

# Teaching Voice Habits in the Choral Classroom



**VOICE STUDY  
CENTRE**

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# Justification and Context

- Extensive requirements on high school choral directors (HSCDs) (Center for Educational Leadership, 2012)
- Quality and availability of professional development may not meet teacher needs (Spurgeon, 2004; Jones, 2013; West, 2024)
- Research favors students' experiences, and not teachers'. (Palkki, 2020; Baker, Oti Rakena and Purdy, 2022; Mercado and Draut, 2024)

## Aims

- Learn what HSCDs know about voice habits, where they learned them, and how they teach them

## Objectives

- Identify areas of strength and growth for HSCD education

# Methods

Literature Review



Open-ended Questionnaire



Semi-Structured Interview

# Methodology

Open Coding



Axial Coding



Critical Discourse Analysis

(Saldaña, 2013)

# Critical Discourse Analysis

1. “...the study of language in the world...” (Gee, 2025, pg. 1)
2. through the critical paradigm to examine power structures (Scotland, 2012)

# Participants

- Collected via purposive and snowball sampling (Makwana *et al.*, 2023)
- Must be:
  - Over 18 years old
  - Choral director
  - With students grades 9-12 (UK 10-13)
- Questionnaire: 3 responders
- Interviewee: “Jamie”

# Ethics

Ethical Approval from University of Wales,  
Trinity Saint David

Addressing Insider Research (Wilkinson  
and Kitzinger, 2013) through incorporation

## Limitations

Small sample size

Not generalizable

# Teacher Education

- + Key takeaway: vocal identity is shaped early and determined by power structures.

*I participated in a lot of musical theater and choir in middle and high school, sang outside of school for fun, and took voice lessons in high school and college.*

*I took some choral classes, and I was very uncomfortable, and I was looked down upon by other choral teachers that I wasn't a choir teacher..."How dare a band person teach choir?"*

# Continued Learning

- + Key takeaways: HSCDs trust each other first for information.

*I ask **fellow** vocal instructors for assistance...*

# Voice Habits

- + Key takeaways: HSCDs desire to teach their students what they deem good and correct for the circumstances.

*...free...*

*...proper...*

*...good...*

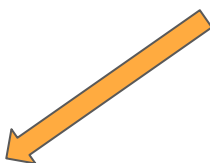
# Knowledge Transmission

- + Key takeaways: HSCDs have the power to determine how students think about voice habits.

*“Wow, that was amazing, but I can't give you a good score because it was Broadway”*

# Conclusion

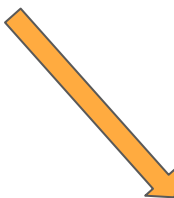
Voice habits in the high school choral classroom are influenced by:



HSCD  
education

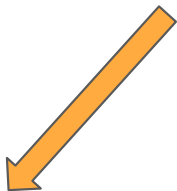


HSCDs' definition of  
"voice habits"

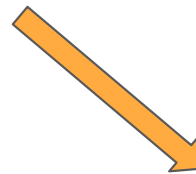


institutions that place  
roles and  
responsibilities on  
teachers and students.

# Recommendations

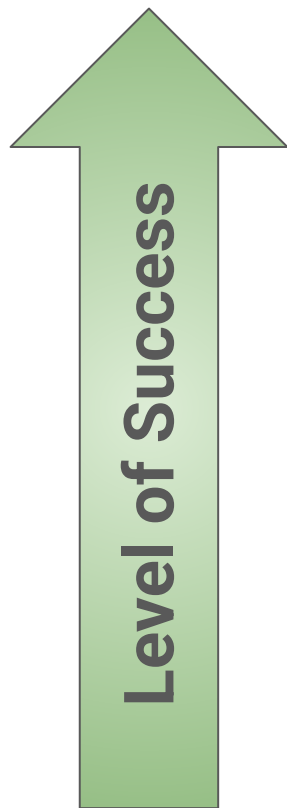


Language of  
specific voice  
tasks



Further investigation  
of HSCD education  
texts

# Reflection on Learning Outcomes



Design a succinct and user-friendly questionnaire in order for participants to adequately and openly respond.

Propose relevant professional development materials for choir directors based on teachers' and students' needs.

Identify potential gaps in knowledge for young singers working with voice teachers.

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# Thank you!



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