

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SOUTHERN BLACK GOSPEL MUSIC: QUALITATIVE LOOK
AT QUARTET SOUND DURING THE GOSPEL 'BOOM'
PERIOD OF 1940-1960

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL
OF MUSIC IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

BY

BEATRICE IRENE PATE

LYNCHBURG, V.A.

April 2014

Abstract

The purpose of this work is to identify features of southern black gospel music, and to highlight what makes the music unique. One goal is to present information about black gospel music and distinguishing the different definitions of gospel through various ages of gospel music. A historical accounting for the gospel music is necessary, to distinguish how the different definitions of gospel are from other forms of gospel music during different ages of gospel. The distinctions are important for understanding gospel music and the 'Southern' gospel music distinction.

The quartet sound was the most popular form of music during the Golden Age of Gospel, a period in which there was significant growth of public consumption of Black gospel music, which was an explosion of black gospel culture, hence the term 'gospel boom.' The gospel boom period was from 1940 to 1960, right after the Great Depression, a period that also included World War II, and right before the Civil Rights Movement became a nationwide movement.

This work will evaluate the quartet sound during the 1940's, 50's, and 60's, which will provide a different definition for gospel music during that era. Using five black southern gospel quartets—The Dixie Hummingbirds, The Fairfield Four, The Golden Gate Quartet, The Soul Stirrers, and The Swan Silvertones—to define what southern black gospel music is, its components, and to identify important cultural elements of the music.

Dedication

There are many people who have helped me on this journey to get where I am today. If your name is not mentioned, charge it to my head and not my heart. First, I would like to thank my parents Angela and Jesse Pate for giving me my love of music and instilling a pride in who I am. Secondly, I would like to thank the music educators that have taught me what I know—Cynthia Taylor and Rosa Kelly. Also, thank you Carolyn Cleveland for teaching me the foundation of spiritual singing.

More educators, counselors, and people who have contributed and/or dedicated their time and efforts in me: Angela Williams, Janice Wiley, Samantha Wallace Graham, Mary Brooks, Leon Lawton, Winona Belton, Tina Polite, Virginia Neal, Arthur 'D.P.' Pinckney, Barbara Jordon, Carolyn Pouncey, Damara Hightower, Johnny Bartley, Sandra Jamison, Corine Wittington, Johnnie Mae Wheeler, Jenee' Moore, Stephania Autry Leonard, William Leonard, Deacon Moses Felder, Leah Scott, Francina Shack, Bobby Cunningham, Tommie McMillian, Faye Hardy, Sylvia Robinson, Fhatj Anderson, Barbara Laird, Patricia Green, and Colonel Walter Watson.

I would also like to thank Jill Dowdy—I have had teachers to help me, those who have mentored me personally, but none of them has changed my life quite like this woman. You taught me how to use my gift and express myself with words—and I am still unable to tell you just how much you have meant to my life. Thank you for what you've done for me. I would not be here without you.

As special thank you also goes to Dr. David Simmons, without whom I would have never heard of Ethnomusicology—he encouraged me to find the programs and encouraged me to pursue what I loved instead of what I thought I should pursue.

I would like to say thank you to Dr. Katherine Morehouse who was patient with me throughout this process, and answered questions no matter when I called or emailed.

I would also like to thank my brothers John and Johnny Gill, and my sister Charity Pate Tucker. John—thank you kindly for introducing me to Sam Cooke and the Soul Stirrers when I was a child. Johnny—thank you for being supportive—you were a rock when I was a kid, and you helped instill discipline in me that I am so very grateful for. To Charity—Thank you for enduring conversations about music constantly. I also want to thank you for your encouragement.

To Kimberly Karnickey Robinson—thank you. You were an anchor in the storm of my collegiate years. I appreciate all that you have done to me. You are the big sister that I did not know I needed.

To Yolanda Taylor, thank you so much for being a friend and pointing me in the right direction.

To my other mothers and Father—Diana and Willie Payne and Darline Robinson: Thank you for being my spiritual godmothers and godfather. You always had a word that I needed to hear, and you provided the support needed to get through this process. To the Gates-Robinson family: I love you all, thank you for your constant words of encouragement and help. Thank you all so very much for adopting me as one of your own.

Thank you to my current and former churches—First Missionary Baptist Church in Smithfield, N.C.; Second Nazareth Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C., Life Giving Outreach Ministries in Columbia, S.C.; Ascending Faith Church Ministries, Aiken, S. C., and Ivy Baptist Church, Newport News, V.A.

To Mrs. Robinson, who lived on 4th Street in Smithfield in 1996—thank you so much for taking two little girls to church. I never knew your first name (because Southern children know better than to ask, and most especially girls), but you thought about two little girl's salvation. Thank you.

Last, and certainly not least, I would like to thank God for all he's done for me. I will be eternally grateful that you chose me to be a soldier, and I am apart of your army of believers. Thank you God for continually blessing me with life, love, a sound mind, favor, health, strength, and endurance.

CONTENTS	
ABSTRACT	2
DEDICATION	3
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	6
Definitions	7
Delimitations	9
Assumptions	10
Need for Study	11
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	28
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS	34
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION	57
WORKS CITED	59

Chapter I: Introduction

Southern Black Gospel Music

I have been long interested in the study of southern black gospel music. My interest began on a spring day in 1996, when I first really began going to church. I noticed that there were two different choirs that sang on regular Sundays, when there were no programs. One sang contemporary gospel or sang hymns in a contemporary manner. The other sang songs that were sung by a “jubilee choir,” and was sung in reverence—you could literally feel the reverence in each voice separately, and yet be impacted by the group as a whole. It was like each singer sang their personal testimony; the story of how they were led to Jesus, combined with the reverence they all had for God was astounding. It was those older, people who are scholars in the wisdom of life, whose songs, combined with their love of Christ that led to my salvation. Though I was just a child, and at the time did not understand the commitment I was making with my life, it felt right. I made a decision that has been hard on me at times, but I have yet to truly regret it.

Now, that interest in those songs that I have often heard so many times, and those songs that the elders say ‘in order to sing those right, you have had to go through something,’ is why I began this research. I know now that those songs are recognized among the origins of what is known essentially as black American music. It branched off and created many of the genres that people all over the world identify as black American music.

My goal is to present information about black gospel music and its origins, as limited by my chosen time period and regional area, provide brief history about the

origins of black gospel, provide information about specific gospel movements and focus on specific gospel groups, and provide history of the sound. The goal is also to present relevant cultural distinctions about black cultural practices in gospel settings, theories why sacred music, gospel, and 'secular' gospel have distinctions, and to discuss oral tradition that may account for the great number of unrecorded hymns. Finally, I hope to distinguish why the 'southern' distinction is necessary to divide from other forms of gospel—whether the "southern" variation describes the region in which the music originates or the sound of the music, and why that modification is significant.

Using songs from five southern black gospel groups who demonstrated the quartet sound that originated in the deep south, I will demonstrate certain characteristics of southern black gospel music that common to the region and time frame. The purpose of this work is to analyze characteristics of southern black gospel music and to note distinctives found in each subgenre of gospel music. Subgenres that will be highlighted in this work will be sacred (spiritual) gospel music, quartet (jubilee) sound gospel music, secular gospel music, in which some of the groups fell into this category during the actual time period that the music originates in, and traditional gospel music. The research goal is to use all of these subgenres to distinguish southern black gospel music, and to examine characteristics of southern black gospel music.

Definitions

Black gospel music is one of the cultural musics of Americans of African descent. Characteristics of southern Black gospel music are demonstrated by soloists like Mahalia Jackson and Shirley Caesar. The music is usually heard in black churches, though the recording industry industrialized the music. Themes of music include

suffering, endurance, and references to bible stories. Jubilee gospel style is a style of music performed primarily by black male groups. It is a distinctive form of southern music that originated in the deep south. It is a style of singing developed by black male groups, usually without formal music training, characterized by complicated rhythms, lively tempi, and simple chords. Although the lyrics are for the most part religious, the style has been applied to the singing of gospel music.¹ Call and response is a method of singing originating in Africa, in which a leader sings sections of a song to which other singers respond in an antiphonal manner.² Quartet sound is primarily used in male groups and the quartet sound is defined by lead (tenor), second tenor, baritone, and bass, regardless of the amount of members in the group. Secular gospel music is a subgenre of gospel music characterized by listeners as containing 'rocking bass and guitars', prompting listeners to 'dance'. The subgenre mixes elements of Blues music in the music, and the style was popularized by gospel boom period. Sacred gospel music is a music passed on by oral tradition using elements of struggle and hard times. It is also known as spiritual gospel music. Examples of sacred music would be "Go Down, Moses" or "Wade in the Water". Sacred music is a somber music with themes of deliverance. The gospel boom period, otherwise known as the 'Golden Age of Gospel', is a period that began after the Great Depression and before the Civil Rights Movement that was an explosion of black cultural music that spread nationwide from the south. Traditional gospel music is music like 'Precious Lord, Take My Hand' by Thomas Dorsey, who is considered to be the father of gospel music.³ The traditional gospel era

¹Samuel Buchanan, *A Critical Analysis of Style in Four Black Jubilee Quartets in the United States* (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1987), pg. 2.

² Gilbert Chase, *America's Music*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955).

³ Marietta Miller, *A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music* (Master's

was from about 1900 to 1939. The music contains elements similar to spirituals except that during this era is when the piano and the guitar were implemented together to accompany soloists and groups of singers. Prior to this era the music was primarily accompanied by no music at all or with the guitar. Spirituals were 'modernized' and music that accompanied the spirituals was usually more 'upbeat and lively'. Southern black gospel music is music that mixes elements of spirituals and country folk music, with exaggerated emphasis on 'country' words and grammar, elements of colorful expressions, and exploitation of humor in sacred songs, like 'How I Got Over' by the Fairfield Four. Prominent features also includes the use of syncopation, harmonized verse through choral arrangements, recounting of bible stories, well blended ensemble singing, the presence of a strong bass singer to give fullness to chords, and distinctive bass parts.⁴

Delimitations

This study was delimited to southern black gospel groups that began in or near the Golden Age of Gospel, a period between 1940 and 1960. Southern black gospel music is not only a sound, but a region in which the groups highlighted originate. This study will analyze songs from groups that began around this time period, although not all songs will come from the time period. The focus will be the singing style from these groups that became popular in this era.

This study concerned itself mainly with those groups whose style was mimicked the most; not necessarily the most popular gospel groups of all time, though each group had their own unique spotlight in fame. It will include an analysis of lyrics form to

thesis, Morgan State University, 2003), pg 14.

⁴Kerill Leslie Rubman, "From 'Jubilee' to 'Gospel' in Male Quartet Singing" (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1980), pgs. 41-46.

demonstrate the characteristics of the southern black gospel quartet sound, though later songs may be used to emphasize certain characteristics of the music, such as the oral tradition elements included within a song.

Assumptions

This study asserts that southern black gospel music is a subgenre of gospel music in which the jubilee and folk style of gospel music are distinctive characteristics of southern black gospel music. The majority of southern black gospel quartets, mimic and use jubilee and folk musical styles characteristics in their music.

According to Raymond Wise in his work “Defining African American gospel music by tracing its historical and musical development from 1900 to 2000”, there is no single definition for gospel, rather, gospel is defined by what era of gospel that is being referenced, suggesting that gospel definitions shift throughout the various ages of gospel music. Wise writes,

“Gospel music composers, performers, scholars, and listeners tend to disagree about the definition of gospel music because they attempt to define the music from a specific perspective. When gospel music is defined too specifically, the resulting definitions may not accurately account for what gospel music was in the past or what it has become in the year 2000. A definition that describes gospel songs composed in the 1930s, for example, may not accurately describe gospel songs composed in the year 2000 and vice versa.”⁵

Based on Wise’s statement, this work only assumes to define gospel during a specific period of time, and with a specific form of gospel music. Any other definitions of gospel will be used for clarity only, to distinguish the forms of gospel before and after the period of the gospel boom, and to aid in understanding the cultural meaning of music during that time.

⁵ Raymond Wise, *Defining African American gospel music by tracing its historical and musical development form 1900 to 2000* (Ph.D diss, Ohio State University 2002), 6.

I am an insider to this particular music. Although that does give me an advantage, it also has some challenges. Because I am privy to certain details, I fear that the fact that I am culturally a part of the community that I am studying, I will leave out some of the phenomena that is a part of Black American music that outsiders are not privy to. Another challenge that I have is despite the fact that I am an insider, like most people in my generation, I am woefully ignorant of black American sacred music. Admittedly, I know more than the average black youth within my racial background as a black/African American, I do not know half of what my mother knows in regards to the music, and I do not know a quarter of what my grandmother knew about hymns and sacred music. As these generations age and pass away, they are taking their information about this music with them, which is a hallmark of music that has origins stemming from oral tradition. In my research I have noted a hesitancy in willingness to share information about these traditions. It has been quite a challenge to overcome so far.

Need for Study

The southern black gospel music phenomenon has been studied in some works, but not as extensively studied as other forms of black music like jazz and blues music genres. The need for study is great, because gospel music is linked to all forms of black music. The resources for black gospel music is limited compared to the amount of studies done about jazz and blues. My work seeks to fill lacunae in these areas which I will point out in the following literature review.

Chapter II

Literature Review

There are quite a few resources for some of the groups, however, those sources would not be typically used in a scholastic work. As a result of studying a period that has not been extensively covered, there were some difficulties in obtaining scholarly resources in these areas. There are only a few beneficial articles located that describe the history of the groups, and even fewer that examine the sound. Some of the artists have an abundance of information in regards to their history and membership changes, and the others have a significant lack of information about them, though all artists' works can be found. Explaining the distinctions between the groups though they come from the same geographic location presents a challenge as well. Quartet style singing is a style of singing in which the singers are divided into a four-part harmony. It can be divided several ways, soprano, alto, tenor, bass for choirs; soprano, alto, contralto, tenor for a female based quartet; falsetto, tenor, baritone, bass or lead, tenor, baritone, bass⁶ for a male quartet; or any modification of the style as long as it is sung in four part

⁶ Alan Young, *Woke Me Up This Morning: Black Gospel Singers and the Gospel Life*. (Jackson:

harmony. The root of gospel and spiritual music is this style, and there are many different modifications to this style. One major resource for the Fairfield Four is Jerry J. Zolten, who is regarded as a leading scholar for anything regarding their music and history. One other source for information regarding the Fairfield Four is the pamphlet from the 1988 Gospel Arts Day in Nashville, Tennessee. One major resource for the Swan Silvertones is Cedric Carl Dent's dissertation, "The harmonic development of black religious quartet singing tradition (1997)", which examines the overall quartet tradition and its defining elements. For the Golden Gate Quartet, the resource that provides information about their musical style is Samuel Carroll Buchanan's dissertation "A Critical Analysis of Style in Four Black Jubilee Quartets in the United States (1987)", which is also a major resource for jubilee quartets.

Rose Blue and Corrine Naden's work, *The History of Gospel Music*, provides a wonderful overview of the history of gospel, including its origins out of Africa, and how it developed in America. Though the work is relatively short, especially when compared to similar books regarding the topic, it is a surprisingly efficient book of definitions and history. It is through this work and Pearl Williams-Jones', "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystalization of The Black Aesthetic," that a definition of what gospel is, is articulated:

"Gospel music is a synthesis of West African and Afro-American music, dance, poetry, and drama, is a body of urban contemporary black religious music of rural folk origins, which is a celebration of the Christian experience of salvation and hope."⁷

The *History of Gospel Music* expands the definition:

University Press of Mississippi, 1997), xxvii.

⁷Pearl Williams-Jones "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystalization of The Black Aesthetic." *Ethnomusicology* 3, no. 19 (1975): 373-385. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/850791>, 376.

“It is a part of black culture, whose roots go back to centuries in Africa.”⁸

“Gospel (Spiritual) music is a religious folksong, and emotional music created by Black people from the Bible, nature, and personal experiences of blacks in America. Many of the spirituals are based on the theme of the afterlife.”⁹

Gospel music is defined as a highly emotional religious music in a four-part harmony developed mainly in African churches.¹⁰ Gospel is also defined as being firmly based in religion, but it is composed and/or arranged with performance in mind, and a “conscious professionalism exist[s] in the performances of all artists, from local groups who sing only within their community to those who make their living from their music.”¹¹

The spiritual was important to the development of the slave community’s sense of group solidarity; it is in the spiritual that a music form was created in which they could all participate.¹² Nearly all spirituals are based on biblical themes, but heavy emphasis fell upon those themes where by supernatural means God delivered the faithful from impossible circumstances.¹³ Wise defines spirituals in these terms:

“Scholars agree that Africans brought and retained elements of their African culture when they were brought to North America from Africa (Ricks, 1960; Jones, 1963). It is further believed that African culture has been applied to every situation and setting in which African Americans have been placed. African culture is particularly evidenced within the music of African Americans.”¹⁴

⁸ Rose Blue and Corrine J. Naden. *The History of Gospel Music*. (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹ Alan Young, *Woke Me Up This Morning: Black Gospel Singers and the Gospel Life*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), xx

¹² Wendel Whalum, "Music in the Churches of Black Americans: A Critical Statement." *The Black Perspective in Music* Special Issue: Black American Music Symposium 1985 1, no. 14 (1986): 13-20. Foundation for Research in Afro-American Creative Arts. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214725>, 342.

¹³ Wyatt Walker, *Somebody's Calling My Name: Black Sacred Music and Social Change*. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979), 34.

¹⁴ Raymond Wise, *Defining African American gospel music by tracing its historical and musical development form 1900 to 2000* (Ph.D diss, Ohio State University 2002), 11.

“Though spirituals were generally songs with a sad mood, Ricks (1960) suggest that there were many forms of spirituals. There were slow spirituals, metered spirituals, and the jubilee spirituals. The jubilee spirituals were face-paced up-tempo songs that a happy mood and spoke of the joys of freedom. The fast shouts were used for dancing. The moans were a special type of spiritual that included songs for the dead. There were also song narratives that combined features of the shout-jubilee and shout-spiritual. In general, spirituals were congregational and improvisational in nature. Though the words might change from one performance to another and through there were song leaders, the congregation was expected to participate.”¹⁵(Ricks 1960:47; Wise 2002:12).

Wise also defined spirituals in terms of their European origins in psalmody, hymnody, and shaped note singing, with added musical elements such as the pentatonic scales, flattened notes, and improvisation from their African musical tradition to transform the existing musical forms into something uniquely theirs.¹⁶

Though similar, gospel music does not always focus on supernatural means of deliverance, but focuses more on life themes—songs that help its listeners through life situations of any sort, not just troubled times. Gospel can morph into many different directions: it can be celebratory, it can tell a story, it can be about troubled time, lessons learned while serving God, etc. Spirituals most often focus on the most well-known biblical deliverance stories where God showed himself as the Almighty in each song. I believe that accounts for the reverence that is so much a part of the music that is known as the spiritual music. Miller sums it up as a characteristic of a spiritual. She writes:

“The Negro spiritual is characterized by its deep biblical references. There is always a definite bible reference for the Negro spiritual. They were coined within the context of their deep religious faith, and we find in them the clearest expression of the faith of the ante-bellum Negro.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Raymond Wise, *Defining African American gospel music by tracing its historical and musical development form 1900 to 2000* (Ph.D diss, Ohio State University 2002), 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

¹⁷ Marietta Miller, *A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music* (Master's thesis, Morgan State University, 2003), pg. 25.

The Almighty that delivers is the one to be feared—in those instances He shows Himself to be all-powerful, and leaves no room to doubt the power He holds. In addition, spirituals tend to be about personal testimony—often about how God delivered the person from their personal Goliath, or like Daniel from the lion’s den, whereas gospel music, although sometimes can be sung solo, does not have the solo testimony element. It has, rather, a consensus of how good God is. Pearl Williams-Jones said this about gospel:

“Gospel songs are composed songs but within the clearly discernible gospel performance tradition which is often more reflective of general folk stylistic traits than distinct compositional techniques of the individual composer. In this regard, gospel music may be considered "composed folk song" which is transmitted primarily through oral performance traditions in much the same fashion as folklore.”¹⁸

Diana L. Hayes, author of “Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality” had this to say about spirituals:

“Although this body of songs was not fully written down until after the Civil war, they can be traced back into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as those enslaved became acquainted with various forms of Christianity. We have no dates or authors/composers, as they were passed down orally and often changed along the way to fit different circumstances. The same melody could have several different sets of lyrics. They varied in number based on the particular needs and concerns of those singing them, especially in the slave holding South. Those songs, better than anything else, reveal to us the spirituality of the slaves, their self-understanding, their belief in Jesus, and their hope in the action of the Holy Spirit to help them stay in the race until freedom came.”¹⁹

Southern black gospel music is distinctive for that reason: no matter the gospel

¹⁸ Pearl Williams-Jones, "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystalization of The Black Aesthetic." *Ethnomusicology* 3, no. 19 (1975): 373-385. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/850791> , 379.

¹⁹ Hayes, Diana L. *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012) 70-71.

song, it holds the sacredness and reverence that spirituals have. The sacredness could come from the fact that most of these quartets sing the songs that slaves sung. Though that is not their entire song repertoire, a lot of the southern black gospel groups that are mentioned in this work sing songs that the slaves sung—at least the ones that were recorded. It maintains the same elements of reverence that a spiritual has, whether it is technically defined as gospel song or a spiritual, because the songs are the same in some instances. In Marietta Miller's master's thesis entitled *A Qualitative Study of The American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music*, she discusses characteristics of gospel and spiritual music with this as a theory of the music of the spiritual. Though the music is thought to have many influences, the music always morphed into music completely different than what it originally was—that morphing process completely africanizes the music and it is changed into what could only be called their own. William Tallmadge's 1957 work *Afro-American Music* provides the most interesting theory about the creation of one of the first American music. Tallmadge writes:

“Accounts of the period report that Negro slaves were so excited by this music and the accompanying religious instruction that after working all day in the fields they would gather and sing psalms and hymns all night long. About 1800 there occurred throughout the South great religious revivals and camp meetings. This religious wave generated an extraordinary amount of emotional fervor—a fervor due in no small measure to the participation of Negro slaves whose heritage of religious worship in Africa had included dancing, shouting, clapping, singing and trance.”²⁰

Through continual performance, the music began to shift, and it was not recognizable by the people who had begun to teach them the psalms and hymns that they learned.

“The slow psalm tunes and hymns of the previous period were not adequate to this kind of religious experience, and so these congregations literally created their own

²⁰ William Tallmadge, "Afro-American Music." *Music Educators Journal* 1, no. 44 (1957): 37. Ministers: A Legacy West African Culture." *Journal of Black Studies* 1, no. 37 (2006): 5-19. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40034370>, 39.

hymnology. Religious lines or couplets were often made up on the spot, and set to lively secular tunes of English or Scotch origin. These hymns and hymn tunes were immediately assimilated by the Negro slaves and Africanized.”²¹

Though the process occurred over time, the music began to lose the English or Scotch origins that they had and metamorphosed into new music. In this process, African music and worship practices slowly dominated the music, and at the same time new music was created through a musical hybridization, that created a new American music.

“For fifty years slave had been singing the old hymns and psalm tunes; however through the process of Africanization and the lack of musical notation, both words and music were so altered as to scarcely resemble the prototype. For all practical purposes spirituals may be classified as an original contribution to American music, and they are, without a doubt, one of the significant contributions to the world of art.”²²

The music became a preservation tool for black American history over time, completing the cycle of Africanization. It also was used, almost in ritual, for working and celebration.

“Negroes worked to spirituals, dances to spirituals, and according to many authorities, preserved the history of their race through spirituals.”²³

Oral tradition also played an important role in the preservation of Black history. Bernice Johnson-Reagon writes in her work, “If You Don’t Go, Don’t Hinder Me,”

“The African American oral tradition is full of stories about the use of spirituals like “I Couldn’t Hear Nobody Pray,” “Wade in the Water,” “Steal Away,” and “Run Mourner Run” as signal songs of escape in general or, more specifically, with the efforts of those working the underground railroad. These stories tell of how the songs and the sing serve the survival of the community. Spirituals were songs created as leverage, as salve, as voice, as a bridge over troubles one could not endure without the flight song and singing.”²⁴

²¹ William Tallmadge, "Afro-American Music." *Music Educators Journal* 1, no. 44 (1957): 37
Ministers: A Legacy West African Culture." *Journal of Black Studies* 1, no. 37 (2006): 5-19. JSTOR.
[Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40034370>, 39.

²² *Ibid.*, 39.

²³ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁴ Bernice Johnson Reagon, *If you don't go, don't hinder me: the African American sacred song tradition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 74-75.

Geneva Southall's *Black Composers and Religious Music* theorized that the spirituals became key to the slave identity. The slaves were able to use their old world beliefs and new world traditions and create something uniquely their own. Because the slaves were able to create their own identity, it enabled them to endure the harsh working and living conditions to maintain their humanity.

“The spiritual, then, holds a key to the slave's description and criticism of his environment and, more important, to his positive folk-group's answer to life. These songs represent the unconscious efforts of the slave to make sense of a shattering life situation. In the songs, the slave expresses in words, nuances, and melody his weariness, loneliness, sorrow, hope, determination, and assurance.”²⁵

Southall also stated that the spirituals were an outlet of emotion, and slaves used the songs to pour out their feelings about their conditions.

“Yes, these simple slave songs reflect the experiences and feelings of a people who suffered tremendously, and the listener must try to understand the real message of the songs if he would really appreciate them. They are not songs of entertainment, and there is little of humor in the sentiments they express—even in the dialect or the rhythms of the music.”²⁶

The importance of the spiritual is in its expression. The music was used as an outlet to express frustrations, hurts, and pains that they could not vent against the group of people who owned them. The spiritual music gave them a way to express their pain and their powerlessness in the face of what they were suffering and it is important because gospel music is still used for that purpose today. Not all gospel music focuses on suffering however, black gospel music focuses on experiences—whether they are positive or negative. The theme of experiences is one of the characteristics that links

²⁵ Geneva Southall, "Black Composers and Religious Music." *The Black Perspective in Music* 1, no. 2 (1974): 45-50. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214148>, 45.

²⁶ Geneva Southall, "Black Composers and Religious Music." *The Black Perspective in Music* 1, no. 2 (1974): 45-50. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214148>, 46

gospel music to spirituals—in fact, the theme of experience is prevalent in all black music.

Hayes agrees that spiritual singing was at the very essence of slave identity. She writes,

“As we explore the critical role that the spirituals have played in the development of African American spirituality, we realize that these songs were truly an extension of the very being of those enslaved. The songs speak to our hearts and souls because they came from the hearts and souls of a people who, with no foreseeable viable future, should have given in to the despair and defeat. Instead they rallied around Jesus Christ, as their brother and son, and the God of Creation, their father in heaven, and poured out their hopes and dreams, their fears and sorrows. In so doing, they not only created a body of music that continues to bring solace to many today but they also built a new community using these songs as brick and mortar, as pathways on their journey to freedom.”²⁷

Secular gospel uses blues and jazz elements. Typically, the music makes the listener want to dance in more secular fashions rather than just the “rockin’ and shoutin’,” hand clapping and foot stomping that typically occurs with gospel music. It has elements of what the gospel listeners deem as ‘worldly’—not necessarily sin filled in this instance, but too close to borderline. Horace Clarence Boyer explained the difference between the music in terms of church versus clubs:

“The question was worth considering, for gospel music has taken in such a circuitous route to its present development that it is now divided into two camps of performers and listeners: “sacred” gospel music, espoused by such artists as James Cleveland, Andrae Crouch and Shirley Caesar—singers who still sing in the church or basically for church people—and “secular” gospel music, promoted by such artists as the Mighty Clouds of Joy, the Dixie Hummingbirds, and the Violinaires, who perform in nightclubs or wherever people of whatever persuasion are assembled.”²⁸

Boyer also came up with an explanation on how the secular gospel and sacred gospel became distinctive categories.

²⁷ Diana L. Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012), 70-71.

²⁸ Horace C. Boyer, "Contemporary Gospel Music." *The Black Perspective in Music* 7 no. 1 (1979): 5-58. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214427>, 6.

“The black American who had never discovered gospel music, or who had simply decided to deny it for whatever reason, began to support it—not in the church, but in places outside the church. Suddenly it became very fashionable for middle-class black Americans to buy gospel records and to watch gospel-music performers on television, though attendance at concerts was not yet acceptable. Non-blacks went a step further, and felt that since they view gospel singing as an “act,” it should be placed in nightclubs along with other acts.”²⁹

Problematically, there are many questions raised about secular gospel—is secular gospel really gospel? Boyer affirms that while the themes and songs are similar, the associations with people who are not walking with God taints the music. In addition, the way the music was performed further validates the music’s questionability. Boyer argues that churchgoers, at least in the 1970’s, did not accept it as a form of gospel music.

“As far as the church-goers are concerned, as well as the gospel singers who have maintained a connection with the church, they are not. Though Christ was rebuked for associating with gamblers, cheats and whore-mongers, the church has not yet decided that its music can be properly performed and receive its proper acceptance outside of its normal place of performance.”³⁰

However, more recently, the industrialized gospel music has been more accepted, as there are more crossovers into other genres of gospel music. Today, gospel musicians rap, sing in the rhythm and blues sound, and employ rock style as well.

Other works that can help illustrate the distinctions of gospel and the characteristics of gospel music are theses and dissertations from other scholars who have studied this phenomenon like Laurel Hurst, who has recently published her thesis entitled “Drive vs. Vamp: Theorizing concepts that organize musical “improvisation” in Gospel communities (2011)”, which focuses on improvisation within Black gospel styles and Southern Gospel quartet styles. The thesis asserts that black gospel quartet music

²⁹ Horace C Boyer, “Contemporary Gospel Music.” *The Black Perspective in Music* 7 no. 1 (1979): 5-58. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214427>, 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

is unique because of improvisation, and is organized according to the principles of Ensemble Thematic Cycle as defined by Meki Nzwei. The thesis also asserts that southern gospel quartet music expresses interconnectivity in the community and expresses self-determinism of the individual.

Another work that will be beneficial is the dissertation of Dwight Webster, who wrote a work entitled “Gospel music in the United States of America 1960s—1980s: A study of the themes of ‘Survival,’ ‘Elevation,’ and ‘Liberation’ in popular urban contemporary Black folk sacred mass music (2011),” which not only provided historical references for understanding gospel music, but a means to interpret and understand the music. Webster maintains that as long as “gospel music emerges from the existential and collective experiences of African American people, it will be an essential resource for understanding and interpreting African American spirituality.”³¹

Nathaniel Frederick II’s work “Praise God and Do Something: The role of Black American gospel artists as social activists, 1945-1960 (2009),” is relevant because it not only focuses on gospel in the gospel boom period, but also provides historical references as well. Fredrick’s work asserts that music is a part of oral culture is meaningful in the way that it communicates culture and that the gospel music after World War II functioned as an outlet for messages for social awareness. Fredrick’s work also asserts that this period of gospel is ‘widely considered’ as the ‘Golden Age of Gospel’ and that it overlaps a period of early civil rights victories, tragedies, and protests.

³¹ Dwight Webster, “Gospel music in the United States of America 1960s-1980s: A study of the themes of “Survival,” Elevation,” and “Liberation” in a popular urban contemporary Black folk sacred mass music.” (Ph.D. diss, Graduate Theological Union, 2011).

Another work that will be highly beneficial is Marietta Miller's "A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music (2003)", a master's thesis that is a survey of the history and cultural elements of spirituals and gospel music. Miller provides definitions for what defines spiritual music, what defines gospel music, and historical background for both. Miller covers spirituals and gospel music from Africa to present, tracing the music through a historical lens using the history and origins of the music, the Euro-Christian religious identity introduced to the slaves, and how the slaves composed their music using the heroes from the Bible. Miller also provides some information about the pre-gospel time period in which Thomas A. Dorsey would provide the foundation for what is now known as traditional gospel and how there was a shift from spiritual music to gospel music.

There are also articles that describe the genre in general or will benefit this work such as "Some Perceptions of Gospel Music" by Romeo Eldridge Phillips; this is a work that presented views from experts and scholars in the field regarding gospel music. The article was in interview format, almost conversational regarding the definition of and the changes that had happened in gospel music. It also discusses how the spread of gospel came about—and how the music and the changes in music affected the interviewees personally and professionally. Their perceptions reflected awareness of personal heritage—they could not separate the culture of gospel music from the music itself. The culture within the music is just as important as the music itself.

Stuart L. Goosman's "The Black Authentic: Structure Style, and Values in Group Harmony", provides in depth knowledge regarding the quartet sound and the value of culture within group harmony. Goosman explores and defines group harmony, and how

the group structure also defines cultural identity within the black community—identifying factors that make up a group structure and how that structure ties into not only self-identity, but community-identity. Goosman also focuses on specific structures within group harmony such as ‘basing’, call and response, and how each unique characteristic affects performance and style. Goosman also focuses on W.E.B. DuBois’s theory of double consciousness³² and points out how perceptions of the music shows elements of DuBois’ s theory.

Dana J. Epstein’s “Black Spirituals: Their Emergence into Public Knowledge”, is an article that discusses not only the importance of why black spirituals should be studied, but provides a look into why we cannot ignore the significance of them. Of all the gospel and spiritual periods, the period before 1900 is the least studied; also, within the foundational gospel period, where there is a major shift from spiritual to gospel that we know today—1900 to 1930—there is little known or documented regarding the period, at least compared to later periods of gospel that have been studied. Epstein discusses how the spiritual emerged and came into American culture, but also provides relevant reasons why there are still questions regarding this period. Epstein provides a historical background relevant to the period as well as information regarding transcription that has been noted but not extensively covered.

Irene V. Jackson-Brown’s “Afro-American Song in the Nineteenth Century: A Neglected Source”, provides sources for spiritual music that is often neglected in resources. Jackson-Brown’s article discusses Marshall W. Taylor’s hymnal, *A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies*, published in 1883. Jackson-Brown asserts that it is significant because it is the only the second known hymnal that is actually

³² DuBois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: New American Library, 1969 [1903]., 45

written by an insider to the culture, therefore is most likely one of the few sources that we know of that is the closest to what the music actually sounded like from slaves and plantation workers during the nineteenth century. Jackson-Brown also provides a historical background of the black minister and asserts why the study of this time period is significant.

Paul Gilroy's "Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a "Changing" Same" highlights relevant cultural factors regarding music and identity of black people in America. Gilroy provides examples of how even though the music may change, the cultural significance of the music will not because of the relationship between black culture and music is a cyclical process of influences—black culture influences black music, and black music influences black culture. Gilroy also discusses what cultural factors affect music, and how ethnicity is defined by the 'changing same'—music as a means of cultural expression. Gilroy identifies black music as a way to form black thought and identity, as well as the result of cultural blending and diaspora. Gilroy also discusses the political, socioeconomic, and geographic influences on black music, and briefly examines cross-cultural influences.

Doug Seroff's "Old-Time Black Gospel Quartet Contests", describes the touring and the environments that the quartets traveled in and to. Seroff gives a general accounting of what it was like during the times in which the quartets would travel around and compete in singing competitions for money, fame, and/or both. Seroff briefly describes techniques, noting that the singing quartets were judged based on "timing, harmony, and articulation."³³ The contests gave quartets a medium in which they could

³³ Doug Seroff, "Old-Time Black Gospel Quartet Contests." *Black Music Research Journal* 10 (1): 27-28.

distinguish themselves from other quartets.

Spirituals are important to this work as a historical basis of the quartet sound—not only is it important in tracing the music history, it is also important because the songs that the slaves sang, are also sung by the quartets. In addition, it is the only true link we have for gospel music prior to 1930 in relation to the history of the music. However, Dent (1997), had some interesting definitions of folk, jubilee, and gospel style and the time period for them. Dent asserts that the time period for folk style was 1920 to 1950, and characterized folk style as “less developed than in jubilee style, often exhibiting chord structures that lack thirds, roots, or both.”³⁴ Dent also asserts that “generally [in the folk style], the bass voice moves rhythmically with other voice parts but is often non-functional.”³⁵ The folk style also has “a two-beat-per-measure rhythmic feeling, that Dent describes as common in folk-style quartet performances and is also in four part harmony.”³⁶ The jubilee sound, according to Dent, “shows more consistent use of complete chords and dissonant harmonies³⁷” and its characteristics are “riff patterns, lead singer taking on the persona of an instrumental soloist and pump bass, imitation of horn sound, and has characteristics of the barbershop sound.”³⁸ The jubilee sound covered the period of 1930-1950. The gospel style “makes generous use of blue notes, less imitate of horn sound, shift from group singing to lead singing,”³⁹ according to Dent. The time period for the gospel quartet sound covers 1950-1960.

³⁴ Cedric Carl Dent, “The harmonic development of the black religious quartet singing tradition.” (Ph.D diss, University of Maryland College Park, 1997), pg. 14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 14.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 48.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 48.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 91

The most interesting information to note is the date of overlap—each time period crosses another stylistic time period and could potentially account for the similarity of sound between the quartet sounds. One of the reasons the groups were selected was because fundamentally, while their singing styles were different, the sound was similar. Nonetheless, each group has characteristics and sounds that can arguably fall under each category of the style periods of folk, jubilee, and gospel quartet styles—and some of their songs reflect more than one style simultaneously. However, in the characteristics of southern black gospel, sound is just one of the characteristics of what qualifies black gospel quartet music as southern. The other characteristics will be examined further in other chapters.

Chapter III:

Methodology

In this work, I will identify and select songs from five prominent southern black gospel music groups to illustrate the characteristics of southern black gospel music. This work will focus on the sounds of the Dixie Hummingbirds (South Carolina), the Fairfield Four (Tennessee), the Golden Gate Quartet (Virginia) the Soul Stirrers (Texas), and the Swan Silvertones (Tennessee) to demonstrate characteristics of southern black gospel music. These groups will be examined and their music will be interpreted so that there can be an understanding of what southern black gospel music is through their work. History plays an important part in this interpretation, especially since gospel switched from oral tradition to written over time, and without the history, there is not much to be shared about the music. History of the music—the spiritual background that the music has developed from—is just as important as the music in this instance. Tracing the history of gospel music and southern black gospel is one of the main goals, so a qualitative historical methodology is most appropriate as one of the primary sources of information. Materials will be collected from online databases and libraries and data will be collected using documents and audio-visual materials.

Information and materials will be collected from various sources such as databases such as JSTOR and ProQuest. Those materials will be used for interpreting southern black gospel quartet music and its history, interpreting the music of the groups, and interpreting historical information for both the groups and the music (for both gospel

music as a whole, and southern Black gospel music). While I attempted to cover many of these topics in the literature review, the research findings will seek to link performance style with historical context and lyric analysis.

I have selected the recordings of the groups that best represent the groups and the characteristics of that represent southern black gospel music during that era. Analysis will focus on the lyrical content presented by the black gospel groups, emphasizing word choices, the use of exaggeration, and textual improvisation. A transcription of lyrics will help to distinguish various elements that characterize southern black gospel music. Commercial recordings of the various gospel groups have been selected based on the criteria below:

- 1) Their emphasis on the style of southern black gospel music
- 2) One or more characteristics that distinguishes their music from other gospel musicians during the era
- 3) The uniqueness of their sound

In addition, this work will examine race and music, as it is inseparable from the music in which will be discussed, and black spirituality, as it is a key element in the music that not only defines the music, but the participants within the music. Regional and geographical locations are also important as the regional influence is either within or very close to the Appalachian region. Dialect and tone is a major factor in language, and the Appalachian region has a very distinctive sound and way of life, which may have influenced the music. Interviews were conducted as well with people who were familiar with the music; however, the interviews did not work out as well as was hoped in the preparation of this thesis. The biggest problem that I faced was not that people were not

knowledgeable about the music, it was getting them to discuss what they knew. Often, people would talk about the music, but when I requested that they interview formally hoping to document the conversation recording, both audio and visual, they would clam up about their knowledge of the music. I perceived it to be that they felt like their knowledge was not valuable due to lack of education or lack of being formally trained musician—it was difficult to discuss the music with them as they were not willing to sign forms for IRB approval. In addition, I sent letters to churches in the Columbia area, spoke with many people regarding the music, yet in the end, there were less than ten who actually agreed to formally be interviewed. Over two years, I met some groups in their churches, some in public places, yet few would actually formally agree to be interviewed. Problematically, I was at the tail end of the era in which those who carried the knowledge, and most of those who knew the music, including the performers, have passed on. What I hoped to capture from the interviews was the insider’s knowledge—information culturally relevant to the music, however, it is difficult to use the impressions from the few who were formally interviewed. One universal idea was shared between those who were interviewed formally and those who were not—the southern gospel quartet sound is white and not black; gospel is essentially black people’s music—the distinction being “southern gospel” and “gospel music made in the south”.

There is the problem of race when discussing southern gospel music, a problem in which I did not expect to come across when I began this study. Apparently, those that I have interviewed and many of the few scholars of the music believe that southern gospel music is a distinction reserved for the white gospel quartet sound, the main distinction being the drive versus the vamp—the drive is essentially European and the

vamp is essentially African.⁴⁰ Basically, the drive is organized according to the principles of tonal harmony—everyone attempts to sound as one, or monody. The vamp is a melorhythm—everyone blends, but sounds differently⁴¹. They share similar distinctive qualities, including the structure of the quartet, however, the main difference, is the way they improvise—either it is a drive or a vamp.⁴² In a personal interview, the interviewee had this to say regarding the distinction:

“They [southern white quartets] sing in a manner that is stiff and straightforward—not in a negative way and not that it doesn’t sound good, but it doesn’t have flair—not the style of black quartets at least. When you heard black quartets sing, they presented it with not just style but with that something extra. The southern groups can harmonize too, but the difference is the extra.”⁴³

In another interview, the interviewee had this to say about the distinction:

“You know what, when you really think about it, when you are talking about southern gospel, quartet [sound] is southern gospel, but I think the [music/consumer] industry put the title southern gospel versus gospel, they generally use that. It’s almost segregational because when you think about southern gospel you think about white groups, when you hear about quartet groups, you think about black groups and black gospel singers. When you hear the title southern gospel, you think about white people.”⁴⁴

There are other differences, but none as great as the one in improvisation. Another interviewee had this to say:

“Southern gospel is not black; it’s white. The way they sing is not the same as Mahalia or anything like that. When I think of southern music, I do not think about black people, I think about white ones. They sung differently, and performed differently—they didn’t have the same experience during the time that Jim Crow was around. They never had to drink out of a segregated fountain or wonder where they were going to sleep in the south.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Laurel Myers Hurst “Drive vs. vamp: Theorizing concepts that organize musical “improvisation” in Gospel communities.” (M.A. thesis, Kent State University, 2011).

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pgs. 60, 74.

⁴² Anonymous, interviewed by author, Columbia, SC, September 2013.

⁴³ Anonymous, interviewed by author, Columbia, SC, September 2013.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, interviewed by author, Columbia, SC, November 2013.

⁴⁵ Anonymous, interviewed by author, Columbia, SC, January 2014.

Racial identity was also a thoroughly discussed topic—much of the cultural values that are a part of black Americans are centered in their racial identities—who they are in their communities, who they are in their world. DuBois’s theory of double consciousness was discussed thoroughly in more than one work. Race is as important to the culture as the music, as race is a huge factor in identity. There is a cyclical influence in regards to the music and identity. For instance, black American gospel has two distinct identities, the same as Dubois’s theory of double consciousness for the individual of color—there are songs that are generally sung by black people, songs such as “Wade in the Water” and “Go Down, Moses” that are considered to be strictly black music, even though the music has been sung by other races. However, songs such as “Amazing Grace” and “What a Friend We Have In Jesus” that are known to be sung by black people that are considered to be American. The struggle of the identities—the American and the Negro—are evident even in the music.

DuBois’s theory of double consciousness stems from the idea that the black American has two conscious ways of thinking and living or two souls that guide them—the American and the Negro. The theory is that black people have to view the world with two warring souls—knowing and acknowledging that they have to see and understand themselves in the eyes of others. DuBois states:

“It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ DuBois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: New American Library, 1969 [1903]., 45.

Although I encountered people who knew of the music and were unwilling to discuss it or sign the forms, there is also the factor that most people who really knew the music and the significance to the culture have passed on. There were simply not many people who knew of the music or what it was like culturally during that time. People who were adults during the pre-Baby Boom and Baby Boom era are not with us any longer, and those who were children are in their late seasons in life and are not familiar with the music as many of them were who born before this period. Many of their parents are no longer living, and the information that they held are gone with them. Although I knew that there would be a problem going into this, my own experience with my own parents influenced me—I went in with the assumption that their parents passed on and shared their generational music the way mine did, and that assumption was quickly corrected when the interviews were conducted.

Chapter IV:

Research Findings

The one common defining factor for the history of black American gospel music is that it stems from African culture, brought to America from Africa. As a result, one of its most distinctive characteristics is the 'call and response', an African tradition in which someone leads (the call) and the group responds (response). The exact origins of the spirituals have not been traced to a specific date, but there is a general consensus that it appeared around the mid-eighteenth century. During its formative years, a cyclical relationship developed between spiritual and its singers. Through this dynamic, the spiritual became a seminal feature of black American culture in the antebellum period.

In the early 1800s, another important tradition was formed—minstrelsy..

Minstrelsy in the 1800's became the entertainment of the commonfolk.⁴⁷ Buchanan observes:

"Minstrelsy emerged as the greatest manifestation of that cultural split between the classes. The rural folk who had moved into urban settings felt comfortable within this form because it was not dissimilar to what they'd seen and heard back home. White boatmen and Negroes in South Carolina sang some of the same songs, danced the same jigs and reels. Hence, it was not strange for these rural folk to understand the black faced imitators on the minstrel stage."⁴⁸

It is important to note that minstrelsy began as white men in/using black faces to imitate slaves. It was in this setting that quartet singing established and popularized as we

⁴⁷ Samuel Carroll Buchanan, "A Critical Analysis of Style in Four Black Jubilee Quartets in the United States." (Ph.D diss, New York University, 1987), 37.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 37

know it⁴⁹. It is not known at what point blacks began to use this minstrel style. When minstrel performances occurred, black people promoted their shows, however in between the acts the quartets would perform. Buchanan notes that the shows provided work for black entertainers and was the first indication of the powerful effect blacks would have on American popular entertainment.

Some scholars maintain that the music of the slaves was based on hymns taught to the slaves by white overseers and owners. Miller (2003) and Hurst (2010) certainly support that notion in their research. There are others who share the thought that the white hymns and spirituals evolved/devolved into a mixture of the bible stories that the slaves were taught within a cultural amalgamation of African, European, and American culture to create what is now known as spirituals Williams-Jones (1975), Buchanan (1987), Dent (1997), Johnson-Reagon (2001), and Wise (2002) all seem to support this theory of the evolution of the music. Though we have ideas about the sources of this music, its exact origin cannot be traced. Another cyclical element is Blacks taking minstrelsy—something that presented them negatively—and making it their own. It seems that there is a symbiotic relationship between the groups—they continuously feed off each other, take it, and change it into something new. One thing is clear however, the music itself is key to black American identity.

“The musics of the black Atlantic world were the primary expressions of cultural distinctiveness which this population seized upon and sought to adapt to its new circumstances. It used these separate but converging musical traditions if not to create itself anew as a conglomeration of black communities, then at least as a means to gauge the social progress of the spontaneous self-creation that was formed by the endless pressures of economic exploitation, political racism, displacement, and exile. This music heritage gradually became an important factor in facilitating the transition of diverse settlers to a distinct mode of

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 38

blackness.”⁵⁰

While the songs were common for slaves to sing in the field, and key to establishing black identity within the slaves, the songs really would not be heard outside of the South until shortly after emancipation Fisk Jubilee Singers would popularize the music as a fund raising technique, traveling across the U.S. to aid in funding the newly established Fisk University⁵¹. Again, there is still a great debate regarding whether or not the spirituals originated with the slaves or if the songs were originally White spirituals that the slaves learned. Problematically, during the time period, ‘recording’ songs did not involve a recording device—it meant listening and attempting to reduce the song into musical notation.

The skills and aims of the process became utterly dependent on the transcriber, his or her musical training, and the intentions for transcription. There were a few musicologists who had traveled to the South to document the sound, however there are concerns the efforts of those who transcribed the music. During the period in which the transcription occurred, the concern was not with recording the music as it was—but recording the music in a way that it would be ‘properly’ recorded in the international notation standard method. There was no thought to capturing the actual music as performed in its sociomusical context, but rather writing in a manner to which that would facilitate the music in terms of the musically elite. Epstein discussed the problem in her article ‘Black Spirituals: Their Emergence into Public Knowledge Dana J. Epstein,

⁵⁰Paul Gilroy, "Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a "Changing" Same." *Black Music Research Journal* 11: 111-136.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/779262> (accessed March 20, 2014.), 115.

⁵¹"Fisk Jubilee Singers." - Our History. http://www.fiskjubileesingers.org/our_history.html (accessed June 5, 2014).

sought to resolve the conflict between the debaters regarding the origin of the spiritual.

“In 1862 collecting songs did not involve a tape recorder; it meant listening and then trying to reduce the song to musical notation—the only means then available for preserving music. Anyone who has tried to do this knows how difficult it can be. Writing down a song one has heard a single time is a challenge, no matter how skilled one may be in ear-training. But there were many additional problems that were recognized by these early collectors. They realized that Afro-American music included many elements not present in European music for no provision had been made in the notational system.”⁵²

When spirituals were still in their infancy, so were the disciplines anthropology and musicology. The problem of notating elements that were not found in standard notation format were not addressed to the mid-twentieth century, when modern ethnomusicology informed research within the context of music and culture. Encapsulating authenticity of music was not a main concern when recording spirituals during the 1800s, especially when during this time the only way to capture the music was through written transcription. The transcribers focused on “improving” the music as they wrote it down, making it what they assumed it would be, “if the singers would have known how.”⁵³

However, the Fisk Jubilee Singers were instrumental in spreading the polished versions of the songs of the slaves for fund raising purposes⁵⁴. The group’s name was derived from the Old Testament—in Old Testament History, every fiftieth Pentecost was followed by a ‘year of jubilee’, a year in Hebrew law required all slaves be set free. As slavery was still very much alive in the minds of the performers in 1871 as the performers who had been or had been affected by slavery, had only been free for about

⁵² Dena J. Epstein, "Black Spirituals: Their Emergence into Public Knowledge." *Black Music Research Journal* 10 (1): 58-59.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pg. 58-64.

⁵⁴ Arnold Shaw, *Black popular music in America: from the spirituals, minstrels, and ragtime to soul, disco, and hip-hop*. (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 2-3.

six years, it was a fitting name for the group.⁵⁵ The Fisk Jubilee Singers started touring to gain money for the school so that they were able to keep the school going—the hope was to gain an education for a better life. The original aim had nothing to do with spreading the spiritual sound or even making people aware of the music. They were entertainers—just as those who performed minstrelsy in order to support themselves financially. Although the gospel quartet sound may have partially arisen from the spiritual style of performance, Lornell notes that it was likely not the only type of performance that occurred during the fund raising concerts. These shows probably included a wide variety of materials including the novelty songs, parlor favorites, and humorous ditties.⁵⁶ Lornell also notes that within the origin of the Fisk Jubilee Singers only two had not been in servitude—the background of the original singers were in folk music⁵⁷. It is also note that the musical songs within the programs did not consist entirely of slave spirituals, there were also song selections that were composed by White Americans and Europeans. But the motivations of the college were more than just entertainment. Lornell writes

“Colleges probably formed quartets for at least two reasons. The first is financial, because if these institutions were using quartets to raise money, this was far less expensive than sending out a larger ensemble. Quartets also spread the reputation of the educational institution they represented and by extension the quality of their music department.”⁵⁸

Southern Black Gospel Music

⁵⁵ Marietta Miller, *A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music* (Master's thesis, Morgan State University, 2003), pg. 7-8.

⁵⁶ Christopher Lornell, “Happy in the Service of the Lord: Afro-American Gospel Quartets in Memphis, Tennessee.” (Ph.D. diss, Memphis State University, 1983), 28.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

Religion is at the center of southern black quartet sound, with emphasis on biblical stories that are told in an exuberant manner through musical sound. Cedric Carl Dent notes that there are five characteristics that distinguish the Black religious quartet from other styles of music. In addition, Dent asserts that some of the early Black musical styles such as folk and jubilee are also musical time periods.

“There are five characteristics that distinguish the black religious quartet singing tradition from related styles such as barbershop, male chorus, doo wop, jubilee-style chorus, and vocal jazz. They are: (1) a common source for song selection for spirituals and gospel songs; (2) vocal arrangements which stand rhythmically and harmonically independent of instrumental accompaniment; (3) a vocal group of four to six singers; (4) vocal arrangements based harmonic ally on prior performances (when using songs previously performed by other groups); (5) individual voice parts that are free to perform melodic variations in repeated sections of a song.”⁵⁹.

Often, singers get creative in telling the story, not only making it relatable to the listener, but telling it in a way that the listeners will remember. That is a distinctive southern trait—not only storytelling, but telling it in a manner that is memorable, especially in the Appalachian region and surrounding areas. It is also a known African trait, however, the focus is on southern black gospel music in America, so it focuses on southern storytelling versus African storytelling. The Appalachian region covers from southern New York to Mississippi. It is region that covers all of West Virginia and parts of North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Maryland, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Almost half of the population in these regions surrounding the Appalachian mountains are rural, and was once dependent on agriculture, mining and forestry.⁶⁰ It is important to note that the Appalachian region run through this

⁵⁹ Cedric Carl Dent, “The harmonic development of the black religious quartet singing tradition.” (Ph.D diss, University of Maryland College Park, 1997), 5.

⁶⁰ “The Appalachian Region.” - Appalachian Regional Commission. http://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/TheAppalachianRegion.asp (accessed April 15, 2014).

concentrated area of southern black gospel music. The majority of people in this region identify as southern, and the music definitely shows characteristics of the language of the region. Storytelling was an art that came about as fear and isolation gave birth to stories—many of them paranormal accounts and strange occurrences.⁶¹ Naturally, the storytelling spread to surrounding areas, and was a cultural element that showed up even in music. One of the main features of the quartet sound is playfulness in storytelling. The improvisation is exaggerated—notes are held in a manner that exceeds a normal count—itches change in a manner that is difficult to describe. Another feature that is important is to note is basing. Stuart L. Goosman in his article “The Black Authentic: Structure, Style, and Values in Group Harmony” writes:

“The idea of basing was an essential aspect of harmonizing. It represented a structural aesthetic with deep roots in earlier black American group song. This sensibility and the importance of having someone back you up points to a relationship between the individual and the group in black America and is part of a black sociomusical system. We see the same necessary relationships between individual and group in improvised music; vocal backgrounding was the same as instrumental riffing in jazz and swing music, and no doubt was influenced by the latter.”⁶²

He continues describing the effect that basing has on a song:

“Basing grounds a song, establishes a two-part organization, and maintains antiphonal and polyphonic relationships. This arrangement during performance establishes a codependency between lead and background voices and between individual and group.”⁶³

Take for instance, the Fairfield Four’s “These Bones”, a spiritual in which the Fairfield Four creatively tells the story of Adam and Eve found in Genesis, has a bass lead:

⁶¹ “Appalachian Mountain and Ghost Culture.” The Moonlit Road. <http://themoonlitroad.com/appalachian-mountain-culture-ghost-stories/> (assessed April 15, 2014).

⁶² Stuart L. Goosman, “The Black Authentic: Structure, Style, and Values in Group Harmony.” *Black Music Research Journal* 17: 81-99. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779361> (accessed March 20, 2014), 86.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 87

*These Bones,*⁶⁴ by the Fairfield Four 3:46

Singer	Solo	Quartet	Unison
Bass Lead	Oh brother then have		
Quartet		have	you heard it brother
BL	Indeed		
Q		Indeed	I heard it brother
BL	Who told you so?		
Q		Who told you	that I know?
All			Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again
BL:	Now my God decided that He would make Him a man		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
BL:	He took a handful of mud and a handful of sand		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
BL:	Then He decided to make Him a woman too		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
BL:	He didn't hardly know just what he wanted to do		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
BL:	So He took Him a rib from old Adam's side		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	

⁶⁴ I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray, Fairfield Four 1997

BL:	Then He took Miss Eve just to be his bride		
Q:	Walter—	Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
Shift to Tenor Lead	Then He put 'em in a garden, so rich and fair		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
TL:	He said Children you can have every thang that's here		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
TL:	Oh but this fruit here, you must not touch		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
TL:	Because uh, if you do you are doomed to die		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
TL:	Now you know Miss Eve thought she would have a little fun		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
TL:	She gathered some of that fruit and gave old Adam some		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
TL:	You know uh Adam did what most men will		
Q:		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise again	
TL:	Take what the women folk have to give		
		Oh well then these bones gwine to rise	

		again	
Repeat of	the beginning phrase		

'These Bones' has been transcribed by Alan Lomax in his work "The Folk Songs of North America" as a southern Spiritual. An example of its transcription is located below⁶⁵:

Blocked for copyright
purposes

⁶⁵ "These Bones Gwine Rise Again", Alan Lomax , "The Folk Songs of North America" , 1960, Part IV, The Negro South, Spirituals II, page 476.

The Fairfield Four recorded the previous song in the later years. The song was used to show that storytelling is interwoven with the spiritual tradition. Another example by the Fairfield Four, recorded during the gospel boom period would be “Somebody Touched Me”, or “Jesus Met the Woman at the Well”. Although the Fairfield Four has a number of songs that the Bass part leads, that is not a common format singing format for black quartet style singing. The standard format is T-T-B-B, which is the Tenor-Tenor-Baritone-Bass. Laurel Hurst in her master’s thesis writes :

“First, Black Gospel and Southern Gospel quartets feature Tenor-Tenor-Baritone-Bass (TTBB) structure with high tenor harmony, lead tenor melody, baritone inner-voicing harmony and a foundational bass line. These elements reflect the tradition of Protestant choral homophony and the American shape-note hymn tradition.”⁶⁶

The performance style of the Southern Black Gospel Quartet Sound generally represents the TTBB structure. Most often, the lead tenor is the one who is remembered most frequently—such as Ira Tucker of the Dixie Hummingbirds and Sam Cooke of the Soul Stirrers. The lead vocalist was usually the one who set the tone for the melody and harmonization for the song, which is important for a number of reasons. Goosman writes:

“In specific performances either a lead vocalist sang the melody and words of a song, accompanied by call-and-response background harmony patterns, or all the vocalists sang the lead melody in harmony. A song commonly combined both structures. In the latter musical strategy, the A sections of a song would typically be organized around a call-and-response (leader/chorus) pattern, the lead vocal being backed by group riffs (brief, repeating musical phrases consisting of words or vocables). Singers of the period refer to this as “backgrounding” a lead; the older concept was called “basing.” Over the bridge, or B section (the channel), the melody could again be sung in concerted harmony.

This musical strategy and its variations are typical of jubilee and gospel quartets as well as groups labeled both pop and rhythm & blues. One finds a

⁶⁶ Laurel Myers Hurst, “Drive vs. vamp: Theorizing concepts that organize musical “improvisation” in Gospel communities.” (M.A. thesis, Kent State University, 2011), pg. 54.

similar sensibility in jazz and swing, for instance, where riffing backed the lead or soloist. Group harmony thus consists of a foreground voice and, when the chorus answers the lead, background voices. When the leader and chorus sing concerted harmony, the distinction between foreground and background is elided but still implied. A necessary relationship between foreground and background is indicated by singers who insisted on the importance of having voices "behind" them, to back them up."⁶⁷

An example of the call-and-response background harmony patterns would be Sam

Cook and the Soul Stirrer's "Jesus Gave Me Water", which is based off the story of the

Samaritan Woman in John 4:

*Jesus Gave Me Water*⁶⁸ by Sam Cooke and the Soul Stirrers 2:28

Chorus: Tenor Lead: Jesus, He gave me water

Quartet: He gave me water

TL: Jesus, He gave me water

Q: He gave me water

TL: Jesus, He gave me water

Q: He gave me water

TL: I wanna let His praises swell

Q: He gave me water

TL: Jesus, He gave me water

Q: He gave me water

TL: Jesus, He gave me water

Q: He gave me water

TL: Jesus, He gave me water

Q: He gave me water

QA: And it was not in the well

Verse 1: TL

Well there was a woman from Samaria,

Who went to the well to get some water

There she met a stranger

Who did her story tell

That woman dropped her pitcher

She drank and was made richer

From the water He gave her,

And it was not in the well

Chorus

⁶⁷ Stuart L. Goosman, "The Black Authentic: Structure, Style, and Values in Group Harmony." *Black Music Research Journal* 17: 81-99, 86.

⁶⁸ "Jesus Gave Me Water", first recorded 1951

Verse 2: TL

On that woman he had pity,
She ran back to the city
Crying glory hallelujah
And did His wonders tell
She left my Savior singing
She came back to em bringing
The town to see that water He gave her
And it was not in the well

Chorus

Verse 3: TL

Well ah that woman left a-shoutin
There was no room for doubting
That she had met a savior
Who did her wonders tell
Every time she'd doubt Him
She'd start to think about Him
The man that gave her water Lord,
And it was not in the well

The song itself, especially in the chorus, has improvisations that are characteristic of the call-and-response style within the jubilee tradition. Improvisation is another key feature of gospel music in general, but in southern black quartet sound, a whole song can be improvised with variations on one refrain. Articulation is another feature of quartet singing. The term refers to all aspects of vocal delivery, but most especially enunciation.⁶⁹ When the term articulation is mentioned, it is usually in the phrase 'time, harmony, and articulation'—which means it is a definite stylistic function of the quartet sound. It also has to be a distinguishable characteristic—something that is distinguishable from one quartet from another. Time is precision—everyone singing the same word, at the same time with crisp uniformity. Harmony is the blending of the different sounds and/or moans. Articulation could be the way the song is sung—after all,

⁶⁹ Doug Seroff, "Old-Time Black Gospel Quartet Contests." *Black Music Research Journal* 10 (1): 27-28.

several of the more commonly known spirituals have been covered by a few of the quartets and they have been sung very differently. Unfortunately, this is one of the features that is mentioned frequently, however, it is something that has not been fully definable in a musicological sense. A great example of that would be the Swan Silvertones “Mary Don’t You Weep,” which repeats ‘Mary Don’t you Weep/Martha Don’t You Moan,’ but the rest of the lyrics are improvised in either content or vocal ability. A different version, of this song was also covered by Sam Cooke and the Soul Stirrers in “Oh Mary, Don’t You Weep”, but the stylistic elements are very different.

*Mary Don’t You Weep*⁷⁰ by the Swan Silvertones 2:46

TL: Oh, I’m singing Mary don’t you weep
Q: Mary don’t you weep
TL: Martha don’t you moan
Q: Oh Martha don’t you moan
TL: Listen to me Mary
Mary don’t you weep
TL: Martha don’t have to moan
Oh Martha don’t you moan
TL: Pharoah’s army they god drowned in the Sea
Mary don’t you weep One day
Q: Drowned in the Red Sea
TL: But Jesus said Mary
Q: Mary don’t you weep
TL: Your little ole sister don’t have to moan
Q: Oh Martha don’t you moan
TL: Now can I get a witness he said Mary

The Golden Gate Quartet was known for the jubilee style of singing. They were famously known for their style—and was considered one of the groups, if not the group that everyone wished to imitate. *Down By The Riverside* characterizes the jubilee style of singing as well as the ‘basing’ technique. The ‘basing’ is in parenthesis below.

*Down By the Riverside*⁷¹ by the Golden Gate Quartet 2:48

⁷⁰ The Swan Silvertones, *At the Cross* 1963.

TL: I'm gonna lay down my burdens,
Bass: (Well down)
Q: Down by the riverside
B: (Well down)
Q: Down by the riverside
B: (Well down)
Q: Down by the riverside
B: (Well down)
TL: I'm gonna lay down my burden,
Down by the riverside
All: Study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
I ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
Well I Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
I ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
I'm gonna lay down my burden,
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
I'm gonna lay down my burden,
Down by the riverside
Study war no more
(No, no, no, no, no, no)
I ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
(No, no, no, no)
Well I Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
(No, no, no, no)
Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')

⁷¹ Rereleased in 2012.

(No, no, no, no)
I ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
Ain't gonna study war no more
I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
To study war no more
I ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gonna think about war no more)
Well I Ain't gonna study war no more
(I ain't gonna think about my troubles and gore)
Ain't gonna study war no more
(I'm going to pick up my faith and board)
I ain't gonna study war no more
(I'm gonna be by the river shore)
Ain't gonna study war no more
(I ain't gonna think about the troubles of war)
Ain't gonna study war no more
(I'm gonna sing and and shout for joy)
I'm gonna try on my long white robe
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
(Well down)
I'm gonna try on my long white robe
(Well down)
Down by the riverside
To study war no more
Well I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield
(Well I ain't gonna study war no more)
No mo' fightin on the battlefield
(Study war no more)
Stick my sword in the golden sand
(Study war no more)

Down by the river I will stand
(Study war no more)
Then I'll shine up my sword and armor
(Study war no more)
No mo' fightin in this land
(Study war no more)
(Well I ain't gon')
(No, no, no, no)
Well I Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
(No, no, no, no)
Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
(No, no, no, no)
I ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
Ain't gonna study war no more
(Well I ain't gon')
Ain't gonna study war no more

The Dixie Hummingbirds were known primarily known for their lead vocalist Ira Tucker and their founder Claude Jeter. Ira Tucker's tenor was distinctive—he could adapt and create many styles, and he influenced many quartets who sang in either the gospel or secular styles. One of the interviewees had this to say about Ira Tucker:

“The thing about Ira Tucker, he was a driver, a scat man he just...[pause]...you know he could be cool with how... [pause]...he approached the song and then he could also come out and just rip your throat out. He could be just that aggressive as a stage performer. He had showmanship, they could be show, real cool, they had style and finesse. And they didn't have a whole lot of technology. The Dixie Hummingbirds of old, the thing was they would have a drum machine and a guitar. A drum machine and a guitar and they would tear the house down.”⁷²

Although “Christian Automobile” is not a spiritual, it does capture the same elements used in spiritual singing, especially call-and-response. Ira Tucker was one of the few tenors who stood out so much when singing that he set a standard—lead tenors after him, especially quartet tenors, all imitated or used a feature of Tucker's singing.

⁷² Anonymous, personal interview, November 5, 2013.

Christian Automobile, 1952, 2:15

TL: Oh, you know that every

Q: (Ev'ry child, ev'ry child of God)

Running for Jesus

(Just like an automobile)

Ev'ry child of God

(Ev'ry child, ev'ry child of God)

Running for Jesus

(Just like an automobile)

Ev'ry child

(Ev'ry child, ev'ry child of God)

Running for Jesus

(Just like an automobile)

You know prayer

(Prayer is your driver's license)

Faith

(Faith is your steering wheel.)

(REPEAT)

BRIDGE

When you get on

(Mmm Hmm)

The road to glory

(Mmm Hmm)

Satan is gonna try

(Mmm Hmm)

To flag you down

(Mmm Hmm)

But--- keep on driving

(Keep on driving)

Well if you

(want your starry crown.)

VAMP

You gotta check on your tires

(Mmm Hmm)

You got a rough road ahead

(Mmm Hmm)

And when you are weary from your journey

(Mmm Hmm)

God will put you to bed.

(Mmm Hmm)

You gotta check on your brakes

(Mmm Hmm)

And stop your wicked ways

(Mmm Hmm)

A man is born of a woman
(Mmm Hmm)
It's only of a few days
(Mmm Hmm)
You've gotta check on your lights
(Mmm Hmm)
And see your own faults
(Mmm Hmm)
Stop while you can see them, children
(Mmm Hmm)
Or your soul will be lost.
(Mmm Hmm)
You gotta check on your generator
(Mmm Hmm)
You need more strength and power
(Mmm Hmm)
You can't do nothing without the man
(Mmm Hmm)
You need him every hour.
(Mmm Hmm)
Christians
(Mmm Hmm)
Oh, Christians
(Mmm Hmm)
Press on your starters
(Mmm Hmm)
And start your automobile
(Mmm Hmm)
Put it in first gear
(Mmm Hmm)
And go on up the hill
(Mmm Hmm)
Drive on, children
(Mmm Hmm)
If I never see you no more
(Mmm Hmm)
I'll meet you when I pull in
(Mmm Hmm)
On the other shore
(Mmm Hmm)
And I'm not worried
(Mmm Hmm)
About my parking space
(Mmm Hmm)
I just want to see
(Mmm Hmm)

See my Savior face to face
You know prayer
(Prayer is your driver's license)
Faith
(Faith is your steering wheel.)

Uniquely, the Dixie Hummingbirds have a song called “Let’s Go to the Programs”, first released in 1964, in which they actually mimic the singing styles of the Soul Stirrers, the Blind Boys, the Pilgrim Travelers, and the Bells of Joy, followed by mimicking their own style. Stylistically and fundamentally they were very different. The Golden Gate Quartet were the premier jubilee sound; both the Soul Stirrers and the Dixie Hummingbirds were known for their dynamic tenors—Sam Cooke and Ira Tucker respectively; the Fairfield Four was known for singing almost completely *a capella* with only a rhythmic pat by hands to keep time and their basso Isaac “Dickie” Freeman—whose voice was so powerful people recount stories of the radios vibrating the late 30’s and 40’s⁷³; and the Soul Stirrers blending was so unique that they were mimicked constantly by upcoming groups and a lead that could shift from tenor to falsetto without losing harmony.

One interviewee who knew of Isaac ‘Dickie’ Freeman had this to say about him:

“That joker was...[pause]...incredible.”⁷⁴

However, in all these groups, their primary repertoire is the spiritual songs that had been passed down practically orally, as the recording of them was problematic originally. Spirituality is at the heart of not only the songs, but the singing styles and cultures of the abovementioned groups. The groups covered many of the same spirituals—and shared some of the same songs. Hayes writes regarding the tradition of

⁷³ J. Jerome Zolten, “The Media-Driven Evolution of the African American Hard Gospel Style as a Rhetorical Response to Hard Times,” *The Howard Journal of Communications* 7, no 3 (1996) pg. 197.

⁷⁴ Anonymous, interviewed by author, Columbia, SC, November 2013.

African American religion:

“African Americans are a spiritual people who are also religious. It is their spirituality, however, which stands at the center of their very being, that has enabled them to become a people of Christian faith, a faith very different from that of white Christians in the United States. Their spirituality, one that emphasizes resistance, survival, and liberation, freed them to become the people God intended them to be rather than personal property, as others saw them.”⁷⁵

It is clearly evident, that in spite of the years that separates the groups and the slaves that originated the singing tradition that the groups embody, that they are definitely continuing the religious tradition of the people before them.

It is believed by some that the quartets who sang in the jubilee style played an important role shifting black sacred traditional spiritual singing to the modern gospel sound.⁷⁶ Problematically, this particular genre and shift has not been studied, like a lot of shifts in the gospel and sacred music traditions. Furthermore, the ones who carried this knowledge and those who performed in this style are no longer with us, and very few remain who know of the music and culture during this time. However, one interviewee did make a distinction between sacred/traditional gospel music/groups and more secular gospel music/groups:

“They [groups who were more sacred] sang more bible studies. [Sings ‘It’s Gonna Rain’ by the Sensational Nightingales] You know songs that they were singing were about Noah, Nicodemus—they wrote songs from a more sacred standpoint. They sang songs that were more scripturally orientated. The other groups would write and sing about life experiences. Then the other [sacred] would sing songs that were scripture based.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Diana L. Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012), 50.

⁷⁶ Samuel Carroll Buchanan, “A Critical Analysis of Style in Four Black Jubilee Quartets in the United States.” (Ph.D diss, New York University, 1987), 6.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, interviewed by author, Columbia, SC, November 2013.

The relationship between singing styles, time period, and even where the music was overlap and intertwine in a way that is difficult to understand and make clear without the knowledge that they have because they hold the key to interpreting the cultural impact of the music from and on the people. The need for study in this arena is significant because during this time period, there is a not only a political shift, but an economic and cultural shift in American culture for blacks. One major social aspect of quartet singing was that in the neighborhood, harmony singing was more than just singing, it was also a reflection of black American values. The music from the groups mentioned are not just southern because they are from the southern region of the United States, but rather because the music is a direct reflection of the cultural identities of each individual member who sang—from the language to the element of storytelling that is involved in each song that is sung. The groups are also southern because their sound is a directly reflects the music, they embody the music as a direct result of the oral tradition that was passed to them.

Chapter V:

Conclusion

The attempt at filling the chasm may have brought more questions than the work answered. The southern black quartet sound has evolved beyond the original sound, yet the method is still the same. The groups of the past have passed on, and the music that they created is leaving at a rapid rate. The need for study is great in this area—specifically gospel music prior to 1960. We know who Thomas A. Dorsey is, but we do not know the other players that may have helped gospel music change. From 1865 to 1930 it is about the Fisk Jubilee Singers, and from an overlapping period during the 1920s on is Thomas A. Dorsey until the gospel boom period when quartets and gospel groups proliferated along with soloists such as Mahalia Jackson. We have some of the results of the changes, but we do not know the who, the what, the when, the where, the why, and the how gospel music changed and the music shifted into new genres. We know the rules, but not the complete ‘history’ of the songs sung. The lacunae in this particular time frame and the period between 1865 and 1960 are gaping. This music is virtually linked to all other black music, and would be beneficial to study, for clarity in understanding other black music as well as for the preservation of the music tradition itself.

Recommendations for Future Research

Black music and identity is a concept that should be explored more fully. Gospel music is considered one of the foundations for all black American music, and the cycle of black music and identity should be explored for understanding. There is cultural

information that needs to be explored in regards to black identity, black music and the cycle between DuBois's theory of double consciousness and how it emerges in black music, and specifically black gospel music. The relationship between the idea of two warring souls and two warring identities clearly emerge in black gospel music, and is likely part of other forms of black gospel music as well. In addition, the period of influence of gospel music should be explored fully as the knowledge in this area is limited. The period of 1865 to 1930 has an alarming lack of information and that information is needed to understand gospel and the gospel origins more completely. Knowledge regarding this era is not fully known, and the knowledge is becoming extinct at an alarming rate.

Bibliography

- Allen, Ray. "Shouting the Church: Narrative and Vocalization in African-American Gospel Quartet Performance." *Journal of American Folklore* 413, no. 104 (1991): 295-317. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/541447>
- Ankeny, Jason. "The Soul Stirrers: Biography." Available from http://afgen.com/soul_stirrers.html. Internet; accessed 2 December 2010.
- Ankeny, Jason. "The Soul Stirrers." *The Vocal Group Hall of Fame Foundation*. Available from http://www.vghf.org/inductees/soul_stirrers.html. Internet; accessed 2 December 2010.
- Blue, Rose and Corrine J. Naden. *The History of Gospel Music*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001.
- Boyer, Horace C. "Contemporary Gospel Music." *The Black Perspective in Music* 7 no. 1 (1979): 5-58. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214427>.
- Buchanan, Samuel Carroll. "A Critical Analysis of Style in Four Black Jubilee Quartets in the United States." (Ph.D diss, New York University, 1987)
- Burnim, Mellonee Victoria. "The Black Gospel Music Tradition: Symbol of Ethnicity." (Ph.D diss, Indiana University, 1980)
- Carawan, Guv, and Candie Carawan. *Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs*. Bethlehem: A Sing Out Publication, 1990.
- Clark, Edgar R. "Negro Folk Music in America." *The Journal of American Folklore* 253, no. 64 (1951): 281-287. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/536154>.
- Dent, Cedric Carl. "The harmonic development of the black religious quartet singing tradition." (Ph.D diss, University of Maryland College Park, 1997)
- DuBois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: New American Library, 1969 [1903].
- Epstein, Dena J.. "Black Spirituals: Their Emergence into Public Knowledge." *Black Music Research Journal* 10 (1): 58-64.
- Erlewine, Michael . "The Swan Silvertones." *The Vocal Group Hall of Fame Foundation*. Available from http://www.vocalgroup.org/inductees/the_swan_silvertones.html. Internet; accessed 2 December 2010
- "Fisk Jubilee Singers." - Our History. http://www.fiskjubileesingers.org/our_history.html (accessed June 5, 2014).
- Floyd, Jr., Samuel A.. "Troping the Blues: From Spirituals to the Concert Halls." *Black Music Research Journal* 13: 31-51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779405> (accessed March 20, 2014)
- Frederick, Nathaniel. "Praise God and do something: The role of Black American gospel artists as social activists, 1945-1960." (Ph.D. diss, Pennsylvania State University, 2009)
- Garcia, William B. "Church Music by Black Composers: A Bibliography of Choral Music." *The Black Perspective in Music* 2, no. 2 (1974): 145-157. Foundation for Research in Afro-American Creative Arts. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214231>.
- Gilroy, Paul. "Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a "Changing" Same." *Black Music Research Journal* 11: 111-136. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779262> (accessed March 20, 2014).

- Goosman, Stuart L. "The Black Authentic: Structure, Style, and Values in Group Harmony." *Black Music Research Journal* 17: 81-99
- Harrison, Douglas. 2008. "Why southern gospel music matters." *Religion and American Culture* 18, no. 1: 27-58. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost
- Hayes, Diana L. *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012.
- Heilbut, Anthony. *The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times*. Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1992.
- Hurst, Laurel Myers. "Drive vs. vamp: Theorizing concepts that organize musical "improvisation" in Gospel communities." (M.A. thesis, Kent State University, 2011)
- Jackson-Brown, Irene V.. "Afro-American Song in the Nineteenth Century: A Neglected Source." *The Black Perspective in Music* 4 (1): 22-38.
- Jackson, Jerma. *Singing in My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Jackson, Joyce Marie. "The performing black sacred quartet: An expression of cultural values and aesthetics." (Ph.D diss, Indiana University, 1988)
- Jacobs, Claude. "Spirit Guides and Possession in the New Orleans Black Spiritual Churches." *The Journal of American Folklore* 403, no. 102 (1989): 45-56, 65-67. American Folklore Society. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/540080>
- Karpf, Juanita. "The Early Years Of African American Music Periodicals 1886-1922: Ideology, Context." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 2, no. 28 (1997): 143-168. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3108447>.
- Lornell, Christopher. "Happy in the Service of the Lord: Afro-American Gospel Quartets in Memphis, Tennessee." (Ph.D. diss, Memphis State University, 1983)
- Miller, Marietta. A Qualitative Study of the American Black Spiritual and Gospel Music (Master's thesis, Morgan State University, 2003)
- National Endowment for the Arts. "1989 NEA National Heritage Fellow The Fairfield Four." National Endowment for the Arts. Available from http://www.nea.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/fellow.php?id=1989_02&type=bio. Internet; accessed 2 December 2010.
- Nelson, Timothy J. "Sacrifice of Praise: Emotion and Collective Participation in an African-American Worship Service." *Sociology of Religion* 4, no. 57 (1996): 379-396. Oxford University Press. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3711893>
- Nettl, Bruno. "The Ethnomusicologist and Black Music." *Black Music Research Journal* 10 (1): 1-4.
- Petrie, Phil. "The History of Gospel Music." Traditional Gospel Music. Available from <http://afgen.com/gospel1.html>. Internet; accessed 2 December 2010.
- Philips, Romeo Eldridge. "Some Perceptions of Gospel Music." *The Black Perspective in Music* 10: 167-178. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214620> (accessed March 20, 2014)
- Reagon, Bernice Johnson. *If you don't go, don't hinder me: the African American sacred song tradition*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Rubman, Kerill Leslie. "From 'Jubilee' to 'Gospel' in Male Quartet Singing." (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1980)
- Samford, Patricia. "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture."

- The William and Mary Quarterly* 1, no. 53 (1996): 87-114. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2946825>.
- Seroff, Doug. "Old-Time Black Gospel Quartet Contests." *Black Music Research Journal* 10 (1): 27-28.
- Smith, Lucy H. "Negro Musicians and Their Music." *The Journal of Negro History* 4, no. 20 (1934): 428-432. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2714259>.
- Southall, Geneva. "Black Composers and Religious Music." *The Black Perspective in Music* 1, no. 2 (1974): 45-50. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214148>.
- Tallmadge, William. "Afro-American Music." *Music Educators Journal* 1, no. 44 (1957): 37-38. Ministers: A Legacy West African Culture." *Journal of Black Studies* 1, no. 37 (2006): 5-19. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40034370>.
- "The Appalachian Region." - Appalachian Regional Commission. http://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/TheAppalachianRegion.asp (accessed April 15, 2014)
- Thieme, Darius. "Afro-American Folksong Scholarship." *Black Music Research Journal* 10 (1): 9-13.
- Warner, Jay. "The Golden Gate Quartet." The Vocal Group Hall of Fame Foundation. Available from http://www.vocalgroup.org/inductees/golden_gate_quartet.html. Internet; accessed 2 December 2010.
- Walker, Wyatt. *Somebody's Calling My Name: Black Sacred Music and Social Change*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979.
- Whalum, Wendel. "Music in the Churches of Black Americans: A Critical Statement." *The Black Perspective in Music* Special Issue: Black American Music Symposium 1985 1, no. 14 (1986): 13-20. Foundation for Research in Afro-American Creative Arts. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1214725>
- Williams-Jones, Pearl. "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystalization of The Black Aesthetic." *Ethnomusicology* 3, no. 19 (1975): 373-385. JSTOR. [Online.] <http://www.jstor.org/stable/850791>
- Webster, Dwight. "Gospel music in the United States of America 1960s-1980s: A study of the themes of "Survival," Elevation," and "Liberation" in a popular urban contemporary Black folk sacred mass music." (Ph.D. diss, Graduate Theological Union, 2011)
- Wise, Raymond. "Defining African American gospel music by tracing its historical and musical development from 1900 to 2000." (Ph.D diss, Ohio State University, 2002)
- Young, Alan. *Woke Me Up This Morning: Black Gospel Singers and the Gospel Life*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997.
- Zolten, Jerry. *Great god a'mighty!, the Dixie Hummingbirds: Celebrating the Rise of Soul Gospel Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Zolten, J. Jerome, "The Media-Driven Evolution of the African American Hard Gospel Style as a Rhetorical Response to Hard Times," *The Howard Journal of Communications* 7, no 3 (1996):185-203.