

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:

DICTION PEDAGOGY: A SURVEY OF NEW ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL DIRECTORS

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Diction is unique to choral music due to the distinct attribute of combining text and music. Choral pedagogues, teacher preparation programs, resources, and professional development have historically offered a wide variety of advocations about what practices to employ when teaching diction, though many have gone untested. While choral education research is plentiful, none has been conducted about diction pedagogy practices. The purpose of this study was to describe the current practices New England high school choral teachers use when teaching diction, particularly what methods and materials are most commonly being used. After collecting survey data from directors ($n = 121$), results indicate a wide array of diction practices being utilized with rote teaching and vocal modeling being the most predominately reported method, and audio recordings being the most reported material. These findings may contribute to a clearer understanding of diction practices and may inspire future research to study most effective practices.

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CHORAL DIRECTORS

by

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my parents, George Chris and Ruth Staudt, who have continually advocated for the arts and have supported the entirety of my musical education; to my sister, Adler Chris, for always being my anchor and best friend; and to my amazing partner, Ben Hain, for unfailingly being my rock.

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Introduction

One of the most unique aspects of choral music is the fusion of tune and text. Composers have been inspired by words to create songs, and conductors, educators, singers, and listeners alike have been engaged by these settings. If text is a unique attribute of choral music, then a logical assumption might be that part of the experience of preparing and listening to choral music is the ability to understand the text and how to pronounce it accurately. This leads to one of the most frequently debated areas of choral education: how to teach diction accurately and authentically. John Hylton (1995) defines diction as “the correct and uniform pronunciation of the text of a song” (p.18) and expands on the importance of clear diction in a choral setting by stating “for the meaning of the text to be accurately conveyed to the listener requires clear diction” (p. 18).

As stated previously, text is part of what makes choral music distinctive. The pronunciation of that text is an integral part of singing well individually and as an ensemble, so much so that choirs are regularly adjudicated diction. There are also many methods that claim to be the most effective way to teach diction, but not all have empirical research to back the claim. Teaching and learning effective diction techniques and achieving the desired tone quality also takes a significant amount of time and energy, from both singers and educators. Collins (1999) argues “attempting to improve choral diction probably consumes more rehearsal time than any other aspect of choral singing” (p. 284). As many choral educators agree time is precious when working with repertoire, one would think finding the optimal method of diction delivery and transferability would be preferred in the ensemble setting not only to

achieve the optimal sound, but to use time efficiently as well. While this topic has been heavily discussed and debated for decades, the choral education community has yet to see a clear answer to which method is the most effective to produce excellent diction. Not only this, but myriad resources are available to assist in teaching diction, ranging from videos, audio recordings, books, and courses (Dekaney, 2014; Mahaney, 2006).

Diction pedagogy has continued to increase in popularity and become more necessary as choral education has included more pieces in foreign languages within their curriculum (Dekaney, 2014; inconsistent and with nGackle and Fung, 2009; Goetze, 2000; Karna, 2012). Integrating more repertoire in different languages, particularly unfamiliar ones, into the curriculum is an essential part of modern choral education. This, of course, presents even greater challenges for authentic and accurate diction to be achieved and taught well. Diction pedagogy in a choral setting is consistently taught inconsistently (Fisher, 1986), with numerous methods and materials being employed, advocated for, and available (Dekaney, 2014). Most are passed down through teacher education, experiencing them in ensemble and private lesson settings, and practitioner literature provided by choral scholars and pedagogues. While all are wonderful resources within the choral education community and one's personal and professional growth, adding empirical data to these claims could strengthen the arguments being made about what practices to endorse when teaching diction in the choral classroom.

To find which methods and materials may be the most effective for a given population, one must first find what methods and materials are being currently

employed in classrooms. This study aims to begin this process by surveying high choral teachers in New England. No study has yet to survey diction pedagogy methods and materials in high school choral classrooms. Adding this study to the current research in diction pedagogy practices in this area could further clarify what is being taught in the classroom, inform choral educators of best practices, and could tell us what factors are influencing diction pedagogy practices being made by high school choral educators.

The purpose of this study is to describe the current practices New England high school choral teachers use when teaching diction. The primary research question guiding this study is what methods and materials are most commonly being used to teach diction in New England high school choral classrooms?

Literature Review

Three significant areas of choral education laid the foundation for this study: methods used to teach diction, materials used to teach diction, and related survey studies in music education. The following literature review will begin with methods being used to teach diction, including transliterations, teaching by rote, utilizing native speakers and culture bearers, teaching melody and text separately, using technology, and other methods. Then, it will be followed by common materials being used to teach diction. Both methods and materials tell us what is available and accessible when teaching diction in high school choral setting. Finally, pertinent survey research will be reviewed, which informed the design of the survey instrument.

Diction Teaching Methods

Historically, numerous methods have been employed to teach diction. Many of these methods are learned from teacher preparation programs, mentors, professional development, personal experience, and the wide variety of literature available to choral educators. While many claim to be the most effective method, only a handful of these methods have been empirically tested. This section will review relevant research and practitioner literature for several areas of diction teaching practices: transliterations, teaching by rote, teaching melody and text separately, utilizing native speakers, designing tools to teach and assess diction, and using audio and video recordings.

Transliterations. One method of diction pedagogy practice that has been repeatedly advocated for by pedagogues (Bolster, 1983; Bragger, 1975; Collins,

1999; Dekaney, 2003; Emmons & Chase, 2006; Goodman, 1993; Hylton, 1995; Leck, 2009; Madura, 2017; Maggs, 1981; Moore, 1972; Olson, 2010; Phillips, 1992; Phillips, 2004; Smith, 2013) and tested in research (Dekaney, 2003; Flower, 1936; Pan, 1997) is the use of transliterations. The term transliteration comes from the verb “transliterate,” which Merriam-Webster defines as “to represent or spell characters in another alphabet” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Tone syllables, the International Phonetic Alphabet, and the English Phonetic Alphabet fall into this category.

Fred Warning’s Tone Syllables method was one of the first systematic diction transliteration methods to heavily influence American choral education (Corbin, 1982; Mountford, 2000). At the time it was created, the Tone Syllables was an exciting, new way of producing beautiful vocal sounds, specializing in American-English diction, and after its publication to the public in 1945, became even more accessible to choral educators. The method consisted of techniques for vowels, consonants, and word stress mostly claimed to be based on “common sense” (p.11), but was not based on phonetics. The transferability of this transliteration system to other languages was not the point of this method. So, while perhaps it was not the most universal or efficient diction method in all of choral music education, it was extremely viral in American choral education, and due to good publicity and marketing, the Tone Syllables were used in choral octavos, pamphlets, and educator practice for nearly seven decades of the 20th century. It is also important because it raised more awareness about diction and how certain sounds affect what we sound like and how we sing in general.

One transliteration method that is repeatedly advocated for and cited above all others is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). IPA is “a phonetic notation system that uses a set of symbols to represent each distinct sound that exists in human spoken language. It encompasses all languages spoken on earth.” (International Phonetic Alphabet, n.d.). Myriad books (Karna, 2012; May & Tolin, 1987; Wall, 1989; Wall, et. al., 2012) and choral pedagogues (Bolster, 1983; Bragger, 1975; Collins, 1999; Dekaney, 2003; Emmons & Chase, 2006; Goodman, 1993; Hylton, 1995; Leck, 2009; Madura, 2017; Moore, 1972; Olson, 2010; Phillips, 1992; Phillips, 2004; Smith, 2013), have advocated for IPA as an effective way to teach diction because of its clarity, consistency, transferability, ease of implementation, and ability for individual ownership of speaking multiple languages.

Moore (1972) suggests IPA teaches students how to comprehend and analyze their individual sounds instead of relying on their teacher for information and also argues no other method can offer such clarity as the symbols are exceedingly consistent. Though this is an untested opinion, it is crucial to consider when understanding why many believe this method to be so effective when teaching diction. Bragger (1975) taught a course where foreign language and music departments collaborated to teach a music diction class for English, French, and Latin languages. Bragger found once the students had gotten over the struggle of learning this system, IPA brought individual ownership of the sounds one can make and how to correct them, not just echoing pronunciation given by the teacher. Bragger’s opinion echoes Moore’s (1972), though again, this was based on observation and not tested. Bragger also suggests it is imperative for the language and music departments

to collaborate more often for effective diction instruction, a notion similarly expressed in other literature (Gackle & Fung, 2009; Goetze, 2000), though untested here. Bolster (1983) discusses the implications of understanding the fixed formant theory to achieve quality diction and tone in choral music, and to do this successfully he also suggests using IPA to unify pronunciation.

Maggs (1981) suggests an alternative to the International Phonetic Alphabet, which consists of combining certain vowels and consonants from common words in standard languages used in choral programs as a cohesive guide to all pronunciation. Maggs believed this method made learning diction more accessible and removed the complicated nature of IPA, as he believed IPA to be “too sophisticated” (p. 5) for the common choral rehearsal. However, three problems arise with his method.

First, it is an untested method of teaching diction, and second, Maggs explains this alternative will take time to learn and then will be efficient. Maggs states, “It is surprising that such a vital aspect of singing as diction is often approached in the most haphazard manner. Vocal and ensemble study can be both more efficient and more effective when a comprehensive set of phonetic symbols is used to represent the sounds of language” (p. 5). How does this method make it any more valid than another diction system that takes time to learn? One does not merely learn IPA or solfege or how to read rhythmic and musical notation instantly. Teaching any new musical skills obviously takes time, and on the contrary to this belief about IPA, some studies provide evidence that IPA does not take a tremendous amount of time to learn and implement (Dekaney, 2003; Pan, 1997). Lastly, this method of transliteration only works for English, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish languages.

Maggs specifically states this because they are “the six languages most frequently performed by American choirs” (p. 5). In 1981, this may have been a more commonplace opinion, as multicultural curriculum was only beginning to grow in music education, but this system would probably not function well in today’s classroom with the rise of multiculturalism and emphasis on integrating more cultures and culturally responsive teaching. While this method is significantly better than something like Fred Waring’s Tone Syllables, that only works for English, it still does not cover the breadth and versatility IPA has to offer.

The sources mentioned above primarily advocate for the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet; however, they are mostly based on practitioner knowledge, advice, and personal experience, not empirical data. While these insights are extremely vital to choral education, we cannot say these methods, or any method for that matter, are indeed effective without valid evidence to back the claim. Thankfully, some studies have tested the effectiveness of IPA, and all have found it to be an effective method of teaching diction.

One of the earliest studies conducted was Flower’s (1936) study comparing the effectiveness of IPA to rote teaching when teaching French diction to young students. Flower taught French diction to two small groups of children, either using the “Phonetic Method” (IPA) or the “Imitation Method” (rote teaching). The two groups learned diction in either of these two ways over the course of six months, and results concluded IPA to be far more effective in producing correct pronunciation when compared to learning by rote. Though an old study, evidence is still evidence,

and it is also important to highlight because it shows the debate of “which method is most effective when teaching diction” has been deliberated for a long time.

In a more recent study, Pan (1997) randomly assigned 62 choir members to three groups to compare three types of diction instruction; the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the English Phonetic Alphabet (EPA), and traditional rote instruction on teaching diction for the Latin language. As previously mentioned, the IPA is a phonetic notation system that represents speech sounds in language. The English Phonetic Alphabet (EPA), is similar to Fred Waring’s Tone Syllables, where “double letters are usually used to represent vowels” (p. 6) and is inconsistent between languages. The experimental IPA and EPA groups received instruction in the particular method they were testing, and the control group used a tradition rote teaching method. Before lessons began in any group, the researcher assessed each student’s knowledge and experience with Latin through written, oral, aural, and reading assessments as well as general attitudes towards instruction in each student’s specific choral setting. These same measures were assessed after the intervention as well. While results indicated both EPA and IPA were more effective than rote teaching in achieving accuracy in Latin diction, IPA was still significantly more effective than the other two methods. Rote teaching method did not achieve significant results at all. IPA also proved more effective when students were asked to read unstudied Latin excerpts, thus inferring IPA is transferable between text currently being studied and text that has never been seen. This study is pertinent not only because it adds to the existing literature supporting IPA, but also because it tested it against other diction methods used in choral classrooms, therefore providing

evidence for a “most effective” method. Finally, this study also suggests IPA is a transferrable method, which from a practical and efficient choral education perspective, is essential.

This study provides an abundance of evidence that IPA is a very effective method for teaching diction, especially if the goal is to implement a system where students become responsible for their learning beyond the current context. This study is also important because it provides evidence against rote teaching as the superior method. Rote teaching has consistently been utilized in American choral classrooms because of its apparent ease and immediate positive results in achieving positive results, but evidence from this study and Flower’s (1936) show rote teaching to be ineffective in achieving long-term results in diction accuracy.

Dekaney (2003) randomly assigned 63 university-level students into three groups to test the effectiveness of the IPA when learning the English language in three ways: in a classroom setting, through a computer program, or a combination of the two methods. As a pretest measure, all participants read a phonetic transcription of English text before starting any instruction, and after being assigned to one of the three groups, participants then received IPA lessons in one of the three ways being measured. Lessons were based on *International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers: A Manual for English and Foreign Language Diction* by Joan Wall (1989), a standard diction textbook, in fact, one of the most common being used based on Mahaney’s (2006) study of common diction materials used in collegiate classes. As a posttest measure, all participants read an unfamiliar phonetic transcription in addition to completing a short survey to gather demographic information, musical and diction

experience, ensemble history, how difficult they thought the pretest and posttest measures were, and feedback about computer software used if they were in a group that used the software.

Results concluded IPA to be an effective method of learning English diction in all three groups, however, teaching IPA through classroom instruction only or a combination of classroom instruction and the computer software produced the most significant results and were favored among the students. Participants learning IPA in the classroom setting reported it being fun, motivating, and challenging, as well as increasing their knowledge of English diction. Those in the computer software group produced significant results but were frustrated with the computer software program itself, mainly because the provided examples were random and not applicable to real life. Participants also found it challenging to transfer their new knowledge of IPA to the posttest because of the lack of practical application.

Other than finding IPA to an effective method, two additional important results emerged. First, more evidence emerged supporting IPA as a transferrable method, similar to Pan's study (1997). As the posttest was a reading of a text the subjects had never encountered, it showed the participants had to rely on their acquired skills and knowledge of IPA to decipher the new IPA problem in front of them. As mentioned earlier, one of the popular pedagogical opinions of why IPA is so effective is because of its transferability (Bolster, 1983; Bragger, 1975; Collins, 1999; Dekaney, 2003; Emmons & Chase, 2006; Goodman, 1993; Hylton, 1995; Leck, 2009; Madura, 2017; Moore, 1972; Olson, 2010; Phillips, 1992; Phillips, 2004; Smith, 2013), and this study, along with Pan's (1997) attaches more empirical data to this

claim. Second, the researcher found IPA was relatively easy to implement in the classroom. Again, this is an opinion frequently supported by choral pedagogues, but was tested and proven here. Dekaney suggests once a person masters the IPA symbols, it could potentially save more time in rehearsal, something many music teachers continually feel a lack of in their programs. Overall, the results of this study support IPA as an effective, transferrable, and time-efficient tool and are significant to choral education as well as being able to add documentation to existing research (Pan, 1997).

The available studies and practitioner literature about the use of transliterations as a diction method in a choral setting offer us insight into diction pedagogy practices that have been proven to be effective, such as IPA, as well as others that have been tested in comparison to each other (IPA, EPA, rote teaching). The most important finding within the studies mentioned above is IPA remains the most effective method when compared to other methods of diction pedagogy. This is important to recall when other studies advocate for other methods as being effective, when in fact, they do not compare themselves to other methods as seen in these studies (Dekaney, 2003; Flower, 1936; Pan, 1997). The source mentioned above are essential to the current study because they inform us of some methods that have been employed in choral classrooms to teach diction. As the present study seeks to describe current pedagogy practices in high school choral classrooms, it will be interesting to see if the pedagogy practices used by high school choral directors include the use of transliterations, particularly IPA.

Teaching by Rote. Another frequently used method of teaching diction in choral settings is teaching by rote. Pan (1997) defines rote instruction as “diction is taught by imitation of oral demonstration...the employment of a phonetic system with visual charts of vowels and consonants is absent” (p. 756). In American music education, rote teaching began its roots in the pedagogy of Lowell Mason, who is considered to be the pioneer of American music education (Demorest, 2001). Mason believed in teaching young students to sing by rote before introducing notation, or “rote-before-note” (p. 10) and his famous text outlining his teaching method which emphasized rote teaching, *Manual of Boston Academy of Music, for Instruction in the Elements of Vocal Music, on the System of Pestalozzi*, was published in 1834 and used widely. Though choral pedagogy has developed dramatically since 1834, rote instruction is still common practice in many areas of music education as it is practical, accessible, time-efficient, and suited for choral education (Goetze, 1988; Radionoff, 2007; Weintraub, 1992). As stated above, what sets rote teaching apart from other methods is all information is learned aurally and orally, with no notational representation involved. Much in early elementary general music education is taught by rote in because it meets children where they are developmentally. Young children develop by learning through imitation and relying on sight and sound before reading and writing. Edwin Gordon (2007) also supports the “rote-before-note” approach so children can build an extensive oral vocabulary for tonal and rhythmic patterns and audiation skills before learning to read music.

Teaching without notational components can also be deemed an effective method when we understand a little about how the brain processes aural and visual

information. The brain processes both visual and auditory information through separate channels, so theoretically, taking one component out (the visual) makes other information easier to process (Gackle & Fung, 2009; Schunk, 2012). In this case, removing the visual stimuli allows each person to organize the aural information in a more focused way, without being distracted by any optical element, and therefore remove any competition for processing information. This aspect of neural information processing is one of the reasons teaching text and music separately has been deemed an effective strategy in a choral setting because there is less chance for cognitive overload by splitting up the various activities.

Teaching by rote is used routinely in choral education, however, when looking at studies comparing rote teaching to other methods when teaching diction (Dekaney, 2003; Flower, 1936; Pan, 1997), it has not been found to be the most effective method if the learning objective is for students to gain transferable skills and individual ownership of knowledge. As teaching by rote is primarily teacher-directed and not student-initiated, this makes some sense. Students become reliant on their teachers when learning repertoire and skills instead being able to learn it themselves, and therefore, any idea of independence in learning is lost (Herman, 1988; Middleton; 1984). However, we also have to consider some cultures learn music entirely by rote and without written notation of any kind, so some argue teaching by rote is an effective method of teaching some pieces because of its accurate representation of the culture being studied (Gackle & Fung, 2009; Goetze, 2000; Walker, 2003).

The effects of teaching by rote in choral settings could be its own study, but for the purposes of the current research, what is important to know is teaching by rote

and vocal modeling are popular methods of diction instruction in choral settings. We also know it has been successful when combined with other methods (Gackle & Fung, 2009), and we know it is not an effective method of instruction when striving for transferability and individual ownership of knowledge (Dekaney, 2003; Pan, 1997). As this study solely seeks to discover current diction practices being employed in high school choral classrooms, future research should continue to compare the effectiveness of rote teaching against others to collect more data and build evidence further.

Culture Bearers and Native Speakers. Using culture and context to deepen musical understanding has become a prominent area of discussion and pedagogy in all modern music education. In choral education, this includes selecting appropriate repertoire that are “culturally valid representations” (Abril, 2006, p. 40) of the music and culture, preparing the music in culturally-appropriate ways, teaching students the context behind repertoire to deepen understanding, and honoring students’ culture, history, and experiences in and out of choral classroom contexts.

One technique used to create these culturally valid representations of music in a choral setting is by utilizing native speakers and culture bearers of the specific language and culture being studied. With the rise of multiculturalism, many choral programs have sought to include an increasing variety of music from other cultures, but this does not always mean it will be represented in culturally valid ways. Goetze (2000) states choirs will likely use “traditional Western intonation, tone, quality, and blend” (p. 24) when singing music from different cultures. Using native speakers and culture bearers can help achieve a deeper understanding of the culture and as well as

more accurate diction in the language being studied. Native speakers are those who consider the language under consideration their native language, and a culture bearer is a “representative of a culture” (Shaw, 2012, p. 62), which can include expertise in language, but also culture, musical style, vocal technique, and history behind the music being studied. These two methods can provide a wealth of knowledge when studying music from different cultures, and deferring to these experts is a frequently advocated method as these experts will have deep insight about nuance of the language and musical and historical culture of which you are working from and sometimes, the particular vocal timbre to be used when necessary. However, not everyone takes advantage of these valuable people.

Some practitioner literature exists advocating for the use of culture bearers in choral classrooms (Abril, 2006; Goetze, 2000; Yoo, 2017). While there is a lack of empirical evidence explicitly studying the effects of culture bearers and native speakers in high school choral settings, some is found in other choral settings and are therefore applicable to the current study (Bennett Walling, 2016; Boshkoff & Gault, 2010; Gackle & Fung, 2009; Shaw, 2016).

Gackle and Fung (2009) found using culture bearers and native speakers, teaching text and melody separately, teaching by rote, and using technology to be effective methods of diction instruction when teaching and learning pieces authentically and accurately in Chinese. This study is applicable to the current research for multiple reasons, including, as they employed numerous methods throughout the process. The researchers especially wanted to know if these methods would be effective in teaching an unfamiliar language. Even with some transliteration

aides available, such as “pinyin” and “romaji” (p. 67) for Chinese and Japanese pieces, the challenges become higher and more complex for the singer and educator alike because of the unfamiliarity of the language and culture. This is a unique aspect of this study because most other research testing a method of diction instruction have tested English or other commonly used languages such as Latin, German, Italian, Spanish, and French.

This qualitative case study chronicled how a 35-member, auditioned youth choir learned Chinese repertoire in preparation for a concert and international tour. The ensemble had sung pieces in languages outside of English previously, but never in Chinese dialects. Gackle primarily rehearsed and taught the group, and Fung mainly supported the group as a culture bearer to understand the language and culture of the music they were singing, though both frequently collaborated throughout the study. Observations, interviews, and performance evaluations were used to document and evaluate the process of learning the four Chinese pieces. Over the rehearsal period, the choir learned the melody and text separately by learning the tune through solfege and on neutral syllables first. To learn the text, they brought in a native speaker to teach by rote. The native speakers also made audio and video recordings for the choir to practice outside of rehearsal. After these first lessons, the choir slowly integrated the text with the melody until the entirety of the piece was learned. Interviews were conducted with the students and director after learning Chinese repertoire, and the performance was evaluated by Chinese choral directors, explicitly listening for both diction authenticity and accuracy. For the performance evaluation, 88% of Chinese choral directors said they understood the text, and all submitted other

positive comments and made suggestions such as listening to Chinese choirs and understanding Chinese stylistic interpretations as useful tools to be used in the future.

Ultimately, the researchers deemed this method effective when teaching pieces in Chinese. Utilizing a native speaker for language comprehension and accuracy aurally and visually increased text retention. Understanding the meaning of the musical works and the culture they came from was deemed extremely important for the students and educators. Another important finding was while learning the new language was repeatedly marked as the most challenging aspect of the process; it was also what the students enjoyed most. This study provides evidence for teaching and learning by rote, utilizing culture-bearers and native speakers, teaching text and melody separately, and using technology are effective methods when preparing pieces in Chinese. The issue with this study is it did not compare these methods to other diction pedagogy practices, though that was not the purpose of this study. Everything was contained within the one group with a very specific set of methods and experiences used for the situation. Future research should study each element separately and compare them to other methods. For example, while teaching by rote was found effective in this study, other studies argue that is not the most effective way to teach diction when compared with other methods (Flower, 1936; Pan, 1997).

Shaw (2016) found students responded well to the use of culture bearers in a case study conducted to investigate the effects of culturally responsive teaching in middle school community choirs. “Culturally responsive teaching” is, in a nutshell, teaching to the students in your classroom. Knowing their culture, heritage, and musical background, and validating those students’ cultures by making it part of the

process and curriculum is at the core of culturally responsive pedagogy. Among other techniques that were deemed effective, this study found using culture bearers was a positive way to create a bridge between school music and music outside of the classroom and to connect to music of another culture in more authentic and meaningful ways.

Bennett Walling (2016) surveyed 126 secondary choral directors working in international schools on specific multicultural practices being used to teach music and what challenges they faced. This study was relevant as it researched high school choral educators, though working outside of the United States. The researcher found many directors believed multicultural education vital to teachers beliefs about education, including learning music outside of Western cultures, and the importance of learning the culture and context of the music being prepared. Many teachers also felt they employed numerous methods when teaching multicultural music, and over half of teachers felt they considered students' backgrounds when selecting repertoire. One method studied in this research was the use of culture bearers. The questionnaire asked if teachers utilized culture bearers when planning lessons and if they brought them in to assist in lessons. The researcher found less than half communicated with or utilized such people, and more than half reported rarely asking culture-bearers to come to rehearsals. Those who did advocate for the use of culture bearers stated they used them as a way to stay informed and educated about multicultural education and to assist in picking repertoire. Based on the results, Bennett Walling suggests teachers use culture bearers as a valuable resource when planning and teaching music of other cultures.

Boshkoff and Gault (2010) offer narrative accounts of how culture bearers impacted student learning in a treble choir setting when learning music in unfamiliar languages. Both said using culture bearers offered an “in-depth immersion experience” (p. 197) for the students. They also suggest an appropriate culture bearer is probably right within your school or community, so one just may need to do a little research to make them accessible. Both accounts also suggest hearing about the language and culture first and learning the music aurally and kinesthetically increased student learning. Similar to Gackle & Fung (2009), the teachers here also found using technology assisted in the retention of the language. They also found students struggled with text more than melody, so using blended approaches when learning the text (culture bearer, movement, technology, etc.) helped deepen student understanding over the rehearsal process. While these accounts are in narrative form and do not have empirical evidence to back them up, both directors found using culture bearers positively impacted student learning in these settings.

These studies and articles validate the use of culture bearers and native speakers and highlight their importance in modern music education practice (Abril, 2006, Bennett Walling, 2016; Boshkoff & Gault, 2010; Gackle & Fung, 2009; Shaw, 2016; Yoo, 2017). Using culture bearers and native speakers as valuable resources seem to yield nothing but positive experiences for students, choral programs and creating authentic, “culturally valid representations” (Abril, 2006, p. 40) of music from different cultures. More research should continue to be done, particularly in diverse classroom settings of varying age and grade levels, but as embracing culture

and culturally responsive teaching are on the rise, I imagine we shall see more research on this method soon.

Other Methods. A small number of stand-alone methods have been developed, tested, and advocated for when teaching and learning diction in choral settings. These include sung-speech diction (Fisher, 1986; Fisher 1991), rhythmic diction (Fisher, 1986; Fisher 1991), the Articulatory Diction Development Method (Fisher, 1991), and using vocal pedagogy as a means of deepening understanding (Corbin, 1982). Though none of these methods have been tested with the frequency of transliterations, culture bearers, and teaching by rote, some have been proven to be effective, and they are therefore pertinent when trying to discover current diction practices.

Fisher (1986) surveyed 102 participants about their preference for sung-speech, or “smear” (p.13), diction, and rhythmic diction. Sung-speech diction links words together creating a continuous blend of words, while rhythmic diction aims to have singers articulate each speech sound in a specific duration of time. The researcher chose sung-speech diction and rhythmic diction because of their common usage, lack of empirical evidence, and inconsistency of methods being used in ensembles. Participants listened to ten choral examples, five of which were sung with sung-speech diction, and five with rhythmic diction, all sung by the same choir. Participants were then asked to take a short survey solely about listener preference. Fisher found more than half of the listeners preferred the choirs singing with rhythmic diction and concluded using rhythmic diction was preferable for the sake of the listener and could potentially yield better results when adjudicated at contest or

festival events. This study brings a unique perspective into the mix because it tests for listener preference. While this is not ordinarily choral educators' number one priority when thinking about choral pedagogy practices, it is an essential factor to consider as most choral ensembles inevitably perform in front of an audience at some point in their performing careers.

Fisher (1991) continued his work of rhythmic diction and sung-speech diction in another study where he designed, tested, and evaluated a specific method to teach English diction at the high school level. Fisher identified three standard diction practices, two of which are seen in the previous study: smear-slur diction and rhythmic diction, and included one other one: discrete phonetic diction. Discrete phonetic diction is a freer form of diction pedagogy, relying heavily on the singer's choice in deciding what "proper clarity" (p. 271) means. The researcher then designed the Articulatory Diction Development Method (ADDM) by identifying skill development areas, identifying vocal and musical exercises to meet the goals of these areas, and then designing the exercises themselves. After designing, piloting, and refining the method, three high school choirs were selected for the actual study. These choirs were chosen due to their normal diction practices following smear-slur diction, rhythmic diction, or no specific diction method. Each choir was asked to prepare recordings of two choral pieces and nine "phonologically ambiguous word phrases" (p. 276). While the choral pieces were different, the word phrases were the same. After the pretest recordings were completed, the ADDM method was the only method allowed to teach English diction in all three choirs, though each choir received instruction in different amounts of time over six weeks. The researcher led the initial

training sessions for all choral directors and choirs, and then each choral director proceeded to direct for the remaining time with guidance from researcher where necessary. A posttest recording of each choir was made of the same choral pieces and word phrases once the intervention was complete. Finally, 47 judges listened to paired pretest and posttest recordings and were instructed to listen for overall tone preference, specific reasons as to why the particular recording was preferred, if they could understand the text, and which recording had “clearer sound, richer tone, better pronunciation, better intonation, which was more expressive, and which more exciting” (p. 278). After analyzing the differences between pretest and posttest assessments, results indicated a strong preference for post-training recordings (11 out of 12 recordings), and all 12 posttest text intelligibility assessments were found to be more intelligible. Based on the researcher’s findings, the ADDM method was proven effective in teaching English diction in a high school setting, improving choral tone, and improving text intelligibility.

This study is pertinent because there are few of its kind, it provided a thorough rationale for the development of the method (specifically looking through the lens of improving choral tone and diction in the high school choral setting), and it also was geared towards how to make this method applicable in the classroom. However, this study has flaws. First, while this study confirms the method to be effective, it does not compare it to another method of diction instruction, it solely draws results from using the one method in three different choirs. They could have improved strictly due to being exposed to more instruction. Not having something to compare it loses the validity of its effectiveness. Phillips (1992) also echoes this issue

in a review of Fisher's study. Second, why go through the trouble of designing a new method when there were other previously studied and mentioned methods, such as the three methods that were the foundation of the ADDM instrument? It would have been more effective to test those methods first before designing another one or designing it and comparing it with another method, as previously mentioned. Third, this method was developed for English diction, so while the method was deemed effective, it was not intended to be transferable between languages, so would this method be worth using if you are using another practice to teach other languages? Lastly, other more recent studies have tested other diction methods since 1991 (Dekaney, 2003; Gackle & Fung, 2009; Pan, 1997;) while this method has not been used since, regardless of its significant results. Again, this study is important if only for the reason that it is one of the only studies looking specifically at choral diction in a high school setting, but it's flaws and lack of reproduction make the method lack validity.

Another aspect of choral singing that includes diction and is frequently taught in teacher preparation programs is understanding vocal pedagogy. Vocal pedagogy informs preservice teachers about the physical, vocal mechanism, and how to achieve proper vocal tone, diction, and health when working with individual singers and choirs. Corbin's dissertation (1982) wanted to investigate if and how specific aspects of vocal pedagogy and vocal pedagogy instruction affected tone quality, diction, and student attitude. The researcher was also curious to know why, with so many available resources, choral directors lacked knowledge of the vocal mechanism, development, and care in the classroom. After a series of pretest assessments, 80 high school choral students in two choirs (40 participants in each) were selected. The

specific population for this study was chosen because Corbin did not think it was feasible to achieve real randomization, so once the two high school choirs were selected the pretest evaluations helped to create the most accurate sample by narrowing it down to the 40 participants within each choir. In these pretests, the researcher assessed singing knowledge, musical background, vocal abilities (including a demonstration), and student attitude. Corbin chose two pieces of choral music to rehearse with both choirs separately, both of which were audio and video recorded before and after the treatment was administered. The control group rehearsed solely focusing on correct notes and rhythms, intonation, and blend, while the experimental group was given three 25-minute sessions over seven weeks focusing on the specific vocal pedagogy concepts being studied, including breathing, diction, and alignment. After the intervention, revised versions of the pretest assessments were given to each participant, and then the choral pieces were re-recorded. The six recordings were then played for a panel of judges, and they were asked to rate them on the tested vocal pedagogy concepts, diction being one of them. After analyzing the data through a series of t-tests to compare the differences between the groups, significant results were found in the experimental group in the improvement of all but one area of vocal pedagogy concepts, one of which was diction. The one vocal pedagogy concept that did not achieve significant results was student attitude. However, the researcher mentions two areas of attitude that did have a noticeable difference between the groups. First, the students liked the specific vocal pedagogy instruction they received, and second, it made the students appreciate choir more.

This study is relevant as it provides evidence that when students are empowered with knowledge about how their voice works, how to achieve specific sounds and the reasoning behind it increases student understanding, appreciation, and overall tone quality and sound. It also provides evidence that teaching choir should be more than teaching notes and rhythms, and furthermore, when the students are included in the learning process and given the tools to understand and take ownership of their vocal contributions can be powerful and effective. More research would need to be conducted to further back these claims.

The studies mentioned above represent a small variety of stand-alone methods created and tested to improve diction, including Fisher's studies about rhythmic and smear diction and ADDM (1986, 1991) and Corbin's study about vocal pedagogy; both of which have not been tested more than once. These studies are unique because they explore ideas that most other diction and vocal research has not, and they reveal valuable insights about teaching diction in a high school choral classroom setting, which, of course, are applicable to the current study as it seeks to uncover methods being implemented when teaching diction in high school choral settings. Though these particular studies found significant results, further evidence is needed to corroborate their findings.

Clearly, there are many diction pedagogy methods being employed and advocated for in choral classrooms. Some have been tested more than others, and some need more research to back their claims. The wide variety of methods available for choral directors to implement has stemmed from research, literature, resources, colleagues, professional development, and personal experience. While this study aims

to discover methods being employed by a specific population in the United States, further research should continue to investigate and study not only methods being used by teachers, but also which methods are truly most effective in teaching diction in choral settings.

Diction Pedagogy Materials and Resources

In addition to the research studies conducted around diction methods in choral ensemble settings, a vast amount of diction pedagogy materials and resources are available to assist singers and educators in learning and teaching diction. Many have been written by choral education experts specifically addressing how diction can be taught effectively within choral ensembles (Baldy, 2010; Collins, 1999; Emmons & Chase, 2006; Hylton, 1995; Leck, 2009; Madura, 2017; Phillips, 1992; Olsen, 2010; Smith, 2013). Since 1980, 23 articles have been published in the American Choral Directors Association *Choral Journal* addressing diction, and 40 more addressing tone (Dorsey, 2016). Since 1979, 68 articles have been published in the National Association for Music Education *Music Educators Journal* addressing diction (NAfME, 2019). Diction is frequently addressed at conferences, workshops, and within teacher-preparatory programs as well. Though few studies have been done researching diction pedagogy materials and resources, the available ones were important to this study.

Mahaney (2006) conducted a study to find common diction resources being utilized in an undergraduate vocal setting, including materials and classes and also to determine how effective they are. Though this study was directed towards a collegiate environment, it is still the only survey study that has been conducted about diction

pedagogy resources. Therefore, it had immense significance in the current study and was the primary basis for the materials section of the Diction Pedagogy Survey (DPS) in the current study. In this study, a survey was sent to the 1,733 vocal diction instructors of the College Music Society, and 118 usable questionnaires were returned and used for the research. The researcher inquired about general information about the university, diction courses offered, and diction resources being used. Mahaney primarily focused on resources for Italian, German, and French, though data was collected on other languages. The researcher also conducted extensive interviews by phone, email, and in-person with 22 participants who had indicated they would be willing to be interviewed.

Mahaney found an extensive list of resources including books, dictionaries, song anthologies, recordings, software programs, and websites being used as resources when teaching diction. Based on the data collected, the researcher suggests choosing diction texts that match your class situation and supplemental with materials that will support the individuals in that class. Mahaney reported 60% of survey takers reported using and preferring the book *Diction for Singers: A Concise Reference for English, Italian, Latin, German, French, and Spanish Pronunciation* by Joan Wall, Robert Caldwell, Tracy Gavilanes, and Sheila Allen (2012). Closely following were *Diction: Italian, Latin, French, German: The sounds and 81 exercises for singing them* by John Moriarty (1975), and *A Handbook of Diction for Singers* by David Adams (2008). Participants also reported using several supplemental resources for classes, including “song anthologies, dictionaries, transcription exercises, speaking exercises, singing exercises, and quizzes and tests” and “software, websites, videos,

movies, and recordings” (p. 270). She also suggests using native speakers (Gackle & Fung, 2009; Goetze, 2000) and IPA, both supported by others (Bolster, 1983; Collins, 1999; Dekaney, 2003; Emmons & Chase, 2006; Goodman, 1993; Hylton, 1995; Karna, 2012; May & Tolin, 1987; Moore, 1972).

This dissertation is valuable to the current study as it is the only study available on diction pedagogy materials and resources. Though it focuses on collegiate professors and minimal languages (Italian, German, and French), the design and findings of the study are still applicable, and as stated previously, the materials and resources compiled from the results of this study informed the materials portion of the survey for the current study.

Dekaney (2014) investigated various diction aids being provided within actual scores choral educators and musicians are learning from, specifically looking at the presence and use of IPA. After analyzing the sample of 184 foreign language choral octavos, ranging from 1970-2013, the researcher found a staggering variety of methods being distributed, including English phonetic transcriptions (similar to Fred Waring’s tone syllables), the International Phonetic Alphabet, hybrid pronunciation guides, poetic translations, other unique guides, and nothing at all. Dekaney also found the methods provided were inconsistent between publishers, composers, and pieces of music. Many of the scores which did give some form of transliteration or pronunciation guide rarely had it accompany the music itself. Instead, it was in one distinct place in the octavo, such as the inside cover, but nowhere near the music people would be reading from within a rehearsal context.

This study is the most recent research looking at diction aids in choral music, and one of the only one to focus on specific methods and materials being provided by publishers and composers. The most important finding of this study is it matches the current state of how diction is thought to be taught; inconsistent and with no attempt at uniformity. Dekaney argues with the expanding need and desire to include more music from unfamiliar cultures and languages in choral music programs it is imperative publishers, composers, arrangers, and editors agree on a consistent set of symbols to represent articulation and pronunciation. This study is important to consider as a diction resource and a method, as choral octavos are a material item being used to study music, but inside can contain and advocate for specific methods to be used when implementing diction.

Karna (2012) compiled and edited the only choral education text aimed explicitly at utilizing IPA in the choral rehearsal. The book contains essays by choral and diction experts in the most common languages sung in American choral music, such as English, Latin, Italian, German, French, and Spanish, but also includes chapters devoted to more uncommonly sung languages such as Hebrew, Romanian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Brazilian, Swahili, Hawaiian, Dutch, Greek, and many more. This comprehensive diction guide is the only of its kind in current choral education and is a detailed and comprehensive text advocating for the use of IPA in the choral rehearsal. Karna argues taking the minimal time and effort to teach IPA will not only save time in your rehearsals in the long run but also make individual singers and choral ensembles more effective communicators and able to use the same

tools to sing in multiple foreign languages; an opinion shared by other pedagogues and researchers (Dekaney, 2003; Pan, 1997).

Though the research about diction materials and resources is scant, we know there are multitudes of resources available to choral educators. Perhaps this contributes to the vast array of diction methods being employed? One can purchase books online and conferences, colleagues converse and share their favorite resources, numerous websites provide choral music, and students gain resources from collegiate music teacher programs. Research cannot keep up with the output of resources and materials available to choral educators, but it can continue to build on what is available to help inform teachers, especially when trying to find most effective and efficient methods and materials.

Related Survey Studies

While no music education survey studies have been conducted to investigate diction pedagogy practices in high school choral classrooms, a number of related survey studies about repertoire selection, sight-reading systems and practices, and assessment practices, have been conducted (Demorest, 2004; Forbes, 2001; Kotora, 2005; Kuehne, 2007; McClung, 2001; Norris, 2004; Pollock, 2017; Russell & Austin, 2010). These studies informed the survey questions and procedures used for the current research.

Forbes (2001) interviewed, surveyed, and collected programs from 104 high school choral directors to investigate repertoire selection practices. Forbes specifically wanted to know how and why teachers pick the repertoire they do and what factors influenced their decisions. The two-part survey inquired about

demographic information from the participants and repertoire selection procedures and practices. Ultimately, the researcher found practices, procedures, and kinds of repertoire chosen were not structured or systematic across the participants used for the study, demographic information played an important role, and many factors influence the selection process. This survey inspired the use of demographic questions as well as inquiring about different factors that influence diction pedagogy practices.

Numerous studies have been conducted about sight-reading practices and systems across the United States, many of which were useful and informative as the current research is looking at practices of another element of choral pedagogy. McClung (2001) surveyed all-state choral students from Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee looking specifically at one question: which sight-reading systems are being used most frequently in high school performance ensemble classes. After conducting a brief, one-question survey during rehearsal breaks of All-State festivals, results indicated singing on letter names and solfege were the most common methods used to teach intervallic relationships and moveable “do” was used to teach sight-singing. However, other methods were being used such as “fixed do” and “neutral syllables” (p.5). One of the conclusions drawn by the researcher was this study added to the research of inconsistency in methods being used and promoted the idea of a more unified approach to teaching sight-reading. While this survey format is not used in the current study, it was essential to consider different strategies and designs that have been used for other survey studies in choral education research. McClung’s study is also important because one of its goals was to

add to existing research. While the current study is investigating a similar number of states, it is more interested in the director's perspective.

Demorest (2004) conducted a broader survey on sight-singing practices in middle and high school choral programs after doing a smaller survey for his book *Building Choral Excellence: Teaching Sight-singing in the Choral Rehearsal* (2001). The survey asked choral directors about the role of sight-reading in their programs, how much time is devoted to sight-reading, methods, and materials used to teach sight-reading, and what assessment approaches were integrated into the process. The 272 middle and high school choral directors who responded to the online survey spent, on average, "9.5 minutes per rehearsal" (p. 5) on sight-reading, and most used moveable "do" for reading pitch, and some kind of counting system to read rhythm. The researcher also found many teachers do some variety of sight-reading assessment throughout the year, but less than half of evaluations were formal instead of informal, and the most favorable kind of assessment was individual assessment in front of the teacher. The survey also asked about the role of sight-reading in determining a student's grade. The majority of respondents said it was only 20% or below within a student's grade, and a large percentage did not include sight-reading in the final grade at all. The researcher also looked at the role of contests or festivals requiring sight-reading and found they were not only significant in classroom sight-reading practices, but also choral directors who brought their ensembles to such events spent more time on sight-reading in rehearsal. Another interesting finding related to materials used to teach sight-reading was most teachers prefer using "self-created materials" (p. 6), which Demorest suggests is "perhaps a most satisfying and cost-effective approach"

(p. 9). The researcher also found there was very little agreement on materials used overall. The depth and nature of questions asked in this study informed the current study, as this study looks at another element of choral pedagogy practices.

This study was extremely informative in developing the survey for the current study. Questions adapted from this study are about percentage of time used on diction instruction, most favored methods for diction pedagogy practices, if diction is assessed and how much of a student's overall grade is devoted to diction, kinds of assessments used, and if festival or contest plays a role in diction assessment and time spent on diction. This study helped narrow down the factors that could influence diction pedagogy practices.

Norris (2004) used a survey to investigate sight-singing requirements for high school and middle school choral festivals. This survey asked basic questions about group festivals, including if sight-reading was required, if there were levels of difficulty, and if there was a final rating given that included the sight-reading assessments. After administering the survey, the researcher received responses from every state; however, it took multiple follow-ups to achieve the 100% response rate. Results concluded many states do require sight-reading as a part of the assessment, and about half of them use that sight-reading assessment to determine the final grade for the ensemble. However, the lack of consistency in the guidelines and requirements for these group-festivals is pervasive, and the researcher suggests a more uniform model is needed. Another interesting finding was more high schools required sight-reading than middle school. This, along with Demorest's (2004) study, inspired the

questions the effects of attending ensemble contests or festivals on diction pedagogy practices in the current study.

Kuehne (2007) surveyed Florida middle school choral directors to study sight-singing practices, particularly looking at methods and materials being used and how and why these choices were made. As this study aims to look at diction pedagogy practices in similar ways, it was found to be useful. Kuehne sent an online survey to 384 Florida middle school choral directors in the Florida Vocal Association (FVA). The researcher chose this population because most schools are required to attend festival assessment, which requires an evaluation in sight-singing. To attend the festival, the director must be a member of the FVA. From the 152 surveys that came back, the researcher found choral teachers in FVA did include sight-reading in classes, and similar materials were used. Sight-singing used approximately 15%-30% of rehearsal time, festival assessments were very influential on sight-singing practices and instruction, and moveable “do” was most commonly used, all similar to previous findings (Demorest, 2004; McClung, 2001). Another interesting finding from this study was the lack of influence from sight-reading practices taught by collegiate professors. Kuehne discusses two possibilities from this. First, maybe professors are not teaching sight-reading instruction methods or second, perhaps they are just not spending enough consistent time on it? These theories would need to be confirmed by future research, but similar findings were expressed in another study about assessment practices in choral education (Kotora, 2005). Kuehne also wonders if the rise of assessment in music education compares with the more sight-reading instruction. Lastly, the researcher finds teachers choose similar materials for sight-

reading, but a large number of them also create personal methods as well, again, similar to previous studies (Demorest, 2004; McClung, 2001). This, and other studies, have not found a conclusive answer as to why this is, and future research needs to be done to understand why people choose specific materials and what influences their choices.

Kuehne's study, along with others (Demorest, 2004; McClung, 2001), confirmed the need to ask about time spent on diction in rehearsals and what methods are being used to teach diction in the current study. This study was also influential in asking questions pertaining to one's diction training and experience and how prepared they felt after said experience as a first-year teacher compared to their current teaching placement. This study, along with others previously mentioned (Demorest, 2004; McClung, 2001), informed the decision to put "self-created method" as one of the choices for diction pedagogy practices.

Finally, Pollock's thesis (2017) studied sight-singing practices being used by choral directors of Kentucky. After receiving 22 usable surveys, Pollock found teachers spent approximately 10-20% time on sight-reading and the most frequently used pitch reading system was movable "do," also found in previous studies (Demorest, 2004; Kuehne, 2007; McClung, 2001). She also found sight-singing practice was usually done prior to rehearsal of repertoire, such as warmups or a specific sight-reading exercise. Pollock also looked at rhythmic sight-reading and found count-singing to be the most common method used, similar to previous evidence (Demorest, 2004). She also found directors used a more unstructured combination of materials over specific published sight-reading materials. Lastly,

directors also primarily used individual assessment for sight-reading, again aligning with previous research (Demorest, 2004).

Another compelling and informative area of music education survey research has to do with assessment. Kitora (2005) surveyed Ohio high school choral directors and collegiate professors about assessment practices. The researcher found high school teachers used concert performances, participation, and attendance most regularly to assess students, closely followed by singing and written tests, attitude, recordings, independent studies, rubrics, and least of all, portfolio projects. The top assessment strategies taught by collegiate professors were video recordings, written tests, concert performances, and attendance. Strategies taught the least were written projects, portfolios, rubrics, and attitude. Most teachers, high school and collegiate, chose their assessment practices as a personal choice, rather than mandated from some other source. Shared frustrations about assessment included lack of time, full teaching schedules, difficulty of implementing individual assessment, lack of support and training, and fighting student attitude about assessment in general. The researcher also asked about how prepared high school teachers felt to use assessment after their training compared to how well collegiate professors thought their students would be prepared to use assessment and found 41% of high school teachers reported not feeling “very prepared,” followed by 25% feeling “not at all” prepared, and only 5% reporting feeling “well-prepared.” Professors said 30% of their students would feel “well-prepared,” 55% “somewhat” prepared,” and 0% would feel “not at all” prepared” (p. 73).

The last literature researched was a survey of assessment and grading practices in music classes by Russell and Austin (2010). They created a random sample which produced 352 surveys, “52% band directors, 37% choral directors, and 11% orchestral directors” (p. 41). The “Secondary School Music Assessment Questionnaire” (p. 41), wanted to look at the context of schools and the grading systems within them, specific assessment and grading strategies being employed by secondary music teachers, and other factors influenced the assessment and grading choices made by teachers. The researchers found most schools used the traditional letter grading method, and hardly any administrative support was offered in how to assess music classes. Classroom-specific, they found most teachers provided a formal grading policy in writing, though some only a verbal description. The most weighted grading criteria were performance, attitude, and attendance, while the least weighted strategies were student written work and student practice. Clearly, grading is mostly based on non-achievement criteria. Lastly, outside influences such as time, the number of students taught, or large performance load did not have relationships with assessment practices. However, what grade level and what ensemble type they taught did.

The two previously-mentioned survey studies about assessment and Kuehne’s (2007) study informed the current survey to include questions about prior training and its effects on comfort level in teaching diction in the high school choral classrooms. Russell and Austin (2010) inspired more questions about demographic information and details about choral programs to achieve a more in-depth picture of how practices and materials could potentially be chosen.

Comparing and analyzing the diverse array of surveys mentioned above helped form the design of the study and instrument for the current study and provided some reference as to what has been surveyed in music education, though all did not apply to this study. Some questions were adapted and spiraled from some of these studies, and they helped shape the form, flow, and questions outside of diction pedagogy practice.

This literature review has discussed methods and materials being employed and advocated for in choral education and related music survey studies in music education. From this one can conclude many methods and materials are available to teach diction, some with effective results, some waiting to be empirically proven as effective. While no choir is trying to sound identical, they do share common goals, one of which being striving for consistent and uniform diction to effectively communicate the text. Karna (2012) states, “The fusion of text with music is one of the most powerful methods by which the composer can express emotion to the audience” (p. 1). Therefore, it seems imperative for choral educators to understand what methods are being employed to teach diction in contemporary high school choirs in an effort narrow the field of effective techniques to use when teaching diction in addition to understanding why and how certain methods and materials are being used. The purpose of this study is to describe the current practices New England high school choral teachers use when teaching diction.

Method

To answer the research question, I conducted a survey of public high school choral directors in the six New England states: Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, and Rhode Island. I chose this region because I am native to Vermont and will be teaching there after the completion of my master's degree. Investigating this topic may further inform my teaching as well as my future colleagues and music educators in the New England area and further guide best practices on a larger scale.

Sampling Frame

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began constructing my sampling frame by identifying all public high schools in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, and Rhode Island using the “2017/2018 Preliminary Directory” data file from the National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). CCD is the annual release of information that school districts are required by law to submit to the Department of Education. This database includes school year, school name, school district, NCES identification numbers, mailing address, type of school, operational status, and lowest and highest grades offered. As the document lists every school in the United States of America, Bureau of Indian Education, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands ($N = 102,204$), my first step was to delete all schools other than those in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, and Rhode Island ($n = 4,864$). Then, I eliminated all elementary and middle schools ($n = 1,052$) followed by schools that were out of scope for this study, including alternative, adult

education, special education, vocation and technical, non-traditional high schools that likely do not have choral programs, schools that closed, or schools that never reported ($n = 881$). Next, I created three new columns in the data file next to the school name for choral director name, email address, and phone number. I then proceeded to manually obtain choral director information from publicly accessible school staff directories on the web and making personal contacts with school staff for those that were either unlisted or unclear online (for example: the website listed names only, multiple teachers were listed as “music teacher,” etc.).

This process was completed over the course of two weeks of non-stop data collection. When making personal calls, I used a script that I had created that identified myself as a music education researcher from the University of Maryland before asking for the names and email addresses of choral directors. After eliminating schools that did not have choral directors, the final sample for this study was 611 potential participants. To maximize the absolute number of absolute responses I decided to send survey invitations to all choral directors ($N = 611$) rather than taking a subsample.

Survey Development

I developed the Diction Pedagogy Survey (DPS) through discussion with my advisor and colleagues as well as reviewing pertinent research. I created it using the Qualtrics Survey Software available to me through a University of Maryland site license. The questionnaire contains 37 questions about diction pedagogy practices and demographic information with several types of response categories, including yes/no, choose all that apply, choose one, Likert-type scales, sliders, open response, and some

questions that would only be displayed after certain choices were made by participants. As previously stated, after the questionnaire was completed it was piloted on working choral directors ($n = 10$) and feedback received from those directors was carefully considered.

The survey questions comprised seven main sections: (a) consent form; (b) methods and materials; (c) assessment; (d) festival adjudication; (e) demographic information about teaching experience; (f) education received, and their choral program; (g) and an open-response question for final comments. As few studies have been done regarding diction pedagogy practices, I created the survey instrument by reviewing relevant music education survey studies (Demorest, 2004; Forbes, 2001; Kotora, 2005; Kuehne, 2007; McClung, 2001; Norris, 2004; Pollock, 2017; Russell & Austin, 2010). These studies helped inform the design and content of the survey questions for the DPS.

As required by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB), the survey begins with a consent form page with information about the study followed by three questions to ensure the correct population takes the survey. These questions asked if the participant is at least 18 years old, if they have read the consent form and agree to take the survey, and if they currently teach high school choir. If a participant answered “no” to any of these questions, they were immediately directed to the end of the survey. These are the only questions in the survey that removed anyone who was ineligible from taking it.

The following two sections of the survey are about the methods and materials used in their diction pedagogy practices. Questions most relating to my research

question were placed in the beginning of the questionnaire and the demographic information and sensitive questions were asked at the end of the survey. Questions were designed as yes/no, choose all that apply, choose one, Likert-type scales, sliders, and open response. Many also featured an “other” category where participants could write in information or choices not available on a certain question.

The methods section of the survey included questions about (a) methods used in the classroom, (b) diction training experience, (c) comfort level in teaching diction, (d) when diction is taught in the classroom, (e) and time spent on diction in the classroom setting. Many of these questions were adapted or spiraled from other music education survey studies (Demorest, 2004; Kitora, 2005; Pollock, 2017) and the question about methods used in the classroom was adapted from researcher and practitioner literature (Abril, 2006; Corbin, 1982; Dekaney, 2003; Demorest, 2004; Flower, 1936; Gackle and Fung, 2009; Mark and Gary, 1999; Pan, 1997; Pollock, 2017; Shehan, 1987; Yoo, 2017). Also, since this study concerned current methods and materials being employed to teach diction and since certain teacher demographics have not been previously researched in relation to diction pedagogy, I also thought it important to ask about participants’ native language, their language fluency, and the time spent on teaching diction in their native language(s) and languages outside of their native language(s).

The materials section contained questions adapted, adopted, and spiraled from numerous survey studies as well (Dekaney, 2014; Demorest, 2004; Mahaney, 2006; Pan, 1997; Pollock, 2017). Particularly influential was Mahaney’s dissertation (2006) about common diction materials and resources used in collegiate courses. Though this

study is about high school choral ensembles, some of the categories used in this study's survey were adapted to the current survey. The other influential study for the current study was Demorest (2004) about sight-reading practices. Demorest offered a "self-created materials" choice in his survey questions, and this choice was adopted into the current survey. Both questions about materials used and most frequently used open-response boxes for "books," "software," and "other" categories to gather more information about materials used in a high school setting.

The penultimate section includes questions about demographics, including information about the choral director's teaching experience, educational background, and high school choral program. I adapted questions from several studies (Kotora, 2005; Kuehne, 2007; Pollock, 2017) as well as created some of my own based on general knowledge of choral education practice. For example, the question about what kind of choral ensembles are offered at their school lists 12 different choral ensembles for the participants to choose from as well as an "other" category to fill in. This list was created by my own knowledge of different choral ensembles based on my personal experience as well as discussing the list with my advisor, colleagues, and the feedback received from the pilot test.

Pilot Test

Before sending the survey to choral directors of New England, I sent it to a group of working and retired choir directors ($N = 26$) in Maryland, Vermont, Alabama, and California asking for feedback on question clarity, ease of use, level of difficulty, answer choices, and response burden. I received feedback from ($n = 10$) choir directors, which resulted in minor changes to question wording, adding an

additional two questions about individual diction assessment, and brought a few technological errors of the survey to light. Piloting the survey was an essential step in finalizing the flow, clarity, and structure of the survey instrument, and if it had not been piloted would have made for a less successful survey and study overall.

Invitations and Recruitment Emails

Once the contact lists were uploaded or created successfully in Qualtrics and Excel, the first recruitment email (see Appendix) with DPS were sent all eligible choral directors ($N = 611$) at 5:00am on Day One. When sending the recruitment email and DPS to the alternate contacts ($n = 54$), 10 contacts had to be deleted due to restrictions against message contents (i.e. URLs were not allowed to be sent, special email access was needed, etc.), leaving ($n = 45$) eligible potential participants from the alternate list. I also had to change the recruitment email for some of the alternate contacts as the message only allowed 1,000 characters maximum in the messaging window. This left the final sampling frame for this study at ($N = 611$). The first survey invitation resulted in 51 completed responses, for an initial response rate of approximately 8%.

A follow-up email (see Appendix) was sent six days later at approximately 10:30am, which received 41 more responses, making the total amount of 92 responses since the initial release of the survey, bringing the response rate to 15%. A final reminder email was sent six days after the second follow-up at 5:00am, following the same protocols as the first follow-up email, which led to 49 more responses, totaling to 141 as the final number of responses, bringing the response rate to 23%. The only changes made to this reminder was I shortened the message to only include basic

information about the study, the link, how long it would take to complete, and a thank you message (see Appendix). I figured if participants hadn't read the first two emails by now, the best way to get more responses was with a short and concise email.

Analysis

I downloaded the data file from Qualtrics and immediately deleted participants names and emails for confidentiality and to remove any bias. Next, I cleaned the data and calculated descriptive statistics using the Qualtrics software. Qualtrics broke down each question and provided frequency counts, means, standard deviations, minimums, and maximums as well as visual representation (usually a bar graph) to represent the data. I calculated some percentages as well. I put down all additional information in a word document to organize my thinking and flow for the results. For the final question of the survey, I utilized descriptive coding (Saldana, 2013) to identify themes about participants further comments on diction pedagogy practices, training, and experience. Then, I used pattern coding (Saldana, 2013) to narrow and refine the themes to arrive at my final list. As this was not part of the original research question, I decided to pursue this exploratory analysis of the open-ended comments purely because of the interesting results.

Results

The survey was open for 20 days, and 141 responses were recorded when it closed. As I began to look through the data, I removed 17 surveys for various reasons. Two respondents opened the survey but never took it, three only answered the first question, two did not agree to the consent form, one was under 18 years of age, one did not teach high school choir, and eight surveys were only partially completed. I chose to omit the partially completed surveys to gain a more complete picture of the overall data set. This left 124 usable surveys out of 611 invitations, for a final response rate of 20.3% and all six states represented.

The purpose of this study was to describe the current practices New England high school choral teachers use when teaching diction. The primary research question guiding this study was what methods and materials are most commonly being used to teach diction in New England high school choral classrooms? In the next section, the results will be broken down by research question, beginning with questions asked to ensure the correct population, moving to an overview of collected demographic information, and ending with results collected about methods and materials used to teach diction in high school choral classrooms.

Demographic Information

All six states of New England were represented in this sample. Massachusetts was the most represented with 53 participants (42.74%), followed by 21 participants from Maine (16.94%), 17 participants from New Hampshire (13.71%), 17 participants from Connecticut (13.71%), 13 participants from Vermont (10.48%), and 3 (2.42%) from Rhode Island. When comparing this to the original 611 invitations

sent out, the response rates match very closely with the breakdown of schools in the initial list. Invitations were sent to 193 directors (31.59%) in Massachusetts, 104 directors (17.02%) in Maine, 80 directors (13.09%) in New Hampshire, 139 directors (22.75%) in Connecticut, 56 directors (9.17%) in Vermont, and 39 directors (6.38%) in Rhode Island.

Twelve survey questions inquired about information regarding the teacher and the choral program to build a larger picture about the sample being studied. More specifically, these questions studies the number of choral directors in each school, number and type of choral ensemble offered at each school, how many students are in the choral program, which grade levels each teacher directed, how many languages the director spoke, what native language was spoken by the teacher, choral director teaching experience, highest level of completed education, bachelor's degree received, and the primary instrument of the choral director. This section of the results will be broken down into two subsections, "Choral Director" and "Choral Program."

Choral Directors. Out of the 124 choral programs represented in this sample, 118 (95.16%) of them are directed by one choral educator, 5 (4.03%) are directed by 2 choral directors, and one participant (0.81%) reported having three choral directors at their school. I asked each participant to include full time and part time choral directors in their response. All but one participant ($n = 123$) reported teaching grades 9-12 in their choral programs, and the one other participant reports teaching grades 10-12. When asked how many years each director has taught high school choral ensembles answers ranged from 1 year to 41 years. On average, this sample of participants have taught for 11.90 years, and 48.4% ($n = 60$) have taught high school

choral ensembles for the entirety of their teaching career. More participants have taught other levels of choral ensembles in their career. On average, participants in this sample have taught any level of choral ensembles for 14.05 years, and 51.6% ($n = 64$) reported teaching other choral ensembles over the course of their career.

All participants reported a wide variety of education degrees having been completed. When asked about highest level of completed education, 66.94% reported having completed a Master's degree ($n = 83$), 21.77% reported having completed a Bachelor's degree ($n = 27$), and 3.23% of directors reported having completed a Doctorate ($n = 4$). This question also offered an opened-ended "other" category where participants could enter other highest level of degrees received. These included a Bachelor's +36 credits, a Bachelor's +30, two reported having a BA+15, a CAS (certificate of advanced study) beyond a Master's degree, a 6th year degree (another form of advanced study), three reported having two masters degrees, and one reported of having a Master's degree outside of music who now teaches chorus as an elective.

If participants reported having a Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate as their highest degree the survey prompted an additional question asking about the field of the Bachelor's degree. Participants ($n = 114$) reported a wide variety of music degrees as well as a few outside of music all together. 72 participants (63.16%) reported a degree in Music Education, 14 (12.28%) reported a degree in Music Performance, 13 (11.40%) reported a dual degree in Music Performance and Music Education, and 15 participants (13.16%) reported some "other" degree, which they were able to fill in. These included one dual degree in music and psychology, two participants reported a BA in Music, a dual degree in music composition and music performance, two

participants reported degrees in music composition, one participant reported a degree in music performance, music theory and composition, two participants reported a degree in music, one participant reported a dual MB degree in vocal performance and choral conducting, one participant reported a dual degree in music theory and linguistics, one participant reported a degree in music education, applied Spanish, and linguistics, and finally, two participants reported their Bachelor's degree in biology.

I was also interested in knowing these choral directors' primary instruments (see Table 4.01.) One piece of invalid data had to be removed (see note). Most directors reported voice as their primary instrument ($n = 70$), though the second most frequently chosen primary instrument was a wide variety of instruments ($n = 23$).

Table 4.01

Frequency Counts of Primary Instruments

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Primary Instrument		
Voice	70	56.91
Instruments	23	18.7
Piano	19	15.45
Voice and Piano	5	4.07
Voice and Another Instrument	4	3.25
Two Instruments	2	1.63

Note. $N = 123$

Lastly, I asked about choral directors' native language. The majority of participants reported speaking one language fluently ($n = 104$), and all but two reported that native language being English ($n = 122$). Of the two not reporting English as their native language, one reported Spanish being their native language and the other being bilingual in English and Spanish. As for fluency in number of languages, 17 participants (11.29%) reported speaking two languages fluently, two

participants (1.61%) reported not being fully fluent in any language, and one participant (0.81%) reported speaking three languages fluently.

Choral Programs. Three questions asked about the choral programs of the participants. First, directors were asked about how many high schools are offered at their school. Before analyzing the data for this question two pieces of data needed to be checked due to the answers seeming implausible. For one, I checked the school website and found the correct number of choirs, and for another I reached out to the choral director to double check their answer. After fixing these two pieces of data, the sample was back at 124 responses. From the 124 responses, directors reported having as low as one ensemble in their program and as high as 13 ensembles in their program. Second, directors were asked about how many students were in their choral ensembles (I specifically asked about choral ensembles and not other offerings such as piano, music theory, or general music). On average, 67 students were in the sampled choral programs, with the lowest reporting 5 students and the highest reporting 270 students.

Lastly, I also wanted to know what types of choral ensembles were offered at these schools (see Table 4.02). The question offered 12 choral ensemble options and one “other section” where directors could write in additional information.

Table 4.02

Frequency Counts of High School Choral Ensembles Offered

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Type of Choral Ensemble		
Concert Choir	120	96.8
Chamber Choir	76	61.3
Women's or Treble Choir	48	38.7
A Cappella	43	34.7
Student-Led Ensembles	24	19.4
Men's or Tenor/Bass Choir	22	17.7
Show Choir	11	8.9
Grade Level Choirs	10	8.1
Madrigal Choir	9	7.3
Jazz Choir	8	6.4
Other	4	3.2
Gospel Choir	0	0.0
Barbershop Choir	0	0.0

Note. *N* = 375 Since one response can contain multiple choices, percentages will not necessarily total 100%.

The most frequently chosen answer was concert choir with 120 directors reporting this offering in their program (96.8%). No programs offered Gospel Choir or Barbershop, and four directors reported other offerings, including an advanced SSA choir, an honor or “select” choir, a choral ensemble open to all grades, and a pop a cappella ensemble.

Methods

The research question framing this study sought to find what methods and materials choral directors are using to teach diction in high school choral classrooms, therefore, many questions in this survey inquired about just that. It must be noted that this research question was solely inquiring about the teacher's methods and materials being implemented. Student practices are outside the scope of this study but should be

studied at a further time. This section will report on the methods in four subsections: training, methods, assessment, and outside influences.

Training. Three questions in the survey inquired about directors training in diction pedagogy. After asking about the context in which participants received diction training (see Table 4.03), many participants reported receiving training through being in ensembles ($n = 108$), college course ($n = 98$), and private lessons ($n = 87$). Additional directors also reported receiving training through personal research, reading diction texts, hiring diction coaches, studying recordings, attending festivals and professional development, and conversing with colleagues.

Table 4.03

Frequency Counts of Diction Training

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Diction Training		
Being in Ensembles	108	87.1
College Courses	98	79.03
Private Lessons	87	70.16
Master Class	55	44.35
Professional Development	54	43.55
Other	9	7.26
No Training	6	4.84

Note. $N = 417$ Since one response can contain multiple choices, percentages will not necessarily total 100%.

Two additional questions asked about how adequately prepared directors felt teaching diction in choir during their first year of teaching as well as now. In their first year, 29.84% ($n = 37$) reported feeling fairly well prepared, 22.58% ($n = 28$) reported feeling very well prepared, 22.58% ($n = 28$) reported feeling somewhat prepared, 14.52% ($n = 18$) reported feeling not much prepared, and 10.48% ($n = 13$) reported feeling not at all prepared to teaching diction in their first year of teaching

choir. Now, over half of directors (53.23%, $n = 66$) feel adequately prepared to teach diction in choir, 30.65% ($n = 38$) feel fairly well prepared, 12.90% ($n = 16$) feel somewhat prepared, 3.23% ($n = 4$) feel not much prepared, and no one reported feeling not at all prepared.

Methods. Five questions specifically asked about methods used to teach diction in high school choral classrooms. When asked about what methods they used (see Table 4.04), most directors (96.16%) reported using vocal modeling and rote teaching. Many also reported it depends on the language (57.26%) or on the choir (50.81%). A few directors ($n = 7$) reported other methods, including utilizing students who take language classes, inviting guest artists, ending consonants on the following syllables (smear diction, Fisher 1986), and collaborating with language colleagues. Two other directors reported using video examples and online recordings.

Table 4.04

Frequency Counts of Diction Methods

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Diction Methods		
Vocal Modeling/Rote Teaching	118	96.16
Transliterations into Another System	71	57.26
Depends on the Language	71	57.26
Native Speaker	68	54.84
Depends on the Choir	63	50.81
Publisher-Provided Method	62	50.00
Transliterations into IPA	60	48.39
Self-Created Method	38	30.65
Do Not Use Specific Method	29	23.39
Other	9	7.26
Do Not Teach Diction	0	0.0

Note. $N = 589$ Since one response can contain multiple choices, percentages will not necessarily total 100%.

Once asked about methods used, I asked them to report which method they used most frequently (see Table 4.05). Again, the majority of directors (73.39%) reported using rote teaching and vocal modeling as their primary method of diction instruction. Two directors reported using a combined approach utilizing numerous methods.

Table 4.05

Most Frequently Used Diction Methods

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Most Frequent Diction Methods		
Vocal Modeling/Rote Teaching	91	73.39
Transliterations into Another System	12	9.68
Transliterations into IPA	9	7.26
Self-Created Method	7	5.65
Publisher-Provided Method	2	1.61
Other	2	1.61
Native Speaker	1	0.81

Note. *N* = 124

I also wanted to know when choral directors usually address diction in their rehearsals. This question was supposed to be set up so directors could choose all that apply; however, it seems as though participants were only able to choose one answer. This may have affected their choice, and therefore, the results. However, all directors (*N* = 124) did answer, and 31.45% (*n* = 39) said “throughout rehearsal,” 3.23% (*n* = 4) said “other,” 2.42% (*n* = 3) said “when new music is introduced,” 1.61% (*n* = 2) said during warm-ups, no one reported “never”, and 61.29% (*n* = 76) said “all of the above.” Those that chose other could write in commentary in an open response box. This is how I found out the question would not let directors chose more than one answer. Two directors also reported addressing diction after notes and rhythms have

been learned on neutral syllables or solfege, and one reported moving to text approximately two weeks before performances.

Building further on this, I asked about what percentage of time is devoted to teaching diction in the participants' native language(s) as well as in languages beyond their native language(s) (see table 4.06). One participant did not answer the question about percentage of time teaching diction in their native language(s) (see note), though all answered when asked about percentage of time teaching diction outside of their native language(s).

Table 4.06

Means, Standard Deviations, and Percentage of Time Teaching Diction

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Teaching Diction of Native Language	26.99	23.19	3	95
Teaching Diction Outside of Native Language	23.92	14.83	4	77

Note. $n = 123$, $N = 124$

Assessment. Five questions addressed diction assessment practices.

Participants were first asked if they did assess diction in their high school choral ensembles. 58.87% ($n = 73$) said yes, and 41.13% ($n = 51$) said no. Those that answered “no” were moved ahead to the next block of the survey. Those that answered “yes” ($n = 73$) were asked three further questions about their assessment practices. First, I asked about what procedures they used to assess diction in their high school choral ensembles (see Table 4.07).

Table 4.07

Frequency Counts of Diction Assessment Practices

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Assessment Practices		
Sing in Small Groups	51	69.86
Student Self-Reflection	34	46.58
Audio Recordings Alone	31	42.47
Recite Text	30	41.1
Audio Recordings in Class	25	34.25
Sing Alone for Teacher	24	32.88
Video Recordings Alone	17	23.29
Video Recordings in Class	15	20.55
Sing Alone in Class	12	16.44
Written Test	10	13.7
Other	4	5.48

Note. $N = 226$ Since one response can contain multiple choices, percentages will not necessarily total 100%.

The “other” category had an open response box where participants could share additional strategies used. These included group and self-reflection after listening to concert and rehearsal recordings, students listening to each other and providing feedback, and assessing diction independently.

Those that reported assessing diction in their choral ensembles ($n = 73$) were also asked if any outside influences affected their method(s) of diction assessment (see Table 4.08). The majority of participants (48.88%) answered “other” which also gave them the answer to write in additional influences including state vocal rubrics, personal choice, personal philosophy, preparing for state choral assessments or festival adjudication, prior experience, needs of the particular piece being prepared, desire to teach proper singing technique, and self-designed methods. Eight participants (17.77%) also wrote in “none,” which was a mistake on my part. There should have been that option in the question itself.

Table 4.08

Frequency Counts of Outside Influences Affecting Diction Assessment

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Outside Influences		
Other	22	48.88
National Core Arts Standards	15	33.33
School Requirement	4	8.88
State Requirement	3	6.66
District Requirement	1	2.22

Note. $N = 45$ Since one response can contain multiple choices, percentages will not necessarily total 100%.

These directors were also asked if diction assessment was a percentage of each students' overall grade. 52.05 % ($n = 38$) answered "yes," and 47.95% ($n = 35$) answered "no." Similar to before, those that answered "no" moved ahead to the next block of the survey, but those that answered "yes" had one additional question, which asked approximately what percentage of students' overage grade was devoted to diction. The minimum grade was 1%, the maximum was 25%, and the average was 10.03%.

Festival Assessment. Four questions asked about diction assessment in state or regional ensemble contest or festival for high school choral ensembles. Out of the 124 participants, 58.06% ($n = 72$) of director's ensembles regularly attend contest or festival for adjudication and 41.94% ($n = 52$) do not. Those whose choirs do attend festival were asked three additional questions specifically about diction in these settings. Almost all (95. 83%, $n = 69$) reported that diction is assessed at their state or regional contest or festival. 4.17% ($n = 3$) reported that diction is not assessed. I also inquired if individual singers are assessed on diction at these events. Just over half (55.56%, $n = 40$) reported individuals are assessed on diction, and 44.44% ($n = 32$)

reported they are not. Lastly, directors were asked how much contest and festival assessment influences diction assessment in the classroom. This was a Likert-type question with five possible answers. Most reported contest and festival diction assessment influencing assessment in the classroom “a moderate amount” (41.67%, $n = 30$), followed by 30.56% ($n = 22$) reporting “a little,” 12.50% ($n = 9$) reporting “none at all,” 9.72% ($n = 7$) reporting “a lot,” and 5.56% ($n = 4$) reporting “a great deal.”

Materials

Two questions asked about materials used to teach diction in high school choral classrooms (see Table 4.09). Three participants left this question unanswered, so the data analyzed was for 121 participants. Most directors ($n = 62$) reported using audio recordings, closely followed by self-created materials ($n = 53$).

Table 4.09

Frequency Counts of Diction Materials

Variable	n	%
Diction Methods		
Audio Recordings	62	51.23
Self-Created Materials	53	43.80
Videos	33	27.27
I Do Not Use Materials	32	26.44
Books	20	16.52
Websites	17	14.04
Worksheets	13	10.74
Other	9	7.43
Software Programs	1	0.82

Note. $N = 240$ Since one response can contain multiple choices, percentages will not necessarily total 100%.

Participants were also asked to indicate which books and software programs they used, where appropriate, as well as any other materials they may use. Three

participants had to be contacted for clarifications about certain texts, and all responded. The most popularly-reported text was *Diction for Singers* by Joan Wall ($n = 6$). This was followed by *Diction* by John Moriarty ($n = 3$), *Translations and Annotations of Choral Literature* by Ron Jeffers ($n = 3$), *International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers* by Joan Wall ($n = 2$), *IPA Made Easy* by Anna Wentlent ($n = 2$), *The Singers's Manual of English Diction* by Madeleine Marsh ($n = 1$), *Successful Warm-Ups* by Nancy Telfer ($n = 1$), *The Interpretation of French Song* by Pierre Bernac ($n = 1$), *The Craft of Singing* by Garyh Nair ($n = 1$), and *The Use of the Phonetic International Alphabet in the Choral Rehearsal* by Duane Richard Karna. Others reported a few untitled books including course packets from college courses, materials from professors and mentors, dictionaries, and IPA handbooks.

One participant reported using Finale software as a diction material. In the “other” category, nine participants (7.43%) reported additional diction materials used in high school choral classrooms. They include posters of IPA vowels, music in choir’s repertory, books and materials from undergraduate studies, the *Diction Police Website*, podcasts, and occasional IPA guides.

Similar to the methods question, I then asked which material participants used most frequently (see Table 4.10). Those who answered, “I do not use materials to teach diction” ($n = 32$) plus the three participants who did not answer the previous question made the sample for this question 89 participants (see note). Self-created materials was the most frequently chosen ($n = 35$, 39.33%), closely followed by audio recordings ($n = 28$, 31.46%). Those who chose “other” reported using IPA posters, repertoire, specific worksheets and exercises, and rote teaching or vocal modeling

alongside materials. For books, the most frequently used were *Diction for Singers* by Joan Wall, *Successful Warm-Ups* by Nancy Telfer, *The Craft of Singing* by Garyh Nair, and *International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers* by Joan Wall

Table 4.10

Most Frequently Used Diction Materials

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Diction Methods		
Self-Created Materials	35	39.33
Audio Recordings	28	31.46
Other	9	10.11
Videos	8	8.99
Books	5	5.62
Worksheets	2	2.25
Websites	2	2.25
Software Programs	0	0.00

Note. *N* = 89

Further Comments

Though my original research question did not study beyond collecting descriptive data about methods and materials when teaching diction, I did reserve a final question for participants to share any further comments about diction pedagogy practices, training, and experience. After an exploratory analysis, I did descriptive coding where I found 19 codes emerge from the comments from 27 (21.77%) participants. Using pattern coding, I narrowed down the codes into seven themes (see Table 4.11) within the additional comments provided about training, experience, and practices.

Table 4.11

Final Theme List, Participant Indicator Terms

Theme (<i>n</i> , %)	Participant Indicator Terms
Advanced Training (<i>n</i> = 9, 33.33%)	Intense language training, specific language diction training, course work, “Lessac” method, training in other musical styles, understanding of vocal pedagogy, private lessons, voice major.
Insufficient Training (<i>n</i> = 9, 33.33%)	Training background instrumental, wish for “reboot” of classes after training programs and how to use them in rehearsal, wish for more concentration on diction pedagogy in undergraduate classes, lack of diction training in languages outside of English, PreK-12 certification
Experiential Influences (<i>n</i> = 7, 25.92%)	Being in choirs, singing in church, mentors, professors, teaching in foreign countries.
Band doing Choir (<i>n</i> = 6, 22.22%)	PreK-12 certification, instrumentalist teaching choir, one music teacher, budget cuts, “woefully inadequate,” undergraduate instrumentalist or vocal track.
Language (<i>n</i> = 5, 18.51%)	Natural and authentic sound, linguistics, interest in endangered languages, native speakers, teaching in foreign countries.
Choral Sound (<i>n</i> = 5, 18.51%)	Rhythmic precision, emphasis on uniform vowels, improving tone and blend, teaching diction in other classes, creating “unified sounds”
IPA (<i>n</i> = 5, 18.51%)	Advocate for IPA, wish for more training in IPA, desire to use IPA more, never received formal training in IPA.

Note. *N* = 27. Since one response can contain multiple themes, percentages will not necessarily total 100%.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe the current diction pedagogy practices New England high school choral teachers use when teaching diction. The primary research question guiding this study was what methods and materials are most commonly being used by choral teachers to teach diction in New England high school choral classrooms? Based on the results of this study, I can state choral directors use a wide variety of methods, materials, and practices when teaching diction in high school choral classrooms, though some methods and materials are used more frequently than others. The next section will discuss the findings from the Diction Pedagogy Survey and how the results connect to current literature.

Methods

As the primary research question looked to discover the most commonly used methods and materials, I was very interested to find vocal modeling and rote teaching are the most frequently used methods of diction instruction by an overwhelming majority of participants in this study ($n = 118$). Most directors (96.16%) reported using vocal modeling and rote teaching, and even more importantly, 73.39% ($n = 91$) reported using this method most frequently when teaching diction. Considering rote teaching has a long history in American choral education (Goetze, 1988; Radionoff, 2007; Weintraub, 1992) this result was expected. However, other research also suggests rote teaching is not as effective a method when compared with other methods (Flower, 1936; Pan, 1997) when trying to produce lasting, transferrable, independently-regulated diction skills. This makes this particular result of great

interest, and, of course, begs the question as to *why* rote teaching and vocal modeling are so frequently used.

Other most frequently used methods are using transliterations into another system (ex. “hallelujah” would be written as “ah-leh-loo-yah”) and transliterations into the International Phonetic Alphabet. IPA, as mentioned earlier, is widely advocated for method of diction instruction by pedagogues and researchers alike, (Bolster, 1983; Bragger, 1975; Collins, 1999; Dekaney, 2003; Emmons & Chase, 2006; Flower, 1936; Goodman, 1993; Hylton, 1995; Leck, 2009; Madura, 2017; Moore, 1972; Pan, 1997; Olson, 2010; Phillips, 1992; Phillips, 2004; Smith, 2013), so it is interesting IPA is not as popular a choice of diction method in this study. When asked to comment further about diction pedagogy practices, some participants advocated for IPA because of its usefulness in the classroom and based on personal experience. However, others also mentioned their lack of training in IPA, the desire but inability to use it more in their classes, time constraints, and frustration that it was not offered in their training programs served as roadblocks in implementing the method.

These results not only suggest more research needs to be conducted around IPA and its effectiveness, but also that it could potentially be something that needs to be implemented more in music education training programs. IPA is regularly used in training programs for vocal majors, but sometimes the crossover of classes between vocal majors and music education majors with a choral or vocal focus often means replacing some classes with others, and therefore, missing out on the benefits of others. Diction or IPA classes could be the ones being lost in the shuffle. Two

participants also mentioned time constraints being a roadblock into implementing IPA. As some research suggests IPA does not take time to implement (Dekaney, 2003; Pan, 1997), another reason why IPA is not used more could be attributed to anxiety around using the system, as learning a new system of language can appear daunting. This would certainly need to be tested to prove any kind of validity but studying the reasons behind choosing or not choosing IPA could benefit teachers and students alike.

Over half of participants ($n = 62$) also reported using publisher-provided methods within octavos, though few ($n = 2$) reported it as their most frequently used method. This could further contribute to the wide variety of methods employed. As Dekaney found (2014), many choral octavos are consistently inconsistent with what kinds of pronunciation guides are offered inside choral octavos students and teachers are working from. If choral education publications are trying to provide helpful resources to directors and students, it may be worthwhile to consider what methods are being provided within these choral octavos from which students and teachers are learning from. The inconsistency could contribute to the wide variety of methods being used to teach diction.

Over half ($n = 68$) of directors also reported using native speakers, though only one participant reported it as their most frequently used method. It was encouraging to see over half of participants utilizing native speakers, as it has been cited as a key method of creating culturally valid representations of musical works, (Abril, 2006; Bennett Walling, 2016; Boshkoff & Gault, 2010; Gackle & Fung, 2009; Goetze, 2000; Mahaney, 2006; Shaw, 2012; Yoo, 2017). Though, it must also be

noted almost half of participants also reported not using them. This could be due to choral director's working knowledge of languages, or the unavailability of such people in their community. However, based on the available research, I would encourage choral educators to utilize this method, particularly with languages where they feel less comfortable teaching. One participant mentioned they thought having a native speaker come in was a "valuable" experience for their students. Past research also suggests (Gackle & Fung, 2009) using native speakers helps those studying the language understand the nuance and pronunciation on deeper levels.

Another interesting result from the DPS was more than half of directors reported their methods of diction instruction were frequently dependent on the choir ($n = 63$) or the language being studied ($n = 71$). This makes practical sense as each choir, each director, and each student are at different levels of their diction education based on their personal experience and training. This could certainly alter the methods used from choir to choir, and similarly, the choir's or director's familiarity with the language being studied could also change the course of method for diction instruction.

One unexpected finding about diction instruction had to do with native languages. The majority of participants reported speaking one language fluently ($n = 104$), and most reported their native language being English ($n = 122$). Seventeen participants (11.29%) also reported speaking two languages fluently, two participants (1.61%) reported not being fully fluent in any language, and one participant (0.81%) reported speaking three languages fluently. When asked about time spent on teaching diction in participants' native language and outside of their native language, I found

the opposite of what I expected. Though the difference is small, more participants reported spending more time teaching diction of their native language over teaching diction of languages outside of their native language. I think this question needs more research to be fully fleshed out, but some questions arise from this particular result. What languages are directors programming? (Forbes, 2001; Hedden & Daugherty, 2009; Kramer & Floyd, 2019). Could it be that some directors spend less time on diction in languages outside of their native language because they invite others to assist in the language instruction? Perhaps directors spend more time on English diction because that is what they are most fluent in and can spend time on nuance and more finite adjustments in syntax and text unification?

Most directors have received diction training through being in ensembles ($n = 108$), college courses ($n = 98$), and private lessons ($n = 87$), though some claim that training was insufficient for the diction responsibilities of high school choir. Regardless of their training, when comparing how prepared directors feel to teach diction from their first year of teaching to now, we can see a marked increase in preparedness. Most felt fairly well prepared ($n = 37$) or very well prepared ($n = 28$) in their first year of teaching diction in high school choir, and now, over half of directors ($n = 66$) feel very well prepared or feel fairly well prepared ($n = 38$) to teach diction in high school choir. This could be due to many factors, including experience, more training, and education, but further research would need to be done to confirm that theory.

Overall, I think the results of this study show a blended approach of diction methods are being widely utilized. Though favoring rote teaching and vocal

modeling, other methods are reported as being used in addition to these two. I'd like to dig a little deeper into assessment practices and festival assessment practices within the following paragraphs.

Assessment. A little over half of choral directors ($n = 73$) reported assessing diction in their choirs, and most reported using singing in small groups as the primary diction assessment practice ($n = 51$). This was closely followed by student self-reflection, individual audio recordings, reciting text. Written tests, singing alone in class, and any kind of video recordings were the least frequently used. Singing in small groups has historically been a method of choice for many kinds of choral assessment, as it is relatively time-efficient, and you can easily see and hear when someone does or does not know their part. I was pleasantly surprised to find many directors having their students use audio recordings. Technology can have many benefits in the music classroom, and it is encouraging to see directors taking advantage that.

Two related factors that could play a role in diction assessment are festival events and adjudication requirements. Similar choral education studies have looked at how sight-reading practices influence grading practices in choral programs (Demorest, 2004; Kuehne, 2007; McClung, 2001). In this study, 95.83% of directors whose choirs attend concert or festival reported that diction was one of the elements adjudicated at these festivals, and 55.56% also reported student's being individually assessed on diction. When directors were asked how much contest and festival assessment influences diction assessment in the classroom, most reported contest and festival diction assessment influencing assessment in the classroom "a moderate

amount” (41.67%, $n = 30$), followed by 30.56% ($n = 22$) reporting “a little,” 12.50% ($n = 9$) reporting “none at all,” 9.72% ($n = 7$) reporting “a lot,” and 5.56% ($n = 4$) reporting “a great deal.” In a practical sense, weighting diction assessment as part of a student’s overall grade could be good and informative practice when preparing for these types of events and making it a regular part of student’s choral education helps reinforce the skills throughout their education while simultaneously preparing them to be adjudicated.

Materials

The second part of the research question guiding this study wanted to know about common materials used by high school choral teachers when teaching diction. Most directors ($n = 62$) reported using audio recordings, which aligns with Mahaney’s study (2006) of diction books and resources in collegiate settings. The researcher found many teachers used recordings as a resource when teaching diction. It is also worth noting some methods and materials seem to overlap in this study. For example, some mentioned using audio recordings as a method, while others viewed them as a material. I do not believe it is one way or the other, but it is interesting to consider.

Closely followed for most frequently used material was self-created materials ($n = 53$). Previous studies (Kuehne, 2007; McClung, 2001) have found similar results of participants using self-created materials for sight-reading in choral settings, but no one has found this with diction, as it has not been asked. Of course, self-created materials leave a lot of open-ended questions. Perhaps it is a compilation of materials

have collected over their years as a choral educator or maybe it is more cost-effective to create materials rather than purchasing them.

When asked about specific texts used the most popularly-reported was *Diction for Singers* by Joan Wall ($n = 6$). This, again, aligns with Mahaney's results (2006), which could suggest this text is frequently used in teacher preparation programs and that high school choral directors call upon their past training for resources and materials. *Diction* by John Moriarty ($n = 3$), *International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers* by Joan Wall ($n = 2$), *The Singer's Manual of English Diction* by Madeleine Marshall ($n = 1$), and *The Interpretation of French Song* by Pierre Bernac ($n = 1$) were also cited as most frequently-used texts. Others reported a few untitled books including course packets from college courses, materials from professors and mentors, dictionaries, and IPA handbooks.

Further Comments

The seven themes that emerged were (a) advanced training, (b) insufficient training, (c) experiential influences, (d) band doing choir, (e) language, (f) choral sound, (g) and IPA. Many participants attributed advanced training in specific languages and diction, vocal pedagogy, and other course work to their comfort and confidence in teaching diction in the classroom. This begs the question about what kinds of diction training are offered within teacher preparation programs and how they differ from those who are strictly vocal majors compared to music education majors with a choral or vocal focus.

Conversely, another interesting theme that emerged pertained to insufficient training. An equal number of participants mentioned their lack of training in diction

and choral pedagogy and how it influenced their teaching. This included a few comments about certain pre-service training programs that had students choose either an instrumental or vocal track or were certified to teach all music for all students in Pre-K-12. This raises an important discussion about the structure of teacher training programs and the advantages and disadvantages around programs that certify teachers to teach all music or ones that are focused to a specific area (e.g., band, choir, general music, etc.)

Some participants disclosed a lack of confidence and lack of training in choir and diction due to being an instrumentalist teaching choir or being a band teacher who had to take up the position of teaching choir as well. One director spoke of feeling “woefully inadequate” to teach choir based on their instrumentalist background. Again, this could speak to teacher training programs, but it also makes me wonder what kinds of professional development are offered or could be offered for teachers in these kinds of situations, and furthermore, if these teachers know about these opportunities that could help them develop their skills in choir, diction, and vocal pedagogy.

Connections to Practice

This study sought to describe diction pedagogy practices and common methods and materials being used to teach diction by New England high school choral directors. The results suggested a wide array of materials of methods being employed, and this next section will discuss how the results of this study can be connected to current practice.

Many directors reported using rote teaching and vocal modeling to teach diction. This method certainly has a place in choral classrooms, especially considering its long history in American choral education (Goetze, 1988; Radionoff, 2007; Weintraub, 1992). However, with other research that suggests rote teaching is not as effective a method when compared with the International Phonetic Alphabet (Flower, 1936; Pan, 1997) when trying to produce lasting, transferrable, independently-regulated diction skills, I would encourage choral directors not only read available research about the effectiveness of using IPA, but also to take it upon themselves to learn more about the method and to integrate it into their curriculum. As it is a widely advocated method of diction instruction by numerous scholars and researchers (Bolster, 1983; Bragger, 1975; Collins, 1999; Dekaney, 2003; Emmons & Chase, 2006; Flower, 1936; Goodman, 1993; Hylton, 1995; Leck, 2009; Madura, 2017; Moore, 1972; Olson, 2010; Pan, 1997; Phillips, 1992; Phillips, 2004; Smith, 2013), it is worth exploring. I am not suggesting dismissing rote teaching all together. That would make no sense in our practice! Rote teaching can be a very useful method and some cultures only use rote teaching and vocal modeling as a way sharing and learning music. I only suggest choral directors to be open to other methods when

teaching diction in choral settings. Some mentioned their lack of training confidence being roadblocks in implementing IPA. I would encourage those who feel they need more training in this area to reach out to colleagues and experts for help, training, and advice. We should never be afraid to ask for help when wanting to enhance our own education and the education of our students. Furthermore, to those who do feel more confident in their diction skills, I would encourage you to offer professional development opportunities through conferences and workshops.

Based on the wide variety of materials available to choral educators, I would encourage those in the field to use a critical eye when researching what is available to them. Looking at Dekaney's (2014) study about diction aides in choral octavos and Mahaney's (2006) study of diction materials, there are clearly a lot of resources being offered to study and learn text within much of the music we frequently work from. However, I would offer just because the resources are there does not necessarily mean we need to use them all. I would urge directors to look at available resources and materials and ask how they align with the goals of their choral programs and how they are helping achieve those goals. It is a wonderful gift to have so many available resources and materials at our disposal, but it is an equally incredible gift to be able to make our own opinions about them.

Future Research Questions

This study opens the door to many future research questions that should be explored. Other grade levels, including elementary, middle school, collegiate, and adult ensembles and other populations across the United States should be explored to see if there are differences in methods and materials being used between ages as well as different areas of the country. While this survey did not seek to find what methods are most effective future research should continue to study which methods are most effective, particularly by way of comparing methods against each other to find best practices of producing concrete, consistent, transferable, accurate, and independently-regulated diction skills. Future research should also investigate the reasons behind choral directors diction pedagogy practices. It would also be worth exploring the student perspective around effective methods and materials. Understanding how our students experience teaching and learning diction could be very informative to our own practices.

Other areas worth exploring are trying to understand how choral directors approaches to diction methods change based on the choir and the language being studied. Similarly, more research should be done to understand the reasons behind why directors may spend more time teaching diction in their native language compared to other languages. Research should also be done to determine what factors contribute to choral directors comfort in teaching diction over time. It would also be worth it to investigate factors behind diction assessment and how, if they do, compare and connect to festival assessment and adjudication practices surrounding diction. Similarly, further research could study what elements of diction are graded in choral

programs, why they are graded, and what influences inform these decisions. Future research should also study common courses taken by vocal majors, music majors, and music education majors to see where there are crossovers in course work and where it may be lacking for those who pursue music teaching professions beyond training.

Regarding materials used to teach diction, future research should be done to understand the reasons why directors choose the materials they do. Are they influenced by their training or perhaps conversations with colleagues and mentors? One specific material that should particularly be explored is directors use of self-created materials. Researchers should not only investigate why directors choose to utilize self-created materials so prevalently, but also what kinds of materials are included and where they have originated from.

Future research can help us understand some of these questions. As diction is an inseparable part of choral education and choral music, research should continue to be done to help inform our practice and profession.

Conclusion

I hope this study informs those in the profession about what methods and materials are being used in New England and how those compare to others being utilized in other parts of the United States of America. I also hope it inspires choral directors to continue their education of diction pedagogy practices, in familiar and unfamiliar languages alike, and how these practices influence their choral programs and their students. As text sets choral music apart from many other forms of music education, it is important to think deeply about how this aspect of choral education is being taught and experienced by students and directors.

Appendices

I: IRB Approval



1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL 301.405.4212
FAX 301.314.1475
irb@umd.edu
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: March 28, 2019

TO: Grace Chris
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1387573-1] Diction Pedagogy: A Survey of New England High School Choral Directors

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: March 28, 2019
EXPIRATION DATE: March 27, 2020
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7; Consent Waiver: 45CFR46.117(c)(1)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of March 27, 2020.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of seven years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

II: Initial Recruitment Email:

Subject: Choral Education Research: Please Help!

Dear Choral Educator,

My name is Grace Chris, and I am a Master's student in Music Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. Before I began pursuing my degree, I taught choral and general music for six years in both Vermont and Maryland.

I am writing you to invite you to participate in a study about diction pedagogy practices in high school choral classrooms. What is diction in a choral education setting? It is how we address and teach text set with music in our choral ensembles and classrooms. John Hylton defines it as "the correct and uniform pronunciation of the text of a song."

The purpose of this study is to describe the current practices New England high school choral teachers use when teaching diction. There have been a multitude of resources made available on the subjects of "how to teach diction" and "what method is the most effective" through organizations such as the National Association for Music Education, the American Choral Directors Association, and your local Music Educators Association, not to mention a vast array of books, websites, courses, and professional development available as well. However, despite the resources and training available, empirical research on *how* diction is taught in actual choral classrooms is remarkably scant. I hope the results of this study will benefit choral teachers by illuminating current diction pedagogy practices, help grow the research base on this subject, and see if current diction pedagogy practices could shed light on most effective methods.

I realize your time is *extremely* valuable, and I appreciate that you have even opened your email and read this far. The survey takes approximately **10 minutes** to complete, and your contribution will be essential to this study, choral education research, and your fellow choral educators.

If you would like to participate, **please follow the link below**. Thank you, in advance, for being a part of this research! (If you are not the current choral director at your school, I would really appreciate it if you forwarded this message to the current director.)

https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV_0lA4yE5GqdkqiBT

Most Sincerely,

Grace Chris

gchris1@terpmail.umd.edu

Master's Student, Music Education
University of Maryland, College Park

University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board
IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu

III: First Recruitment Follow-Up Email

Subject: Choral Education Research: Please Help!

Please disregard if you've already participated!

Dear Choral Educator,

You were recently contacted about a research study being conducted on diction pedagogy practices in high school choral classrooms of New England. As a current high school choral director in New England, your insight on this topic is vital to this research study, and I would be truly grateful for your participation in the project. You will find the original email **below** with further details about the study **or** scroll to the bottom to find the **link** to the survey if you wish to participate. Thank you, in advance, for your help!!

...

My name is Grace Chris, and I am a Master's student in Music Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. Before I began pursuing my degree, I taught choral and general music for six years in both Vermont and Maryland.

I am writing you to invite you to participate in a study about diction pedagogy practices in high school choral classrooms. What is diction in a choral education setting? It is how we address and teach text set with music in our choral ensembles and classrooms. John Hylton defines it as "the correct and uniform pronunciation of the text of a song."

The purpose of this study is to describe the current practices New England high school choral teachers use when teaching diction. There have been a multitude of resources made available on the subjects of "how to teach diction" and "what method is the most effective" through organizations such as the National Association for Music Education, the American Choral Directors Association, and your local Music Educators Association, not to mention a vast array of books, websites, courses, and professional development available as well. However, despite the resources and training available, empirical research on *how* diction is taught in actual choral classrooms is remarkably scant. I hope the results of this study will benefit choral teachers by illuminating current diction pedagogy practices, help grow the research base on this subject, and see if current diction pedagogy practices could shed light on most effective methods.

I realize your time is *extremely* valuable, and I appreciate that you have even opened your email and read this far. The survey takes approximately **10 minutes** to complete, and your contribution will be essential to this study, choral education research, and your fellow choral educators.

If you would like to participate, **please follow the link below**. Thank you, in advance, for being a part of this research! (If you are not the current choral director at your school, I would really appreciate it if you forwarded this message to the current director.)

https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV_0lA4yE5GqdkqiBT

Most Sincerely,

Grace Chris

gchris1@terpmail.umd.edu
Master's Student, Music Education
University of Maryland, College Park

University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board
IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu

IV: Second Recruitment Follow-Up Email

Subject: Choral Diction Research: Last Call!

Dear Choral Educator,

You were recently contacted about a research study being conducted on diction pedagogy practices in high school choral classrooms of New England. As a current high school choral director, your insight on this topic is *vital* to this research study, and I would be truly grateful for your participation in the project. You will find the **link** to the survey below, which takes approximately **7 minutes** to complete. The survey will close this **Thursday, May 30th**, at midnight. Thank you, in advance, for your help!!

https://umdsurvey.umd.edu/jfe/form/SV_0lA4yE5GqdkqiBT

Most Gratefully,

Grace Chris

gchris1@terpmail.umd.edu
Master's Student, Music Education
University of Maryland, College Park

University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board
IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu

V: Thank You Message

Dear Choral Educator,

I wanted to extend a warm thank you for participating in my research about choral diction pedagogy practices in New England high school choral classrooms. The project would not have been possible without your time, support, and contributions, and I am extremely grateful you elected to participate. My thesis will be available shortly through the University of Maryland's research database, which can be found here <https://drum.lib.umd.edu/>. Have a wonderful last few weeks of summer!

With sincere thanks and gratitude,

Grace Chris

gchris1@terpmail.umd.edu
MA Music Education
University of Maryland, College Park

IV: Diction Pedagogy Survey

Diction Pedagogy Survey

Q1 Please scroll to the bottom of this page to begin the survey!

Project Title

Diction Pedagogy: A Survey of New England High School Choral Directors

Purpose of the Study

This research is being conducted by Grace Chris at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a high school choral director in a New England state. The purpose of this study is to describe the current practices New England high school choral teachers use when teaching diction.

Procedures

The procedures involve completing a “Diction Pedagogy Survey.” This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and will remain available for four weeks.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

There are no known risks for participating in this study.

Potential Benefits

Though there are no direct benefits from participating in this research we hope that, in the future, choral educators might benefit from this study through clarity of current diction pedagogy practices that could potentially inform most effective practices when teaching diction. Another potential benefit from this study could be gaining clarity about levels of diction training received before becoming a music educator and how that influences diction pedagogy practices. It also will benefit music education as a whole as there are few studies that have researched this topic, and no studies have yet to survey diction practices in high school choral classrooms.

Confidentiality

Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data on a password-protected computer, and as soon as survey closes data will be de-identified. The data will only be accessible to the researchers of this study. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

Right to Withdraw and Questions

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise

qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:

Grace Chris
gchris1@terpmail.umd.edu
802-291-2252

Participant Rights

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:

University of Maryland College Park
Institutional Review Board Office
1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, Maryland, 20742
E-mail: irb@umd.edu
Telephone: 301-405-0678

For more information regarding participant rights, please visit:

<https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants>

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Statement of Consent

The following two survey questions indicate that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

If you agree to participate in this study, please continue with survey, where you will complete the consent process.

Q2 As of today, are you at least 18 years of age?

1. Yes (1)
2. No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If As of today, are you at least 18 years of age? = No

Q3 Have you read the consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study?

3. Yes (1)
4. No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Have you read the consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study? = No

Q4 Do you currently teach high school choir?

5. Yes (35)

6. No (36)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you currently teach high school choir? = No

Q5 The following questions are about your diction training and your pedagogy practices when teaching diction in a high school choral classroom. When we say diction, we mean how you or your singers pronounce the text of a song.

In which context(s) have you received diction training? Choose all that apply.

1. Being in ensembles (1)

2. Private Lessons (2)

3. College Courses (3)

4. Master Class (4)

5. Professional Development (5)

6. I have not received any diction training (6)

7. Other (7) _____

Q6 To what extent did you feel adequately prepared to teach diction during your **first year** of teaching choir?

	Very Well (1)	Fairly Well (2)	Somewhat (3)	Not Much (4)	Not At All (5)	Unsure (6)
1 (1)	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.

Q7 To what extent do you feel adequately prepared to teach diction in choir **now**?

	Very Well (1)	Fairly Well (2)	Somewhat (3)	Not Much (4)	Not At All (5)
6 (6)	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.

Q8 What methods do you currently use to teach diction in high school choral programs? Please choose all that apply.

- 8. Vocal Modeling/Rote Teaching (1)
- 9. Transliterations into the International Phonetic Alphabet (2)
- 10. Transliterations into another system (ex. "hallelujah" would be written as "ah-leh-loo-yah," the English Phonetic Alphabet, or Fred Waring's tone syllables.) (3)
- 11. Inviting a Native Speaker (4)
- 12. Publisher-provided method within choral octavo (8)
- 13. Self-created method (9)
- 14. It depends on the choir (18)
- 15. It depends on the language (19)
- 16. I do not use a specific method (10)
- 17. I do not teach diction in my high school choral ensembles (15)
- 18. Other (11) _____

Skip To: End of Block If What methods do you currently use to teach diction in high school choral programs? Please choose... = I do not teach diction in my high school choral ensembles

Q9 Which method do you use most frequently?

- 18. Vocal Modeling/Rote Teaching (1)
- 19. Transliterations into the International Phonetic Alphabet (2)
- 20. Transliterations into another system (ex. "hallelujah" would be written as "ah-leh-loo-yah," the English Phonetic Alphabet, or Fred Waring's tone syllables.) (3)
- 21. Inviting a Native Speaker (4)
- 22. Publisher-provided method within choral octavo (8)
- 23. Self-created method (9)
- 24. Other (10) _____

Q10 What materials do you use to teach diction? Choose all that apply.

- 19. Books (please indicate) (1)

- 20. Videos (2)
- 21. Audio-recordings (3)
- 22. Worksheets (4)
- 23. Software Program (please indicate) (6)

- 24. Websites (7)
- 25. Self-created materials (8)
- 26. I do not use any materials to teach diction (9)
- 27. Other (5) _____

Skip To: Q12 If What materials do you use to teach diction? Choose all that apply. = I do not use any materials to teach diction

Q11 Which materials do you use to teach diction most frequently?

25. Books (please indicate) (1) _____

26. Videos (2) _____

27. Audio-recordings (3) _____

28. Worksheets (4) _____

29. Software Program (please indicate) (5) _____

30. Websites (6) _____

31. Self-created materials (8) _____

32. Other (7) _____

Q12 In a typical choral rehearsal, what percentage of time is devoted to teaching diction of your native language(s)?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Q13 In a typical choral rehearsal, what percentage of time is devoted to teaching diction of pieces **outside** of your native language(s)?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Q14 In one of your typical choral rehearsals, when do you usually address diction?

Please check all that apply.

33. During warm-ups (1) _____

34. Throughout rehearsal (2) _____

35. When new music is introduced (3) _____

36. All of the above (6) _____

37. Never (4) _____

38. Other (5) _____

Q15 Do you assess diction in your high school choral ensembles?

39. Yes (1) _____

40. No (3) _____

Skip To: End of Block If Do you assess diction in your high school choral ensembles? = No

Q16 Which procedures do you use to assess diction? Choose all that apply.

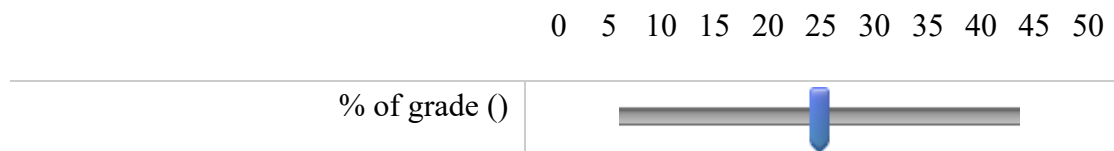
- 28. Written test (1)
- 29. Sing alone for the teacher (2)
- 30. Sing alone in class (3)
- 31. Sing in small groups (4)
- 32. Recite Text (6)
- 33. Video recordings alone (7)
- 34. Video recordings in class (8)
- 35. Audio Recordings alone (9)
- 36. Audio recordings in class (10)
- 37. Student self-reflection (11)
- 38. Other (13) _____

Q17 Is diction assessment a percentage of each student's overall grade?

- 41. Yes (1)
- 42. No (2)

Skip To: Q19 If Is diction assessment a percentage of each student's overall grade? = No

Q18 Approximately what percentage of students' overall grade is for diction assessment?



Q19 Do any of these outside influences affect your method(s) of diction assessment? Choose all that apply.

- 39. School Requirement (1)
- 40. District Requirement (2)
- 41. State Requirement (3)
- 42. National Core Arts Standards (4)
- 43. Click to write Choice 6 (8)
- 44. Other (7) _____

Q20 Do any of your high school choral ensembles regularly attend state or regional ensemble contest or festival for ensemble adjudication?

43. Yes (1)

44. No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Do any of your high school choral ensembles regularly attend state or regional

Q21 Is ensemble diction assessed at your state or regional ensemble contest or festival adjudication?

45. Yes (1)

46. No (2)

Q22 Are individuals assessed on diction at your state or regional ensemble contest or festival adjudication?

47. Yes (1)

48. No (2)

Q23 How much does contest or festival diction assessment influence how you assess diction in your classroom?

	A great deal (1)	A lot (2)	A moderate amount (3)	A little (4)	None at all (5)
6 (6)	49.	50.	51.	52.	53.

Q24 The following questions are about your choral teaching experience and education.

Including this year, how many years have you taught **high school** choral ensembles?



Q25 Including this year, how many years have you taught **any level** of choral ensembles?

Q26 What is your highest level of completed education?

- 54. Have Not Completed High School (1)
- 55. High School or High School Equivalent (9)
- 56. Associate's Degree (10)
- 57. Bachelor's Degree (3)
- 58. Master's Degree (11)
- 59. Doctorate (4)
- 60. Other (5) _____

Display This Question:

If What is your highest level of completed education? = Bachelor's Degree
Or What is your highest level of completed education? = Master's Degree
Or What is your highest level of completed education? = Doctorate

Q27 In what field was your bachelor's degree?

- 61. Music Education (1)
 - 62. Music Performance (2)
 - 63. Both Music Education and Music Performance (3)
 - 64. Other (please indicate) (4)
-

Q28 What is your primary instrument?

Q29 The following questions are about the choral program you currently teach in.

Including yourself, how many high school choral directors are in your school? (Please count each full time or part time choir director.)

Q30 How many high school choral ensembles are in your school? (When we say "choral ensemble" we mean any body of singers who perform together.)

Q31 Approximately how many high school students are in your choral ensembles?
(Please exclude students in other courses you may teach, such as piano, theory, etc.)

Q32 Which of the following **high school** grade levels do you teach? Choose all that apply.

45. 9 (1)

46. 10 (2)

47. 11 (3)

48. 12 (4)

Q33 What types of high school choral ensembles are offered in your school? Choose all that apply.

49. Concert Choir (1)

50. Chamber Choir (2)

51. Grade-Level Choir (ex. 9th grade choir, 10th grade choir, etc.) (3)

52. Women's Choir or Treble Choir (11)

53. Men's Choir or Tenor/Bass Choir (12)

54. Barbershop Choir (13)

55. Jazz Choir (4)

56. A Cappella Choir (5)

57. Madrigal Choir (6)

58. Show Choir (7)

59. Gospel Choir (8)

60. Student-Led Ensembles (15)

61. Other(s) (10) _____

Q34 How many languages do you speak fluently?

Q35 What is your native language?

Q36 If you would like, please share any further comments about your diction pedagogy practices, training, and experience. Thank you!

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