Trends in the Gospel Music Ensemble Experience:
Establishing the Precedent and Need for Inclusion of Gospel Choir Ensemble Experience
and Pedagogy into the Collegiate Level Music Curriculum

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By

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ABSTRACT

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During the late 1990s, gospel music emergence in secondary schools and colleges brought a new awareness of a dynamic change in social-cultural, peer-relations, and many educational sector activities in America. Gospel music is part of the musical tapestry in the United States arts community. The music genre shapes, frames, and reflects the worship-life and faith expression in most African-American churches. The nature of gospel music itself encourages teachers to introduce it as a meaningful, albeit alternative genre in music education curriculum and teaching experiences. This study aims to articulate the significance of integrating gospel music ensemble into the college music curriculum and teaching experience. The study will use descriptive and historical research methodology for establishing the need for including gospel music in the collegiate level curriculum and developing guidelines for appropriate learning outcomes, the scope of gospel music repertoire, and gospel music ensemble pedagogy. The study will also outline and demonstrate the benefit the gospel choir ensemble has for university and college educational, social, public relations, and marketing programs.

Keywords: Gospel music, gospel music style, gospel choir, gospel music form, pedagogy, improvisation, vamp.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Janice L. Beard and Arthur Beard.
Acknowledgements

First, I have to give glory and honor to God who always causes me to triumph in all my ways. He could have chosen anyone. But he chose me to do work for him.

Second, I want to acknowledge my loving mother Janice L. Beard who bought me my first Piano and Music Theory Books.

Third, special acknowledgement is extended to my Thesis Mentor, Dr. Vernon M. Whaley, for his multiple hours of editing, counsel, encouragement and mentorship; and, Thesis Reader, Dr. Eddie Robinson, for his encouragement and guidance in the writing process.

Fourth, additional acknowledgement goes to:

- Dr. Bernard Williams, former Director of Concert Choir, The Golden Voices, College Organist, and Professor in the Division of Education at Miles College.

- Bishop Kevin P. Turner, Founding Director of The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Gospel Choir. *May you continue to Rest in Peace knowing that your legacy lives on through me and many other UABGC Alum. “Everybody Ought To Know Who Jesus Is”!*
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CHAPTER ONE:
Introduction

The purpose of this study is to articulate the significance and need of integrating gospel music ensemble into the college music curriculum and teaching experience. The study establishes the historical precedent of Gospel Choir in America, the precedent, purpose, function and need for using Gospel Choir in the collegiate level curriculum with appropriate learning outcomes and gospel choir ensemble pedagogy. The study will also outline and demonstrate the potential benefit Gospel Choir has for university and college educational, social, public relations, and marketing programs.

Background of Topic

During the late 1990s, gospel music, and in particular the Gospel Choir’s emergence in secondary schools and colleges brought dynamic changes in social-cultural, peer-relations, and many educational sector activities in America. Gospel music in general is part of the musical tapestry in the United States arts community.

The history of gospel music genres dates back to pre-18th century singing schools. During this time, the phrase and oral traditions were popular methods of music education in the church. The white and black congregations used hymns of famous writers like Isaac Watts, Charles, and John Wesley. The camp meeting sings related to the Great Awakening of 1800 promoted congregational singing. By 1800, camp meetings’ the folk-music style combined with texts expressing personal faith in God to form a sacred music style, which became a precursor of gospel music. From 1840 onwards, new songs emerged and integrated into the camp, meeting rivals, the American Sunday school movement, and the city revivals. The songs facilitated the
presentation of camp meeting songs to the public outside the church setting. The songs led to the promotion of evangelical theory to children.¹

Between 1850 and 1910, there were gospel music sub-genres that emerged in the American church. They included traditional gospel music, southern gospel music, and African American gospel music. Traditional gospel music emerged from the German art song, which had a stanza followed by a chorus, with less emphasis on the rhythm. Some of the critical writers of this music genre were Fanny Crosby, Ralph E. Hudson, and Philip Bliss. Southern gospel music emerged from the fa-sol-la singing school tradition. African American gospel music was highly rhythmic and established on spontaneous solos and improvised vocal counterpoint. African American gospel is “a much vaster range of emotion, vocal color, and rhythmic energy,”² This rooted in older European singing, preaching, and clapping traditions and exclusively proclaims “the gospel” of the New Testament.

Traditional black gospel hymnody singers have followed the African concept of using a griot as a soloist, preacher, and song leader. Griot refers to the ceremonial role that an “African plays in encouraging audience participation via spoken and sung dialogue or drama.”³

Gospel music undoubtedly found much of its early roots in African-American spirituals and hymnody. Robert F. Darden contends that spirituals emerged from the field hollers, African rhythm, and work songs. At first, the Black-American gospel songs reflected the music of the American Church’s great revivals in general, including Sankey's gospel hymns, Sunday school songs, and the Watts and Wesley hymns of the mid-1700s.⁴ Blacks’ great migration to urban

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⁴ Whaley p. 48.
areas during the first and second world wars played a significant role in spreading the use and acceptance of The Gospel Choir. Charles Albert Tindley served as an early composer to integrate melodic and rhythmic gospel singing principles from the black folk church. Later, Thomas Dorsey modified Tindley’s approach and included blues-based melodies, harmonies, ragtime, and boogie-woogie piano style.

As a Christian doctrine and biblical theology facilitator, the gospel song emerged in the 1906-1909 Los Angeles Azusa Street Revival. The revival’s meetings were characterized by individuals from different races engaging in preaching, singing, and speaking in tongues. Likewise, their melodies and lyrics depended on Ira Sankey and D.L. Moody's song tradition. They were performed with expressive bodily movement, clapping, shouting, and melody ornamentation. The commencement of African American Gospel Choir corresponds, in part, with the origin of blues, ragtime, and jazz. Eileen Southern describes it as the “sacred counterpart of the blues” in her landmark book, The Music of Black Americas: A History.5

From 1930 to 1969, the Golden Age of Gospel Music witnessed the dissemination of African American gospel music via radio and other oral traditions. The printed product was limited to one and two-page sheet music, containing texts, melody lines, and chords for improvisational purposes. Many African American gospel writers did not transcribe their music to print, nor copyright their songs.

From 1970 onwards, the modern gospel era, gospel music is dominated by musical artists such as Andrae Crouch, Tremaine Hawkins, Walter Hawkins, Sandra Crouch and the Clark Sisters and many more. Besides, clergy like Rev. James Cleveland, Rev. Al Green, and Evangelist Shirley Caesar focused on preaching the gospel in concert hall congregations.6 It is

thought by many that these musicians considered their mission to spread gospel music to mainstream America as “a calling.”

**The Emerging Use of Gospel music in Higher Education**

Gospel songs are culturally rich from the black experience. It is impossible to understand American history and culture without comprehending the blacks’ cultural history and vice versa. In many ways, Gospel music provides students opportunity to enhance self-esteem, contribute to individual intellect, promote self-worth, stretch skill-set and musical ability. Student participation in Gospel Choir provides opportunity to foster social interaction, develop community, and generate social engagement.

**Problem Statement**

In general, The Gospel Choir Ensemble is not part of the official music curriculum in most institutions of higher learning. Although gospel choir has a role in a significant number of colleges and universities, most institutions only employ the ensemble as an extra-curricular club-type organization or activity. As a result, most undergraduate music education students, choral directors in training and those pursuing choral pedagogy degrees never experience or lead a *Gospel Choir Ensemble*.

**Purpose Statement**

This study seeks to research the contribution of and *need* for integrating “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” into the standard college music education curriculum. The study also investigates the history of a Gospel Choir in America establishes precedent and need for embracing The Gospel Choir Ensemble” as a primary teaching tool in music education. The study concludes by establishing the *need* for developing a pedagogical technique for music educators to use in leading “The Gospel Choir Ensemble.”
Significance of the Study

In many ways, the establishing the need for inclusion of *Gospel Choir Ensemble* in the “standard music education degree completion plan” will demonstrate how an obvious “gap” in choral repertoire, leadership experience and training may be greatly eliminated. In the process, establishing the precedent for this need may broaden the understanding of how Gospel Choir Ensemble participation enriches students’ personal development, educational breath, and musical competence. Additionally, this study may prove beneficial to those doing additional research in other areas of Gospel Choir development, African-American worship leadership practice and to choral directors seeking a rational for developing a systemic pedagogical method for leading The Gospel Choir Ensemble.

Research Questions & Hypothesis

Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following questions:

a) What is the historical precedent and need for using The Gospel Choir in the training and equipping of Music Educators?

b) How are HBCU and non-HBCU institutions integrating the study and use of Gospel Choir into their undergraduate and graduate music education curricula?

c) In what ways can articulating the need for “Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience in music education be used to advance the broad musical and cultural experiences of secondary and college-age music students?

d) How does the Gospel Choir Ensemble experience contribute to the overall life-equipping process of a student?

e) Is there need for a formal Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy?

Hypothesis

H1: There is adequate historical precedent and need for using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” in a primary teaching, training, equipping role of music education professionals.

H2: There is need to demonstrate how “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience, at the college level, provides students a broader opportunity for music experience and expression.

H3: There is need to establish a formal “collegiate level standard” for using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” as a primary recruiting and retention tool for college and university music education degree programs.
H4: There is evidence of the need for “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience to serve in a music, social, cultural, peer, student inter-action and relationship capacity.

H5: There is evidence of the need for a “Gospel Choir” pedagogy.

**The Methodology**

Historical and descriptive research design seems the most appropriate methodological process for this study.

**The Limitations**

This study focuses on providing a brief historical account of the precedent and trends in Gospel Choir Ensemble since before 1850, the established precedent, purposes, function and need of Gospel Choir in music education. Further, there is need for the development of a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy.

This study is not a quantitative or qualitative research project nor is it used as a platform for discovery of Gospel music or Gospel Choir’s role in social or political movements. The study is not intended to be a rationale for, historical analysis of, or pedagogical practices with Gospel Music Ensemble. This is not a comprehensive account of the rich and deeply meaningful history of Gospel Choir in America. There is no attempt to measure the effectiveness of Gospel Choir in music education or provide an assessment of program learning outcomes used in the establishment of any curriculum.

**Structure and Organization**

Chapter 1 – This chapter includes the Statement of Research, Methodology, Limitation, Research Questions, Organization of Thesis, and Key Terms.

Chapter 2 – Related Research is dealt with in this chapter. The chapter is divided into three sections. Subject research includes but, is not limited to: 1) Research related to the History of Gospel Choir; 2) Research Related to Gospel Choir in Music Education; and, 3) Research
Related to Gospel Choir Pedagogy. Related research sources for this thesis include scholarly works and papers, doctorate level dissertations, formal thesis research, text books, trade books and workshop manuals, magazine articles, online blogs, web-site posts, podcasts and collegiate level journals and formal lectures.

Chapter 3 – This chapter provides a historical precedent of and need for “Gospel Choir in America” including: Introductory remarks, a survey of Singing in the African American Community Prior to 1850, Singing in the African American Community from 1850 – 1910, Gospel Choir from 1910 – 1970, Gospel Choir from 1970 – 2000, Gospel Choir from 2000 – 2020 and a brief wrap-up conclusion. This chapter is a historical survey of the general trends in African American song, including gospel choir, over the last two centuries. There is no intention for this thesis, or for this chapter, to be a comprehensive account of the deep and rich history of Gospel Choir in America. Rather, the chapter establishes premise upon which need for Gospel Choir’s inclusion in music education may be established.

Chapter 4 – This chapter provides an overview of the precedent, purposes, function and need of Gospel Music Ensemble in music education, including: Introductory remarks about the chapter’s emphasis; Background, precedent and need for Gospel Choir in Music Education; The Function and need for Gospel Choir in The Black Church; The purposes of and need for Gospel choir in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); The need for Gospel Choir as an extra-curricular activity in music education; The function of and need for Gospel Choir in collegiate level music education curriculum; and a comprehensive wrap-up conclusion.

Chapter 5 – This chapter investigates the need for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy, including: Introductory remarks presenting the need for a pedagogical system in teaching Gospel Choir; a brief overview of the Unique Role of the Gospel Choir;
The need for understanding the “Gospel Choir Language” and musical form; The need for establishing practical steps for building and develop the “Gospel Choir Sound;” The need for developing successful Gospel Music Ensemble rehearsal and performance technique; and, A comprehensive summary and conclusion

Chapter 6 – Summary- Conclusion. This chapter is grouped into several strategic sections: Organizational Summary of the Research Study, Organizational Purposes for Each Chapter, Significant Findings and Discoveries, Significant Conclusions as Applied to using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble,” Recommendations for Future Research and a Concluding Summary.

Definition of Terms

Gospel music - is a religious music with spiritual lyric.7 “Some authorities say that gospel music is a fusion of Afro-American forms such as blues, jazz, spirituals, rock and ragtime. This means that the characteristics that are found in these various types are embedded in the music called gospel.”8

Gospel music style – is represented by no less than 20 musical expressions or sub-genres.9 For the purposes of this study, Gospel music style will refer to Spiritual, Traditional (Black) Gospel, CCS (Contemporary Choir Songs), or Praise and Worship.

Gospel choir ensemble - Group of singers performing Gospel music style.

Gospel music form – refers the unique pattern in which a gospel song is arranged. Most songs written or arranged for Gospel Choir will usually follow a predictable format: A: a verse sung by solo, B: chorus sung by choir, A: verse sung by choir, B: chorus sung by choir C: Vamp repeated by choir and soloist, B: sung by choir, D: Bridge with modulation sung by soloist and choir, B Chorus sung by choir and soloist, E: Repeated ending. (ABABCCCBDBBE)

Pedagogy - the method and practice of teaching a subject, concept or theory.

Improvisation – creating and performing music spontaneously without prior preparation. In music, improvisation implies that the performer is playing without written notation.

Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy - the method and practice of teaching gospel music for use as

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7 The New World Encyclopedia, 1996, s. v. “Gospel music”
9 Gospel music style includes, but is not limited to: Spiritual, CCS, P & W, Traditional Black Gospel, Contemporary/Urban Gospel, Shout and Rhythm and Blues.
a choral ensemble.

*Vamp* - in gospel music, this is a short, simple musical passage, usually repeated several times, as directed.
CHAPTER TWO:
Review of Related Research Materials

This chapter is organized into three short sections: 1) Research related to the History of Gospel Choir; 2) Research Related to Gospel Choir in Music Education; and, 3) Research Related to Gospel Choir Pedagogy. Related research sources for this thesis include scholarly works and papers, doctorate level dissertations, formal thesis research, text books, trade books and workshop manuals, magazine articles, online blogs, web-site posts, podcasts and collegiate level journals and formal lectures.

Research Related to the History of Gospel Choir

Eileen Southern’s landmark book, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, published in 1997 by New York based Norton Publishers, is perhaps one of the most important scholarly contributions to African American music practice. It is important to this thesis study in that it helps establish historical precedent for the development and use of Gospel Music Choir Ensemble in America.

Dr. Vernon M. Whaley wrote *Trends in Gospel Music Publishing: 1940-1960* in 1992 as part of the dissertation requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) at The University of Oklahoma. Dr. Whaley’s chapter defining the gospel music genre as “incorporating traditional, southern, and African American influences” is most helpful in setting the parameters for the study of “The Gospel Choir Ensemble.” His chapter on “African American Gospel Music Publishing” provides insight into the broad evolution from The Black Hymnody to the repertoire most often associated with “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” today.
Dr. James Abbington has compiled and edited forty Reading in African American Church Music and Worship in 2001 for the GIA Publishing Company of Chicago. This landmark volume represents the writings of some of the brightest scholars and intellects leading Black Church worship during the 21st century. The book is grouped into four strategic sections: 1) Historical Perspectives, 2) Surveys of Hymnals and Hymnody, 3) Liturgical Hymnody, 4) Worship, 5) Composers, 6) The Organ, and 7) Contemporary Perspectives. Contributors include, but are not limited to: William Edward Burghardt DuBois, John W. Work, Portia K. Maultsby, Irene V. Jackson-Brown, Don Lee White, Harold T. Lewis, James Abbington, William D. Watley, Wendell Phillips Whalum, and Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. Most compelling is Dr. Abbington’s “Foreword” where the editor presents the purposes of his exhaustive volume and recounts an experience he had while a student at Morehouse College in Atlanta. In describing the contents of the book, Dr. Abbington outlines in detail the resource from where he gleaned his information:

I have compiled chapters, essays, articles, and unpublished papers on music and worship in the African American church during the twentieth century by pastors, scholars, theologians, historians, ethnomusicologist, organists, professors, and conductors. I feel that their writings represent some of the greatest writings, musical comment and discourse, histories, perspectives, and concepts on the subject.

This volume edited by Dr. James Abbington includes an invaluable wealth of scholarly, well written information and, as such, provides a much needed resource for the completion of the DME thesis.10

In 2014, Dr. James Abbington edited and compiled for GIA Publishers, Readings in African American Church Music and Worship, Volume 2. Following the same format as his first

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volume, this work includes forty-three articles grouped into seven sections: 1) Worship and Liturgical Practice, 2) Liturgical Theologies, 3) Proclamation of the Word, 4) Hymnody: Sound and Sense, 5) Perspectives on Praise and Worship, 6) Hip Hop and/in the Church, and 7) Perspectives on Women and Gender. Of special interest is the “Foreword” written by Dr. John D. Witvliet, Director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, and the sections on “Liturgical Theologies,” “Praise and Worship,” and “Hip Hop and/in the Church.” The articles by Kenneth C. Ulmer, “Transformational Worship in the Life of a Church,” and Pamela P. Martin, Tuere A. Bowles, LaTrese Adkins, and Monica T. Leach, “Black Megachurches in the Internet Age: Exploring Theological Teachings and Social Outreach,” are significant to the study of pedagogy for the Gospel Choir Ensemble, which is included in this thesis investigation. Contributors to this exhaustive volume include, but are not limited to: Valerie Bridgeman Davis, James Abbington, James H. Cone, Samuel D. Proctor, Frank Thomas and Martha Simmons, Luke A. Powery, Robert Darden, Melinda E. Weekes, Deborah S. Pollard, and Gayle Wald. Most impressive are readings by Valerie Bridgeman Davis, “Twenty-one Questions Revisited,” and Luke A Powery’s “Walkin’ the Talk: The Spirit and the Lived Sermon.”


Robert Stephens has written "A brief history of gospel music's evolution" for Mail and Guardian Web-site Blog on May 3, 2019. This article is vital in this thesis since it offers

insightful data on gospel choir's evolution since the 20th century. Additional information on Thomas A. Dorsey, the father of African-American Gospel Music, contribution to gospel choir development.

Historian Lawrence W. Levine wrote *Black culture and black consciousness: Afro-American folk thought from slavery to freedom* for Oxford University Press in 1978. Long considered classic and much needed resource for American folklore, the book is an exhaustive investigation of black songs, folk tales, proverbs, aphorisms, verbal games and the long narrative oral poems known as 'toasts,' Levine argues that the value system of Afro-Americans can only be understood through an analysis of Black culture. His work ranks among the best books written on the Afro-American experience in recent years. A small section of the book offers valuable data regarding influential people in "the gospel choir movement." The book is significant to this current study in that it provides the researcher an overview and detailed information of different scholarly writings by Pops Foster, T-Bone Walker, Langstone Hughes, and Zora Neal Hurston.\(^\text{13}\)


Don Cusin discusses the importance of gospel choir in his book *The Sound of Light,* published by Hal Leonard Books in 1990. The book offers insightful data on the history of music in religion and gospel choir is an important centerpiece in his narrative.\(^\text{15}\)

In his article, "The Changing Nature of Gospel Music: A Southern Case Study," published in the *African American Review* volume 29, number 2, Jackson Marie highlights notable advancements in gospel choir from the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Although congregational singing is highly prevalent in worship houses, community and church choirs only multiplied in number during the later 1940s and early 1950s. The article offers vital information on how the Civil Rights Movement, the growth of new African-American consciousness, and the increased prevalence of the need to unite the religious institutions impacted gospel choir development.\(^\text{16}\)

Dr. Raymond Wise wrote *Defining African American Gospel Music by Tracing its Historical and Musical Development from 1900 to 2000* for The Ohio State University Press in 2002. Dr. Wise’s book offers reliable data on the role of some of the most influential community gospel choirs during this century.\(^\text{17}\) Dr. Wise discusses the various choir repertoire, purpose and mission and important music directors.

Horace Clarence Boyer wrote *The Golden Age of Gospel* in 2000 for the University of Illinois Press.\(^\text{18}\) The book provides a detailed description of the gospel choirs' development. nine-foot Steinway grand pianos and Hammond organs. The book is important to the research process


in that the author traces the various transformations in gospel choirs' character over numerous decades.


Larry Wolz published an article in the 2008 issue of The Hymn entitled "Singing and Making Music: Issues in Church Music Today," which articulates how choir members work towards a common objective in the spiritual and musical discipline. According to Wolz, gospel choirs are relevant in the modern church because they enhance a community that strives to serve God and bringing people close to God.\(^ {20}\)

*Singing in My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age* is a book by Jerma Jackson and published in 2004 by the University of North Carolina Press. The book is a thorough documentation of the rise of Gospel Music immediately following the reconstruction years of the American Civil War. It includes a lengthy introduction, chapters that cover “Music and Religion after Reconstruction,” “Gospel as Women’s Missionary Work,” “The Grassroots Campaign for the Gospel (also deals with The Church and Entrepreneurs),” “Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Gospel and Popular Culture,” and “Gospel in the Postwar Era.” An impressive section of beautiful illustrations and photographs adds an unusually enriching dimension the study along with an extensive epilogue and well-crafted bibliography.\(^ {21}\)


Mark Burford has written *Mahalia Jackson And The Black Gospel Field* for the Oxford University Press in 2019. Nearly a half century after her death in 1972, Mahalia Jackson remains one of the most esteemed figures in black gospel music history. Born in the backstreets of New Orleans in 1911, Jackson joined the Great Migration to Chicago during the Great Depression, where she became a highly regarded church singer and, by the mid-fifties, a coveted recording artist for Apollo and Columbia Records. She is to this day still considered by many the "World's Greatest Gospel Singer."\(^{22}\)

A remarkable three volume collection edited by Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley provides more than 80 articles on *Hymns and Hymnody: Historical and Theological Introductions*. Volume Three of the collection, *From the English West to the Global South*, includes an engaging chapter entitled, *African American Sacred Music and Black Hymnody* by Stephen M. Newby, Jocelyn Russell Wallace and Vernon M. Whaley. The chapter provides a historical overview of sacred music and black hymnody, an acknowledgement of the Anglo-American and British hymn traditions on sacred black hymnody, a thorough overview of the African American folk song (including spirituals and early gospel), the theological emphasis of the literature, list of influencing African American denominations and a comprehensive list of composers and performers of early Black hymnody. A list of the publications making contribution is grouped according denominational preference, including, but not limited to: African American Methodist-Episcopal Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church National Baptist Convention, and Church of God in Christ.\(^{23}\)


James McCray wrote an article for *The Diapason* entitled, "*The Evolution of American Choral Music: Roots, Trends, And Composers Before The 20th Century,*" in 2011.24 This is a scholarly document that puts into context many of the contributions African American composers, writers and musicians have made to the evolution of American choral music. McCray from Colorado State University in Fort Collins after more than 40 years of teaching. He also served a two-year term as the lead editor for The Choral Journal, the official publication of the American Choral Director’s Association.

Adriane Thompson-Bradshaw wrote "*The impact of race on perceptions of authenticity in the delivery and reception of African American gospel music*" in 2014 to fulfill dissertation requirements for the Ph.D. degree at Bowling Green State University.25 The section on balancing the purposes of Gospel Choir in the Black church is especially appropriate for this study and on establishing an awareness the impact religion on the music people perform.

**Research Related to Gospel Choir in Music Education**

*Music, Education and Diversity: Bridging Cultures and Communities* is an informative book written by Patricia Shehan Campbell for Teachers College Press that describes the emergence, development and growth of music education in and for diverse communities. According to the publication, the late 19th and early 20th Centuries saw choral music make minor inroads as a secondary school venture in elementary schools.26 During this period, schools and classes began using Schubert, Brahms, and Wagner music as a primary teaching tool in the

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“regular, non-music classroom.” This book is valuable to this study in that it provides documentation of collaborative efforts in music and education intersect in the culture.

*Gospel Music: An African American Art Form* by Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman is a book designed for the general reader of gospel music, as well as those who incorporate gospel into their lesson plans on the academic level. *Gospel Music: An African American Art Form* provides music information on the heritage of gospel from its African roots, Negro spirituals, traditional and contemporary gospel music trends. According to the author, “The mission and purpose of this book is to provide a framework of study of gospel music, which is in the mainstream of other music genres.”

The book is divided into eight sections, appendices and resources on gospel music including: 1) African Roots and Characteristics and history, 2) Negro Spirituals, 3) Black Congregational Singing, 4) Gospel History and Movement, 5) Gripping Effects of Gospel; 6) Youth in Gospel, 7) Gospel Music in the Academic Curriculum and 8) Lesson plans, which include 14 mini-lessons for classroom use. This 152-page book provides invaluable primary research information this thesis, including a model for developing a pedagogical approach to teaching gospel choir.

Craig Resta’s *Looking Back to Move Forward: Charles Fowler and His Reconstructionist Philosophy of Music Education* demonstrates how the reconstructionist philosophy of music education in American schools impacted the schools, learners, surrounding communities, and society in general. The book provides significant knowledge on the new ways

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in which the US educational centers may influence music innovation outside of the mainstream traditional classroom.28

Craig Resta has written *Valuing Music in Education: A Charles Fowler Reader* in 2017 for Oxford University Press as a tool for those seeking to include an “honest approach” music education in the mainstream classroom. Divided into five sections, the book deals with areas critical to education practice and student learning: 1) Music Pedagogy and Schooling; Advocacy and Arts Education Policy; 3) Art Culture and Community; 4) Music Education and Professional Reform; and, 5) Diversity and Pluralism in Art Education. Although highly ideological in its approach to music methodology, the book does provide insight into how gospel choir may be used in the mainstream classroom in creative and innovative ways.29

Linda B. Walker wrote, "Developing a Gospel Choir," as a short article for the *Music Educator's Journal* to discuss gospel choir development in colleges and university music programs and high and middle schools. According to Walker, 95% of all the music students in American schools will become a part of some type of performing ensembles.30 The article provides data and much needed precedent for the use of gospel choir in music education during the late 1960s and the 1970s.

According to David McKay’s article, "Performance of William Billings’ Music," different people played vital roles in forming diverse gospel choirs. William Billings was the first tutor to include the Stoughton Musical Society in 1786, which later became one of the oldest choral

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societies in the US. The article offers vital information on the formation of choir in America and the contribution the Old Stoughton Musical Society had in establishing choral traditions in the American school system.

In Myron L. Pope and Cynthia Moore’s article, "The Afro-American Gospel Choir: Achieving a Positive Campus Climate for African American Students," published by the College Student Affairs Journal Volume 24, no. 1 of The University of Alabama in 2004, documents how the university's gospel choir emerged as a small group of 12 African American learners who received sponsorships from the Afro-American association in 1971. The authors discuss the affirming nature of Gospel Choir on the college campus for both black and non-black students. Fifteen students, former members of the Gospel Choir, were interviewed. The interviews had three purposes: (a) to understand the reasons students elected to become involved in the choir, (b) to identify the personal gains that the former members perceived as a result of being involved in the choir, and (c) to determine former members' perceptions of the benefit of the choir to the Africa America student population and the campus as a whole. Student engagement in gospel choir concerts and events demonstrates the positive impacts on the student's lives, including students joining the gospel choir because of the repertoire’s innately positive message, better achievement of social needs, positive learning environment, cultural competence, high energy performance practices and loving community. The article is a significant resource for this thesis in that it provides credible information about the important role gospel choir in music education.

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Terrell Strayhorn wrote an article in 2011 for the *Journal of College Student Development*, entitled: "Singing in a foreign land: An exploratory study of gospel choir participation among African American undergraduates at a predominantly White institution" to discuss some of the benefits of engaging in gospel choir within “the learning institution.” According to the study, Strayhorn discovered that the practice of singing gospel choir improved the participant's sense of ethnic identity. The article offers reliable data on the importance of gospel choir within the learning institutions, including acquiring multicultural awareness and identity expression.

Patrick M. Jones’ article, "Returning music education to the mainstream: Reconnecting with the community," for *Visions of Research in Music Education* provides an overview of music educator’s role within the local culture and population in which they serve. As related to this thesis project, it is a compelling read and provides a comprehensive framework for making application of Gospel Choir Ensemble to the local community.

Despite the advancements in a gospel choir and music education in the United States, Jones Patrick notes some of the discrepancies in music education in his article "Returning music education to the mainstream: Reconnecting with the community." According to the report, many American schools experience a musical disconnect with the surrounding community. Many schools in the US offer different ensembles like show choirs, football marching bands, spring basketball band clubs, the yearly production of Broadway ensembles, and big band jazz ensembles. However, the American learning institutions limit the opportunity to perform in the choirs to the selected few students. The article will enlighten the researcher on music education.

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in the US Educational system and some of the significant drawbacks to integrating the subject into the curriculum.

John Ogasapian wrote and published a book in 2007, *Church Music In America 1620-2000*, for the Mercer University Press of Macon, Georgia. Ogasapian discusses how different faiths have influenced and even woven their traditions into the fabric of one another's worship practices even as they competed for converts in the free market of American religion. This overview traces the musical practices of several of those groups from their arrival on these shores up to the present, and the way in which those practices and traditions influenced each other, leading to the diverse and multi-hued pattern that is American church music at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Non-technical in tone and nature, there are no musical examples, and the musical descriptions are clear and concise. The author makes this history of American church music an unusually fascinating and challenging subject, if for no other reason than because of the variety of diverse religious groups.

Sharon Young wrote an article for the *Western Journal for Black Studies* in 2005, “*Purposes of gospel choirs and ensembles in state-supported colleges and universities.*” The article explains how the gospel choir role in the American educational system is often based on the perceived function of the university environment.

Andrew Legg and Stewart C. Long created and filmed a documentary in 2015, "*Journey: The Southern Gospel Choir in the USA,*" for ABC television’s “Compass Program.” Legg and

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36 Sharon Young. “*Purposes of gospel choirs and ensembles in state-supported colleges and universities.*” *Western Journal of Black Studies 29, no.4* (2005), p. 55  
37 Andrew Legg and Stewart C. Long., "*Journey: The Southern Gospel Choir in the USA*" film documentary for ABC TV. Research supervision was by digital Kitchen and first screened in December 2015, it slated for broadcast and then distribution by the ABC through its Compass program in April 2016. p. 89.
Long’s research dealt with the *transculturalisation* of African American gospel music into the *Australian context*. This documentary film, co-produced by Legg, Long and Digital Kitchen, documents the (1) Southern Gospel Choir tour in the USA; and, (2) key elements of the effect of the cultural exchange experience. The documentary also demonstrates audience reaction and responses to the Southern Gospel Choir performances. Skillfully augmented by original compositions, underpinning research findings provides a strong narrative to support the research. Published by digital Kitchen and first screened in December 2015, it was slated for broadcast and then distribution by the ABC through its Compass program in April 2016.

Marcus Harrison. *The Impact of Gospel Choir Participation on the Social Integration and Persistence of African-American Students*. A 2015 dissertation submitted to the faculty at Wilmington University, it is in partial fulfillment of the degree, Doctor of Education (EdD) in Innovation and Leadership. The study is based on and in response to a 2010 research project finding that "57% of all students who enroll in four-year, nonprofit colleges earn diplomas within six years...[while] 40% of African-American students graduate in six years."

Harrison concludes that “for years, colleges and universities throughout the nation have grappled with finding effective strategies for assisting African-American students with their persistence in an effort to close the graduation gap.”38 One such strategy is the use of student organizations. A replication of a study completed in 2008, this inquiry delved into the impact gospel choir participation has on the social integration, persistence, and graduation of African-American students at West Chester University, a medium-size east coast predominantly White institution (PWI).

Harrison used a mixed method approach to data collection via an online survey-questionnaire followed by structured focus group discussions. The study included 77 currently enrolled gospel choir members, as well as alumni who had graduated from the institution between 2003 and 2013. Currently enrolled members of the gospel choir and alumni, alike, emphasized the positive impact their gospel choir participation had on their comfort and connection to the university community. Ultimately, the study revealed the gospel choir is an effective vehicle for fostering positive social integration for African-Americans at the institution.39

“Lift Every Voice and Sing: A Gospel Choir Participation Experience and the Persistence of African American Students at a Predominately White University” is a dissertation submitted by Kahan Sablo to the School of Graduate Studies and Research at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in August 2008 in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree. “This study concluded that gospel choir participation decreased feelings of marginalization and enhanced feelings of social integration.” Sablo encourages predominately White universities (PWI) to consider college-level gospel choirs as an additional resource when attempting to positively impact African American student persistence at a PWIs.40

Andrew Legg and Carolyn Philpott wrote an article, "An analysis of performance practices in African American gospel music: rhythm, lyric treatment and structures in improvisation and accompaniment," for Popular music in 2015. A major driving purpose of this research was to study the impact of African American gospel music outside its originating culture.

39Ibid.
According to Legg and Philpott, African American gospel music is a unique and distinctive idiom that has had a pervasive influence upon the development of contemporary popular music. While there are now many sources available on African American gospel music, the focus of the vast majority of these studies is on the sociological, historical and stylistic aspects of the genre, rather than on identifying and codifying specific musical characteristics and performance practices.

The Legg and Philpott paper extends the discussion of gospel singing techniques originally written by Andrew Legg in a January 29, 2010 article ‘A taxonomy of musical gesture in African American gospel music’ for Popular Music. By examining some of the key performance practices associated with rhythm and lyric treatment in African American gospel music, as well as common structures in gospel music improvisation and accompaniment, the authors are able to document performance practice techniques inherent within the genre itself.41

Research Related to Gospel Choir Pedagogy

A field experience workbook, "Becoming a Choral Music Teacher A Field Experience Workbook" and written by Randall Wolfe, offers a comprehensive and thorough overview of teaching choral music strategies at the secondary school level. According to Wolfe, “gospel choirs learn their music through listening, enhancing the learner's oral skills.”42 The workbook provides a paradigm model teaching gospel choirs in most American elementary and secondary schools.


42 Wolfe, Randall. "Becoming a Choral Music Teacher (A Field Experience Workbook)." The Choral Journal 52, no. 8 (2012): 64. P.158
In her article "Developing a Gospel Choir," Linda Walker stresses the importance of using rote learning, notation, or both. According to Walker, “notes and musical expression, joined with rote note learning, are essential teaching pedagogy for the gospel choir. “The article provides opportunity to analyze rote learning as a possible method in teaching gospel choir in American learning institutions.”

In her 2018 master’s thesis, "Culturally Relevant Choral Music Pedagogy and Student Feedback" to the Loyola University of Chicago, Theoni Richardson stresses the importance of culturally relevant choral music pedagogy. The article is an informative work that emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant choral music pedagogy with teachers' culturally diverse gospel choir members. The report provides insight into how music teachers’ attitudes towards ethnically diverse students, learners' music preferences, approaches to teaching multicultural music, and the connection between music and home culture specifically affect gospel choir teaching pedagogy.

Sarah Kathleen Arthur wrote a thesis in 2004, "Sound of Praise": Reflexive Ethnopedology and Two Gospel Choirs in Tallahassee, Florida," in partial fulfillment for the Master of Music degree at Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida. This thesis is a groundbreaking ethnomusicological study of gospel music as performed and experienced by the Florida State University Gospel Choir and the Youth, Collegiate, and Young Adult Choir at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Tallahassee, Florida.

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It is Sarah Arthur’s belief that Gospel music has become an increasingly important form of artistic expression for understanding the roots of American music. According to Arthur, it has unfortunately been marginalized as an area of study in universities and colleges for decades. This thesis emphasizes gospel music as a musical genre worthy of study in educational institutions.

Arthur believes, “Its rich history, cultural significance, and pedagogical value make it an important part of American music.” This thesis also explores how the ethnomusicological study of pedagogy in culture, or what Arthur calls ethnopedology, provides a deeper understanding of the gospel music tradition and culture. This thesis also explores how the ethnomusicological study of pedagogy in culture, or what Arthur calls ethnopedology, provides a deeper understanding of the gospel music tradition and culture provides educators, choral directors, and ethnomusicologists with a resource for teaching African American gospel music traditions. Arthur is hopeful her thesis will serve as a model for ethnopedology and its applicability to the social sciences.45

Shelley Braxton has written an article for the 2019 edition of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72, no. 1. Entitled, "Analyzing Gospel," the article presents an analytical paradigm that employs the repetitive musical cycle known as “the vamp” to illuminate the interrelation of form, experience, and meaning in African American gospel music, focusing on music performed by gospel choirs with soloists. The author argues that, more than just a ubiquitous musical procedure, the gospel vamp functions as a ritual technology, a resource many African American Christians use to experience with their bodies what they believe in their hearts. As they perform and perceive the gospel vamp's characteristic combination of repetition and escalation,

these believers coproduce sonic environments that facilitate the communal experience of a given song's textual message.

Braxton uses a close readings of four canonical songs from the gospel choir repertoire—Kurt Carr's “For Every Mountain,” Brenda Joyce Moore's “Perfect Praise,” Richard Smallwood's “I Will Sing Praises,” and Thomas Whitfield's “I Shall Wear a Crown”—as source material for examining the phenomenological implications of gospel's communal orientation, outline the relationship between musical syntax, musical experience, formal convention and lyrical content in this genre. The author suggests that analyzing gospel offers a way of studying how many black Christians come into contact with the invisible subjects of their belief.46 This article will be especially helpful as a pedagogical need for Gospel Choir is established for this study.

Paris Django, and H. Samy Ali wrote for the Harvard Educational Review an article entitled, "What are We Seeking to Sustain Through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy?" The article stresses the importance of culturally sustaining teaching pedagogy from culturally diverse gospel choirs toward use of the choir in music education.47 Django and Ali explain how the use of a “gospel teaching pedagogy” can promote student-centered learning, curriculum amendment, learning within the cultural contexts, and culturally mediated instruction.

Vicki R. Lind and Constance McKoy stress the importance of using culturally responsive teaching pedagogy in gospel student choir in America. In their book " Culturally Responsive Teaching in Music Education: From Understanding to Application," Their position is that “offering music lessons in culturally-based musical knowledge, skills, strengths, and addressing

student interests improves the students' experiences at school.\textsuperscript{48} This resource provides much needed support the notion that students learn better when they clearly understand educational goals as applied to individual aspirations and personal skill competences.

Margaret Dilling highlights how most teaching pedagogies for gospel choirs in most learning environments in her article, "Living the life we sing about: A gospel choir challenges academe," in the College Music Society’s 1995 edition of The College Music Symposium. Dilling addresses some of the challenges in teaching gospel choir that threaten the grading and crediting of music students, mostly due to an inability to use the existing patterns of measuring academic achievement.\textsuperscript{49} The article provides broader insight as to how the previous musical experience (history) establishes a basis for modern teaching approaches in music education.

Robert Cutietta’s book, Strategies for Teaching Specialized Ensembles, provides a series of lectures, articles and lessons on the teaching of choir in the public-school system. The book is an informative work that helps music teachers implement and integrate the K-12 national music standards and MENC's Prekindergarten Standards into a gospel choir pedagogy.\textsuperscript{50}

Patrice E. Turner’s article for Music Educator’s Journal, "Getting Gospel Going"\textsuperscript{51} offers a brief history of gospel music, reviews religious music in schools, shares her experiences, and presents tips for singing and teaching gospel music that will be helpful for the choral music educator seeking to find an introduction to Gospel Music Ensemble pedagogy resource.

\textsuperscript{48}Vicki R. Lind and Constance McKoy. Culturally Responsive Teaching in Music Education: From Understanding to Application. Routledge, 2016. P.89

Crystal Yvonne Sellers’ *I Sing Because I’m Free: Developing a Systematic Vocal Pedagogy for the Modern Gospel Singer* is a well written, carefully researched Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) document presented to the Graduate School of The Ohio State University in 2009. Sellers’ emphasis on and documentation vocal health issues surrounding the African American vocalist makes this an unusually valuable resource for this study.

Katherine A. Barone wrote an article, *"Issues in Pluralism - A Unique Gospel Choir's Experience,"* for the *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice*. The article reassures readers of the unique role Gospel Choir has in building consensus among various ethnic people groups at Lesley University, a non-sectarian liberal arts institution in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Patrice Elizabeth Turner. “Mentoring Music Educators in Gospel Music Pedagogy in the Classroom” is a dissertation written in fulfillment for the requirements of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) at Teachers College of Columbia University in New York City. The author argues that “since the early 20th century, gospel music has become increasingly popular in the United States. The popularity is making it appealing to perform in public schools. However, many choral and general music educators did not experience the tradition during their formative years and/or have not received training or background in its instruction.” The purpose of this collective

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The case study was twofold: (1) to document the experiences of three music educators who were learning about and teaching gospel music to their students for the first time and (2) to reveal characteristics of the mentoring process related to the needs of these teachers and their diverse music education settings. The study's conclusion found that teachers with varied backgrounds were able to teach this style in an authentic way by calling upon their strengths as music educators. Music educators encountered challenges with teaching religious music in secular school settings and were able to negotiate these challenges in a variety of ways.

Leo H. Davis, Jr. wrote an article, “The Spiritual Arrangement Since 1999 and its Use in Contemporary Worship” for inclusion in James Abington’s Readings in African American Church Music, Volume 2. The article is one of the well-researched, exceptionally well written documents dealing with sacred music practices in the Black church. This article specifically outlines the use of the “Concert Spiritual” in various contemporary liturgies. Davis’ article is a helpful in establishing the role and use of “the spiritual” as a tool for establishing the need to build a pedagogy for Gospel Music Ensemble.

Dr. Donna Mary Schaffer has written an exceptionally well researched work, “An Introductory Pedagogy of Gospel Music for the Choral Conductor,” as part of her doctoral document submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Music and in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) at the University of South Carolina.

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57 Schaffer, Donna Mary. “An Introductory Pedagogy of Gospel Music for the Choral Conductor.” A doctoral research document submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) at the University of South Carolina. Columbia, SC. 2018.
Southern and Horace Clarence Boyer provide a rich reservoir from which to draw profound and deeply meaningful historical evidence of Gospel Music’s evolution into mainstream American culture. Her chapter four provides a helpful and concise guide to gospel music which provides opportunity for performers to more consistently engage in the material. Through a thorough examination of select gospel music repertoire, Shaffer provides “information on the performance practice, including choral tone required and how to approach it with a healthy vocal technique.”

Dr. Shaffer’s work is especially beneficial in providing much needed data and materials for chapter five of this author’s Doctor of Music Education thesis project, “The Need for Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy.”
Chapter 3: 
Historical Precedent and Need for Gospel Choir in America

This chapter provides A Historical Precedent of and need for “Gospel Choir in America” including: Introductory remarks, a survey of African American Sacred Song Prior to 1850, African American Sacred Song from 1850 – 1910, Gospel Choir from 1910 – 1970, Gospel Choir from 1970 – 2000, Gospel Choir from 2000 – 2020 and a brief wrap-up conclusion. This chapter is a historical survey of the general trends in African American song, including gospel choir, over the last two centuries.

There is no intention for this thesis, or for this chapter, to be a comprehensive account of the deep and rich history of Gospel Choir in America. Rather, the chapter establishes premise upon which need for Gospel Choir’s inclusion in music education may be established.

Introduction

African American Gospel music is a form of rhythmic and spiritual music that builds its foundation on the solo and responsive church singing. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman “sets the table” and establishes perspective for a unique and meaningful discussion about Gospel Music:

African American Music, often referred to as Afro-American Music, consists of all music of African descent: spirituals, blues, rhythm and blues, ragtime, jazz, gospel, rap, hip-hop, and other emerging forms by Africans and African Americans in the diaspora. ... Throughout all African American music, the characteristics such as syncopation, cross-rhythms, call and response, improvisation and other African elements of music are infiltrated. These elements will perhaps be present in music throughout the coming decades.

Gospel music as a choral genre dates back to the pre-eighteenth century singing, adopted in schools. They include African American Folk songs. African American folk song incorporates the pre-spiritual songs that the black community sang before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, individuals in the church embraced singing songs of Watts, Wesley, Doddridge and Newton.

**African American Sacred Song Prior to 1850**

*The African American Folk Song* includes the early, “pre-spirituals” sung and embraced by the Black community before 1700 and on up and through the early 1800s. The *Folk Songs* are much more personal in character and include “chants for deliverance,” musical expressions of hope and religious melodies that the African American sang in the cotton and tobacco farmlands of the South. These songs were sung to invented meters and creative harmonies. They were usually “lined out” by a leader and sung by the congregation. They were more often slow, mournful, and plaintive. Their beauty is seen and felt in the unsophisticated and primitive nature of the songs themselves coupled with lyrics often based on eighteenth century English hymnists.

By the year 1740, individuals embraced folk spirituals that were sung by different congregations. There was the use of instruments, predetermined harmony, foot-stomping, call and response, heterophonic, demonstrative behavior, and handclapping singing. The performance of folk spirituals incorporated conducting the singing in the “invisible churches and praise houses” of enslaved African Christians. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman elaborates:

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62 Ibid.
The origin and development of the spirituals, stemming from Africans brought to America, are great creations of musical instincts and talents. These songs are handed down from generation to generation via oral tradition. In various studies of the spirituals, it was determined that the earlier ones were built upon the form so common to African songs known as “call and response.” . . . The majority of the spirituals that we know today are those stemming from slavery as blacks reached the shores of America. However, it has been established that this was, by no means the beginning of this music, which expressed the Black man’s total crucial experiences.

It was in 1787, in response to acts of discrimination in the St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church at Philadelphia, PA, that Richard Allen led Blacks to establish the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Allen became the pastor and established a form of worship passing on the cultural preference of his African American congregation. In 1801, Allen published the first hymnal exclusively to and for black worshipers. This hymnal was modified from that required by the (White) Methodist Episcopal by:

- Replac[ing] complex words and phrases with simpler ones so that the songs “would have more meaning for the illiterate worshippers” in his congregation. He added repetitive refrain lines and choruses to the orthodox hymns. This new text, easily memorized by members who could not read, was sung after each verse. By making these textual changes, Allen insured the complete participation of all church members in the worship.

The “camp meeting songs,” an outgrowth of the Great Awakening of 1800, had an important influence on Black sacred music. They promoted a new type of congregational singing. Significant to the “Camp Meetings” is that worship services were often integrated with blacks singing and worshiping along-side of white believers.

The emotional nature and informal structure of The Camp Meetings provided opportunity for Blacks to worship with freedom seldom tolerated by the Anglican clergy. Large numbers of blacks, including slaves and freedmen, attended The Camp Meetings. Spontaneous singing and

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63 Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 9
outward testimony of a personal encounter with God gave platform for the creation of a style of adulation unique to the Black community. Songs and hymns often took on a call-response form. At other times, worshipers followed traditional verse-chorus structure. Whatever the form of communication, expressions of faith were deep and genuine. Often, at the conclusion of a Camp Meeting service, Blacks continued to sing until the early morning hours. Eileen Southern credits the Second Awakening (also called The Camp Meetings) for the birth of the Spiritual:

They were singing songs of their own composing . . . . The texts of the composed songs were not lyric poems in the hallowed tradition of Watts, but a stringing together of isolated lines from prayers, the Scriptures, and orthodox hymns [with] the addition of choruses and . . . refrains between verses . . . . Nevertheless from such practices emerged a new kind of religious song that became the distinctive badge of the camp meeting movement . . . . Song leaders added choruses and refrains to the official hymns . . . . They introduced new songs with repetitive and catch tunes. Spontaneous songs were composed on the spot . . . . The new songs were called “spiritual songs” as distinguished from the hymns and psalms.

The folk-music style of the Camp Meetings, combined with texts expressing personal faith in God, helped shape a sacred music style, which eventually became a precursor of gospel music. From 1840 onwards, new songs emerged and assimilated into the various camp meeting celebrations, the 1820 American Sunday school revival, the prayer revival of 1868 and the city revivals of 1880-1900. These revival songs led to the promotion of evangelical theology through children’s music and songs for the people.

African American Sacred Song 1850 - 1900

Close to the end of the Civil War and on into the years of reconstruction and emancipation, spirituals and “heart song” reflecting the soul, struggle, and profoundly spiritual

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65 Portia K. Maultsby. 82.
journey of the African-American people become a more prominent, dynamic part of Black Church liturgy. Gospel Choir itself is a product of the African-American spirituals and hymnody of the mid-19th century.68

Additionally, The Concert Spiritual, sometimes called “the arranged spiritual,” was introduced in 1871 by the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Nashville, Tennessee and directed by Mr. George White. Jerma Jackson explains the significance of this phenomena in Singing in My Soul: Gospel Music in a Secular Age:

In the 1870s, newly opened Fisk University achieved worldwide renown with the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a group of well-trained performers who toured the Northeast and Great Britain. Their concerts featured temperance songs, operatic arias, and parlor tunes as well as a group slavery-era spiritual that had been rearranged according to the principles of Western classical music. . . . but, the arrangements used tradition, and the spirituals’ origins in slavery highlighted the accomplishments of a distinctly black culture. The enthusiasm the Fisk Jubilee Singers generated, for example, led composer Antonin Dvorak to point specifically to the spirituals as the bedrock for a distinctive American music: “These beautiful and varied themes are the product of the soil. They are American. They are the folksongs of America, and your composers must turn to them. In the Negro melodies of America, I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music.”69

The Concert Spirituals were hugely successful. They introduced to the mainline church and Europe and choral community songs like “Walk Together, Children,” “Roll, Jordan Roll,” “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” “Ride On, King Jesus,” and others. Many scholars, especially those based in Western European communities, readily acknowledged the contribution of “spiritual” to choral music repertoire and adopted the

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use of the genre as a sort of “black hymnody,” characterized by a solo song or solo followed by with a refrain sung by choir.  

The periods between 1850 and 1910 were characterized by three gospel music sub-genres in the American church. What unites these three genres is the gospel lyric, usually finding origin from The Psalms and New Testament passages. These gospel music genres most often incorporate traditional, southern, and African American gospel music:

*Traditional “Northern” Gospel Music* - Traditional gospel music emerged from the German art song, which usually included a verse (or stanza) followed by a chorus (or refrain), with less emphasis on the rhythm. Harmonically based on the European practice of using intervals of the third and sixths, significant composers of this music genre were Fanny Crosby, Ralph E. Hudson, and Philip Bliss.

*Southern Gospel Music* - Southern gospel music emerged from the fa-sol-la singing school tradition, prevalent in Appalachia, Mid-Western, and rural Southern America.

*African American Gospel Music* – According to the Library of Congress website, “African American Gospel music is a form of euphoric, rhythmic, spiritual music rooted in the solo and responsive church singing of the African American South. Its development coincided with -- and is germane to -- the development of rhythm and blues.”

According to Dr. Crystal Yvonne Sellers in her DMA document for The Ohio State University:

The earliest form of Gospel music is known as congregational music. This music was composed so that everyone could participate in the church service. The music still followed the verse/refrain structure of earlier hymns, but the lyrics changed to

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address the needs and concerns felt by the people at that time, which were unfair
treatment, scorn, ridicule and survival. The music also provided a soundtrack to
an energetic, participatory worship. 72

By the beginning of the 1900s, colleges, churches, factories, and social clubs had their
own Jubilee Quartets specializing in a cappella performances and tight harmonies. Jubilee
singing was the most lasting trend prevalent in African American sacred music during this
period. 73

The Gospel Song as a facilitator of Biblical theology and Christian doctrine may be
traced to the 1904-1907 Los Angeles Azusa Street Revival. The Azusa Street Revival meetings
were characterized by racially integrated audiences participating in unrestrained preaching,
healings, speaking in tongues, and singing. Their music was based on the gospel song tradition of
Ira Sankey and D.L. Moody and performed with handclapping, bodily movement, shouts, and
ornamentation of the melody. African-Americans made up a large part of the Azusa Street
Revival movement’s new followers and encouraged a style of church music that allowed
expression of personal feelings and experience. 74

Gospel Choir from 1900 – 1970

According to Dr. Raymond Wise, author of Defining African American Gospel Music by
Tracing its Historical and Musical Development from 1900 to 2000, the early musical influences
on Gospel music were the “Blues,” “Jazz,” “White Hymnody,” Black Hymnody” and
“Spirituals.” 75 Dr. Wise suggests that there are three Gospel musical eras from 1900 -1970:
The

72 Crystal Yvonne Sellers. I Sing Because I’m Free: Developing a Systematic Vocal Pedagogy for the
Modern Gospel Singer. DMA Document presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Doctor
of Music Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University. 2009. 18.
73 Ibid, 1.
75 Raymond Wise, Defining African American Gospel Music by Tracing its Historical and Musical
Congregational era (1900-1920), the Traditional era (1920-1960) and the Contemporary era (1960-1980).\textsuperscript{76}

The beginning of 1910 and on into the late 1920s, Gospel music emerged through a “Black Hymnody style” through the coalescing of three types of musical activity:

1) \textit{The Gospel Hymn Style} of Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933) a “Philadelphia minister who composed hymns based on the negro spiritual, adding instrumental accompaniments, improvisation and ‘bluesified’ third and seventh intervals.” In addition to Charles Tindley, Charles Harrison Mason,\textsuperscript{77} Charles Price, James Weldon Johnson, John Johnson, Jennie Wilson, F.L. Eiland, Thomas A. Dorsey, and Cleavant Derricks, among others, gave birth to a new hymnody; often infused with and harmonically based on “the blues;”\textsuperscript{78}

2) “\textit{The minimalistic, solo-sung "rural Gospel" tunes that appeared as a counterpart to the rural blues; and,}"

3) \textit{The uninhibited, exuberant worship style of the Holiness-Pentecostal branch of the Christian church.”}\textsuperscript{79}

Jerma Jackson explains the significance of this “new way of expressing worship” in \textit{Singing in My Soul: Gospel Music in a Secular Age:}

Members of the Church of God in Christ regarded music as an extension of worship. . . the emphasis on spiritual gifts, including music, persisted over generations. “The Lord gives each person some kind of gift.”. He gives some the

\textsuperscript{76} Dr. Wise continues by suggesting that two more eras may be defined: \textbf{1980s-1990s is “the Word/Ministry era” and 1990s-2000s is “the Urban Crossover era”} and while the time frames encompass when the eras might began and progresses into the years of their highest popularity, each era may also be extended to present day practices because music from each of these eras are still composed and performed frequently.

\textsuperscript{77} According to Dr. Crystal Yvonne Sellers: \textit{“The leading composers of this music were three ministers: Charles Tindley of the United Methodist Church, as well as Charles Price Jones and Charles Mason, co-founders of the earliest and largest of the Pentecostal denominations, The Church of God in Christ. Some of their most noted compositions were —We’ll Understand it Better By and By, —Stand by Me, and —I Shall Overcome, which inspired the Civil Rights anthem —We Shall Overcome. These compositions were the foundation of what would later become Gospel music.”} Sellers. \textit{I Sing Because I’m Free: Developing a Systematic Vocal Pedagogy for the Modern Gospel Singer}. 18.

\textsuperscript{78} https://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/ritual-and-worship/african-american-gospel

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
gift of smiling, some the gift of talking soothingly to people, some the gift of praying, some the gift of preaching . . . and, some the gift of singing.
The close relationship between music and worship reflected how members of the Church of God in Christ regarded religion as a corporeal experience in which the physical and emotional reinforced each other. As parishioners spoke in tongues, considered the most sacred divine gift, they made external an experience that was private and internal and in the process helped generate a community. . . . As believers consecrated their bodies to God and celebrated God’s presence, they also moved away from the a cappella singing that characterized vernacular music during slavery. Music served as both a vehicle for religious fellowship and an arena for individual expression. . . . Over time, personal testimony [like many given in 1907 at the Azusa Street Meetings] became a formal part of worship.80

During and near the end of this period, there was a great migration of Black populations from the rural to urban communities of Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, New York City, Kansas City and Boston. These faithful worshipers brought with them a love for and appreciation of a new kind of music, the gospel song.81

A key figure in the development of Gospel was Thomas A. Dorsey (1899 -1993). Referred to today as the father of Gospel Music, Dorsey pioneered the form in Chicago. Before devoting his career to the development of Gospel, Dorsey, the son of a Georgia Baptist preacher, was a prolific blues and jazz composer and pianist. The energetic rhythms and primal growls of secular music heavily influenced Dorsey's sacred composing style.82

“From its beginnings, Gospel music challenged the existing church establishment. Black religious leaders originally rejected Dorsey's approach because of its associations with the widely frowned-upon secular music styles of the era such as ragtime, blues, and jazz.”83 Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillman, author of the landmark volume Gospel Music: An African American Art

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82 Ibid.
Form, spoke fondly describes the composer’s influence: “Dorsey planted the gospel seed for others to follow and spread the gospel around the country and around the world.”

*Early Gospel Music, Choir, Quartet and Radio* - The radio has been a powerful platform in expressing different forms of gospel choirs. Thomas Dorsey, together with vocalist Mahalia Jackson (1912 - 1972) bypassed the establishment and took their new Gospel sound to the street corners of Chicago and elsewhere around the country. Jackson sang Dorsey's songs on radio, on the street corner, and in any church that would allow them to perform while the composer sold copies of his sheet music during breaks.

Lucie Campbell, “long considered the mother of black Baptist hymnody” and Rev. W. Herbert Brewster are important influences in Dorsey’s life. Campbell compiled music for the Baptist Convention and provided Dorsey a platform for his growing Gospel music repertoire. W. Herbert Brewster wrote songs for Mahalia Jackson and a growing number of developing radio artists and performing groups, including, but not limited to: Rosetta Tharpe, Clara Ward, Willie Mae Ford Smith.

The radio also provides a platform through which individuals hear gospel music from different backgrounds. Dorsey and Jackson had both been reared in the Baptist Church and the sounds of blues artists like Bessie Smith and Sallie Martin.

Nearly a half century after her death in 1972, Mahalia Jackson remains one of the most esteemed figures in black gospel music history. Born in the backstreets of New Orleans in 1911, Jackson joined the “Great Migration” to Chicago during the Great Depression, where she became a highly regarded church singer and, by the mid-fifties, a coveted recording artist for Apollo and

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Columbia Records. She is to this day still considered by many the "World's Greatest Gospel Singer." Together, Dorsey and Jackson “blazed a trail” for Gospel music’s acceptance by the mainstream entertainment industry that remains unrivaled by any other singer or practitioner of Gospel music.

Dorsey and Martin helped facilitate the organization of Gospel Choir in churches and local ministries. Eventually, Dorsey and Jackson's vision spread through their alliance with a few likeminded musical pioneers to form the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses, which thrives today. Dr. Crystal Sellars explains:

Along with Sallie Martin and Willie Mae Ford Smith, he [Dorsey] founded the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses (NCGCC) in 1931. This organization provided a meeting ground for choirs and soloists from around the country to learn about, exchange ideas and further perfect the Gospel singing style. The NCGCC helped to create a uniform sound associated with Gospel singing. During this time music was primarily distributed as sheet music rather than through recordings. This convention provided composers with an opportunity to distribute their music on a greater scale as well as a place to have their say in how it was to be performed. Many choirs and groups left the convention with this new music.

According to the Library of Congress Celebrates the Songs of America: African American Gospel article:

During its early development, Gospel music featured simple piano and organ accompaniment. Male vocal quartets were popular, having emerged under the auspices of African American universities like Fisk and Hampton. Originally these groups sang a cappella spirituals, but started switching to the Gospel repertoire in the 1930s. In the 1940s, the quartets often added a fifth singer and guitar accompaniment.

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The period of 1940s and 1950s were associated with the radio bringing new marketing potential to the African American gospel singers. Groups hosted radio programs, advertised music, sold records, and traveled across a “nationwide church performing circuit.

Singers would travel from city to city by car or bus and stay in private homes or rooming houses in order to perform for almost nothing. They worked closely with pastors all over the country, their music becoming a major feature of worship everywhere, bringing joy in hard times and spiritual answers to human needs. The motive wasn’t money. It was ministry.

During this period, many of the singing groups would host radio programs, sell records, and advertise music and travel. Some of the first traveling gospel quartets included groups such as: the Soul Stirrers, Harvey Watkins and the Kansas Spirituals, Lee Williams and the Spiritual Qc’s, Mighty Clouds of Joys, Sam Cooke, Middle Georgia Four, the Williams Brothers, and others.

The exposure provided by the radio and television also aided the African American songwriters. Through these platforms, the gospel quartets could also submit their music to a broader market. They could obtain fresh, creative new sounds and songs to satisfy the newly established commercial audiences. From 1950 forward, there was a rise of song battles in furthering the work of black churches. These acts grew to become a type of “spiritual entertainment” and served as opportunity for musicians to develop individual performance abilities and musical skill. It also enhanced their understanding for and practice of gospel

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91 Ibid, 137. There were hundreds of quartets but, these are perhaps the most well established during this period. In many cases, their groups continue today as family ministries.

92 Ibid.
preaching. In February 1950, such a battle was prevalent among the Humble Gospel Singers, Ever Ready Singers, and Georgia quartets.93

Perhaps the most influential personality teaching and promoting The Gospel Choir Ensemble was James Cleveland. Because of his work with the Gospel Music Workshop, many historians consider Cleveland the “King of Gospel Choir.”94 Dr. Crystal Sellars explains the significance of James Cleveland’s contribution:

Rev. James Cleveland assumed the legacy of Thomas Dorsey, his childhood mentor and teacher. Like Dorsey, he was a choir director, composer and also the founder in 1968 of a Gospel music organization, the Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA). One of Cleveland’s great contributions to Gospel singing was his development of the [gospel choir] as a major performance force, especially in recordings . . . He used his [gospel choirs] to advance the drama of the biblical story he was telling in his compositions. . . . Cleveland’s gravelly baritone voice is easily identified in recordings. He grew up as a boy soprano but as he matured and due to some of his unhealthy vocal and life practices, his voice became low and hoarse. He was a long time smoker and in combination with his excessive use of growls, yells and shouts by the time of his death he suffered severe vocal damage that resulted in significant voice loss.

Various events marked a shift away from strictly church performance toward general acceptance of African-American gospel music by mainstream entertainment. The “cross-over” between Afro-American and white musical styles, especially in the gospel quartet medium, and the exposure provided by radio and television helped African-American song writers get their music to a broader market. In turn, white quartets were able to find fresh, creative new sounds and songs for their own newly established commercial audiences.95

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In 1969, church-centric Gospel Choir Ensemble music began to cross over into the mainstream entertainment industry through the release of a recording by the Edwin Hawkins Singers, “O Happy Day.” The Gospel ensemble, based in the San Francisco Bay area, sang a setting of a mid-eighteenth century English hymn by Phillip Doddridge. The single sold more than a million copies in two months and stayed on the Billboard Top Singles chart for weeks.

**Gospel Choir from 1970 - 2000**

Sometimes called the Modern Gospel Era, this period of Gospel Choir Ensemble development is dominated by artists such as Andrae Crouch, Tremaine Hawkins, Walter Hawkins, Sandra Crouch Richard Smallwood, Bobby Jones, Raymond Wise and the Clark Sisters.

Clergy such as Rev. James Cleveland, Rev. Al Green, Dr. Mattie Moss Clark and Evangelist Shirley Caesar “literally preached their compositions into the hearts of their concert hall congregations.” These leaders saw their mission to spread “gospel music” to mainstream America as “a calling.” Walter Hawkins and André Crouch, in particular, branded an innovation for blending the stylings of pop culture, Jesus Movement and multi-ethnic congregations into their compositions. Gospel music historian Robert Darden describes this timeless canon of Gospel Choir Ensemble repertorie from the west as “religion with rhythm.”

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97 “Oh Happy Day” is a 1967 gospel musical arrangement of an 18th-century hymn by clergyman Philip Doddridge. Recorded by the Edwin Hawkins Singers, it became an international hit in 1969, reaching No. 4 on the US Singles Chart, No. 1 in France, Germany, and the Netherlands and No. 2 on the Canadian Singles Chart, UK Singles Chart, and Irish Singles Chart. It has since become a gospel music standard. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oh_Happy_Day

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya describe the infusion of Gospel Music into mainstream American Culture:

Just as the spirituals were taken outside the formal worship context by the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University to be performed throughout the nation and the world, so it was with [the] gospel[s] brought by performers into the concert halls and recording studios of America. . . . [The Gospel Choir] has not only not only found a place beside concerted spirituals in the otherwise classical repertoire of Black college choirs, but separate gospel choirs also developed and eventually found wide acceptance. . . . Today the Black college that does not have a Black mass choir or some other form of gospel enterprise is the exception rather than the rule. . . . Because gospel has been popularized by college ensembles, students are attracted to those churches in the surrounding community which have contemporary gospel choirs.\(^{100}\)

### Gospel Choir from 2000 – 2020

The inclusion of Gospel Choir as an ensemble experience in college and university settings, state and privately-owned institutions finds broad acceptance. At first, Gospel choir is offered exclusively in the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) settings.\(^{101}\) By 2000, the Gospel choir was introduced as an extra-curricular or intramural elective at most state-owned and private non-black institution. Even so, offering “the Gospel choir” as a “for credit ensemble option” is still not available to students in many institutions.

Students are provided opportunity to engage in choirs from early middle school through high school. Children are able to sing similar repertories to those experienced by the adult Gospel Choir. Often invited to participate by classmates, Gospel Choir Ensemble is opening doors for students to experience multi-ethnic and diverse cultural experience. African American

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\(^{100}\) C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya. 57

\(^{101}\) Howard University Gospel Choir is one of the first HBCU first gospel choirs, Richard Smallwood was an early musician affiliated with this movement. The Black Gospel College Choir Workshop was a major influence, especially with their Annual Thanksgiving Weekend in Atlanta.
gospel choir also has been recognized by some as a significant contributor to early childhood
development,\textsuperscript{102} using Gospel Choir Ensemble to enhance and develop social skills.\textsuperscript{103}

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter provided the “A Historical Precedent of “Gospel Choir in America.” Gospel
music as a choral genre dates back to the pre-eighteenth century singing, adopted in schools.
They include African American Folk songs. African American folk song incorporates the pre-
spiritual songs that the black community sang before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{104}
During this period, individuals in the church embraced singing songs of Watts, Wesley,
Doddridge and Newton.

\textit{African American Sacred Song before 1850 - The Folk Songs} are much more personal in
character and include “chants for deliverance,” musical expressions of hope and religious
melodies that the African American sang in the cotton and tobacco farmlands of the South.
These songs were sung to invented meters and creative harmonies. They were usually “lined out”
by a leader and sung by the congregation. They were more often slow, mournful, and plaintive.
Their beauty is seen and felt in the unsophisticated and primitive nature of the songs themselves
coupled with lyrics often based on eighteenth century English hymnists.\textsuperscript{105} Beginning around

\textsuperscript{102} John Ogasapian, \textit{Church Music In America 1620-2000} (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press,
2007), 1-252.
\textsuperscript{103} Myron L. Pope and Cynthia Moore, "The Afro-American Gospel Choir: Achieving a Positive Campus
\textsuperscript{104} Mark A. Lamport, Benjamin K. Forrest and Vernon M. Whaley, \textit{Hymns and Hymnody: Historical and
Theological Introductions, Volume 3: From the English West to the Global South} (Portland. Wipf and Stock
Publishers, 2019).
1740 emerged the Folk Spiritual. Like The Folk Song,\textsuperscript{106} the Folk Spirituals are communal compositions to be sung by the congregation.

Large numbers of blacks, including slaves and freedmen, attended The Camp Meetings. Spontaneous singing and outward testimony of a personal encounter with God gave platform for the creation of a style of adulation unique to the Black community. Songs and hymns often took on a call-response form. At other times, worshipers followed traditional verse-chorus structure.\textsuperscript{107} Whatever the form of communication, expressions of faith were deep and genuine. Often, at the conclusion of a Camp Meeting service, Blacks continued to sing until the early morning hours. Eileen Southern credits the Camp Meetings for the birth of the Spiritual.

\textit{African American Sacred Song from 1850 - 1900} - Close to the end of the Civil War and on into the years of reconstruction and emancipation, spirituals and “heart song” reflecting the soul, struggle, and profoundly spiritual journey of the African-American people become a more prominent, dynamic part of Black Church liturgy. Gospel Choir itself is a product of the African-American spirituals and hymnody of the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century.

The \textit{Concert Spiritual}, sometimes called “the arranged spiritual,” was introduced in 1871 by the Fisk Jubilee Singers of Nashville, Tennessee, by Mr. George White. The \textit{Concert Spirituals} were hugely successful. They introduced to the mainline church and Europe and choral community a whole new genre of “black hymnody,” characterized by a solo song or solo followed by with a refrain sung by choir. The periods between 1850 and 1910 were characterized by three gospel music sub-genres in the American church. What unites these three genres is \textit{the gospel lyric}, usually finding origin from The Psalms and New Testament passages.


\textsuperscript{107} Portia Maultsby. 82.
These gospel music genres most often incorporate traditional, southern, and African American gospel music.

By the beginning of the 1900s, colleges, churches, factories, and social clubs had their own quartets and Gospel Choir Ensembles called “Jubilee Singing.” Specializing in a cappella performances and tight harmonies the Jubilee ensembles was one of the most lasting trend prevalent in African American sacred music during this period.

*Gospel Choir from 1900 – 1970* - The beginning of 1910 and on into the 1930s, Gospel music emerged through a “Black Hymnody style” through the coalescing of three types of musical activity: 1) *The Gospel Hymn Style* of Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933) 2) “The minimalist, solo-sung "rural Gospel" tunes that appeared as a counterpart to the rural blues; and, 3) The uninhibited, exuberant worship style of the Holiness-Pentecostal branch of the Christian church, also known as Gospel Music or Gospel Choir. A key figure in the development of Gospel was Thomas A. Dorsey (1899 -1993).108

During and near the end of this period, there was a great migration of Black populations from the rural to urban communities of Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, New York City, and Boston. These faithful brought with them a love for and appreciation of a new kind of music, the gospel song.

The period 1940s and 1950s were associated with the radio bringing new marketing potential to the African American gospel singers. Groups hosted radio programs, advertised music, sold records, and traveled across a “nationwide church performing circuit.

108 Thomas Andrew Dorsey (July 1, 1899 – January 23, 1993) was an American musician. Dorsey was known as “the father of black gospel music” and was at one time so closely associated with the field that songs written in the new style were sometimes known as “dorseys”. Dorsey was the music director at Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois, from 1932 until the late–1970s. http://www.earlygospel.com/styles-gospel-blues/ (Accessed April 28, 2021).
In 1969, church-centric Gospel Choir Ensemble music began to cross over into the mainstream entertainment industry through release of a recording by the Edwin Hawkins Singers, “O Happy Day,” a rearrangement of an 18th century hymn by Phillip Doddridge.

_Gospel Choir from 1970 - 2000_ - Sometimes called the Modern Gospel Era, this period of Gospel Choir Ensemble development is dominated by radio and television artists that saw their mission to spread “gospel music” to mainstream America as “a calling.” Walter Hawkins, Richard Smallwood, and André Crouch, in particular, branded an innovation for blending the stylings of pop culture, Jesus Movement and multi-ethnic congregations into their compositions. Gospel music historian Robert Darden describes this timeless canon of Gospel Choir Ensemble repertoire from the west as “religion with rhythm.”

_Gospel Choir from 2000 – 2020_ - The inclusion of Gospel Choir as an ensemble experience in college and university settings, state and privately-owned institutions finds broad acceptance. At first, Gospel choir is offered exclusively in the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) settings. By 2000, the Gospel choir was introduced as an extra-curricular or intramural elective at most state-owned and private non-black institution and . . .

Today's Gospel songs are more harmonically complex than their traditional counterparts. . . . Gospel Choir is performed with solos or by small or large ensembles, and by men and women of all ages. Both blacks and whites sing the repertoire and the instrumentation possibilities are limitless, ranging from synthesizers and drums to full symphony orchestras.109

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Chapter 4: 
The Precedent, Purposes, and Function of Gospel Choir in Music Education

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the precedent, purposes, function of and need for gospel choir in music education, including introductory remarks about the chapter's emphasis; background, precedent and need for gospel choir in music education; the function of and need for gospel choir in the black church and its transition to music education; the purposes of and need for gospel choir in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); the need for gospel choir as an extracurricular activity in music education; the function and need of gospel choir in collegiate level music education curriculum; and a comprehensive wrap-up conclusion.

Background, Precedent and Need for Gospel Choir in Music Education

The evolution of the gospel choir in music education over the last three decades has been significant. For the last ten years, in particular, the gospel choir's incorporation into the music education in the United States schools has increased, certainly as compared to the early 1930s when most clergy the Black church did not consider gospel choir appropriate for use in worship services.

The gospel choir's popularity in music education is due in large part to the gospel choir's use and acceptance in a growing number of high schools and colleges toward the end of the 20th century. In many ways, the gospel choir has become a normal part of the extra-curricular experience. Patrice E. Turner suggests that teaching and experiencing the Gospel Choir genre itself offers unique opportunity for student learning:

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Gospel music offers music teachers and their students the opportunity to experience and exceptional genre that has deep historical roots in many African American Christian communities in the United States.\textsuperscript{111}

Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman makes reference to the broad educational use and significance of African American Music in the college and university curriculum in her \textit{Gospel Music: An African American Art Form}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a) “It provides another avenue for students in terms of career opportunities (Professional Gospel Artists, etc.).
  \item b) It broadens one’s horizon and understanding of a type of historical music that is heard on a daily basis.
  \item c) It enhances multi-cultural awareness and music appreciation (not only Afro-American music should be introduced, but also music of other world cultures).
  \item d) It creates an awareness of the struggles that went into the making of this great body of music.
  \item e) Exposure will broaden the students’ knowledge allowing them to discriminate one type of music from another.”\textsuperscript{112}
\end{itemize}

Over the last thirty years, Gospel choir has grown and evolved to a point where planning and creating a gospel choir has been modified and adapted to various cultural nuances.

African American gospel music, which celebrates the good news of the message of Jesus of Nazareth, is increasing in popularity. Many music educators want to include the style in the curriculum but are not familiar with it.\textsuperscript{113}

Gospel choir’s integration and use of jazz, the solo, and inclusion of various musical instruments, musical form and changing performance practice opened the door for acceptance of the genre in the non-sacred educational settings. In reality, this approach to music education through participation provides a much broader opportunity for student involvement:

In many instances, gospel music is now being incorporated into the instructional plans and music activities for the benefit of students in public schools and colleges. There is a quest for more knowledge of the history and performance

\textsuperscript{113} Patrice E. Turner. 62-63.
techniques of gospel music, especially among those persons who may not have had direct interaction with it previously.\textsuperscript{114}

In the years before, the gospel choir was only part of the music education taking place in “the sacred environment.” The church was the origin of much training and musical instructions that focused on the development of musical skills, including teaching of vocal parts, accompaniment, conducting, energy, movement, and improvisation. Over the years, this practice evolved into a teaching tool through which a number of important educational goals could be accomplished:

Due to scholarly interest (researching and composing in gospel, the music has gained prominence and being performed in places previously denied). Some of these venues include catholic services, cathedrals, theaters, Broadway, and prominent concert halls.\textsuperscript{115}

Much has changed, and more people are gaining interest in this area music performance of Gospel Choir. Unlike the early 1930s and 1940s, where the gospel singers mainly are clergy and performance primarily in the church, current trends in Gospel music presentation demonstrate an increasing number of students receiving much needed training for leading and performing Gospel music in their non-sacred music schools. "In secular school settings, gospel music strategies (the aural learning and oral teaching traditions) looked different than they did in sacred settings."\textsuperscript{116} Such development has increased the integration of gospel choir in music education in the United States, and for that matter, other countries. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman articulates the benefits:

Students readily identify with gospel music. They react spontaneously by moving and clapping as they sing. Gospel music serves as a multi-communicative agent, leading to group interaction along with expression of the literature. Many music

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid. 88.
\textsuperscript{115} Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 88
skills can be reinforced through gospel music, which affords a built-in success factor.\textsuperscript{117}

The emergence of Gospel music training being part of music education, even though it is on an informal basis and mostly limited to extra-curricular environments, implies that the gospel art form is gradually being accepted into training of traditional music education. In the United States, about 56\% of higher education institutions provide learning opportunities for those exploring the different musical expression. It may be that many more in the music education community are now embracing the idea that improving and enriching “the music experience” for all music students aligns well with the benefits of the Gospel choir rehearsal and performance. If that is indeed the case, the positive reputation of using Gospel choir and its benefits in the music education process, provides much needed precedent for accepting Gospel choir as an alternative ensemble experience in traditional music education. For various reasons, Gospel choir’s integration into a meaningful choral music pedagogy has been slow and yet to be realized, especially as related to the teaching of rhythmic patterns, vocal practices, harmonic nuances, and presentation of the “Gospel message” with stylistic integrity.\textsuperscript{118}

\textbf{The Function and Need of Gospel Choir in the Black Church}

The gospel choir in the black churches has taken on numerous roles, including uniting individuals, creating the black church's identity, and worship leading in the congregation. According to Sharon Young, “a gospel choir is a group within the church that enhances faith formation and enhanced functionality of the black church.”\textsuperscript{119} The aim and mission of the Black

\textsuperscript{117} Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 88.


church seems to have always been one of uniting various groups within the non-white communities. It often appears that Gospel choir helps facilitate this unity and quest for religious freedom.  

In many ways, Gospel choir often functions as a symbol of unity in the Black church. Understandably, a critical culture that African Americans have embraced the Black church as a family of believers – embracing faith, love and hope. Among the community of black people gathering as “one family” creates a sense of belonging and togetherness. The gospel choir has remained a pivotal part of the black community churches and is often a major source for developing this spirit of togetherness. The aim and mission of the Black church seems to continually be one of uniting various groups within the non-white communities. Again, it often appears that Gospel choir helps facilitate this unity and quest for religious freedom.

Another function of the gospel choir in the black churches is creating the identity of the Black churches. Gospel among the Black in the United States originates from the grassroots of black society, a social setting. The message of “The Gospel” is considered many people in the Black church as the source of consolation. The Gospel choir often gives these Black churches a much-needed tool of identity and mission. This principle is demonstrated through three dynamic functions:

First, the Gospel choir takes on a worship leadership role with the congregation. In this role, the Gospel choir partners with the senior pastor in telling the story of “the Gospel of the New Testament.”

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121 Ibid.
Second, Gospel choir serves as a method for equipping untrained constituents as singers, musicians, instrumentalists worshipers and worship leaders to and with a deeply grateful community of faith.

Third, Gospel choirs mainly focus on offering their gift to God and leading the congregations to praise God with a willing and committed heart.\textsuperscript{122}

Fourth, the Gospel choir functions to enhance Christian unity, harmony and oneness.\textsuperscript{123} Worship singing creates a strong bond among the congregants. Simply put, “Gospel choir brings people together!”

In much the same way that Gospel choir functions in the Black church, the influence of Gospel choir – creating harmony and unity among a community of like-minded people, providing an environment of training, learning and equipping, building a bond between people through leadership training – can be realized in the public and private music education community. The need for this kind of influence and unity among music educators has never been greater.

\textit{The Purpose and Need of Gospel Choir in HBCU Institutions}

In all of the Gospel Choir’s history, perhaps the most critical area for its development is seen in the on-going relationship to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). The HBCU community needs the Gospel Choir. And, the Gospel Choir needs thee HBCU community. The two are almost inseparable.


Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are institutions of *higher education in the United States* that were established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the intention of primarily serving the African-American community.\(^\text{124}\) Many of these institutions are located in the Southern United States and established in the years after the American Civil War.\(^\text{125}\) HBCU institutions provided a solid and well established platform for the presentation of Gospel Choir.

The first HBCU Gospel Choir was founded in the fall of 1968 by Melanie Russell (Lee) and Rosalind Thompkins (Lynch) at Howard University, a private non-profit historically black institution located just outside of Washington, D.C.\(^\text{126}\) It was the very first collegiate Gospel choir of its type in the world. The “Howard Gospel Choir” (HGC) pioneered an international legacy in gospel music industry and the “gospel music choir as a ministry” to and within the collegiate level community:

“... the Howard Gospel Choir (HGC) is a body of students, alumni and community members dedicated to using the gift of music to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. As one of the first college gospel choirs, HGC is a trailblazer for

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\(^\text{124}\) HBCUs were established to give opportunities to African Americans. During the period of segregation in the United States prior to the Civil Rights Act, the overwhelming majority of higher education institutions were predominantly white and completely disqualified or limited African-American enrollment. For a century after the end of slavery in the United States in 1865, most colleges and universities either prohibited all African Americans from attending institutions of higher learning or regularly employed quotas to limit admissions of blacks.  

\(^\text{125}\) There are 107 HBCUs in the United States (of 121 institutions that existed during the 1930s), representing three percent of the nation's colleges and universities, including both public and private institutions. Of these HBCU institutions in the United States, 27 offer doctoral programs, 52 offer master's programs, 83 offer bachelor's degree programs, and 38 offer associate degrees.  

\(^\text{126}\) Founded in 1867, Howard University is considered by many as the only truly comprehensive predominantly Black private university in the world. The institution has awarded more than 100,000 degrees in the professions, arts, sciences and humanities and ranks among the highest producers of the nation's Black professionals in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, nursing, architecture, religion, law, music, social work and education. Howard has grown from a single-frame building in 1867 and evolved to more than 89 acres, including the six-story, 400-bed Howard University Hospital. Since 1974, it has expanded to include a 22-acre School of Law West Campus, a 22-acre School of Divinity East Campus and another three-fifths of an acre facility in northeast Washington and a 108-acre tract of land in Beltsville, Maryland.  
[https://www2.howard.edu/about/history](https://www2.howard.edu/about/history) (accessed April 23, 2021)
all Gospel music ministries across collegiate campuses in the nation. With a legacy of four decades committed to excellence in music ministry, this musical aggregation has bred and shared with many of the most prolific people of this century.”

Hampton University Gospel Choir was founded in 1969 with 50 singers called, “His Chosen Sounds.” Hampton University is located in Tidewater Virginia area of the Eastern United States and is a vital part of the Hampton, Virginia community. Much like Howard University’s Gospel Choir, “His Chosen Sounds” (HCS) blazed the gospel music trail for the inclusion of gospel music on college campuses. Six students, LaVelton Daniel, Shelley Barber, Charles Evans, Cynthia Levine, Louis Mason and Mary Nails organized the group for presentation at a freshman talent show on the Hampton University campus. Today, the university hosts an Annual “HCS” Alumni Choir event as part of a pastor/worship pastor workshop.

Virginia State University Gospel Choir was established as an outgrowth of a ministry at Second Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia in 1971. Organized as a gospel ensemble by Jackie Ruffin and Larry Bland, Mr. B Dexter Allgood and Ms. Cora Harvey grew the ensemble to over 75 members and increased its influence as a strong cultural and musical influence in the Richmond area. Its long and rich heritage is highlighted by significant contributions to intervening during the turbulent years of racial unrest in America during the 1960s and 1970s through music, cultural enrichment and spiritual encouragement.

The first HBCU state university to establish a Gospel Choir was Southern University and A & M College in Baton Rouge, LA. Founded in 1969, The Southern University Gospel Choir

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127 HGC is a Howard University religious life organization under the auspices of the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel (Rev. Dr. Bernard Richards, Dean of the Chapel) and is considered a “non-academic,” extracurricular organization. [https://howard.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/howardgospelchoir](https://howard.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/howardgospelchoir)


130 [https://www.subr.edu](https://www.subr.edu)
(SUGC) “has been bringing the Holy Spirit not only to the bluff, but to an extensive audience outside of Southern University’s campus as well.”

The love that the members and directors have for gospel choir is very evident. After speaking with some of Southern’s current gospel choir members there can be no mistaking the deep, sentimental value they hold for it.

Today, nearly all HBCU institutions have some type of curriculum based or extra-curricular Gospel choir, including but not limited to: Livingstone College Gospel Choir, Hampton University Gospel Choir, Southern University Gospel Choir, Fisk University Jubilee Singers, Tuskegee Golden Voices Choir, and Kentucky State Gospel Choir.

In 1973, The National Black Gospel College Choir Workshop was organized to provide opportunity for the HBCU institutions to showcase their institution’s choral performance ability. Each year during the Thanksgiving weekend, college gospel choirs and ensembles from HBCU, community choirs, and gospel groups from all over the United States gather to:

“…enhance their knowledge, fellowship, and celebrate the rich history of gospel music and the Negro Spiritual legacy. A team of professionals in gospel music: pastors, musicians and music educators - assemble and conduct several sessions such as vocal and instrumentalists’ technique, the history of the gospel genre, music theory and composition, musical excellence, and many other related topics. The selected sessions … [are designed] to enhance the choir’s performance in music excellence as they performed not only in art form but in heart form. . . In addition to participation in the daily sessions, each choir and group were afforded the opportunity to perform in the event’s nightly concerts.”

It seems to be the consensus that the role and function of Gospel Choir in the HBCU institutions is strategic for seven essential and significant reasons:

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131 www.southerndigest.com/culture/article_4c3218f6-2904-11e9-b175-3fd89fc19aa.html
133 In addition to participation in the daily workshop sessions, each choir and group were afforded the opportunity to perform in the event’s nightly concerts. Since the 1990’s, there has not been any other workshop of that magnitude for college and community gospel choirs. The founding pioneers established a stellar and exceptional standards for academics and the genre of gospel music. The history of this workshop is stunningly rich in heritage and reputation. https://www.ngccmw.com (accessed April 12, 2021).
134 Ibid. https://www.ngccmw.com
1) *Perhaps the most important element characteristic of all HBCU Gospel Choir organizations centers in the need for establishing and developing a common community*. The love that the members and directors have for their own group is a universal that unites the group as an ensemble, public relations force, communication medium and cultural influence.

Alesha Bethea makes the following observation in a February 4, 2019 interview for an article for the *Southern Digest* about the Southern University Gospel Choir that provides apt description of the “relationship building” environment common among the HBCU Gospel Choir communities:

After speaking with some of Southern’s current gospel choir members there can be no mistaking the deep, sentimental value they hold for it. Bryson London, a senior business management major with a concentration in human resources from Jackson, Louisiana, speaks on the positive impact that gospel choir has had on his life, noting: “I’ve grown closer to God and I’ve made plenty of friends that have turned into family,” Dijon Hughes, a junior social work major from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, tells The Digest about his first experience with the gospel choir fawning, “When I walked in the love was overbearing...I was like ‘Oh yeah...this is where I need to be,’ I felt the presence of God in there when we started rehearsal...I made a lot of friendships just from that night.”

2) *Opportunity to enjoy a common “spiritual experience” through the message of the Gospel in song*. The message itself is uplifting. In most institutions, the choir’s spiritual mission is as important to their endeavors to instill moral character, educational value and cultural perspective and career preparation.

For example, the famous Tuskegee Choir from the equally renown Tuskegee University is a HBCU organization steeped in more than a century of pride and the richest of choral traditions. Since its inception, the Tuskegee Choir has served as an artistic model while carving its place in American history. The school choir was developed in 1886 because founding
president, Dr. Booker T. Washington determined that the institute was in need of a group of singers who could lead vesper services and sing for special campus occasions. Huston Johns was chosen as the first director. Over the years, the Institution’s choir would expand its role to providing vocal music for all cultural and religious campus activities:

From the beginning years of its history, students at Tuskegee Institute were encouraged to express themselves in communal singing. Founder Booker T. Washington, insisted on the singing of African American spirituals by everyone in attendance at the weekly Chapel worship services, a tradition which continues today. Further, he stated, "...If you go out to have schools of your own, have your pupils sing them as you have sung them here, and teach them to see the beauty which dwells is these songs..." Thus, the school developed and passed on a singing tradition.¹³⁶

3) Of paramount importance to most HBCU Gospel Choir organizations is the goal of promote unity within (and without) the historically black community. While a primary purpose for the Gospel Choir is to enhance and promote the unity among the black populations, in recent years, attention has been given to advocating for the unity and integration of African American culture into all cultures and people groups. The Gospel Choir often serves as a platform to present (and popularize) the African American Gospel choir's uniqueness in musical style and positive message to all people, regardless of religious belief or ethnic expression.¹³⁷ Gospel choir provides a platform where the HBCU schools are able to join together as a unified community of institutions and present a message of unanimity through a common medium and musical expression.¹³⁸

4) In many ways, the HBCU Gospel Choir serve as a public-relations agents to the entire academia. Institutions are afforded opportunity to showcase their music programs, emphasis on

¹³⁶ https://www.tuskegee.edu/student-life/join-a-student-organization/choir/choir-history
¹³⁸ Harrison Marcus. The Impact of Gospel Choir Participation on the Social Integration and Persistence of African-American Students. Wilmington University (Delaware), 2015, p. 34
diversity, and love for the atheistic processes taking place during their own performances. And, in the process, the Gospel Choirs themselves give the choir members opportunity to learn about ensembles and music practices at sister institutions. HBCU institutions have long used the Gospel Choir as a tool for communicating their academic, athletic and cultural contributions, and in the process popularize the American Gospel Choirs as an alternative choral genre to the country and around the world.

5) **HBCU institutions provide platform, community and a welcoming environment for preserving “The Gospel Choir” as an alternative choral genre in the arts community as a whole.** Gospel Choir is dynamic, ever changing. The Gospel Choir of Thomas Dorsey, James Cleveland, Walter Hawkins, Fred Hamond and Hezekiah Walker are hugely different from each other. The emphasis of quickly passing from one musical expression to the next, often prevalent in the commercial music community, may sometimes push an entire genre of music into a sphere of irrelevance. HBCU institutions as a historically safe community provide opportunity for historians, musicologist and performers of Gospel Choir to curate their repertoire for generations to follow.

6) **HBCU’s inclusion of the Gospel Choir provide opportunity for students to experience the joy of performing great music.** There is joy for the participating musician when performing music at a high level of excellence. Perhaps this one area is greatly unstated and maybe even under-estimated in today’s fast-paced, consumer driven market community. Gospel Choir, as a performance ensemble, is often spiritually, emotionally and

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socially invigorating. Many HBCU institutions give testimony of their Gospel Choirs having opportunity to sing with well-known Hollywood entertainers and Nashville musicians. Talladega College, Tuskegee University, Hampton University and Howard University have ensembles that have represented their institutions before presidents, on national television, as part of hugely successful entertainment events on the National Mall in Washington D.C., on “America’s Got Talent” and during National Football League halftime shows. These performance opportunities are often “once-in-a-life-time” performance events for the students and they come by way of their connection to Gospel Choir and the HBCU institutions they represent.

7) HBCU Gospel Choirs assist in providing for their own institutions opportunity to give back to society, culture, constituent and community from which they receive their greatest support. In this broad sense, HBCUs are able to serve their own community through the Gospel Choirs. Sometimes the opportunities present themselves through community concerts, arena events with well-known Rhythm and Blues artists, famous gospel artists or as part of a half-time show during a football game. At other times, HBCU institutions are able to provide a Gospel Choir for a community arts celebration. Then, there are the times when HBCU institutions look to their own Gospel Choir to provide encouragement, inspiration and spiritual enrichment during time of grief at the death of a loved one, loss or serious emotional need. 141 Whatever the service or where ever the need, Gospel Choir is able to join with the HBCU community in reaching out to the needs of others through their fresh and often original musical perspective, inspiring moments of communication and eternally hopeful message.

This inter-change between the HBCU institutions and their Gospel choirs meets an ongoing and deeply imbedded need for relationship between the two. The need for the Gospel choir being identified with their HBCU institution cannot be understated. It is in this relationship with the institution that the Gospel ensemble really secures its public identity and sense of security as a deeply valued organization, communicating a public and self-awareness of its own mission as an ensemble. Likewise, the HBCU institution receives positive interaction from their own constituents, sphere of influence and alumni (including Gospel Choir alumni) when using the Gospel ensemble in strategic public relations capacities.

This public relations function is especially meaningful as the Gospel Choir itself is purposely used in a recruiting capacity and as a focused retention tool for student enrollment, programmatic development and curricular interaction. Additionally, those HBCU institutions that have elevated the Gospel Choir to a place of curricular inclusion, such as being an approved ensemble in a music performance or music education curriculum, have given opportunity for the musical group itself to function as a pedagogical agent to a broader group of students preparing themselves for various careers in music. In the process, the HBCU institution has afforded those students never given opportunity to sing in or be a part of any Gospel Choir experience the very training and equipping needed to lead and develop a musical genre previously excluded from their own cultural awareness.142

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142 One of the best examples of a music group functioning in a primary recruiting and retention role is the Great Tornado Marching Showband at Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama helping grow resident enrollment from 574 in 2011 to 1330 in 2020 with over 450 on campus students participating in the marching band. (See DME thesis from Liberty University School of Music by Miguel Bonds, Strategies for Recruitment, Growth and Retention through Marching Band Enrollment at Talladega College (2011-2021) 2021.)
The Need of Gospel Choir as an Extracurricular Activity in Music Education

Precedent and need for Gospel Choir’s inclusion as an extracurricular activity in non-HBCU institutions has been long established.\textsuperscript{143} For better than 30 years, high schools, community colleges and senior colleges or universities all around the globe have employed some type of “Extra-curricular Gospel Choir” as a primary “marketing tool,” “recruitment team” or very public communication agent. It may seem obvious to some political, sociological or behavioral science purest that this “displaying” of an institution’s attempt at meeting cultural demands for diversity and ethnic inclusion might appear, at its very heart, disingenuous. This conclusion may not be at all true. There seems to be significant evidence that some institutions may provide occasion for Gospel Choir “a space as an extracurricular music team” for the very purpose of affording students a very legitimate opportunity for social, spiritual, and psychological expression. After all, the very first Gospel Choir on any collegiate campus in America was founded at Howard University in 1968 and it was and still is an extra-curricular, not-for-credit organization.

In reality, many of the benefits articulated above for Gospel Choir with HBCU institutions certainly apply to those non-HBCU colleges and universities using the ensemble to meet extra-curricular needs. Perhaps the following rationale may be useful in articulating the need for inclusion of Gospel Choir as an Extra-curricular organization in high school, community college, senior college and university settings. This rationale is grouped into five areas of examination: \textit{personal enrichment, spiritual enrichment, diversity, unity and community}.

\textit{1) Personal Enrichment} – In one true sense, student participation in Gospel choir as an extracurricular activity is rarely a one-size-fits-all opportunity. Perhaps one of the greatest

\textsuperscript{143} Andrew Legg and Carolyn Philpott. "SGC2USA, The Southern Gospel Choir Research and Tour Project." (2014).
advantages of the Gospel Choir being an extracurricular ensemble, students from all walks of
campus life may participate. Membership in an “Extra-curricular Gospel Choir” organization can
certainly be valued differently by every member of the group. In that sense, participation in the
extracurricular Gospel Choir becomes deeply personal. To some, it may provide opportunity for
musical enrichment, social awareness, sense of community and a means for establishing new
friendships. To others, their membership in the Gospel Choir may provide opportunity to
establish identity with a higher calling – their life’s mission. Still others, especially the very
talented non-music major seeking a place for musical and artistic expression, see participation in
an extra-curricular Gospel Choir “as an escape” from the requirements and rigor generally part of
an undergraduate Bachelor of Music degree program.

In the final analysis, the “Extra-curricular Gospel Choir” provides for all involved – the
students, the musical leader, the administration – opportunity to be an essential part of a mutually
cohesive team. Students learn the value of working together as a team every bit as much as any
basketball, football, soccer or baseball unit. Sopranos, altos and tenors in a really well rehearsed,
unified group, learn to move, pivot, swing, work out parts, create and make musical decisions
essential for performing artistic acrobatics – always necessary when producing an engaging
experience for themselves and their listeners.144 In a very real way, these “Extra-curricular
Gospel Choirs” offer students a musical and cultural opportunity to explore, experience, enjoy,
and engage in – on a personal level – while pursuing and preparing for careers in other
meaningful disciplines, something they may never experience in their “regular classrooms.”145

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144 Randall Wolfe. "Becoming a Choral Music Teacher (A Field Experience Workbook)." The Choral Journal 52, no. 8 (2012): 64. P.158
2) *Spiritual Enrichment* – Singing in a Gospel Choir, by its very nature, may be a deeply spiritual experience for the musicians, directors, and audience. From its very beginnings, the gospel message of hope, freedom, peace, comfort, faith, redemption and reconciliation have been part of the very fabric of this uniquely American musical genre. Unlike many other choral genre – renaissance plainchant, baroque madrigal, Bach cantata, Handel oratorio, Mozart Requiem Mass, or Debussy chanson – gospel choir is a dynamic, ever changing and uniquely driven by the singer’s very personal, and on-going spiritual experience. It is at this very point – gospel music is a spiritual experience – that many state-owned college or university administrators may find the “Extracurricular Gospel Choir” most beneficial. Students are able to enjoy a deeply personal spiritual experience without any sense of violation of the mandates surrounding separation of the church and state. In the process, the state institution may be able to meet a spiritual need, often reserved for faith-based colleges or universities, in a deeply personal and meaningful way.

One such institution is Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass. Professor Katherine A. Barone assisted in the establishment of a Gospel Choir on the campus of what is well known as a “liberal, non-sectarian institution.”

In a 2002 article for the “Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice,” Dr. Barone explain how the idea of an “Extracurricular Gospel Choir” became reality as a fully approved and university sanctioned organization but, within the confines of the campus chapel ministry:

An African American undergraduate student, Nakia Campbell, founded the choir in the 1993-1994 academic year. Nakia saw the choir as a way to provide a "church home" for students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, hence the name UNITY, but especially for African American students. Nakia's background in music and her church affiliation led her to conduct UNITY as a traditional gospel choir . . . . This included prayer said at the beginning, end, and sometimes mid-

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rehearsal. The choir members were white and black Christians who, even if they were non-participants at their own churches, understood the messages of the music and accepted, even perhaps expected, prayer as a part of their choir participation. Nakia invited her own minister to Lesley to open a concert and preach at intermission, a common practice at other local college gospel choirs. UNITY was popular with students on the undergraduate campus and was invited to sing at various campus events including ALANA celebrations, Family and Friends Weekend, and Admissions recruitment events. The choir sang off-campus at churches and at a local college Gospel Fest.

Within the first three or four paragraphs of her article, Dr. Barone addresses the issue of spirituality and empowerment, for both student and faculty:

In the field of psychology and at academic institutions, the tightly held premise of the separation of church and state has been used to exclude the need to address spiritual issues as a part of academe. The "me" decades of the 1970s and '80s spawned a civic and spiritual impoverishment that helped to change that premise.

Perhaps her strongest argument and rationale for the “Extracurricular Gospel Choir” being a part of the university’s chapel program is found in a quote cited in the article by Cornel West in his 1994 book, Race Matters:

We have created rootless, dangling people with little link to the supportive networks - family, friends, school - that sustain some sense of purpose in life. We have witnessed the collapse of spiritual communities that in the past helped Americans face despair, disease, and death and that transmit through the generation’s dignity and decency, excellence and elegance.147

The spiritual aspect of the group at Lesley University is key to the Gospel Choir’s mission and purposes. Katherine Barone explains that Lesley University is able to provide a type of “spiritual diversity” at a non-sectarian university through their Gospel Choir initiative:

As an activity supported by a private, non-sectarian university, UNITY should be able to provide a model for open participation and spiritual diversity. UNITY does this in several ways. First, members who wish to offer a prayer do so voluntarily, although the most common practice is silent prayer in a circle of joined hands. Second, the director and I have encouraged members who want to pray aloud to do so from their own traditions. The director has also supported this

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effort by stretching the musical repertoire of the choir to include spiritual music of other cultural traditions including Jewish and South African. This is a clear demonstration of how to institute policy and procedures allowing for open participation.

3) Diversity – It seems that inclusion of Gospel Choir as an extra-curriculum organization provides many state and privately owned institutions opportunity to “open the door” for at least some type emphasis on inclusion and diversity without wholesale changes to the university administrative structure and mission, or the massive undertaking necessary in completely revamping or over hauling the entire curriculum. Perhaps every institution’s administrative team and the faculties in which they lead legitimately desire to chart meaningful paths toward diversity. For certain, the desire at these institutions to embrace diversity and inclusion on some level seems to be genuine and sincere but their economic model, educational goals, business structure, faculty awareness, administrative strategies and cultural involvement sometimes make the move to a new organizational paradigm a bit complicated and slow. Establishing a Gospel Choir as an Extra-curricular arm of the university, no matter how formal or informal the organization, seems to give the sponsoring institution political, organizational, administrative and educational room (space) to maneuver the public relations and operational aspects of this endeavor. If anything, the experience at Lesley University sets precedent for their inclusion and diversity stance to afford a “significant spiritual and religious background” to all students. So much so that the University's emphasis on open participation supporting a genuinely non-sectarian position, in terms of choir membership, seems only natural for the success of the group itself and the university. Dr. Barone observes:

In terms of its diversity, UNITY is a multi-cultural group that includes students of color from many different religious backgrounds; white students of differing ethnic and religious origins; students with differing sexual orientations; and international students, primarily Japanese undergraduate women. In terms of status levels at the university, faculty and others with power and status at the
University participate in the choir as equal members with students, with the same requirements in terms of learning music and movement. Finally, in terms of differing ability levels, for threshold students, and others struggling with musicality, UNITY offers views of how inclusiveness might work in a setting governed by pluralism, with ways for all to participate. . . . Many members report that UNITY is the most diverse experience that they have on campus and that it gives them a sense of being equal with others. . . . [The] debate about diverse spirituality among UNITY's members created a strong tension in the group and across campus in its first few semesters because the gospel tradition is distinctly a Christian, Black Church experience.\textsuperscript{148}

In a very real sense, the support of their Gospel Choir, UNITY, by Lesley University – a private, non-sectarian university - should be able to provide a model for open participation, “a spiritual diversity” and cultural inclusion that trumps the “church and state” issues at many other institutions. Apparently, UNITY does this in at least two ways:

First, members who wish to offer a prayer do so voluntarily, although the most common practice is silent prayer in a circle of joined hands. Second . . . members who want to pray aloud to do so from their own traditions. [This allows for] the director [to support] this effort by stretching the musical repertoire of the choir to include spiritual music of other cultural traditions including Jewish and South African. This is a clear demonstration of how to institute policy and procedures allowing for open participation.\textsuperscript{149}

In the final analysis, it seems clear that universities and colleges – non-sectarian and faith-based – can successfully embrace the use and active involvement of an “Extra-curricular Gospel Choir” within the campus community for the purposes of encouraging and establishing an awareness for diversity and inclusion. In so doing, the mission of the Gospel Choir itself to proclaim “the good news of Jesus Christ” may be facilitated and accomplished at a broader, more efficient level. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman seems to agree with this assessment:

Immediately when one hears the term “gospel” the mind perhaps reflects on religious music, the four gospels in the Bible, or one might simply say, “it’s church music” . . . . Gospel music is referred to as the “good news” music.

\textsuperscript{148} Katherine A. Barone. "Issues in Pluralism - A Unique Gospel Choir's Experience. \\
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
However, gospel music extends far beyond the elements. It is a “style” of music that makes use of the African characteristics.150

4) Unity - Gospel choir, at its very core is a unifying force. Woven into its very fabric is the New Testament Gospel which promotes so many of the values and outcomes – character, spirituality, discipline, comradery, companionship, community, affirmation, integrity – needed for student success in the troubled culture in which we live in today. The success of building this kind of unity seems to be realized even more when the Gospel Choir is extra-curricular in organization and operation. First, the broad acceptance of student participation from many disciplines eliminates the “impression of exclusivity” or elitism often associated with highly trained, high-level performing choral ensembles, especially the groups affiliated with music departments or school of music. Second, the extra-curricular approach does away with the notion that a “multi-cultural, multi-racial Gospel Choir” will not sound authentically “gospel.” Dr. Katherine Borne attempts to answer this concern as it relates to her group, UNITY, at Lesley University; which reflects the relatively small size minority student population in Cambridge and Boston and the very busy academic and social schedule of many students:

I believe that “Lesley's mission” and its understanding of true multiculturalism in a pluralistic society means that UNITY's purpose cannot be solely to support African American students on campus, but also to engage all people in learning from inside cultures. [This position echoes] Cornel West's (1994) assertions that the cultural exclusivity promoted by some Afrocentrist writers is a "...gallant, yet misguided attempt, to define an African identity in a white society perceived to be hostile...out of fear of cultural hybridization..." (p. 4). . . In other words, "Are we supposed to hide our cultural gifts and keep them all to ourselves?"151

Community – This final area, building community, seems to be the most cited reason for student participation in The Gospel Choir. This “community” aspect actually has a twofold

150 Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 43
application: 1) To the “community” of musicians in the Gospel Choir – singers, soloists, music director, instrumentalists, road managers, and public relations liaisons – the extra-curricular approach provide opportunity to develop friendships, share in one another’s celebrations, achievements, successes, loss, grief and disappointments. “Community” in this sense is “becoming part of the Gospel Choir Family.” It is an intrinsic process that only comes as student musicians spend time together. Developing friendship – community – on this level is essential for the group’s success in communicating to the public their message. In one sense, it gives the student’s opportunity to live out the gospel message to be “one in the spirit.”

2) Equally important is the “community” outside of the Gospel Choir membership, the “constituent and institution in which they serve.” This is an extrinsic process that can, and should, deeply impact the purposes of the ensemble itself. This includes building loyalty with the various audiences served by the group, partnerships with other academic and extra-curricular organizations on the college or university campus and contribution of the group to external organizations – churches, denominational agencies, conferences, hospitals, non-profit agencies, athletic organizations, civic groups, alumni organizations or other schools and institutions.

Interestingly, the internal group – the Gospel Choir itself – is dynamic, ever changing with each new academic year. Each academic year will bring with it a set of changes and potential challenges. The external group – the partnerships that drive the groups purposes – are much more stable and predictable. It is this stability that actually provides credibility for the group to the “outside community” – friends, alumni, institutional initiatives, and more.

**The Function of and Need for Gospel Choir in Collegiate Level Music Education Curriculum**

The idea for inclusion of Gospel Choir in collegiate level music education curriculum seems to be growing desire among many music educators. Patricia E. Turner makes the case for
equipping music teachers, already in the profession, and those in presently in music education choral music and/or conducting programs, as leaders of Gospel choir:

African American gospel music, which celebrates the good news of the message of Jesus of Nazareth, is increasing in popularity. Many music educators want to include the style in the curriculum but are not familiar with it.\footnote{152}

The case for the Gospel choirs becoming an essential part of the college-level education curriculum seems to be gaining momentum. As early as 2001, any number of graduate and post-graduate research projects have focused on the benefits of the Gospel Choir being part of the “standard choral ensemble curriculum” when equipping students as conductors and music educators. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman, a truly active professional practitioner and music educator, has led this charge in her \textit{Gospel Music: An African American Art Form:}

If we are to begin exposing the various cultures to a cross-section of music, the classroom is a good place to start. Gospel music should not be excluded. There have been many concerns regarding gospel music in the curriculum. The concerns range from questioning its quality, importance, content delivery, and infringement.\footnote{153}

Obviously, the five roles articulated for the Gospel Choir as related to the mission of the Black church in America,\footnote{154} the seven strategies for partnership between Gospel Choir and the HBCUs,\footnote{155} and the five-point rationale for using Gospel Choir as an extra-curricular


\footnote{153}Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 83.

\footnote{154}Benefiting the Black Church Mission: 1) the Gospel choir takes on a worship leadership role with the congregation; 2) Gospel choir serves as a method for equipping untrained constituents as singers, instrumentalists and skilled musicians with and to a deeply grateful community of faith; 3) Gospel choirs’ primary focus is on offering their gift to God and leading the congregations to praise God with a willing and committed heart; 4) The Gospel choir functions to enhance Christian unity, harmony and oneness; and, 5) Worship singing creates a strong bond among the congregants. Simply put, “Gospel choir brings people together!”

\footnote{155}Seven HBCU strategies for building relationship through Gospel Choirs: 1) Establishing and developing a common community; 2) Common “spiritual experience” through the message of the Gospel in song; 3) Promoting unity within (and without) the historically black community; 4) Public-relations agents to the entire academia – critical for student recruitment and retention initiatives; 5) Preserving “The Gospel Choir” as an alternative choral genre in the arts community; 6) Providing opportunity for students to experience the joy of performing great music; and 7) HBCUs are able to serve their own community through the Gospel Choirs.
organization\textsuperscript{156} may apply to conversation when citing need for the Gospel Choir Ensemble’s inclusion in the colligate level experience. In reality, there seems to be considerable overlap in purposes and application between the three different approaches to Gospel Choir inclusion and participation. But, there also seems to be a consensus among researchers that there are at least five benefits to the institution and student experience when Gospel Choir Ensemble is interwoven into the official academic curriculum offerings:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Strengthens and broadens the entire choral ensemble options.}
\item \textit{Enhances opportunity for multi-discipline curricular involvement.}
\item \textit{Provides opportunity for inclusion of the Gospel Choir Choral experience as part of the undergraduate and graduate music education curriculum.}
\item \textit{Recognizes the Gospel Choir as an alternative choral genre – much like jazz vocal ensemble, classical choir, madrigal, a capella singers, etc.}
\item \textit{Provides opportunity for multi-ethnic music experiences.}
\end{enumerate}


\begin{quote}
There is in gospel music a universality capable of touching all who hear and need its comfort, its consolation ... Perhaps gospel music is the much-sought link that can unite the people of this nation, across barriers of race and color, class and creed ... (p 4)\textsuperscript{157}
\end{quote}

Dr. Bell’s observations seem to have significant merit when making application of the pedagogical process to include the various and diverse stylistic trends – those associated with the Gospel Music Ensemble – as a legitimate art form – to be studied, experienced and enjoyed aesthetically, musically, spiritually and culturally. This inclusion of a broader repertoire is often prompted by the very students participating in the ensemble. The point is that Gospel Choir

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{156} Five-point rationale for using Gospel Choir as an Extra-curricular organization: 1) Personal enrichment; 2) Spiritual enrichment; 3) Diversity; 4) Unity; and, 5) Community.
\textsuperscript{157} https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/jppp/vol2/iss2/6 Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice, Vol. 2, Iss. 2 [2002], Art. 6 64
\end{footnotesize}
Ensemble provides opportunity for both student and choral leadership to collaborate in an artistically fulfilling, academically legitimate endeavor:

Due to the increased demand for more knowledge and performance of gospel music, mostly by students, doors have opened, and academicians are becoming more receptive to this art form. However, one must understand the diverse stylistic trends. Many colleges and universities have applauded their success in producing high quality performing groups.\textsuperscript{158}

It is with these observations in mind and in order to better understand the application of these five benefits, each item is addressed according to its own merits with application to a possible colligate level curriculum:

1) \textit{Strengthens and broadens the entire choral ensemble options}. The Gospel Choir Ensemble’s inclusion in and contribution to the music curriculum at state- and privately-owned colleges and universities, non-sectarian and faith-based, is certainly not without precedent. When discussing the HBCU institution’s relationship to Gospel Choir (above), a number of member college and university programs were cited as examples. In dealing with the Gospel Choir role as an extra-curricular organization, Lesley University was cited as an example on a non-sectarian campus. What follows is a list of five select choirs from as many universities that provide opportunity for the Gospel Choir to hold status as a curriculum offering for choir in their various degree programs. Included is the official name of the group listed in the university academic catalog and the related course description (when available):

\textit{a) The Black Chorus - University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. MUSC 463 Black Chorus:}

“A mixed-voice chorus of students from across campus performing the music of Black Americans, ranging from the Negro spiritual, anthems, and formal music, to traditional and contemporary gospel, jazz, and rhythm and blues. Open to all students with assignments made according to proficiency. Completion of course

\textsuperscript{158} Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 85
involves, in addition to the regular schedule of rehearsals, participation in public performances by the ensemble.”

Founded in 1968, the following year The Black Choir received the co-sponsorship of the African-American Cultural program and the School of Music Choral Division. The course is an official curriculum ensemble and receives one undergraduate and 1 graduate hour credit. The course may be repeated in separate terms. Prerequisite for acceptance into the degree is an audition and/or consent of the instructor. Originally organized by four students, and later under the direction of School of Music faculty with student officers, the Black Chorus has achieved and maintained a reputation for presenting inspiring concerts and demonstrating high standards of musical performance. The Black Chorus maintains an active performance schedule, with formal and informal appearances on and off campus. The Chorus has performed at the National Black Gospel College Choir Workshop (held annually in Atlanta, Georgia), and in concerts at Purdue University (Indiana), Clarke College (Iowa), Clarion College (Pennsylvania), Northwestern University (Illinois), and Eastern Illinois University. In addition, the Black Chorus has performed with the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra and as special guests at an Orchestra Hall concert in Chicago.

b) The UAB Gospel Choir – University of Alabama at Birmingham – MUP 110 Gospel Choir:

Primarily performs choral literature from the Major Eras of American Gospel Music. Open to students of all majors. May be repeated for credit.

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160 The Black Chorus at the University of Illinois – Urbana was established in the same year academic year as The Hampton Gospel Choir. The Hampton Choir was organized as the first HBCU Extra-curricular Gospel Choir at a faith-based institution and The Black Chorus as part of the music curriculum at a state-owned university.
161 https://music.illinois.edu/ensemble/black-chorus
162 Ibid.
The UAB Gospel Choir is a music performance ensemble open to students of all majors. One (1) credit hour is earned for participating in the ensemble and the course may be taken multiple times for credit. Listing of the choir in the University of Alabama – Birmingham 2021-2022 Undergraduate Catalog is included “right alongside” any other ensemble offering afforded for all music majors, as follows:

Students of all majors are invited to participate in a variety of musical ensembles: Blazer Band, Brass Ensembles, Chamber Singers, Computer Music Ensemble, Concert Choir, Gospel Choir, Guitar Ensemble, Jazz Combo, Jazz Ensemble, Marching Band, Opera Workshop, Orchestra, Percussion Ensemble, Steel Drum Band, Electro-Acoustic Percussion Group, Piano Ensemble, Symphony Band, Wind Symphony, and Woodwind Ensembles. Other ensembles may become available depending on student interest and available resources.164

c) The Gospel Choir – Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama – MUSE 1170 Gospel Choir:

“Consisting of nearly 50 members, the Gospel Choir sings traditional and contemporary gospel music, as well as the African diaspora. The group rehearses 2 hours per week.”165

The Gospel Choir at Auburn University is one of eight official ensembles representing the choral division at the University’s School of Music. Considered a “non-traditional/specialty choir,” students receive one-hour academic credit per semester with no more than two semester experience counting toward any music degree, including: performance, music education or conducting programs of study.166

d) LU Praise – Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia – MUSC 286 The Gospel Choir I and/or MUSC 386 The Gospel Choir II:

The Gospel Choir is a 25-30-member choir representing the historical and diverse traditions of African American choral music. The ensemble serves in an official

164 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
public relations capacity for the University, The School of Music, and Center for Music and Worship. The Gospel Choir generally participates in Annual Christmas on University Blvd. and Spring Music Night Concerts, weekly convocations, TRBC [Thomas Road Baptist Church] worship services, Liberty University fundraising events and weekend tours, as needed.

Up to two hours credit from Gospel Choir may be applied as "approved credit" for the various music and worship studies and music education degree programs.” Offered as a one-hour credit class during the fall and spring semesters, registration restrictions for the Gospel Choir at Liberty University include audition by the Department of Music and Worship Studies and one-hour credit.” There is a limit of two hours of “The Gospel Choir” toward any approved School of Music degree.167

*e) Troy University Gospel Singers – Troy State University, Troy, Alabama. Founded in 1980 and originally directed by a student choir member, the 40-voice ensemble is under the direction of Dr. James Brown and is one of the official performing groups at the Troy University’s John M. Long School of Music:

The Gospel Singers specialize in the study and performance of sacred music, hymns, spirituals, and traditional and contemporary gospel music from the African-American tradition.168

Since its inception, over 35 years ago, TUGS (Troy University Gospel Singers) has continued to carry on traditions of performing within the community, as well as the tri-state region. According to the 2021-2022 Undergraduate Catalog:

TUGS, formerly known as the Troy State University Gospel Choir, has participated in many concerts and prestigious festivals, such as the Moses Hogan Memorial, William Dawson and Afro-American Composers’ Festivals, and has made numerous television appearances including ‘Good Day Alabama.” The choir had the esteemed honor of performing for Rosa Parks’ funeral, in addition to opening the Children’s Wing of the Rosa Parks’ Museum. Recently, TUGS

opened for Vickie Winans in Concert and collaborated with the Boys and Girls Club of Troy and Nairobi Chamber Chorus. In addition to their musical endeavors, TUGS participates in the local Boys and Girls Club after school program, working with children on homework, mentoring, and creating opportunities to express themselves through miming, liturgical dance, and singing.\textsuperscript{169}

2) \textit{Enhances opportunity for multi-discipline curricular involvement}. It is precisely at this point that the Gospel Choir Ensemble itself stands as a “pillar” or foundational underpinning for enhancing and developing the social relationship between multiple disciplines while encouraging successful academic engagement. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman explains that:

The teaching and performance of gospel connects across disciplines, such as social studies, English/language arts, technology, science and other subjects. Research has shown that utilizing the interdisciplinary approach may avoid teaching isolation. Therefore, skill retention will occur at higher frequency.\textsuperscript{170}

Perhaps this approach to multi-discipline interaction through a type of “multi-ethnic exposure” and pedagogical intentionality provides opportunity for the broader inclusion of students in the ensemble coming from: different religious backgrounds, a large variety of multi-discipline experiences, the health and science community, behavioral science and philosophy communities and non-music educational environments. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman makes appropriate application to the Gospel Choir Ensemble’s role to provide this very group of multi-discipline learners an extra-ordinary “life-long learning opportunity.”

Many colleges and universities have incorporated music as part of their curriculum. . . . those institutions that have a viable program have reported success through cross-cultural experiences, integrating across the curriculum, community awareness and knowledge-based experience for life-long learning.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 85.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
3) Provides opportunity for inclusion of the Gospel Choir Choral experience as part of the undergraduate and graduate music education curriculum. In 2003, Linda B. Walker and Sharon Young wrote a paper entitled "Perceptions About Gospel Choir in the College and University Music Curriculum: A Preliminary Investigation" the journal Contributions to Music Education 30, no. 1. Their study was preliminary in nature. The purpose was to investigate, examine and describe perceptions that music professors hold about gospel choir in the music curriculum. Professors teaching in historically black colleges or universities, large comprehensive universities, and liberal arts or community colleges were randomly selected and surveyed. It seems that the researchers received overwhelmingly positive interaction regarding the subject:

Results showed that respondents believed a campus gospel choir should exist to study this genre we call "gospel". In addition to academic value, we found that the gospel choir was perceived to provide a cultural outlet for students who are not served by the music unit. Overall, gospel choir was perceived to have musical, aesthetic, and academic values in college/university music curricula.

4) Recognizes the Gospel Choir as an alternative choral genre – much like jazz vocal ensemble, classical choir, cantata, madrigal, chanson, A cappella singers, etc.

Gospel music also brings in a new form and style that adopting music education could be beneficial. African American Gospel choir has a unique style and instrument tones that can add a

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fresh taste to music education. Integrating Gospel music means attracting most students who love this form of music into the music education curriculum.

5) Provides opportunity for multi-ethnic music experiences and expression. This benefit has also been cited as part of a five-point rationale for creating and deploying an Extra-curricular Gospel Choir Ensemble. The significance between the two is seen in the reality that when Gospel Choir Ensemble is part of a regular collegiate level curricular offering, issues like multi-ethnic experience becomes formalized through the normal process of establishing a course’ program learning outcomes, catalog course descriptions, lesson plans and related assignments. When this happens – The Gospel Choir Ensemble is included in the academic curriculum design – the opportunity for students to experience and share the dynamic nuances brought by multi-ethnic and multi-cultural interaction actually becomes an academic pursuit that can be quantified, evaluated and studied according to: various ethnic regions, non-white communities (i.e. Asians, Latino, West African, etc.), an even larger variety of academic disciplines, religious affiliations and influences, musical expression and significantly diverse family backgrounds. It is precisely at this point that a wise director might consider using the Gospel Choir Ensemble as a tool for creating opportunity for student interaction, musical enrichment, emotional development, self-expression, personal and group discipline, and team development. In this role, The Gospel Choir Ensemble joins with the academic community to increase cultural awareness and a genuine love for the mission and goal of “good” music education.

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Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the precedent, purposes, function of and need for gospel choir in music education, including introductory remarks about the chapter's emphasis; background, precedent and need for gospel choir in music education; the function of and need for gospel choir in the black church and its transition to a tool when facilitating music education purposes; the purposes of and need for gospel choir in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); the need for gospel choir as an extracurricular activity in music education; and, the function and need of gospel choir in collegiate level music education curriculum. A relatively comprehensive conclusion to the discoveries through research methodology may be divided into four areas: Benefit of Gospel Choir to mission of the Black Church; Contribution and relationship between Gospel choir and the HBCU institutions; Rationale for institutional leadership to consider when establishing the Gospel Choir Ensemble as an Extra-curricular organization; and The Benefits of including Gospel Choir in collegiate level ensemble experience, including preparation in roles as a choral music teacher and choral conductor. In general, the benefit of Gospel Choir to the Black Church Mission may be summarized through five ministry related roles: 1) the Gospel choir takes on a worship leadership role with the congregation; 2) Gospel choir serves as a method for equipping untrained constituents as singers, instrumentalists and skilled musicians with and to a deeply grateful community of faith; 3) Gospel choirs’ primary focus is on offering their gift to God and leading the congregations to praise God with a willing and committed heart; 4) The Gospel choir functions to enhance Christian unity, harmony and oneness; and, 5) Worship singing creates a strong bond among the congregants. Simply put, “Gospel choir brings people together!”
The contribution and relationship between Gospel choir and the HBCU may be summarized through seven strategic strategies: 1) establishing and developing a common community; 2) common “spiritual experience” through the message of the Gospel in song; 3) promoting unity within (and without) the historically black community; 4) public-relations agents to the entire academia – critical for student recruitment and retention initiatives; 5) preserving “The Gospel Choir” as an alternative choral genre in the arts community; 6) providing opportunity for students to experience the joy of performing great music; and 7) HBCUs are able to serve their own community through the Gospel Choirs.

Over the years, there has developed a “Five-point rationale” for an institution using Gospel Choir as an Extra-curricular organization: 1) Personal enrichment; 2) Spiritual enrichment; 3) Diversity; 4) Unity; and, 5) Community.

Finally, there seems to be five benefits to the institution and student experience when Gospel Choir Ensemble is interwoven into the official academic curriculum offerings:

1) Strengthens and broadens the entire choral ensemble options.  
2) Enhances opportunity for multi-discipline curricular involvement.  
3) Provides opportunity for inclusion of the Gospel Choir Choral experience as part of the undergraduate and graduate music education curriculum.  
4) Recognizes the Gospel Choir as an alternative choral genre – much like jazz vocal ensemble, classical choir, madrigal, a capella singers, etc.  
5) Provides opportunity for multi-ethnic music experiences.
Chapter 5:  
**A Precedent of and Need for Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy**

Chapter Five investigates the need for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy, including: Introductory remarks presenting the need for a pedagogical system in teaching Gospel Choir Ensemble; a brief overview of the Unique Role of the Gospel Choir; The need for understanding the “Gospel Choir Language” and musical form; The need for establishing practical steps for building and develop the “Gospel Choir Sound;” The need for developing successful Gospel Music Ensemble rehearsal and performance technique; and, A comprehensive summary and conclusion.

**Introduction**

The chapter will deal in part with the unique need and role for Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy in undergraduate and graduate level music education instruction. Apparently, Gospel Choir’s increasing popularity has made the genre appealing to perform in public high schools, community colleges and institutions of higher education.

It seems that the popularity of Gospel Choir in America over this past century has brought to the attention of many music educators the need for a practical, hands on pedagogy for the effectively leading Gospel Choir as an academic choral genre. However, many choral and general music education teachers have little to no experience in leading Gospel Choir during their own formal education. It seems they have not received training or cultivated musical background enough in the tradition to feel a sense of confidence in teaching students how to stylistically perform or present Gospel Choir. Simply put, these professional music education practitioners need opportunity, experience and training that will provide a Gospel Choir pedagogy they can look to for teaching the genre themselves.
Patrice Elizabeth Turner, Ed.D. graduate of The Teachers College at Columbia University, wrote her dissertation on this very subject. Entitled, *Mentoring Music Educators in Gospel Music Pedagogy in the Classroom*, Dr. Turner interviewed and mentored three life-time music education professionals in a “Gospel Choir leading technique” and was able to teach them how to execute and perform the gospel style with authenticity and confidence. According to the study, “They were able to implement culturally relevant pedagogical practices when integrating gospel music into the curriculum.”177

Perhaps it is this very hunger for knowledge, and the increased demand for performing gospel music with excellence by the students themselves, that music educators and college administrators have been prompted to investigate the growing need for inclusion of Gospel Choir in “the standard roster” of performing groups at their college or university:

Due to the increased demand for more knowledge and performance of gospel music, mostly by students, doors have opened, and academicians are becoming more receptive to this art form. Many colleges and universities have applauded their successes in producing high quality performing groups.178

The need for developing a Gospel Choir Pedagogy is broken down into two questions for research investigation: 1) What is the purpose for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy? and, 2) What processes and practices should a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy address? Articulated under each of this twin but broadly applied thematic-questions are defined six topic-areas for discovery. The first six topics deal with philosophical and theoretical purposes for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy, including making the case of pedagogical need for:

1) Developing and implementing a philosophy for Gospel Choir Pedagogy.

2) Studies of the various Gospel music styles.

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178 Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 85.
3) Historical studies in Gospel music and the use of Gospel Choir Ensembles.
4) Providing an overview of any “underlying mission of the group” – its role as an organization.
5) Understanding the Gospel Choir “language.”
6) Need for instruction in personal and group discipline.

The second six topics are much more practical in application and involve a serious look at the processes and performance practices a pedagogy should address, including making the case of need for:

1) Developing a system for music theory analysis of Gospel Choir literature.
2) Need for understanding the Gospel Choir as a musical form.
3) Need for developing a “Gospel Choir Sound.”
4) Need for developing successful rehearsal technique.
5) Need for developing successful performance technique.
6) Need for developing a broad stylistically diverse Gospel Choir performance repertoire.

**The Purpose in Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy**

Perhaps Frank Abrahams,179 Professor of Music Education at Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, N.J., makes a compelling case for music educators to develop a “choral music pedagogy.” His thoughtful and dynamic principles make immediate application to the Gospel Choir Ensemble:

When skillfully integrated into the fabric of the choral rehearsal/performance continuum, the pedagogy brokers singers into a community of practice. The rehearsal scaffolds and schema foster competency, personal and musical agency, identity, and critical consciousness among the singers. This ensures that the performance is more than the singing of pitches with accurate rhythms, dynamics, and intonation, and embodies both cognitive and affective responses to the music and the music making.180

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179 *Frank Abrahams* is professor of music education at Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, NJ. A native of Philadelphia, he holds degrees from Temple University and New England Conservatory. He has pioneered the development of a critical pedagogy for music education and has presented research papers and taught classes in the United States, China, Brazil, Taiwan, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Croatia, and the United Kingdom.

1) Developing and implementing a philosophy for Gospel Choir Pedagogy.

In general, music pedagogy courses usually include the study of teaching objectives, various performance, communication, rehearsal and teaching techniques as applied to the area of equipping (in this case, Gospel Choir), literature, methods and materials, some history of the discipline and review of the musical skill needed for success. Traditional music education or choral conducting degrees, for example, typically include courses in choral literature, conducting, methods courses, and even private voice lessons—but they often omit the study and research of vocal function and pedagogy. According to says James F. Daugherty, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Choral Music Education and Director of Graduate Studies in Music Education and Music Therapy at the University of Kansas:

The focus has been rather narrow on preparing folks to teach choirs in public schools, or, at the graduate level, preparing folks to teach those folks who will then teach choirs in public schools. . . . This frequently results in what Daugherty describes as “an unnecessary and often detrimental division of choral folks into different camps, with the ‘educators’ in one camp and the ‘conductors’ in another camp. . . . [In reality,] one cannot effectively conduct choirs without simultaneously being a good teacher. Likewise, one cannot effectively teach choral singing without simultaneously being a fine conductor. Regardless of which term comes first, teacher-conductor or conductor-teacher, the fact is both facets belong together, not apart.”

Perhaps it is this gap in understanding that choral pedagogy works to address. And, it is the basic premise in expressing the “need” for a choral pedagogy that is unique to the Gospel Choir Ensemble context in general and as a fully recognized choral genre. Daugherty continues:

“I suppose that choral pedagogy is one form of vocal pedagogy. Research shows us that human beings tend to phonate and behave in somewhat different ways when they sing in groups than they do when singing as soloists. Choral pedagogy primarily focuses upon that group context, while vocal pedagogy can be used to describe working with singers one on one, as occurs in a voice studio….“in the broad sense, singing is singing, and developing efficient, healthy, well-informed

ways of singing, whether as a soloist or a choral singer, is integral to both vocal and choral pedagogy. . . . Choral pedagogy . . . suggests a much broader way of thinking and knowing about choral singing phenomena than the more traditional term ‘choral music education.’

Dr. Donna Mary Schaffer completed an exceptionally well researched study on Gospel Music Pedagogy as part of her Doctor of Musical Arts requirements at the University of South Carolina, “An Introductory Pedagogy of Gospel Music for the Choral Conductor.” Dr. Schaffer presents a very thorough and helpful treatise on performance technique and practice, choral tone for the Gospel Choir Ensemble, phrasing, instrumentation and approaching the presentation within the framework of a healthy vocal technique in her fourth chapter, “Distinguishing and Approaching Choral Gospel Music, The Genre.” Dr. Schaffer successfully puts the need for and practice of a well-developed pedagogy for the Gospel Choral Ensemble into perspective:

One must consider the fact that a primary means of transmission of the African American gospel choir performance practice is oral. The genre can be intimidating to those who have never been exposed to this oral transmission. There are, however, resources in the form of texts, online materials and workshops such as the Gospel Music Workshop of America that assist in learning to perform this style. . . . There are many resources available on performance practices of the Western canon. . . . These texts provide a comprehensive annotated listing of choral works representing the Western tradition. . . . There are some comprehensive resources available on the performance practice of Gospel Music.

Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman makes observation of how most training for Gospel Choir leadership is rather informal in nature, actually delivered through the venue of workshops, seminars, websites, podcasts, blogs and director-to-director conversation:

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182 Ibid.
184 An example of these resources is Dennis Shrock’s “Choral Repertoire, Performance Practice in the Baroque Era” and “Performance Practices in the Classical Era.” This are essential guides to selecting and adequately preparing choral music from these periods. Dr. Shrock provides pertinent historical facts, performance practice information, and descriptions of choral forces and instrumentation needed to perform the works.
185 Schaffer. 2.
Workshops, seminars and conferences are gaining popularity due to this increased interest. More instructional materials are being developed and becoming available to meet the growing demands and challenges of teachers who are eager to share and expose students to gospel music.\textsuperscript{186}

2) Studies of various Gospel music styles.

According to earlygospelstyles.com, there are at least 15 different gospel choir performance styles: 

Some authorities say that gospel music is a fusion of Afro-American forms such as blues, jazz, spirituals, rock and ragtime. This means that the characteristics that are found in these various types are embedded in the music called gospel.\textsuperscript{188}

Dr. Joan Hillsman recommends incorporating various gospel styles into the teaching curriculum and intentionally using the opportunity to draw comparison of various musical elements:

Incorporate gospel with other styles such as blues, jazz, ragtime, and spirituals. Students may then be able to make and easier comparison of musical elements on relationship to other types.\textsuperscript{189}

Dr. Patrice Elizabeth Turner reinforces this idea in the abstract of her 2011 dissertation at the Teacher’s College of Columbia University, “*Mentoring Music Educators in Gospel Music Pedagogy in the Classroom:*”

In secular school settings, gospel music strategies (the aural learning and oral teaching traditions) looked different than they did in sacred settings. In addition, gospel music skills (vocal parts, accompaniment, conducting, energy, movement, and improvisation) might look different than they do in sacred settings.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{186} Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 88.
\textsuperscript{188} Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 43.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid. 91.
3) **Historical studies in Gospel music and the use of Gospel Choir Ensemble.**

Providing students historical perspective is always important to pedagogical instruction. This is especially true when it applies to the deep, rich and culturally reflective of Gospel Choir and the large number of extraordinarily talented personnel associated with its development over this past century. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman explains:

> The music of the Black man has its roots in his homeland, Africa. In all parts of Africa, music is an integral part of daily living. There are certain rituals to commemorate each milestone in one’s life. . . . music and dance go hand-in-hand, and African communities feel free to incorporate these as needed for various occasions.\(^{191}\)

Dr. Hillsman also makes application to the need for teaching and providing “student performance experiences” in the various styles of musical expression available to Gospel Choir director. Learning the “how to’s” is an essential pedagogical need for the novice or beginning Gospel Choir Ensemble director, especially since there are so many stylistic musical nuances that are “caught” more often than “taught” in many Gospel Choir initiatives:

> When incorporating the various styles of music, the instructor first has the responsibility for understanding the style, history and performance practices of music. Students should be exposed to all types of music. Gospel as well as other African American music forms, belong in the curriculum at all levels from elementary through higher learning. If it is not incorporated within the pre-college music studies, we run the risk of other cultures not understanding this great body of materials.\(^{192}\)

4) **Providing an overview of any “underlying mission of the group” – its role as an organization – its relationship with the sponsoring institution – its purposes in the academic community.**

The idea of a musical ensemble, any ensemble, understanding better their focus and purpose for existence is usually a good thing and healthy for group unity. This seems to be especially true when applied to the Gospel Choir Ensemble. Apparently, more and more of the

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\(^{191}\) Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 1.

\(^{192}\) Ibid. 83.
Gospel Choir Ensemble groups at a growing number of colleges and universities serve in multiple roles – public relations for the institutions that sponsor the group, building unity across campus, establishing a platform for broader diversity and among various ethnic groups, and developing community within the group – which require a type of pedagogical strategy for the participating students and the teachers involved in their instruction. Gospel Choir and institutional leadership might consider pedagogical instruction that outline “group mission,” “objectives and goals,” “core values,” “program learning outcomes,” relationship to the institution’s alumni and long-term organizational plans.

This pedagogical need seems to be even more pronounced for the Gospel Choir Ensembles that represent their sponsoring institution, state owned, private non-sectarian or faith-based platform, as an extra-curricular, club sport type organization. In some faith-based institutions, the Gospel Choir Ensemble serves a strategic spiritual role. In the state own institution, The Gospel Choir may serve as a centralized organizational unit for encouraging cultural, multi-ethnic or ecumenical assimilation. Then, it is entirely possible the Gospel Choir Ensemble unit itself takes on the dynamic role as primary recruiting ambassador for the institution itself.

Informing the Gospel Choir Ensemble member of their mission and “place” in the overall structure of the institution seems to be even more critical for those schools and departments of Music that offer students the option of receiving academic credit for participation in the group. Leadership for the ensembles in this category will need to be taught how to construct course syllabi unique to the Gospel Choir Ensemble’s purpose, program learning outcomes, measurable assignments, performance presentation opportunities and an agenda for regular classroom rehearsal.
5) Understanding the Gospel Choir “language.”

Historically, every musical style seems to have its own “language” or group of terms to define and provide direction when performing. Often referred to as “performance practices” by choral pedagogists, these “musical presentation” guidelines serve as a type of “rudder” for following stylistic expectations, including dynamics, articulation, rhythm, ornamentation, and more. For example, in the Baroque period, composers used language and musical terms unique to the practice, such as: trills, mordents, turns, appoggiaturas, ornamentation, grace notes, passing tones. Even vibrato was considered an ornament, especially when improvising on cadences. In performing music of the Baroque period, it is generally understood that there is a “single melodic idea” coupled with continuous rhythmic drive and balance of homophonic and polyphonic textures.193

In the Classical period, there are at least three musical style in performing various literature.194 Each style represents a totally different way to execute rhythm and texture, dynamics, articulation, ornamentation, and tuning. Most “improvised sections” were generally written out in full notation.

In the Romantic period, there is freedom of form and design, it was more personal and emotional, literature is more song-like or lyrical with the use of chromatic harmonies and

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194 Classical Musical Styles: 1) Sturm und Drang, meaning storm and stress. Its goal was to illicit shock in the powerful, and even violent, expression of emotion. It found its place in music primarily during the 1770s in German opera and melodrama. 2) The galant style, an early Classical rendering, referred to homophonic style as opposed to strict, learned or contrapuntal style. It is characterized by light texture, frequent cadences, heavily ornamented melody and simple harmony. And, 3) Empfindsamer Stil was to express emotion, meaning “sensitive” or “sentimental.” This style was characterized by simple homophonic texture, frequent use of appoggiatura or sigh figures, and harmonic and melodic chromaticism. Jacy Burroughs. Sheet Music Plus. May 29, 2014. https://blog.sheetmusicplus.com/2014/05/29/musical-characteristics-and-performance-practice-of-the-classical-period/ (accessed April 20, 2021).
discords, much use of dramatic dynamic and pitch contrast, recurring themes and “programme music that tells a story.”

Likewise, there is a performance language to be understood when presenting Gospel Choir Ensemble that is true to the stylistic intent of the genre. This terminology might be synonymous with descriptions of technique used in Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Jazz or even Rhythm and Blues, such as: “groove,” “break-down,” “vamp,” “soul-ful,” “spiritual,” “improvised,” “ad lib,” etc. (Ironically, it seems that Gospel Choir Ensemble performance technique relies as heavily on improvisation and “ornamentation” as much as Baroque ever did.)

As with the example of performance practice of the Classical Period above, there are various styles of Gospel Music and any Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy should include terms and “languages” guide a choral director in the performance practice, especially those directors that have not previously been part of the Gospel music culture.

6) Need for instruction in personal and group discipline.

Perhaps many Gospel Choir Ensembles, extra-curricular and for academic credit, don’t always pay attention to the need for musical and performance disciplines as much as their counter-part choral groups choosing to present Baroque chorale by Bach or Impressionistic chansons by Dubois.

Likewise, audiences often look at a group’s sense of preparedness by the way they walk into the concert hall, process to the risers, stand and sit together in one motion, pay attention to entrances and cut offs, watch their director and engage with the vocalist’s renderings of a solo section during the presentation of a choral song while in concert. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman makes the case for insuring discipline within the Gospel Choir as a group:

Many performance groups, on and off campus, are mainly focusing on learning repertoire for performances. However, it is of utmost importance to incorporate
skills, history, and discipline to the group. Many college students may not be familiar with the historical background of the subject. On campus a large majority of the students only hear that which is available on radio, television and online. When introducing music materials to the group, historical background, intended message, and compositional elements should be shared.\textsuperscript{195}

**Processes and Performance Practices a Pedagogy Should Address**

The previous six topics strategically dealt with philosophical and theoretical purposes for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy. What follows are six pedagogical areas that outline processes, practical applications and performance practices, including making the case of need for:

1) **Developing a system for music theory analysis of Gospel Choir literature.**

Perhaps consideration should be given to establishing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy that provides a type of system for music theory analysis of the genre. It seems obvious by some that students, directors and teachers of Gospel Choir Ensemble will develop a deeper love for and value of Gospel music if they understand its “different elements,” how they relate to each other, and how each unit functions. Shelly Braxton makes the case for establishing a theoretical analysis paradigm for Gospel Choir:

The analytical paradigm for choral gospel song provides a way of getting inside this music, a set of tools with which to explore how this particular genre, one so often used to facilitate human and transcendent communion, works.\textsuperscript{196}

Shelley Braxton has written an article for the 2019 edition of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72, no. 1. Entitled, "Analyzing Gospel," the article presents an analytical paradigm that employs the repetitive musical cycle known as “the vamp” to illuminate the

\textsuperscript{195} Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillman. 85.
interrelation of form, experience, and meaning in African American gospel music, focusing on music performed by gospel choirs with soloists. The author argues that,

“more than just an ubiquitous musical procedure, the gospel vamp functions as a ritual technology, a resource many African American Christians use to experience with their bodies what they believe in their hearts. As they perform and perceive the gospel vamp's characteristic combination of repetition and escalation, these believers coproduce sonic environments that facilitate the communal experience of a given song's textual message.”

2) Need for understanding the Gospel Choir as a musical form.

Just as Baroque cantata, oratorio and three-part invention or Classical sonata have a “normal,” somewhat expected or inevitable form, Gospel Choir Ensembles perform in a somewhat predictable, unsurprising, anticipated manner. It seems that a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy should include instruction on how to understand and use the different elements of a gospel song’s form to its fullest potential. Shelley Braxton suggests that it is this “form” that brings a cohesive focus on the purposes of the genre itself.

Dr. Donna Schaffer reinforces this notion in her “Introductory Pedagogy of Gospel Music for the Choral Conductor” document by quoting an article written by Dr. Horace Clarence Boyer “during a period of evolution for Gospel Music, moving from the church into the secular market.” She explains how Gospel Music is a genre with roots in numerous musical forms with fundamental features, and language, found in multiple examples of gospel music.

Some of these elements and qualities include:

- Audience participation.
- The use of call and response.
- Instrumentation that features the use of piano, guitar and drums as accompaniment with the addition of instruments such as the saxophone, trombone, tambourine, and percussion.
- The inclusion of movement or dance.

• Prominent rhythms (often syncopated).
• Bending of pitch.
• The insertion of blue notes (lowered thirds, fifths, and seventh scale degrees).
• Oral traditions as “lining out” that encouraged audience participation.
• Vocal and instrumental embellishment and improvisation.
• Harmonic language that often features the use of secondary dominants.
• Overlapping of the call and response.
• A personal connection to the text that is related to Jesus, God, [Holy Spirit] or heaven.
• Hand clapping.
• The use of the supertonic in place of the subdominant.
• Strings of second inversion chords.  

To further expand upon this idea, Shelly Braxton explains how the “gospel vamp” serves multiple purposes within the overall framework of Gospel music presentation:

The “vamp at the end of gospel songs ... allows for vocal/instrumental improvisations of increasing intensity causing a corresponding shift in the music to a higher energy level.”

Braxton uses a close readings of four canonical songs from the gospel choir repertoire—Kurt Carr’s “For Every Mountain,” Brenda Joyce Moore's “Perfect Praise,” Richard Smallwood's “I Will Sing Praises,” and Thomas Whitfield's “I Shall Wear a Crown”—as source material for examining the phenomenological implications of gospel's communal orientation, outline the relationship between musical syntax (or flow), musical experience, formal convention and lyrical content in Gospel Choir as a genre. The author suggests that “analyzing gospel offers a way of studying how many black Christians come into contact with the invisible subjects of their belief.” Braxton continues by using the “gospel vamp” as an example for promoting and explaining better the principle that the form itself (the vamp) serves as a facilitator of a spiritual purpose:

Gospel vamps are not merely harmonic backgrounds for improvisation, nor are they designed to occupy time, as in the vamp-till-ready practice. In gospel

198 Dr. Donna Schaffer. 5-8.
199 Ibid.
song, the vamp is a complex of music, text, and escalatory procedures composed to facilitate religious experience. ...the vamp in gospel music as a “troping cycle,” a “musical and ideological [remnant] of the ring shout from the slave past.” ... These troping cycles “work as micro representations of the syntax of rituals present throughout the African Diaspora.”

The poetics of gospel developed in the process has illustrated the way in which the musical arrangement of gospel vamps facilitates the experience of the lyrical messages of the songs, whether by musically manifesting mountains and valleys, lifting worshippers into the presence of God, performing the perfection of praise, or offering an anticipatory experience of eschatological delight. The analysis of gospel song, then, uncovers both the sonic remains of African American Christians’ interaction with the invisible subjects of their belief and the formal logic through which their ecstasy is achieved.200

3) Need for developing a “Gospel Choir” sound.

It seems to be a universal fact that Gospel Choir Ensembles most often have a unique choral sound and timbre. Just as the oratorio chorus, Baroque madrigal or the classical chamber choir have fairly predictable choral ambience, Gospel Choir Ensembles often have a “sound” unique unto itself. For example, many Gospel Choir Ensembles only sing three-part vocals, soprano, alto and tenor. And, because of the natural, physical and often robust quality of the African American voice, especially with men and lower altos, some ensemble directors are able to develop a powerfully rich and thick choral tone, often providing opportunity for a group of 25 to command a volume level twice its size. This ability provides the director a stylistic flexibility not often afforded for those ensembles performing strictly classical repertoire. The talented and skilled Gospel Choir Ensemble director develops an innate ability to develop this sound and make application to various stylings, including prime unison, two-part and three-part voicing and rich vocal solo accompanying moments. Any Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy needs to include studies and methodology in “developing the Gospel Choir Sound.” It seems that this technique

200 Ibid.
is rarely taught and yet this choral quality and timbre during most performances is strategic to the cultural representation of the Gospel Choir Ensemble itself.

4) **Need for developing successful rehearsal and conducting technique.**

It would seem that the major difference between The Gospel Choir Ensemble rehearsal and that of most other choral groups is that gospel repertoire is usually taught by rote, it’s an aural, sing by hear, “head-chart” experience. In reality, the Gospel Choir Ensemble rehearsal schedule is actually not much different than that recommended for any choral group rehearsal plan: vocal warm-ups, learning new repertoire, learning the vocal parts, shaping the choral presentation, developing sound, pacing, building community and perfecting a sense of discipline when singing as an ensemble. As with all choral rehearsals, the Gospel Choir Ensemble director should choose a balance between easy and more challenging song literature, seek to provide students a wide range of stylistic experiences and options within the genre and keep in mid the context for which a song or concert, for that matter, is being performed. Context is everything. And, the good choral rehearsal should prepare with the context performance presentation in mind. Dr. Joan Hillsman observes:

Gospel is a generic term which takes into account a particular style of performance (vocal and instrumental), purity in values message, as well as delivery. Therefore, when attempting to define, one must be aware of the intent and content of the music.201

When designing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy, issues important to the cultural presentation and musical context should be explained. Nuances surrounding a specific gospel style should be explained. For example, in giving instruction regarding the performance of “the spiritual,” Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman explains:

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201 Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 42
Many of the spirituals as we know them today have been arranged for trained singers’ voices.\textsuperscript{202} … There are basically three types of spirituals in short, the syncopated, segmented type such as “Little Lamb, Little Lamb, the call and response type “Have You Got Good Religion,” and the long narrative type “Deep River”. The gospel singer may sing the song as he feels it and will utilize much improvisation, repetition, and adlib techniques. Whether it is narrative, call and response, or segmented, it depends on the ability of the singer to interpret, or “worry” the notes.\textsuperscript{203}

The task of a Gospel Choir Ensemble conductor is much more diverse in application than that needed for most choral genre. In addition to communicating the beat, dynamics, stylistic expression, phrasing and vocal color, the Gospel Choir Ensemble conductor is responsible for encouraging proper vocal technique, self-confidence, unity of the choral blend and “stylizing” the “important gospel message.” In general, conducting Gospel Choir Ensemble differs from traditional conducting: First, the director often forsakes standing in front of the group to lead with traditional conducting patterns. Second, the conductor often forsakes the traditional conducting pattern and gives preference to indicating the rhythm and melody with gestures that mirror the shape of the lines. Third, Gospel Choir repertoire often provides the opportunity for improvisation. The conductor most often develops gestures for communicating these improvisation variations, including: 1) which sections are singing (SA, SAT, SATB, etc.), 2) key changes, 3) coming into and out of vamps, break-down or repeated sections, 4) the addition of harmonic variation in repeated sections, and 5) providing space solo improvisation. Dr. Donna Schaffer makes apt observations about the role of the choral conductor with a Gospel Choir Ensemble that support the notion of minimal conducting technique and development of an improvisational communication technique:

Just as in a traditional setting, it is critical to provide these signals with ample lead time and to ensure that the ensemble is knowledgeable of the conductor’s gestural vocabulary. . . . While some choices are made in the moment, as with any style of

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid. 12
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid. 61.
music, the major decisions are predetermined so there is a plan the ensemble is following. Common signals [used for improvisational sections] are:

- To continue a vamp one can, use a circular motion with the arm and to end the vamp one can hold a fist up prior to the beginning of the last vamp
- To begin a new section-pat the top of the head
- A “T” shape formed by the hands can be used to indicate moving to a bridge
- Indication of verses-use fingers to signal which verse (1,2,3)
- Soloists may be cued simply by pointing to them prior to the beginning of their solo sections. When it is time to bring the rest of the choir in, one can hold up a finger indicating to the choir to get ready, and then use both hands to bring the choir in at the desired time.
- The evocation of vocal tone: as with traditional styles, choral conductors use their body language to remind the choir what kind of sound is called for at a specific moment. The word remind is used because this issue would have already been rehearsed and the choir would be familiar with the signal used by the conductor. For example, if a robust sound is desired, the conductor may make a low and round gesture with their arms reminding the choir of consistent low body support while making a round shape with their mouth indicating the singer create a full singing space with a relaxed laryngeal position and forward tongue position. These gestures are drawn from a group of indicators regularly used in rehearsal.
- One can indicate dynamics in a traditional manner such as smaller gestures for piano and larger gestures for forte.
- Modulation should be determined ahead of time, and the conductor can indicate it with a simple gesture pointing up.

5) Need for developing successful performance technique.

Presentation is perhaps the most important element to include in a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy. Teachers and directors of Gospel Choir Ensembles need to feel comfortable leading the group as communicators of “the gospel.” Keep in mind the context for concert presentation. Even so, Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman suggests that various concert settings and contexts will require the entire group being flexible enough to affirm unique performance practices, especially when presenting within the context of the “mainstream” academic community:

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204 Dr. Donna Mary Schaffer. 41-44.
205 Ibid. 53-54.
Certain principles and practices should be adhered to when presenting gospel music in the formal educational setting:
   a. *Do not infringe upon the religious rights.* Just as one would present the religious music of Bach or Beethoven (introducing the style and musical elements), the same should apply to gospel music. Teach the music as an art form. Do not teach the doctrine.
   b. *Suitable compositions should be a key element when introducing and incorporating gospel as a part of the lesson plan.* Awareness of the instructional population (age group) in terms of vocal ranges and comprehension level is vital in [maintaining] command of interpretation and style of composition.
   c. *Adhere to vocal and instrumental performance practice.*
   d. *Demand proper breath control, diction, and pitch acuity, coordinating phonation with breath, comprehension and interpretation of style, improvisation technique, and theoretical application.*
   e. *Enforce the aesthetics and beauty of singing the music.* Do not scream.
   g. *Present the skills necessary for proficiency in performance, composition, and reading, within the medium of gospel music.*

Program performance technique is perhaps one of the most important elements for Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy. All preparation, rehearsal time and mentoring in the final analysis leads to “the presentation.” This includes the macro presentation – the program, the context, the culture, the audience – and the small detail moments of the presentation – the songs, soloists, singers and band. In reality, while the small details are critical, the audience often walks away from the concert or program remembering the whole. Pedagogy for the program performance should be grouped into three areas: 1) First Impression; 2) The Overall Purpose of a Program; and 3) Last Impression. These areas most often present themselves in stages:

**First impressions** are most often the only impression a group, soloist or music director ever gets. There is only “one first impression.” So, discipline of the choir – how the group walks in, their individual mannerisms, their focus on the moment, the commitment to

\[206\] Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman. 91.
presentation, their dress and engaging spirit – has everything to do with what the audience will “buy into” and remember.

The program IS the program and must be envisioned by the director and the Gospel Choir Ensemble itself. Each song helps to build the program and must follow the same guidelines: first impression, the song is the song, and last impression. While there may be many songs in the program’s repertoire, they all combine to shape the purposes and processes of the program.

Last impressions are what people will remember most about the program. This is true even after the program is finished. And, its true for each song. Train the students to start and stop together. Pay attention to entrances and cuts off. Shape the phrases and communicate a message. These helpful principles need to be included in a pedagogical manual for teaching choral conductors how to develop and lead a Gospel Choir Ensemble.

6) Need for developing a broad stylistically diverse Gospel Choir performance repertoire.

The last and perhaps most important area to be addressed by a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy, the repertoire. Almost everything the Gospel Choir Ensemble does rises or falls on the choices the director makes as it relates to the songs they sing. Dr. Joan Rucker-Hillsman makes this observation about the expression of literature.

Gospel music serves as a multi-communicative agent, leading to group interaction along with expression of the literature. Many music skills can be reinforced through gospel music, which [often] affords a built-in success factor.207

What follows is a list of 63 gospel songs appropriate for Gospel Choir. The songs are labeled according to stylistic preference. Indication of how the individual songs may be used for pedagogical purposes, along with appropriate “key terminology” serve as a guide for application.

207 Ibid. 88
### Suggested Gospel Choir Repertoire Pedagogical Tool

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<th>Style</th>
<th>Composer or Artist</th>
<th>Pedagogical Use</th>
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<td>P &amp; W</td>
<td>Israel Houghton &amp; New Breed</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 17, 23, 24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’ve Come this Far By Faith</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Albert A. Goodson</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 17, 23, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were You There</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Traditional-Unknown</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 17, 22, 23, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why We Sing</td>
<td>CCS</td>
<td>Kirk Franklin</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 17, 23, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonderful Is Your Name</td>
<td>CCS</td>
<td>Hezekiah Walker</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 17, 23, 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CCS** = Contemporary Choir Song  
**Traditional** = well known song already part of the Gospel Choir community  
**Spiritual** = taken from the vast and rich resources of Folk, Traditional and Concert Spirituals

**Pedagogy Statement:**

*When using this song, students will be able to better...*

1. Learn new music by rote.
2. Learn how to perform “call and response” technique.
3. Listen to other ensemble members and develop tight blend.
4. Understand the relationship between their own voice and the accompanying instruments.
5. Establish a choral discipline.
6. Successfully understand and sing prime unison.
7. Sing two-part gospel vocal styling.
8. Better understand and vocally perform key change sections of the song.
9. Understand and successfully perform “the vamp.”
10. Understand the interaction between choir and soloist.
11. Understand, hear and perform “the gospel choir sound.”
12. Relate to the soloist’s role in communicating the “gospel message.”
13. Match the vocal style exactly as demonstrated by music director.
14. Understand and perform emotionally dynamic literature.
15. Understand purpose of song through listening to the artists’ original recordings.
16. Facilitate sectional rehearsals.
17. Sing difficult rhythms together.
18. Perform four-part choral setting of the early “arranged Spiritual.”
19. Understand how to interpret the stylistic intent of the song.
20. Stylistically interpret the “Spiritual.”
21. Stylistically interpret the “Contemporary Gospel Choir Song.”
22. Understand how to shape and craft musical “motion through proper phrasing vocal production.
23. Sing high energy, rhythmically complex passages with skill.
24. Sing Praise and Worship literature in Gospel Choir Style.
25. Perform and communicate the whole intent of the gospel message.


Conclusion

Chapter five investigated the need for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy. 

*Discovery is grouped into two broad areas: I. The purposes for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy; and II. The process and practice in Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy.*

In establishing the purposes for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy, seven pedagogical needs are identified: a) Pedagogical need to include Developing and Implementing a Philosophy for a Gospel Choir Pedagogy; b) Pedagogical need to include studies of the various gospel styles; c) Pedagogical need to include historical studies; d) Pedagogical need to include personal and group disciplines; e) Pedagogical need include the “real, underlying core purposes of the Gospel Choir as a group;” f) Pedagogical Need for Understanding the Gospel Choir Language; and g) Pedagogical Need for Understanding the Gospel Choir as a Musical Form.
Chapter 6:
Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the study and draw conclusions as to the practical application of the various research findings to the music education community and Academe at large. This chapter is grouped into several strategic sections: A Brief Introduction of the Study and its Overall Purpose, Organizational Summary of the Research Study, Organizational Purposes for Each Chapter, Significant Findings and Discoveries, Significant Conclusions as Applied to the needs associated with the use of “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” in higher education, Recommendations for Future Research and a Concluding Summary.

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this study was to research the contribution of and need for integrating “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” into the standard college music education curriculum. The study also investigated the history of Gospel Choir in America and established precedent and need for embracing The Gospel Choir Ensemble” as a primary teaching tool in music education. The study also established the need for developing a pedagogical technique for music educators to use in leading “The Gospel Choir Ensemble.”

Significance of the Study

In many ways, the study established the need for inclusion of Gospel Choir Ensemble in the “standard music education degree completion plan” and demonstrates how an obvious “gap” in choral repertoire, leadership experience and training might be greatly eliminated. In the process, establishing the precedent for this need may have broadened the understanding of how
Gospel Choir Ensemble participation enriches students’ personal development, educational breath, and musical competence. The study brought attention to how the emerging use of Gospel music in higher education actually broadens the students understanding of a multiple of cultures.

Patrice E. Turner reminded us in her article for the *Music Educators Journal* that:

Gospel music offers music teachers and their students the opportunity to experience and exceptional genre that has deep historical roots in many African American Christian communities in the United States.\(^{208}\)

**Problem Statement**

In general, student participation in a Gospel Choir Ensemble is not part of the official music curriculum in most institutions of higher learning. Although gospel choir has a role in a significant number of colleges and universities, most institutions only employ the ensemble as an extra-curricular, club-type organization or activity. As a result, most undergraduate music education students, choral directors in training and those pursuing choral pedagogy degrees never experience or lead a *Gospel Choir Ensemble*.

**Research Questions & Hypothesis**

**Research Questions** – The study addressed the following questions:

a) What is the historical precedent and need for using The Gospel Choir in the training and equipping of Music Educators?
b) How are HBCU and non-HBCU institutions integrating the study and use of Gospel Choir into their undergraduate and graduate music education curricula?
c) In what ways can articulating the need for “Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience in music education be used to advance the broad musical and cultural experiences of secondary and college-age music students?
d) How does the Gospel Choir Ensemble experience contribute to the overall life-equipping process of a student?
e) Is there need for a formal Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy?

**Hypothesis** – There were five hypothesis statements:

H1: There is adequate historical precedent and need for using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” in a primary teaching, training, equipping role of music education professionals.

H2: There is need to demonstrate how “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience, at the college level, provides students a broader opportunity for music experience and expression.

H3: There is need to establish a formal “collegiate level standard” for using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” as a primary recruiting and retention tool for college and university music education degree programs.

H4: There is evidence of the need for “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience to serve in a music, social, cultural, peer, student inter-action and relationship capacity.

H5: There is evidence of the need for a “Gospel Choir” pedagogy.

The Methodology and Limitations

Historical and descriptive research design seemed the most appropriate methodological process for this study. This study focused on providing a brief historical account of the precedent and trends in Gospel Choir Ensemble since before 1850, the established precedent, purposes, function and need of Gospel Choir in music education and for the development of a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy. This study was not a quantitative or qualitative research project nor was it used as a platform for discovery of Gospel music or Gospel Choir’s role in social or political movements. The study was not intended to be a rationale for, historical analysis of, or pedagogical practices with the Gospel Music Ensemble. This was not a comprehensive account of the rich and deeply meaningful history of Gospel Choir in America. And, there was no attempt to measure the effectiveness of Gospel Choir in music education or provide an assessment of program learning outcomes used in the establishment of any curriculum.

Structure and Organization

Organization for the study was as follows:

Chapter One included the Statement of Research, Methodology, Limitation, Research Questions, Organization of Thesis, and Key Terms.
Chapter Two was a presentation of related research and organized into three areas: 1) Research related to the history of gospel choir; 2) Research related to Gospel Choir in music education; and, 3) Research related to the need for Gospel Choir pedagogy. Related research sources for this thesis included scholarly works and papers, doctorate level dissertations, formal thesis research, textbooks, trade books and workshop manuals, magazine articles, online blogs, web-site posts, podcasts and collegiate level journals and formal lectures.


Chapter Four provided an overview of the precedent, purposes, function and need of Gospel Music Ensemble in music education, including: Introductory remarks about the chapter’s emphasis; Background, precedent and need for Gospel Choir in Music Education; The Function and need for Gospel Choir in The Black Church; The purposes of and need for Gospel choir in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); The need for Gospel Choir as an extra-curricular activity in music education; The function of and need for Gospel Choir in collegiate level music education curriculum; and a comprehensive wrap-up conclusion.

Chapter Five investigated the need for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy, including: Introductory remarks presenting the need for a pedagogical system in teaching Gospel Choir; a brief overview of the Unique Role of the Gospel Choir; The need for understanding the “Gospel Choir Language” and musical form; The need for establishing practical steps for
building and develop the “Gospel Choir Sound;” The need for developing successful Gospel Music Ensemble rehearsal and performance technique; and, A comprehensive summary and conclusion.

**Significant Findings and Discoveries**

**In Chapter Three**, discovery suggests that Gospel music as a choral genre dates back to the pre-eighteenth century singing, adopted in schools. They include African American Folk songs. African American folk song incorporates the pre-spiritual songs that the black community sang before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, individuals in the church embraced singing songs of Watts, Wesley, Doddridge and Newton.


*African American Sacred Song before 1850* - The *Folk Songs* are much more personal in character and include “chants for deliverance,” musical expressions of hope and religious melodies that the African American sang in the cotton and tobacco farmlands of the South. These songs were sung to invented meters and creative harmonies and were usually “lined out” by a leader and sung by the congregation.

The study discovered that large numbers of blacks, including slaves and freedmen, attended *The Camp Meetings*. Spontaneous singing and outward testimony of a personal

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encounter with God gave platform for the creation of a style of adulation unique to the Black community. Songs and hymns often took on a call-response form.

_African American Sacred Song from 1850 - 1900_ - Close to the end of the Civil War and on into the years of reconstruction and emancipation, spirituals and “heart song” reflecting the soul, struggle, and profoundly spiritual journey of the African-American people become a more prominent, dynamic part of Black Church liturgy. Gospel Choir itself is a product of the African-American spirituals and hymnody of the mid-19th century. By the beginning of the 1900s, colleges, churches, factories, and social clubs had their own quartets and Gospel Choir Ensembles called “Jubilee Singing.” Specializing in a cappella performances and tight harmonies the Jubilee ensembles was one of the most lasting trends prevalent in African American sacred music during this period.

_Gospel Choir from 1900 – 1970_ - The beginning of 1900 and on into the 1930s, Gospel music emerged through a “Black Hymnody style” through the coalescing of three types of musical activity: 1) _The Gospel Hymn Style_ of Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933)2) “The minimalist, solo-sung "rural Gospel" tunes that appeared as a counterpart to the rural blues; and, 3) The uninhibited, exuberant worship style of the Holiness-Pentecostal branch of the Christian church, also known as Gospel Music or Gospel Choir. A key figure in the development of Gospel was Thomas A. Dorsey (1899 -1993). During and near the end of this period, there was a great migration of Black populations from the rural to urban communities of Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, New York City, and Boston. These faithful brought with them a love for and appreciation of a new kind of music, the gospel song.
The period 1940s and 1950s were associated with the radio bringing new marketing potential to the African American gospel singers. Groups hosted radio programs, advertised music, sold records, and traveled across a “nationwide church performing circuit.

In 1969, church-centric Gospel Choir Ensemble music began to cross over into the mainstream entertainment industry through release of a recording by the Edwin Hawkins Singers, “O Happy Day,” a rearrangement of an 18th century hymn by Phillip Doddridge.

**Gospel Choir from 1970 - 2000** - Sometimes called the Modern Gospel Era, this period of Gospel Choir Ensemble development was dominated by radio and television artists that saw their mission to spread “gospel music” to mainstream America as “a calling.” Gospel music historian Robert Darden describes this timeless canon of Gospel Choir Ensemble repertoire from the west as “religion with rhythm.”

**Gospel Choir from 2000 – 2020** - The inclusion of Gospel Choir as an ensemble experience in college and university settings, state and privately-owned institutions finds broad acceptance. At first, Gospel choir is offered exclusively in the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) settings. By 2000, the Gospel choir was introduced as an extra-curricular or intramural elective at most state-owned and private non-black institutions.

**Chapter Four discoveries are concentrated into four areas**: 1) the benefit of Gospel Choir to the Black Church Mission may be summarized through five ministry related roles: a) the Gospel choir takes on a worship leadership role with the congregation; b) Gospel choir serves as a method for equipping untrained constituents as singers, instrumentalists and skilled musicians with and to a deeply grateful community of faith; c) Gospel choirs’ primary focus is on offering their gift to God and leading the congregations to praise God with a willing and committed heart; d) The Gospel choir functions to enhance Christian unity, harmony and
oneness; and, e) Worship singing creates a strong bond among the congregants. Simply put, “Gospel choir brings people together!”

The contribution and relationship between Gospel choir and the HBCU may be summarized through seven strategic strategies: 1) establishing and developing a common community; 2) common “spiritual experience” through the message of the Gospel in song; 3) promoting unity within (and without) the historically black community; 4) public-relations agents to the entire academia – critical for student recruitment and retention initiatives; 5) preserving “The Gospel Choir” as an alternative choral genre in the arts community; 6) providing opportunity for students to experience the joy of performing great music; and 7) HBCUs are able to serve their own community through the Gospel Choirs.

Over the years, there has developed a “Five-point rationale” for an institution using Gospel Choir as an Extra-curricular organization: 1) Personal enrichment; 2) Spiritual enrichment; 3) Diversity; 4) Unity; and, 5) Community.

Finally, there seems to be five benefits to the institution and student experience when Gospel Choir Ensemble is interwoven into the official academic curriculum offerings:

6) Strengthens and broadens the entire choral ensemble options.
7) Enhances opportunity for multi-discipline curricular involvement.
8) Provides opportunity for inclusion of the Gospel Choir Choral experience as part of the undergraduate and graduate music education curriculum.
9) Recognizes the Gospel Choir as an alternative choral genre – much like jazz vocal ensemble, classical choir, madrigal, a capella singers, etc.
10) Provides opportunity for multi-ethnic music experiences.

In chapter five, research discoveries included identifying need for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy. Discovery is grouped into two broad areas: I. The purposes for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy; and II. The process and practice in Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy.
In establishing the purposes for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy, seven pedagogical needs are identified: a) Pedagogical need to include Developing and Implementing a Philosophy for a Gospel Choir Pedagogy; b) Pedagogical need to include studies of the various gospel styles; c) Pedagogical need to include historical studies; d) Pedagogical need to include personal and group disciplines; e) Pedagogical need include the “real, underlying core purposes of the Gospel Choir as a group;” f) Pedagogical Need for Understanding the Gospel Choir Language; and g) Pedagogical Need for Understanding the Gospel Choir as a Musical Form.

In articulating the process and practice for establishing a Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy, four pedagogical needs are identified: a) Pedagogical need for building the Gospel Choir sound; b) Pedagogical need for developing and practicing successful Gospel Choir rehearsal technique; c) Pedagogical need for developing and practicing successful Gospel Choir performance technique; and, d) Pedagogical need for building a Gospel Choir pedagogical repertoire – answering the question, “What works best for developing a Gospel Music Ensemble?”

**Significant Contributions of Study as Applied to using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble”**

Involvement in this project has made significant contribution to my life on at least two levels, four personal and four professional:

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:**

1. Helped increase my personal knowledge about gospel choir and application to the domestic and global gospel music community.

2. Increased my own personal research skill level and interests in promoting the gospel choir genre worldwide.

3. Increased personal interest promoting gospel music ensemble in public and private schools.
4. Prompted me to seek creative ways to study and learn about the historical development of gospel choirs.

**PROFESSIONAL APPLICATION:**

1. The study presents a method for establishing and measuring program learning outcomes of gospel choirs in the classroom.

2. The study demonstrates the need to create pedagogical approaches for teaching music educators (conductors and choral music directors) how to lead Gospel Choir.

3. The study expresses the need for gospel choir being a part of collegiate level choral music preparation.

4. The study provides tools for communicating the context, rationale, benefits and purposes of building a Gospel Music Pedagogy.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Research in this dynamic area of Gospel Music Ensemble must continue. This study was intended to provide preparatory studies for the serious student of the Gospel Choir movement.

Six recommendations for future research follow:

1) Qualitative study that deals needs for improving Gospel music performance standard and orienting it to the current expectations for choral music in the music education community.

2) A descriptive study focusing more on analysing the past literature specific to Gospel Choir.

3) Quantitative study on the success of Gospel Choir as a public relations agent by college and university administrators.

4) Quantitative study comparing the Gospel Choir at select HBCU institutions.
5) Qualitative study between Extra-curricular Gospel Choir (no college credit) and the “Academic Gospel Choir” (for college credit) at five HBCU and five non-HBCU institutions.

6) Qualitative study of Gospel Choir as a “Spiritual Experience” at select public and private colleges or universities.

Concluding Summary.

In March of 2011, Dr. Terrell Strayhorn of Virginia Union University concluded a study on 21 African American undergraduate gospel choir members. Entitled, “Singing in a Foreign Land: An Exploratory Study of Gospel Choir Participation Among African American Undergraduates at a Predominantly White Institution,” three themes emerge that relate to the music educator dedicated to participating in and leading a Gospel Choir: 1) membership in the group helped students establish a sense of belonging, 2) the Gospel Choir experience helped students develop ethnic identity, and 3) the Gospel Choir experience provided opportunity for students to nurture resilience or inner strength.

The findings and conclusions of this study establish clear precedent and need within the academia for broader student participation and deeper professional training in Gospel Choir Ensemble technique. While the musical and cultural benefits for all are abundantly clear, contribution to the Gospel Choir as an ensemble – character building, providing a sense of belonging, ensuring ethnic identity, building inner strength, encouraging spiritual engagement – provides an abundantly more satisfying and long-lasting benefit to all involved – student and teacher alike.


Jones, Patrick M. "Returning music education to the mainstream: Reconnecting with the community." Visions of Research in Music Education 7, no. 1 (2006


Legg, Andrew and Stewart C. Long., "Journey: The Southern Gospel Choir in the USA" film documentary for ABC TV. Research supervision was by digital Kitchen and first screened in December 2015, it slated for broadcast and then distribution by the ABC through its Compass program in April 2016.


Schaffer, Donna Mary. “*An Introductory Pedagogy of Gospel Music for the Choral Conductor.*” A doctoral research document submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) at the University of South Carolina. Columbia, SC. 2018.


Young, Sharon. “*Purposes of gospel choirs and ensembles in state-supported colleges and universities,* *Western Journal of Black Studies* 29, no.4. 2005.

Retrieved from Internet and Website Resources


Stephens, Robert. “*A brief history of gospel music’s evolution.*” 2019. Available from:  


Appendix A:

Defense PowerPoint Presentation

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MUSIC


A Thesis Project Submitted to the Faculty of Liberty University School of Music in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Music Education by Arthur D. Beard III

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to research the contribution of and need for integrating “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” into the standard college music education curriculum. The study also investigated the history of Gospel Choir in America and established precedent and need for embracing “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” as a primary teaching tool in music education and verified the need for developing a pedagogical technique for music educators to use in “learning how to teach others to “lead” and/or direct “The Gospel Choir Ensemble.”
Research Questions:

Research Questions – The study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the historical precedent and need for using The Gospel Choir in the training and equipping of Music Educators?
2. How are HBCU and non-HBCU institutions integrating the study and use of Gospel Choir into their undergraduate and graduate music education curricula?
3. In what ways can articulating the need for the “Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience in music education be used to advance the broad musical and cultural experiences of secondary and college-age music students?
4. How does the Gospel Choir Ensemble experience contribute to the overall life-equipping process of a student?
5. Is there need for a formal Gospel Choir Ensemble pedagogy?

Hypothesis Statements: There are 5 Hypothesis Statements . . .

H1: There is adequate historical precedent and need for using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” in a primary teaching, training, and equipping role of music education professionals.

H2: There is need to demonstrate how “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience, at the college level, provides students a broader opportunity for music experience and expression.

H3: There is need to establish a formal “collegiate level standard” for using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” as a primary recruiting and retention tool for college and university music education degree programs.

H4: There is evidence of the need for “The Gospel Choir Ensemble” experience to serve in a music, social, cultural, peer, student inter-action and relationship capacity.

H5: There is evidence of the need for a Gospel Choir Pedagogy.
**The Methodology:**

Historical and descriptive research design seemed the most appropriate methodological process for this study.

**The Limitations:**

This study was not a quantitative or qualitative research project nor was it used as a platform for discovery of Gospel music or Gospel Choir’s role in social or political movements. It was not a comprehensive account of the rich and deeply meaningful history of Gospel Choir in America. And, there was no attempt to measure the effectiveness of Gospel Choir in music education or provide an assessment of program learning outcomes used in the establishment of any curriculum.

**Organization:**

*Discovery for this thesis was organized into six chapters, as follows:*  

*Chapter One – Introduction:* Chapter one included the Statement of Research, Methodology, Limitation, Research Questions, Organization of Thesis, and Key Terms.

*Chapter Two – The Literature Review:* This included a presentation of related research and was organized into three areas: 1) Research related to the history of gospel choir; 2) Research related to Gospel Choir in music education; and, 3) Research related to the need for Gospel Choir pedagogy. Related research sources for this thesis included scholarly works and papers, doctorate level dissertations, formal thesis research, textbooks, trade books and workshop manuals, magazine articles, online blogs, web-site posts, podcasts and collegiate level journals and formal lectures.
Organization Continued:

Chapter Three - A Historical Precedent of Gospel Choir in America:
This chapter provided a historical precedent of and need for “Gospel Choir in America” including: Introductory remarks, a survey of Sacred Singing in the African American Community Prior to 1850, Sacred Singing in the African American Community from 1850 – 1910, Gospel Choir from 1910 – 1970, Gospel Choir from 1970 – 2000, Gospel Choir from 2000 – 2020 and a brief wrap-up conclusion. The chapter established a premise upon which need for Gospel Choir’s inclusion in music education might be established.

Organization Continued:

Chapter Four - The Precedent, Purposes, Function and Need of Gospel Choir in Education:
This chapter provided an overview as applied to Music Education, including: Introductory remarks about the chapter’s emphasis; The Function and need for Gospel Choir in The Black Church; The purposes of and need for Gospel choir in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); The need for Gospel Choir as an extra-curricular activity in music education; The function of and need for Gospel Choir in collegiate level music education curriculum; and a comprehensive wrap-up conclusion.
Organization Continued:

Chapter Five - The Need for Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy:
This chapter investigated the need for developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy, including: Introductory remarks presenting the need for a pedagogical system in teaching Gospel Choir; a brief overview of the Unique Role of the Gospel Choir; The need for understanding the “Gospel Choir Language” and musical form; The need for establishing practical steps for building and develop the “Gospel Choir Sound;” The need for developing successful Gospel Music Ensemble rehearsal and performance technique; and, A comprehensive summary and conclusion.

Organization Continued:

Chapter Six - Summary and Conclusion:
This chapter is grouped into several strategic sections:
• Organizational Summary of the Research Study
• Organizational Purposes for Each Chapter
• Significant Findings and Discoveries
• Significant Conclusions as Applied to using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble”
• Recommendations for Future Research
• Concluding Summary
Related Research Discoveries

In chapter three, Historical Precedent and Need for Gospel Choir in America:

*Discovery suggests that Gospel music as a choral genre dates back to the pre-eighteenth century singing school movement.*

First, *African American Sacred Song before 1850 - The Folk Songs* are much more personal in character, include “chants for deliverance,” musical expressions of hope and religious melodies.

Second, *African American Sacred Song from 1850 – 1900* - Close to the end of the Civil War and on into the years of emancipation, spirituals and “heart song” reflected their soul, struggle, and profoundly spiritual journey Gospel Choir itself is a product of the African-American spirituals and hymnody of the mid-19th century.

2) “The minimalist, solo-sung "rural Gospel" tunes that appeared as a counterpart to the rural blues; and,
3) The uninhibited, exuberant worship style of the Holiness-Pentecostal church.
A key figure in the development of Gospel was Thomas A. Dorsey (1899 -1993).

Fourth, *Gospel Choir from 1970 – 2000* - Called the Modern Gospel Era, this period of Gospel Choir Ensemble development was dominated by radio and television artists that many times saw their mission to spread “gospel music” to mainstream America as “a calling.”
Related Research Discoveries

In chapter three, Historical Precedent and Need for Gospel Choir in America:

_Fifth, Gospel Choir from 2000 – 2020_ - The inclusion of Gospel Choir as an ensemble experience in college and university settings, state and privately-owned institutions finds broad acceptance. At first, Gospel choir is offered exclusively in the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) settings. By 2000, the Gospel choir was introduced as an extra-curricular or intramural elective at most state-owned and private non-black institutions.

Related Research Discoveries

Chapter four, The Precedent, Purposes, Need and Function of Gospel Choir in Music Education . . . Four areas:

1) **Gospel Choir Impacts the Black Church** in five ways: a) Impacts the worship leading role, b) method for equipping untrained singers, c) Main focus is on offering a musical gift to God; d) Enhances Christian unity, and e) Gospel Choir brings people together.

2) **Gospel Choir impacts HBCU Institutions** through 7 strategies: a) establishing and developing a common community; b) common “spiritual experience” through the message of the Gospel in song; c) promote unity within (and without) the historically black community; d) public-relations agents to the entire academia; e) preserving “The Gospel Choir” as an alternative choral genre in the arts community; f) provide opportunity for students to experience the joy of performing great music; and g) HBCUs are able to serve their own community through the Gospel Choirs.
Related Research Discoveries
Chapter four, The Precedent, Purposes, Need and Function of Gospel Choir in Music Education . . . Four areas:

3. Five rationale for Extra-curricular Gospel Choir Organizations: a) personal enrichment; b) spiritual enrichment; c) diversity; d) unity; and e) community.

4. Benefits of Gospel Choir being part of academic curriculum: a) Strengthens and broadens the entire choral ensemble options; b) Enhances opportunity for multi-discipline curricular involvement; c) Provides opportunity for inclusion of the Gospel Choir Choral experience as part of the undergraduate and graduate music education curriculum; d) Recognizes the Gospel Choir as an alternative choral genre – much like jazz vocal ensemble, classical choir, madrigal, a capella singers, etc; and, e) Provides opportunity for multi-ethnic music experiences

Related Research Discoveries
In chapter five, Need for Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy

Discovery is grouped into two broad areas:


Discovered 7 pedagogical needs: a) Pedagogical need to include Developing and Implementing a Philosophy for a Gospel Choir Pedagogy; b) Pedagogical need to include studies of the various gospel styles; c) Pedagogical need to include historical studies; d) Pedagogical need to include personal and group disciplines; e) Pedagogical need include the “real, underlying core purposes of the Gospel Choir as a group;” f) Pedagogical Need for Understanding the Gospel Choir Language; and g) Pedagogical Need for Understanding the Gospel Choir as a Musical Form.
Related Research Discoveries

In chapter five, Need for Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy

_Discovery is grouped into two broad areas:_

**II. The Process & Practice in Developing a Gospel Choir Ensemble Pedagogy. . .**

_Discovered 4 pedagogical needs: a) Pedagogical Need for Building the Gospel Choir Sound; b) Pedagogical need for Developing and Practicing Successful Gospel Choir Rehearsal Technique; c) Pedagogical need for Developing and Practicing Successful Gospel Choir Performance Technique; and, d) Pedagogical need for Building a Gospel Choir Pedagogical Repertoire_

Significant Contributions of Study as Applied to using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble”

_Involvement in this project has made significant contribution to my life on at least two levels, four personal and four professional:_

**PERSONAL APPLICATION:**

1. Helped increase my personal knowledge about gospel choir and application to the domestic and global gospel music community.
2. Increased my own personal research skill level and interests in promoting the gospel choir genre worldwide.
3. Increased personal interest promoting gospel music ensemble in public and private schools.
4. Prompted me to seek creative ways to study and learn about the historical development of gospel choirs.
Significant Contributions of Study as Applied to using “The Gospel Choir Ensemble”

Involvement in this project has made significant contribution to my life on at least two levels, four personal and four professional:

PROFESSIONAL APPLICATION:
1. The study presents a method for establishing and measuring program learning outcomes of gospel choirs in the classroom.
2. The study demonstrates the need to create pedagogical approaches for teaching music educators (conductors and choral music directors) how to lead Gospel Choir.
3. The study expresses the need for gospel choir being a part of collegiate level choral music preparation.
4. The study provides tools for communicating the context, rationale, benefits and purposes of building a Gospel Music Pedagogy.

Future Research Based on the Discoveries of this Study
1) Qualitative study that deals needs for improving Gospel music performance standard and orienting it to the current expectations for choral music in the music education community.
2) A descriptive study focusing more on analyzing the past literature specific to Gospel Choir.
3) Quantitative study on the success of Gospel Choir as a public relations agent by college and university administrators.
4) Quantitative study comparing the Gospel Choir at select HBCU institutions.
5) Qualitative study between Extra-curricular Gospel Choir (no college credit) and the “Academic Gospel Choir” (for college credit) at five HBCU and five non-HBCU institutions.
6) Qualitative study of Gospel Choir as a “Spiritual Experience” at select public and private colleges or universities.
In March of 2011, Dr. Terrell Strayhorn of Virginia Union University concluded a study on 21 African American undergraduate gospel choir members. Entitled, “Singing in a Foreign Land: An Exploratory Study of Gospel Choir Participation Among African American Undergraduates at a Predominantly White Institution,” three themes emerge that relate to the music educator dedicated to participating in and leading a Gospel Choir: 1) membership in the group helped students establish a sense of belonging, 2) the Gospel Choir experience helped students develop ethnic identity, and 3) the Gospel Choir experience provided opportunity for students to nurture resilience or inner strength.

The findings and conclusions of this study establish clear precedent and need within the academia for broader student participation and deeper professional training in Gospel Choir Ensemble technique. While the musical and cultural benefits for all are abundantly clear, contribution to the Gospel Choir as an ensemble – character building, providing a sense of belonging, ensuring ethnic identity, building inner strength, encouraging spiritual engagement – provides an abundantly more satisfying and long-lasting benefit to all involved – student and teacher alike.