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To cite this article: Rockford Sansom (2024) Practitioner Research in Voice Studies, Voice and Speech Review, 18:2, 199-205, DOI: [10.1080/23268263.2024.2361557](https://doi.org/10.1080/23268263.2024.2361557)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268263.2024.2361557>



Published online: 04 Jun 2024.



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FORUM



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Introduction to the VSR Special Issues as Books

Voice and Speech Review (VSR) has been fortunate to have published three previous Special Issues as Books (SPIB). In essence, Routledge Press, the journal's publisher collects articles from the VSR and publishes them in book form to offer the articles to a more mainstream audience. The first was *The History of Voice Pedagogy: Multidisciplinary Reflections on Training* (Sansom 2019b, 2019c), which examined the history of the voice field from an interdisciplinary perspective. This SPIB was a single Special Issue 13.1. The second SPIB, *Vocal Traditions: Training in the Performing Arts*, was a collection of articles over a six-year period. This book explored the 18 most influential voice training techniques and methodologies of the past 100 years, highlighting historically important voice teachers, contemporary leaders in the field, and rising schools of thought (Sansom 2022a, 2023).

The third SPIB is still under production. *Voice and Identity* explores the evolving nature of voice training in the performing arts. The authors in this international compilation look through both practical and theoretical lenses as they connect voice studies to equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging and to gender and gender diversity. The SPIB comes primarily from Special Issue 16.2; however, additional articles were added to increase the scope of the SPIB (Sansom 2022b).

Practitioner Research in Voice Studies

Practitioner Research in Voice Studies is the fourth SPIB. This book aims to support the artist-scholar who wishes to design and publish research in voice. The book is useful for the novice, who wants tangible tools to begin, and for the more experienced researcher, who wants varying perspectives on how voice scholarship has evolved. The book contains three sections:

- Conducting Practitioner Research in Voice Studies
- Getting Started
- Practitioner Research Examples.

The first two sections outline major themes, debates, and research approaches in the field, and many chapters offer step-by-step guides and tips. The final section presents example

research articles that highlight numerous methods including qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, action research, performance as research, practice as research, literature review, narrative review, and other kinds of multidisciplinary practices.

Utilizing research ideas and examples from a variety of voice disciplines, this book will be of interest to those studying voice, speech, singing, acting, public speaking, voice science, communication, music, theatre, and performance. Those writing a dissertation or thesis may also draw from this text. This book pulls from Special Issue 18.2, but many articles were added from issues over the past few years, particularly to expand the practitioner research examples.

I had the great privilege of serving as the Editor of the VSR for seven years between 2017–2022 and in 2024. During that time, one of my greatest joys came from writing about how to create original research in voice and showcasing original research in voice. *Practitioner Research in Voice Studies* does both, as it pulls from articles throughout this season of the VSR and organizes these articles into a collection aimed at supporting artist-scholars who want to create original research. Ultimately, this essay functions as the introduction to that SPIB, and in the following sections, I outline the table of contents and the articles within it. My hope is that the text encourages and inspires further research in the field of voice studies.

Exploring the Table of Contents

Conducting Practitioner Research in Voice Studies

Section 1 is called Conducting Practitioner Research in Voice Studies. In this section, the authors write *about* practitioner research. The goal of this section is to present a variety of perspectives on how to conduct practitioner research. What is especially exciting about these articles is that they are in “conversation” with each other. Since the articles were published over several years, the authors reference each other—affirming and debating ideas. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field and the broad scope of “voice,” there is no single way to conduct practitioner research, so the articles do not offer definitive answers or mandates. Rather, they offer supportive guidance and lines of inquiry. The articles in this section are:

- “Research and Practice in Voice Studies: Searching for a Methodology” by Daron Oram.
- “Voicing a Practitioner Research Methodology: Further Framing the Conversation” by Deborah Winter.
- “Insights, Considerations, and Suggestions for the Practitioner-Researcher in Voice Studies” by Sophie Scott.
- “Exploring the Narrative: Voice Practitioner Research and the Literature Review Process” by Deborah Winter.
- “‘The Full Monty’: Taking a Fully Qualitative Approach to Research *By Singers, With Singers, For Singers*” by Melissa Forbes.

Oram’s (2015) article is arguably the first VSR article to formally talk about creating original research within voice studies; he explores practice as research and performance as research

as primary methodologies for the field. Winter (2021) goes into further detail and opens up many threads of research investigation. She digs into methodology both from practical and philosophical perspectives. Scott's (2022) discussion builds on these articles and is one of the most "how-to" pieces in this section with many step-by-step instructions. Winter (2023) examines the fullness of literature reviews within the field and offers keen observations into practice. Forbes (2024) narrows into qualitative research and seeks to empower artists to engage in this methodology. All these articles aim to demystify the research process and serve as citable methodology articles for those conducting original research.

Section 2: Getting Started

Section 2 is called Getting Started. The name is self-evident. For the budding researcher, I advise reading this section before Section 1, since these articles aim to support new artist-scholars. The articles in this section are:

- "A Guide to Publishing in the *Voice and Speech Review*" by Rockford Sansom.
- "Voice Research Reflections: Tips for the Artist-Scholar" by Rockford Sansom.

I considered placing this section first; however, the original intent of these articles is to support the artist or student who was truly beginning their research journey, which is not necessarily the primary audience or topic of this book. I wrote these articles to encourage authorships to the VSR, but they are also strong tools for anyone new to research, even beyond writing for a single journal. The first article, "A Guide to Publishing in the *Voice and Speech Review*" introduces the field of academic writing in voice in the broadest sense—broader than practitioner research specifically (Sansom 2018a). But there are many specific tools and steps for the practitioner researcher included. "Voice Research Reflections: Tips for the Artist-Scholar" is a compilation of many Editor's Notes that I wrote during my time as VSR Editor (Sansom 2024). This chapter is a cleaner and unified version of those varied articles, which may be useful to the practitioner interested in creating research:

- "'Doing Research': Understanding the Different Types of Peer-Reviewed Articles"
- "The Nature of 'Voice' in Academic Writing"
- "The 'So What' of Voice Research"
- "Voice Teacher Certification and Research: Relationships and Trends" (Sansom 2018b, 2019a, 2019d, 2021).

Section 3: Practitioner Research Examples

Section 3 is called Practitioner Research Examples. In this section, the authors demonstrate practitioner research in a variety of forms. Articles in the previous sections reference most of these articles in their analysis, but not all of them. Nevertheless, all the articles represent cutting edge ideas; many of these won *Voice and Speech Review* awards.¹ Several of these articles are based on a dissertation and thesis, and all these articles can serve as structural models for new, original research in voice. The articles in this section are:

- “Voice Training Methods in MFA Acting Programs: Preliminary Descriptive USA Data” by Marianna Rubino and Celia Stewart.
- “Impolite Birth: Theatre Voice Training and the Experience of Childbirth” by Kris Danford, Lee Roosevelt, Alexandra Vroom, Lisa Harris, and Ruth Zielinski.
- “Healthy and Efficient Voice Use Awareness in Amateur Group Singers: A Multi-Sensory Self-Assessment Protocol Trial” by Tara Leiper.
- “Communication and Resilience in Acting Students: A Qualitative Study” by Jennifer Innes.
- “Survey of University Acting Majors regarding the Most Useful Elements of Singing Training” by Brian Manternach and Jeremy N. Manternach.
- “Keep the Arrows: Interrogating Discrimination in Fandom Through Solo Performance” by Alan R. White.
- “La Casa de Inez: Investigating History, Voice, and Memory through Embodied, Site-Specific Storytelling: by Elisa Gonzales.
- “Finding a Way: More Tales of Dyslexia and Dyspraxia in Psychophysical Actor Training” by Daron Oram.
- “Accent Modification, Voicework, and ALS: A Case Study in Prolonging the Ability to Speak” by Andrea Caban.
- “When Mouths Went Missing: A Post-Pandemic, Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration for Actors and Animators” by Kathryn M. Cunningham and John C. Kelley.
- “Poetry, Voice, Brain, and Body” by Christina Shewell.
- “Assessment in Musical Theatre: A Tool for Transparency, Equity, and Student Learning” by Amanda Flynn.
- “Online Theatre Voice Pedagogy: A Literature Review” by Shannon Vickers.
- “The Unspoken Voice and Speech Debate [Or] the Sacred Cow in the Conservatory” by Rockford Sansom.

Rubino and Stewart (2018) demonstrate a quantitative study that is excellent and accessible.² The next four articles are all qualitative and utilize different methodologies and philosophical frameworks. Danford et al. (2023) employ interdisciplinary structures. Leiper (2024) showcases community-based research outside of academia. Innes (2021) is a robust “classic” qualitative study in the performing arts. And Manternach and Manternach (2019) employs a “mixed method” methodology (quantitative and qualitative) and also highlights action research (classroom-based research) that uses a survey as a key instrument.

White (2023) and Gonzales (2018) serve as superior “performance as research” examples; each is based on an original performance, and the article documents the research questions and the creative process that responded to these questions. The next four articles broadly fall under “practice as research” examples. Arguably, this category of research remains the most loosely defined in voice studies and in many other fields. Ultimately, these articles record creative practice and either answer research questions or work to solve a problem in the field or both. Oram (2018), Caban (2018), and Cunningham and Kelley (2022) all focus on unique needs and challenges in voice coaching, and in my time as a journal editor, these kinds of experiences tend to be the most suitable for “practice as research” in voice studies. Shewell (2020) generally falls under practice as research, but this article would also be what I would call a “theory article” (Sansom 2024)

in that Shewell examines a topic (in this case teaching poetry performance) through an unique research lens. And I assert that Winter (2023) might even call this article a “narrative” since Shewell describes her teaching process. The fact that the article is difficult to categorize speaks to the fluid nature of voice research methodology and the fluid nature of the voice field.

The final three example articles are literature reviews. These articles summarize different empirical or theoretical studies on a particular topic or question. Both Flynn (2022) and Vickers (2020) use the literature review to address a need in the field, and their analysis of the research literature (both inside voice and outside of it) illuminates the topic (or problem) and ways to tangibly process it. Sansom (2016) is a narrative literature review with a “dominant authorial voice”; [having such a voice] is of paramount importance to [the narrative literature review] process” (Winter 2023, 134).

My goal is that authors can use *Practitioner Research in Voice Studies* to empower their own research and unique ideas. Frankly, artists too often shy away from research since conducting research is traditionally outside the framework of artists. Moreover, research often has many hidden hurdles such as jargon and methodology procedures, which are not necessarily easy to discover outside of a formal research classroom. My hope is that this text breaks down some of those barriers. I truly believe that every artist that wants to create research can do so. Through this book, the contributors and I are delighted to champion artist-scholars in the field of voice.

Notes

1. To see the *Voice and Speech Review* award winners, go to www.vasta.org/voiceandspeechreview and then click on VSR Awards.
2. In this section, I do not introduce the articles in a vigorous way. Each chapter gives the article’s abstract, so please read the abstract for an overview of the article’s research topic. Rather, in this section I briefly underscore the methodology of each article and why the article is a research example in this collection.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on Contributor



Rockford Sansom PhD, MFA, is a voice teacher and communication coach. For seven years, he was the Editor of the *Voice and Speech Review*. His book publications include *The History of Voice Pedagogy*, *Vocal Traditions*, *Voice and Identity*, and *Voice Work: Art and Science in Changing Voices* (2nd ed). He is a VASTA Lifetime Distinguished Member.

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