.

Dramatic: A *fach* classification. Dramatic voices are usually dark in timbre and very powerful. Examples include dramatic soprano, dramatic tenor, etc.

Fach: A German system of classifying types of singing voices for classical music, especially opera. The *fach* system allows singers to communicate which operatic roles they can sing, and is determined by vocal timbre, complete range, comfortable range (*tessitura*), and other factors.

Grounded Theory: A qualitative research method. Grounded theory aims to develop a theory based on the data collected. This approach does not attempt to fit data into a framework developed by the researcher. For more information see Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Harris, 2015; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007.

Lyric: A *fach* classification. Lyric voices are usually of medium weight (e.g. not as dark in timbre as dramatic voice types). Examples include: Lyric tenor, lyric baritone, lyric mezzo)

Researcher Reflexivity: “Researcher reflexivity is a type of critical reflection about the position you are taking as a researcher and how you have taken this stance into account in your research.” (Collett, 2018)

Soprano: A female voice of high range.

Soubrette: Soubrette is a *fach* of light soprano voice.

Tenor: A male voice of high range.

Mezzo-soprano (mezzo): A female voice of mid-to-low range.

Vocal weight: A way to classify an aural perception of a singer’s voice. Vocal weight is like the spectrum of vocal lightness or darkness. Weight refers to volume, intensity, richness of tone, and agility.

Zwischenfach: Literally “Between *fächer*”. A voice that does not fit into the *fach* system and is usually between two *fächer*.

Appendix A: Voice Image Interview Schedule

Introduction

This study wants to explore singers' relationship with their voices. Specifically, their personal thoughts, feelings, beliefs, actions, and experiences regarding their voices. Please feel free to go into as much detail as you are comfortable doing. I want to hear about your experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings about being a singer and its impact on your life. I might ask questions to clarify an aspect of your answer, I want to ensure that I know what you mean when using vocabulary (especially vocabulary around singing) that I might use slightly differently. I want to remind you that you can skip or refuse to answer any question at any time during this interview.

I. Background

1. Do you identify as a professional voice user?
2. Do you identify as a singer?
3. What other roles do you have which involve your voice or singing skill? (e.g. teacher, choir director, any type of public speaking)
4. What is your voice type?
5. Have you every undergone a voice-type or fach change?
 - a. What was that experience like for you?
 - b. What are the advantages/disadvantages of being your voice type?
 - c. How do you cope with the disadvantages?

- d. How do the advantages benefit you personally?
6. Tell me about your vocal journey.
 - a. Were you encouraged to sing growing up? Who encouraged you?
 - b. How did you come to singing?
7. Have you ever had any problems with your vocal health?
 - a. How have those problems changed the way you view your voice?
 - b. What is different after these issues?
 - c. Did you feel that you could talk to people freely about your vocal illness/recovery?

II. Personal views of the voice

1. Tell me the story of how you feel about your voice.
 - a. Tell me how you felt about your voice as it developed
2. How do you react when you hear a recording of yourself singing or speaking? How did you feel? What is different from how you perceive your speaking and singing live, if anything?
3. Do you think you can develop your own singing voice?
 - a. Why?
 - b. To what extent?
4. What do you like about your voice?
5. What do you dislike about your voice?

6. Have you ever wished you had a different voice?
7. What are the greatest challenges of being a professional voice user? How do you cope with these challenges?
8. What are the best things about being a professional voice user?
9. What do you find easy about being a singer?
10. Tell me about a time you experienced a vocal setback.
 - a. How do you care or yourself or help yourself after a vocal setback?
11. Do you have any rituals about your voice?
 - a. What do these rituals do for your mental well-being?
12. Do you ever think of your voice as a different entity from yourself? (e.g. do you ever talk about your voice as having thoughts or feelings or a health status that is different than that of the rest of your body?)
13. How do you describe your attitude (feelings) toward your voice?
14. What does an ideal version of your voice sound like?
 - a. How close are you currently to matching this ideal?
 - b. How do you feel about where your voice is right now in comparison to your ideal voice?
15. Do you ever feel that others (e.g. teachers, mentors, coaches, friends) expect or want your voice to sound a certain way?
 - a. How do you feel about those expectations?
 - b. How do you manage those expectations?

- c. Do you try to adhere to or move away from those expectations?
 - d. If there is a difference between how you think you should sound and how a teacher, mentor, or coach thinks you should sound, how do you decide who to follow?
16. What does your voice provide you?
 17. How do you care for your voice?
 18. What do you do differently because you're a singer? How do you feel about that?
 19. What would be different about your care of the voice if you were not a singer?
 20. Do you ever wish you were not a singer?

III. Important others and the voice

1. Who are your vocal role models?
 - a. Why? (for speaking and singing voice)
2. Are there others who have been influential in your growth as a singer?
 - a. Why?
3. What have you learned from your teachers outside of vocal technique?
 - a. How have they helped or hindered your growth as a singer outside of vocal technique?
4. What important information have you learned from others about your singing (such as family, peers, romantic partners, and society)?
5. Can you tell me about a time (or times!) when someone said something memorably negative about your voice?

6. Can you tell me about a time (or times!) when someone said something memorably positive about your voice?
7. How have others described your singing voice? How does this compare to how you would describe your own singing voice?

IV. Classical singing culture

1. Some teachers encourage their students to remember that their instruction is not about the student, it is about their voice.
 - a. Have you ever heard this saying before?
 - b. What do you think about this instruction?
2. Some have described singing as an “athletic event”. What are your thoughts about singing as an athletic event?
3. Some have described singers as elite athletes.
 - a. Do you think of yourself as an elite athlete?
 - b. Why or why not?
4. Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your voice type?
5. Do you think there is a hierarchy among voice types? Can you elaborate on why you think this?
6. What do you think are the dialogues and stereotypes surrounding classical singers and different voice types?
7. How grounded in reality do you think these stereotypes are?

8. How do these stereotypes and dialogues influence how you feel about your voice?
9. What do you think are vocal ideals for your voice type?
10. Can you describe your idea of your own ideal voice?
 - a. How closely does your voice match this ideal?
 - b. How do you feel about your current voice as it relates to your ideal voice?

V. Larger societal and cultural views of the voice

1. What kinds of messages do you think society promotes about the voice (TV, movies, magazines, newspapers, etc.)?
 - a. Do you feel that you adhere to these messages?
2. If so, in what ways? If not, in what way are you different? What are your feelings about how your voice adheres or diverges from these messages?
3. Do you think there are expectations around gender and voice? How have those expectations affected you personally?
4. What taboos do you think exist around the speaking and/or singing voice?
 - a. How have those taboos affected you personally?
5. Do you think others are judging or comparing your voice to an ideal vocal concept?
 - a. How does that impact you?
6. Are you uncomfortable singing certain types of music?
 - a. Why?

b. How does that feeling contrast with the feeling of singing a type of music you are comfortable with?

VI. Closing questions:

1. Have you ever struggled to accept your voice? What was that experience like for you?
2. What advice would you give to someone who is struggling to accept their voice?
3. What does the term "Voice Image" bring to mind?

Finally: Is there anything else you would like to share? If you have any thoughts, concerns, or questions, please feel free to contact me via email.

Appendix B: Complete Mind Map

The following sections represent the four main themes outlined in this document. As previously stated, the interviews were very data-rich and provided much material for further research. I wished to have the full mind map to show the extent of the complexity, the depth of the data, and to illustrate the need for further research. Items that are capitalized in title-case are part of this document. Items that are lowercase represent sub-sub etc. themes that were not directly addressed in this document. Sometimes themes are in more than one place (i.e. “illness reflects on singer”), this merely indicates that the theme has aspects that could be conceptualized in a variety of ways.

Figure 5: Simplified Mind Map

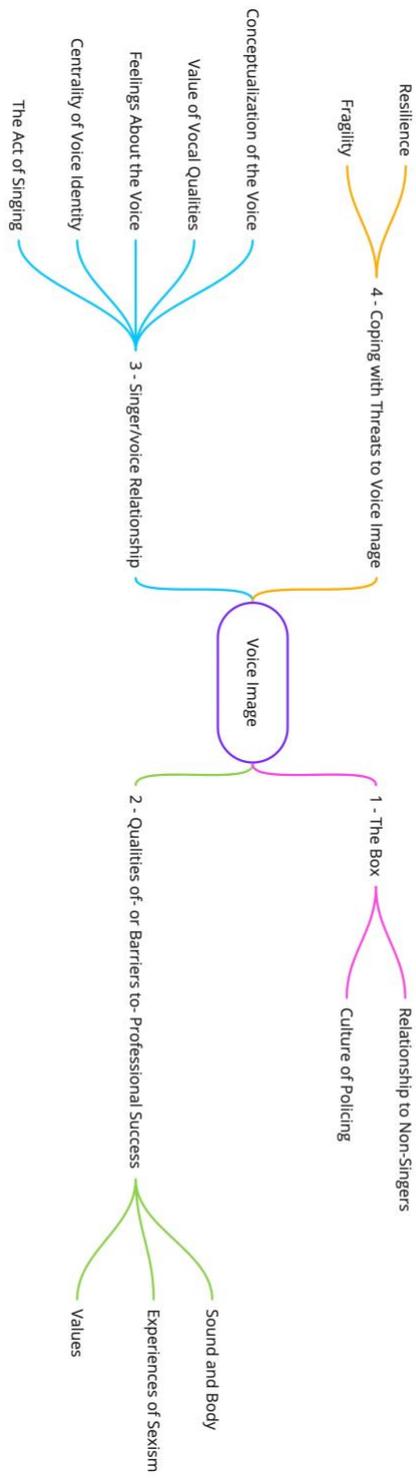


Figure 6: Mind Map Theme 1 The Box

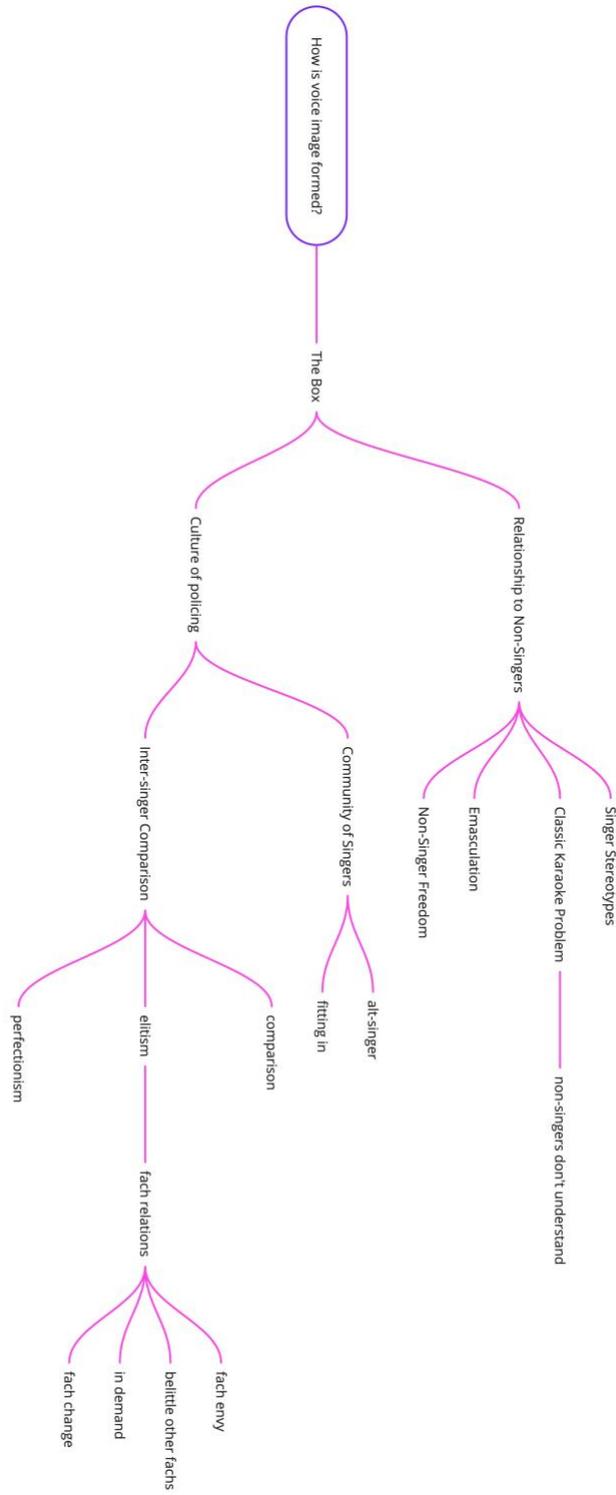


Figure 7: Mind Map Theme 2 Qualities of- or Barriers to- Professional Success

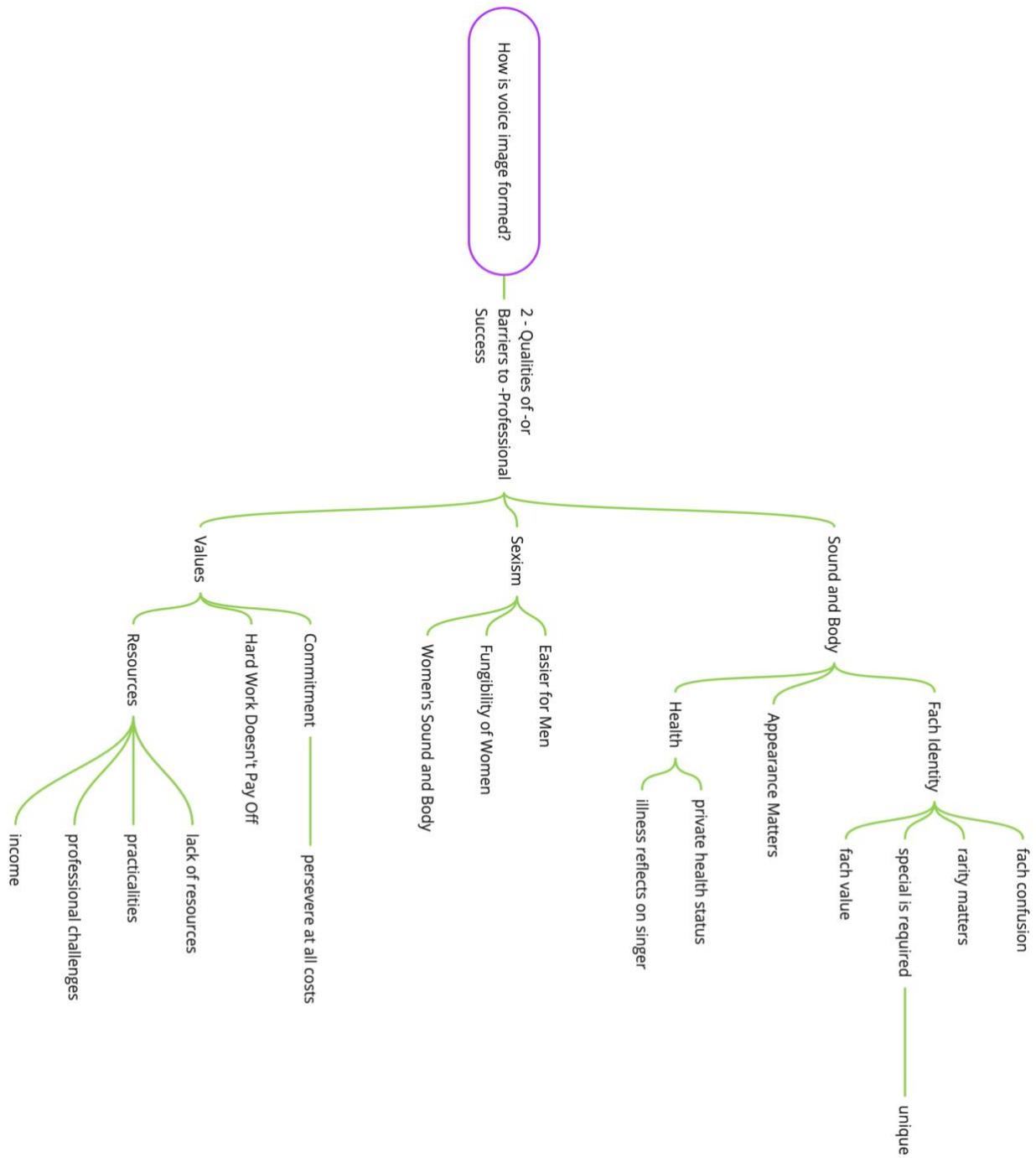


Figure 8: Mind Map Theme 3 Singer/voice Relationship

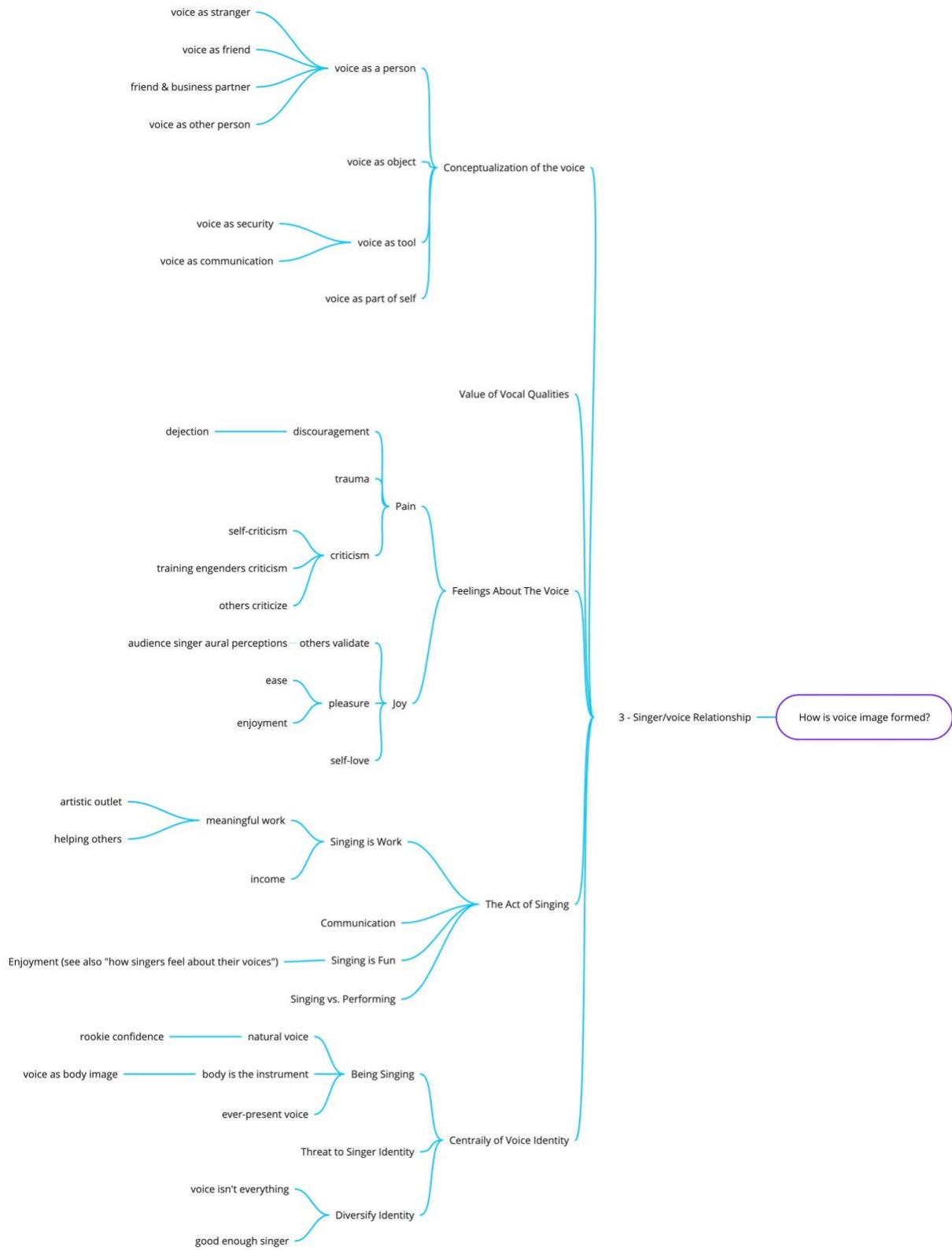
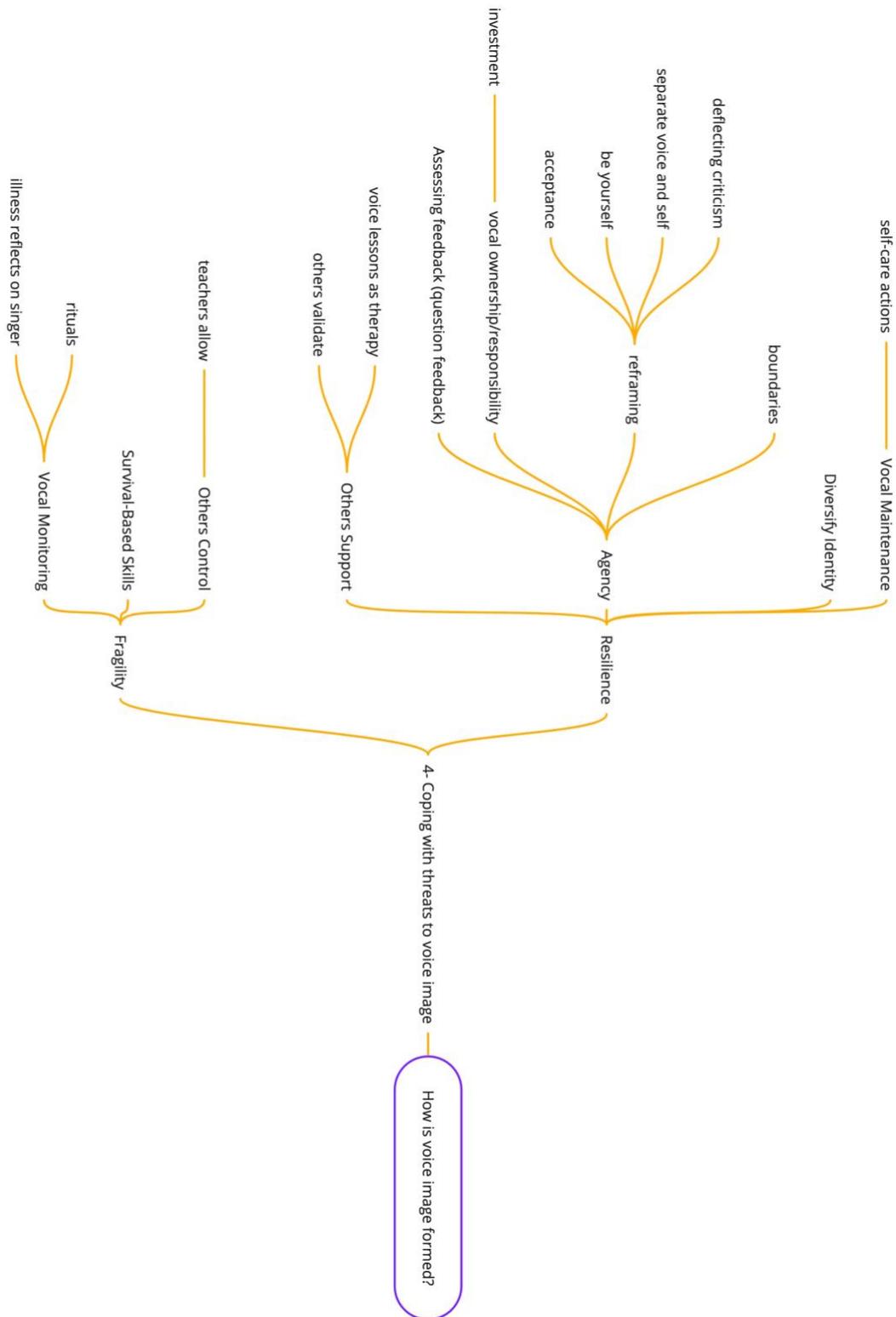


Figure 9: Mind Map Theme 4 Coping with Threats to Voice Image



9 Curriculum Vitae

Bethany Turpin (she/her)

Education

2021 anticipated **Doctor of Musical Arts**, Western University

Monograph title: "Voice Image: A Thematic Analysis"

Co-Supervisors: Dr. Sophie Roland (Mus.) & Dr. Rachel Calogero (Psych.)

2014 **Master of Music**, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Supervisor: Dr. Caroline Schiller

2011 **Bachelor of Music**, Memorial University of Newfoundland

- Research Interests
 - Psychology of singing
 - Psychology of singer identity
 - Vocal pedagogy
 - Contemporary art song
 - Extended vocal techniques
 - Music for unaccompanied voice
 - Vocal works of Olivier Messiaen

Employment Experience

Graduate Student Research Internship, Western University May 2020-Aug 2020

- Assisting professors in modifying their in-person courses for online instruction as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Technological skills: Learning Western's OWL platform for online learning
 - Course development (Vocal Pedagogy): Developing updated course handouts and online articles
 - Administration: Advising professors in reformatting their courses for online learning, finding learning resources requested by professors, digitizing articles and course handouts
- Courses included the following:

Undergraduate courses

Lyric Diction I [2942y]
 Vocal Pedagogy [4961y]
 Doctoral Piano Pedagogy [4959y]
 Clarinet Literature and Pedagogy
 [4966y]

Graduate/Doctoral courses

Lyric Diction I [9596y]
 Doctoral Vocal Literature: Opera
 [9834b]
 Vocal Pedagogy [9510y]
 Acting for Singers [9504b/9841b]
 Doctoral Piano Pedagogy [9822y]
 Clarinet Literature and Pedagogy
 [9549y]

Assistant Professor, Dalhousie University 2021-2022

Choral Director, first year Aural Skills [MU 1272], Voice Clinic for the Theatre [MU 1081]

- Directing Dalhousie Chorus and vocal chamber ensemble, Ora
 - Repertoire selection
 - Rehearsal planning and leading
 - Development of new chamber ensemble, Ora
 - Administration and correspondence
- Teaching: MU 1272 Aural Skills, MU 1081 Voice Clinic for the Theatre
 - Course development: course curriculum development, rubric creation, online platform creation and maintenance through Brightspace
 - Administration: grade submission, student correspondence, office hours, additional student meetings, advocating for student accessibility needs
- Service: Creative Team
 - Season concert planning
 - 2022-2021 concert season planning

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Western University

Sept 2016-Apr 2020

Lyric Diction I – German and Italian Diction [2942y] Dr. Todd Wieczorek

- Teaching: Preparation and delivery of portions of the class, administering oral exams, invigilating final exam
- Grading: grading oral and written quizzes, exams, handouts, and assigning grades
- Course Development: Creating rubrics for assignments, quizzes, and exams
- Administration: Paperwork and handout organization, office hours, correspondence with students and professor, uploading assignments to university online learning platform

Vocal Pedagogy [4961y] – Prof. Torin Chiles

- Teaching: Preparation and delivery of portions of the class, invigilating final exam
- Course development: Developing and communicating expectations for final paper, creating rubric for final paper
- Grading: Grading final papers, written exams, and quizzes
- Administration: Organization and booking of examination room, paperwork and handout organization, office hours, correspondence with students and professor

General Integrated Musicianship [1639] (sightsinging) – Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick**General Integrated Musicianship [2639] (sightsinging) – Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick**

- Teaching: Teaching course sections, administering exams and quizzes
- Grading: Grading quizzes, midterms, and final exams, assigning course grades
- Administration: Paperwork and handout organization, office hours, uploading course grades to university online learning platform, requesting and organizing anonymous student feedback regarding in-class experience
- Interpersonal: Liaise between students and professor, providing support and accommodation for students

Contemporary Music Studio [3976a] – Dr. John Hess

- Coaching: Coaching chamber ensembles, conducting chamber ensembles in rehearsal and performance, coaching students on extended vocal techniques, coaching students on interpretation of contemporary and atonal works, coaching students on interpretation of alternate notation and graphic scores
- Administration: Organization and booking of rehearsal spaces, organization of dress rehearsals and performances, handout organization, concert program creation and organization, correspondence with students and professor

21st Century Musician [3960a] – Prof. Sharon Wei

- Teaching: Presenting lecture on mental resilience and growth-mindset in learning, preparation and delivery of portions of the class, coaching students' group work
- Coaching: Coaching chamber ensembles, stage management for performances
- Administration: Scheduling and booking rehearsal spaces, paperwork and handout organization, office hours, receiving late submissions, correspondence

Graduate**Lyric Diction I [9596y] – Dr. Todd Wiczorek**

- Teaching: Preparation and delivery of portions of the class, administering aural exams, invigilating final exam
- Grading: Grading aural and written quizzes, exams, handouts, and assigning grades
- Course Development: Creating rubrics for assignments, quizzes, and exams
- Administration: Paperwork and handout organization, office hours, uploading assignments to university online learning platform, correspondence with students and professor

Vocal Pedagogy [9510y] – Prof. Torin Chiles

- Teaching: Preparation and delivery of portions of the class, invigilating final exam
- Course development: Developing and communicating expectations for final paper, creating rubric for final paper
- Grading: Grading final papers, written exams, and quizzes
- Administration: Organization and booking of examination room, paperwork and handout organization, office hours, correspondence with students and professor

Contemporary Music Studio [9507a] – Dr. John Hess

- Coaching: Coaching chamber ensembles, conducting chamber ensembles in rehearsal and performance, coaching students on extended vocal techniques, coaching students on interpretation of contemporary and atonal works, coaching students on interpretation of non-standard notation and graphic scores
- Administration: Organization and booking of rehearsal spaces, organization of dress rehearsals and performances, handout organization, concert program creation and organization, correspondence with students and professor

21st Century musician [9721a] – Prof. Sharon Wei

- Teaching: Class lecture on mental resilience, preparation and delivery of portions of the class, coaching students' group work
- Coaching: coaching students' chamber ensembles, stage management for final performance
- Administration: Scheduling and booking rehearsal spaces, paperwork and handout organization, office hours, email contact with students and teachers, receiving late submissions, correspondence with students and professor

Bethany Turpin Private Music Studio

2011-present

- Voice instruction for beginner, intermediate, advanced levels
- Piano instruction, beginner

- Teaching: Repertoire selection, lesson planning including individual vocalise design, recording accompaniment tracks, student project planning in theory, critical thinking about music, and music history
- Collaboration: Collaboration with accompanists and other teachers for yearly recitals and Kiwanis Music Festival classes
- Administration: Financial management, graphic design, creating syllabus documents, corresponding with students and caregivers, social media management, attendance spreadsheets
- Advertisement and Media: Graphic design, social media advertising, newsletter design and distribution

Co-Founder and Media Relations, Little London Community Opera

2017-2018

- Administration: Rehearsal scheduling, box office management, coordinating transportation and storage of sets, props, and costumes
- Executive Administration: Season planning, audition planning, hiring singers and instrumentalists
- Management: transportation coordination, transportation and storage of props and costumes
- Advertising and promotion: Graphic design, logo design, social media advertising, newsletter design and distribution

On-Site Coordinator and Performer, *Opera RoadShow* Apr 2015-Jun 2015

- Management: Liaising with school administration when on-site, managing performers on-site, in rehearsals, and during provincial travel; overseeing storage and transportation of sets, props, and costumes
- Administration: Coordinating touring schedule, scheduling performances, maintaining schedule spreadsheet; correspondence with host schools, performers, and program director
- Performing: Hosting and mediating Q&A with school assemblies, hosting educational workshop for high school music classes, performing opera

Creative Activities

Operatic Roles

- 2020 Soloist, *Beethoven Mass in C maj. op. 86*, Fanshawe Chorus
- 2019 Mrs. Gleaton, *Susannah*, Peck Productions
- 2018 Romilda, *Serse*, Accademia Europea Dell'Opera, Italy
- 2018 Soloist, Mozart Requiem, London Music Machine
- 2018 Pamina, *Die Zauberflöte*, Abridged Opera
- 2017 Micaëla, *Carmen*, Western University Opera
- 2017 Ruth, *Ruth*, Arcady
- 2015 Rusalka, *Rusalka: A Mermaid's Tale*, Opera RoadShow
- 2014 Dido, *Dido and Aeneas*, Memorial University (MUN) Opera
- 2013 Fiordiligi, *Così fan tutte*, MUN Opera
- 2012 Soloist, NSYO Fall Concert, Newfoundland Symophy Youth Orchestra
- 2011 Soloist, *Seven Last Words of Christ*, Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra
- 2011 La sorcière, *Le nez de la sorcière* (world premiere) Opera RoadShow
- 2011 L'écureuil and La princesse, *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, MUN Opera
- 2010 Pamina, *Die Zauberflöte*, MUN Opera
- 2009 Mom, Witch, Dewfairy, Sandman, *Hansel and Gretel*, Opera RoadShow
- 2009 Geraldine, *A Hand of Bridge*, MUN Opera
- 2008 Soloist, Choral Fantasy Op. 80

Recitals

- 2020 I Speak Whale, Musical Meditations (online concert)
- 2019 Songs that Make Grown Women Cry, DMA Milestone Recital
- 2019 I Speak Whale, London Opera Guild
- 2019 London Opera Guild Concert Series, London Opera Guild
- 2019 Forest City Opera Pub, Storm Stayed Brewery
- 2019 Elizabeth Lepock, soprano, DMA Milestone Recital
- 2019 Irish-Language Art Song Project, Western University
- 2019 Raymond Truong, collaborative pianist, DMA Milestone Recital
- 2019 Caleb Mora, collaborative pianist, DMA Lecture Recital
- 2018 Je Suis Lyrique, Accademia Europea Dell'Opera, Italy

2018 London Opera Guild Concert Series, London Opera Guild
2018 Kimly Wang, collaborative pianist, Masters Recital
2017 Songs of Canadian Women Composers, Western University
2017 Western Performs! Concert Series, Western University
2017 Canadian Song Composers Concert, Western University
2017 Voices of Autumn, Arcady
2017 Final Concert, Waterloo Contemporary Music Sessions
2017 London Opera Guild Concert Series, London Opera Guild
2017 I Speak Whale, DMA Recital
2017 In Concert: Bethany Hynes and Karen Turpin, Yarmouth Museum
2017 Facing Forward/Looking Back, Memorial University of Newfoundland
2017 Opera Gala, German-Canadian Club
2016 Opera Gala, German-Canadian Club
2014 Somewhere Along the Line, Newfound Music Festival
2014 Masters Graduating Recital, Memorial University of Newfoundland
2013 Masters Recital, Memorial University of Newfoundland
2012 So This Is Love, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Selected Directors/Coaches

2018 Stephen Hopkins
2018 Enza Ferrari
2018 James Conway
2018 Allison Grant
2017-2020 Simone Luti
2017-2019 John Hess

Teachers

2018-present Sophie Roland
2016-2017 Patricia Green
2012-2014 Caroline Schiller
2007-2011 Jane Leibel

Presentations & Guest Lecturing

Voice Image: how vocal identity impacts singers' self-image Dalhousie FSPA Research Forum	2021
Running a Private Voice Studio , Dalhousie FSPA Vocal Pedagogy.	2021
Poster Presentation & Lightning Talk NATS Ontario Vocal Showcase	2019
Susannah Revisited: A Panel Discussion Unitarian Fellowship of London of Carlisle Floyd's <i>Susannah</i>	2019
Class Voice: Introduction to Voice Image Laurier Uni. Faculty of Music	2018 & 2019
Introduction to Grounded Theory SOBR Lab	2018
Introduction to Voice Image Lunchtime Research Forum DWFOM*	2018
Three Minute Thesis Western University	2018
The Basics of Singing for Choir Workshop La Rose Des Vents Choir	2013
*Don Wright Faculty of Music	

Professional Development

Contemporary Voice Practicum Dr. Shannon Coates	2021
Vocal Ped POPUP: Dr. Shannon Coates Adolescent/Expanding Voice	2021
Vocal Ped POPUP: Dr. Shannon Coates Neurodiversity in the Voice Studio	2021
An <i>Affective</i> Guide to Ornamenting Halifax Institute of Trad. and Early Music Handel's Arias	2021
NATS Eastern Region Conference NATS Eastern Region	2021
Talking About Race Western University	2021
Bias Awareness Training Western Student Experience	2021
Training Transgender Performers NATS Eastern Region	2021
March Vocal Ped Power Up: CCM Styles Dr. Shannon Coates	2020
Operating a Private Studio Student NATS Western University	2020
Adjudicating and Masterclass Leading Student NATS Western University	2018
Belting is your Birthright! KW Musical Productions	2017
Syllabus Development Seminar UWO Center for Teaching and Learning	2017

Teaching Assistant Training Program UWO Center for Teaching and Learning 2016

Awards and Scholarships

Forest City London Music Award Winner - Vocal Solo 2020
Ontario Graduate Scholarship 2018-2019
London Opera Guild Scholarship 2019
Three-Minute Thesis at Western University - 3rd place 2018
Jack Richardson London Music Awards – Classical Voice [nomination] 2018
Graduate Student Teaching Award [nomination] 2017 & 2019
First Place, Great Lakes Regional Auditions, NATS 2016

Volunteer Activity

Co-President NATS, Canadian Atlantic Provinces Chapter 2021-2023
Adjudicator NATS, New England Region 2021
Bi/Pan/Queer Group Facilitator Generous Space Ministries 2020
Music Director Yarmouth Arts Regional Council 2020
Adjudicator NATS, Ontario Chapter 2020
Juror East Coast Music Awards 2015-2017
Music Director West End Baptist Church 2013
Coordinator Carolling for the Canadian Cancer Society 2011-2012

Committee Activity

Creative Team, Dalhousie Fountain School of Performing Arts 2021-2022
Performance Representative Society of Graduate Students in Music 2018 & 2020
Program Committee Western U. Graduate Symposium on Music 2017 & 2020

Professional Affiliations

Nova Scotia Registered Music Teachers Association 2020-present
National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) 2015-present