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White Masculinity in Barbershop Quartet Singing

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Abstract

This article explores the cultural work of white masculinity in barbershop quartet singing in two historical contexts: the barbershop revival of the 1920s and 1930s and barbershop's struggle for survival in twenty-first century Philadelphia. It first details how revivalists attempted to re-create Victorian white masculinity by codifying and promoting a barbershop musical style and repertory that fostered closeness between men. By performing their musical style in public, masculine spaces, and admitting only white men to their gatherings, the organizers of the Barbershop Harmony Society opposed a number of contemporary social changes in the United States, including shifting gender roles, a rise in immigration, the economic instability of the Great Depression, and New Deal liberalism. The article then documents how and why barbershoppers in Philadelphia at the turn of the twenty-first century still perform this "close," neo-Victorian mode of white masculinity. In this new context, barbershop whiteness enabled a group of white men to claim belonging in their racially divided city despite years of migration and displacement caused by deindustrialization and urban decay. In both historical moments, barbershoppers used whiteness to challenge social and economic change and to assert the continued relevance of their musical style.

Since its golden age at the turn of the century, barbershop quartet singing has become both a symbol of the Victorian era and a successful hobby for men. Its primary organization, the Barbershop Harmony Society, currently has approximately 30,000 members in the United States and affiliate societies in eight other countries, including Germany, Australia, and Great Britain.[1] This resurgence after a fall from the popular mainstream was sparked by barbershop revivalists, who not only produced the Society, but also revised and codified barbershop's history, racial politics, and musical style.[2] In so doing, they advanced a mode of white masculinity that combined physical, emotional, and musical closeness.

This article examines the history and cultural work of this distinctive mode of white masculinity in barbershop, which was characterized by closeness between men, during its creation in the early twentieth century and in its struggle for

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[1] The Barbershop Harmony Society, formerly the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America (SPEBSQSA), is "committed to enriching lives in every generation and community through the lifelong benefits of a cappella harmony singing." For a complete mission statement and list of affiliated organizations, see http://www.barbershop.org.

[2] The golden age of barbershop ended after World War I, as syncopated dance music, blues, and jazz eclipsed its popularity. The barbershop revival movement began in the mid-1920s and coalesced with the founding of the Barbershop Harmony Society in 1938. For a detailed account of the barbershop revival, its origins, and its repercussions, see Gage Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (New York: Oxford University Press), esp. chap. 3.

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survival in Philadelphia at the end of the last century.[3] A reading of early writings about barbershop will show how authors racialized the style as originally white, and asserted closeness as a means of performing whiteness in barbershop. Then, an ethnographic account informed by demographic data and musical analysis will document the cultural work that this style of performed white, masculine closeness enacted for barbershop singers in Philadelphia between 2001 and 2003 as they negotiated changing ideals of manhood in the United States and struggled to find a place in their racially divided, postindustrial city.

This study draws on ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted between 2001 and 2003 with the Philadelphia Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. A group of businessmen founded the chapter in 1947, and met regularly in downtown Philadelphia.[4] The chapter grew rapidly, and helped to organize five new chapters in surrounding suburbs. Its chorus, then named the Quaker City Chorus, staged its annual benefit show at the Academy of Music, then the home of the Philadelphia Orchestra. After 1974, the group withdrew from downtown, and its membership gradually shrank. At competitions, the urban Quaker City Chorus was eclipsed by choruses from larger, suburban chapters, including those in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. An attempt to revitalize the group in 1992 increased membership and enthusiasm, and prompted the Chorus to change its name to The Sounds of Liberty. By the time I began fieldwork with the group, the Philadelphia Chapter numbered forty regular members, the majority of whom were of retirement age.

Although smaller, older, and less musically proficient than its suburban progeny, the Philadelphia Chapter's long history and experienced membership made it a desirable fieldwork site.[5] Several of its members owned large, personal archives related to the hobby that included recordings, photographs, and memorabilia. Though my status as a white male made my participation easier (only men are allowed to join the Barbershop Harmony Society as singing members, and the organization remains overwhelmingly white for reasons discussed below), my relative youth, professional musical training, and class status set me apart from the other members, most of whom had retired from blue-collar occupations.[6] This fieldwork experience generated questions about the history of barbershop "closeness" and race in barbershop's cultural work. In particular, I noticed that these aspects of barbershop

[3] I use the term "cultural work" to indicate the capacity of the arts (barbershop, in this case) to affect the lived experiences and subjectivities of individuals or groups, and to change or challenge power relations in society.

[4] Charter of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, 1947. Philadelphia Chapter Archive, private collection.

[5] As a participant-observer between 2001 and 2003, I participated in and recorded rehearsals, meetings, shows, and competitions. In addition to hundreds of short, informal conversations with barbershoppers, I recorded twelve in-depth interviews, each lasting up to three hours, with active members of the Philadelphia Chapter, including the leaders of The Sounds of Liberty Chorus. I met repeatedly with members of the chorus to examine their personal archives of barbershop memorabilia, record their accounts, and scan their archival materials. I also visited other chapters in the Philadelphia area and sang with quartets from other chapters.

[6] My experiences of difference in ethnography close to home are analogous to those described by Joanne Passaro in "'You Can't Take the Subway to the Field!': 'Village' Epistemologies in the Global Village," in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science,* ed. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 147–62 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

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singing seemed to connect in praxis. As documented by the accounts below, the intimate act of barbershop singing was important for these men in ways they often articulated in terms of both race and gender. Building upon these observations, this article explores how barbershop became such fertile ground for the performance of white masculinity, why Philadelphia's barbershoppers conceive their style in these terms, and what these aspects of barbershop singing offer to the group.

The study of race and gender in barbershop and the use of ethnography to document this musical style build upon previous work. Gage Averill has explored the racial origins of the barbershop style and the continued influence of blackface minstrelsy on barbershop through "blackvoice" performance.[7] His ethnographic accounts of modern barbershop events have documented and critiqued barbershop nostalgia as well as many of the essential concepts that barbershoppers use to define their hobby, such as "ringing" chords. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, Liz Garnett has theorized the roles of gender and stigma in the identity politics of being "a barbershopper" in Britain.[8] These studies, however, have tended to conceive race and gender discourses in isolation from each other, and to consider race only where representations or contributions of racial "others" are concerned.[9] Expanding on these efforts, this article explores how discourses of whiteness and masculinity connect in barbershop musical praxis and their implications for barbershop's place in a specific social and cultural context. It documents how whiteness played an essential role in the creation of the modern barbershop style, and how race impacts white barbershop musicians.

In making whiteness explicit, this article is part of a larger challenge to the general musicological tendency to discuss race only as it relates to commonly raced genres, musicians, composers, or audiences.[10] Scholars' reluctance to address whiteness

[7] Gage Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Lynn Abbott first critiqued the myth of barbershop's white origins in "'Play That Barber Shop Chord': A Case for the African-American Origin of Barbershop Harmony," *American Music* 10/2 (Autumn 1992): 289–325.

[8] Liz Garnett, *The British Barbershopper: A Study in Socio-Musical Values* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Press, 2005).

[9] Averill considers race "from two angles: from the strikingly hybridized cultural contributions that blacks and whites have made to barbershop harmony and from the representations and the discourse about race that have emerged in and around barbershop quartet singing"; *Four Parts, No Waiting,* 179. The latter topic concerns the active exclusion of African Americans from participation in the Barbershop Harmony Society. Garnett dismisses race as an issue in her study because barbershop in the UK "shares with its parent organizations neither their history of exclusion nor the concomitant discursive revisionism: the art form that Danser imported in the 1960s was already white, as was its imaginative vocabulary. And, while other imported cultural forms, particularly cinema, provide myriad clues as to the sorts of racial references associated with much of barbershop's core repertoire, few contemporary British barbershoppers appear to pick them up"; *British Barbershopper,* 10. Garnett is correct about the racialization of barbershop being complete by 1960, and the obliviousness of most barbershoppers to the racist history of their organization prior to the diversity efforts of the Society after 2003. Indeed, the same can be said of American barbershoppers, many of whom reacted with shock when they learned of the contributions of African Americans to the style. But I am skeptical of Garnett's assertion that race is not an issue, albeit an inexplicit one, for barbershoppers in Britain. One wonders what performed whiteness does for these barbershoppers, how it may mark their difference from local gospel choirs, or lay claim to a certain class status.

[10] Deborah Wong has argued: "To be American and to think about race means engaging with Whiteness and all its performances, yet this encompassing racialization is perhaps the most under-theorized embodiment of all, and therein lies its power and narrative definition." Wong, "The Asian

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has historically preserved its invisible status in American culture: by defining itself as the norm relative to numerous "others," discourses of whiteness often manage to disappear from view, displacing responsibility for its dominance onto the very groups that it excludes.[11] Thus, the place of whiteness in music scholarship echoes the normalcy of whiteness in Euro-American culture as a whole and reinforces whiteness as the hegemonic racial identity both in music history and scholarly discourse. Extending the discussion of race in barbershop beyond the contributions and invocations of "others" to performed whiteness reveals how whiteness harnesses class, gender, age, and other discourses to effect changes in its social and cultural context. This critique of barbershop whiteness as a complex, discursive framework is not an apology for race as an ethical or accurate means of identifying cultural groups, or for its legitimacy as a biological "fact."[12] Rather, it highlights the cultural work that whiteness accomplishes as a social reality, and how that work is contingent on other discourses. Such an explicit discussion of whiteness can thereby recognize race as a discursive bridge between musical sounds and other social realities in America.

Closeness, Race, and Victorian Masculinity

Victorian masculinity rested not on birthright or successful relationships with women. Rather, it was established in contests and relationships with other men

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American Body in Performance," in *Music in the Racial Imagination*, ed. Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 58. Similarly, in her review of *Music in the Racial Imagination,* Kyra Gaunt laments "the deafening silence around the subject of whiteness." Gaunt, review of *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ed. Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman, *Ethnomusicology* 48/1 (Winter 2004): 127–29. Nonetheless, a number of scholars have recently taken on musical whiteness as an explicit topic: see, among others, Kevin Holm-Hudson, "'Come Sail Away' and the Commodification of 'Prog Lite,'" *American Music* 23/3 (Fall 2005): 377–94; Theo Cateforis, "Performing the Avant-Garde Groove: Devo and the Whiteness of the New Wave,"*American Music* 22/4 (Winter 2004): 564–88; Vron Ware and Les Back, *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Lloyd Whitesell, "White Noise: Race and Erasure in the Cultural Avant-Garde," *American Music* 19/2 (Summer 2001): 168–89; and Jeffrey Melnick, "'Story Untold': The Black Men and White Sounds of Doo-Wop," in *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, ed. Mike Hill, 134–50 (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

[11] David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998); Ruth Feldenstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930–1965* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000). These studies demonstrate consistently that though whiteness has maintained normative status in American culture throughout the history of the United States, it is an unstable category that is dependent on other categories. Writing from a sociological perspective, Ruth Frankenberg has likewise theorized whiteness as a position of power that is informed by other discourses, including gender, class, and age; see *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). See also Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Richard Dyer, "White," *Screen* 29/4 (Autumn 1988): 44–65, and *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Fred Pfeil, *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination and Difference* (New York: Verso, 1995); Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); David Savran, *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[12] For an argument against race as a biological constant, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

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in the public sphere, where the "character" that "self-made" men acquired in overpowering other men marked their true manhood.[13] However, the heyday of quartet singing between 1890 and 1910 witnessed a crisis in masculinity. With their spheres of work and leisure increasingly open to women, middle-class men began to voice concerns about a perceived "feminizing of America." In response to these threats, many looked to leisure sports and what was called "the strenuous life" to perform their manhood more forcefully.[14] The new, more virile man, as embodied by Theodore Roosevelt, could dominate other men through fighting, forceful personality, and athletic ability. Boxing enjoyed a heyday. Men organized successful fraternal organizations, clubs, and hobby groups (including the Boy Scouts of America).[15] Social Darwinists in particular viewed this struggle to establish gender norms as directly related to the struggle of the Anglo-Saxon race against others and native-born Americans against new immigrants; stronger white men, they argued, would help to ensure the survival of white America.[16] In this context, race and gender were inextricably linked by the concept of "character," a quality of manhood, virility, and racial superiority that was developed through competition and close contact with other white men.

Such intimacy between men was not necessarily conceived as a mark of homosexuality—a man could be close with and even have sex with another man without being feminized or labeled "gay," so long as he performed a dominant, masculine role.[17] Certain urban, working-class neighborhoods, most notably the Bowery and Times Square in New York, became renowned centers of the bachelor subculture that youth gangs, transient workers, and "fairies," or effeminate men,

[13] Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Joe L. Dubbert, *A Man's Place: Masculinity in Transition* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1979), esp. 75–77.

[14] Harvey Green, *Fit For America: Health, Fitness, Sport, and American Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), chap. 5, 203–15; Donald J. Mrozek, "Sport in American Life: From National Health to Personal Fulfillment," in *Fitness in American Culture: Images of Health, Sport, and the Body, 1930–1940,* ed. Kathryn Glover, 18–46 (Rochester, N.Y.: Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, 1989); for more on the "worship of force" and its ties to antimodernism, see Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), chap. 3, 107–39.

[15] Elliot Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 130–44, chap. 6, esp. 191–94; Jeffrey P. Hantover, "The Boy Scouts and the Validation of Masculinity," in *The American Man*, ed. Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H. Pleck, 285–302 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1980). This is not to imply that before 1900 respectable middle-class men would never have attended a boxing match or participated in sports. On the contrary, men and couples in Victorian New York toured the saloons and dance halls where these manly contests took place to satisfy their fascination with abject working-class bloodsports; Gorn, *The Manly Art,* 182–85. However, after 1900, the middle and upper classes began to accept and even valorize rough sports, and their social spaces, as examples of American virility, rather than look down on them as evidence of the moral decrepitude of the working class; see Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), chap. 2.

[16] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925,* 2nd edn. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 149–57. For more on the increases in racism in the 1890s and its ties to masculinity and antimodernism, see Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 107–39.

[17] George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 36–46.

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created, especially in saloons. These same places would later be celebrated in both barbershop song lyrics and Hollywood movies as the urban homes of rough, carefree young men, whose ties to the others in the gang could only be broken by marriage and domestication.[18]

As the name "barbershop" implies, male quartet singing in the golden era likewise enjoyed a strong association with the places and social settings like barbershops that fostered closeness and intimacy between men. For example, many clubs, church groups, professional leagues, and fraternal organizations in Philadelphia featured quartets in their annual banquet celebrations, usually with singers drawn from the ranks of the organization.[19] The prominence of quartet singing in African American bachelor subculture in particular is evidenced in surviving accounts, such as the oft-quoted statement by James Weldon Johnson that "any four colored boys are a quartet."[20] Quartets were also common in most working-class entertainments, including vaudeville, variety shows, and what few minstrel theaters remained. Keith's Vaudeville Theatre in Philadelphia played host to at least twenty-six professional touring quartets and a national quartet contest between 1900 and 1925; its top floor was also home to a gymnasium that specialized in men's physical fitness.[21] Figure 1 shows a playbill advertisement from 1909 that features three photographic images of the bare-chested owner, William J. Herrmann, engaged in the kinds of intimate, forceful, and manly contests that were popular during the period, and invites men to return to the theater's gymnasium after work to wrestle, improve their strength, and demonstrate their manhood through contact with other men. Whereas the vocal quartets that appeared at the Keith sang (and sometimes played) in a diverse range of styles, all of them appeared in a space that was carefully constructed and labeled within the changing discourses of masculinity, leisure, and male community described above.[22]

[18] See, for example, the barbershop standards "Down Our Way," "Coney Island Baby," "The Gang that Sang 'Heart of My Heart,'" or "Down on the East Side of Thirty-third and Third." Gangs made an appearance in Hollywood movies through the "Dead End Kids" cast. Together, this group appeared in ninety-two films over the course of 1937 and 1958, under the group names "The Dead End Kids," "The Little Tough Guys," "The East Side Kids," and "The Bowery Boys."

[19] Music Fund Society of Philadelphia Records, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. A survey of programs in this collection from 1885 to 1905 yielded mentions of five professional and semiprofessional groups performing for fraternal banquets, trade beneficial associations, and church groups.

[20] James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (New York: Viking Press, 1925), 35, quoted in Abbott, "'Play That Barber Shop Chord,'" 290.

[21] This information was compiled during an exhaustive search of the surviving playbills from Philadelphia theaters, including the Keith, housed in the Theater Collection at the Free Library of Philadelphia. Relatively few of the programs survive from some years, so these data represent only a small sample of the quartets that performed at the Keith. I am greatly indebted to Geraldine Duclow and her staff for their assistance in this matter. The National Quartet Contest was held on 5 October 1925.

[22] Some quartets that appeared at the Keith, such as the Apollo Quartette of Philadelphia, included women, dressed formally, sang more "classical," anthem-like arrangements, and provided little comedic entertainment. Many offered physical comedy skits with songs interspersed for comedic effect. Others, like the Avon Comedy Four and the Quaker City Four, presumably sang the same kinds of "coon" songs, ballads, and up-tunes that we have preserved on their recordings and in current barbershop repertories. Taken together, these quartets did not perform in a unified style but in a variety of styles, each with its own distinct physical requirements.

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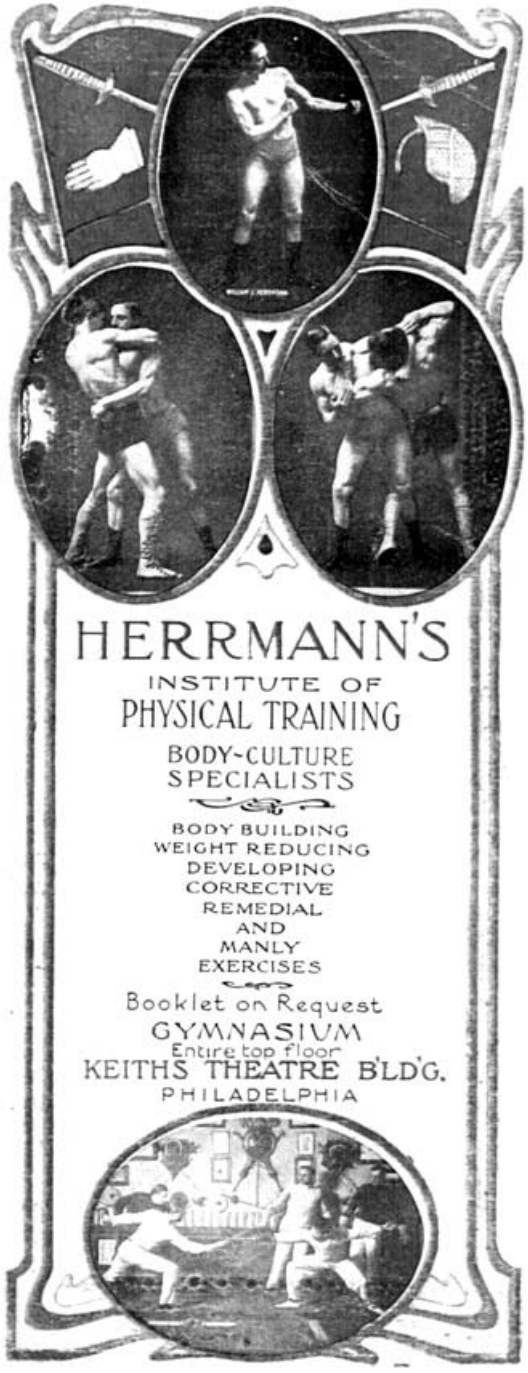


Figure 1. Program from Keith's Vaudeville Theatre, Philadelphia, week of 31 May 1909, featuring an advertisement for Herrmann's Institute of Physical Training. Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, The Free Library of Philadelphia. Used by permission.

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Theorizing the Closeness in "Close Harmony"

Beginning in the 1920s, barbershop revivalists re-created and performed this Victorian mode of masculinity using physical, emotional, and musical closeness.[23] Their writings emphasized camaraderie and closeness, and often referenced the working-class institutions associated with male intimacy, especially the saloon, the barbershop, and the gang, though they often reconstructed these spaces as rural.[24] Their musical choices encouraged emotional and physical closeness between singers in ways that reflect the ideals of neo-Victorian masculinity.[25] I refer not only to the lyrics of the songs they chose to preserve, many of which address topics dear to neo-Victorian hearts, but also to the physical modes of engagement between singers that their arrangements demanded. In paring down the diverse styles and practices that characterized quartet singing around 1900, revivalist authors disciplined their singers' bodies by selectively advocating a single "barbershop style" and repertory, which encoded closeness by eliminating those musical practices, such as instrumental accompaniment and solo verses, that had previously allowed singers to separate physically.

The earliest source for the codification of the barbershop musical style is *Barber Shop Ballads* by the popular musicologist and "Tune Detective" Sigmund Spaeth (1885–1965).[26] This book was published in 1925 as a men's practical introduction to the barbershop singing hobby.[27] Since that time, it has become one of the most widely cited sources for defining the barbershop musical style because of its early date and extensive use of musical examples.

Spaeth's relatively narrow representation of barbershop quartet singing favors sentimental ballads, "coon" songs, and ethnic caricatures while leaving aside the opera choruses and other, more formal quartet genres that were common in

[23] Gage Averill has identified the roots of the barbershop revival in neo-Victorianism, antimodernism, and nativism. Using evidence from song lyrics and interviews, he has also noted the distillation of barbershop ideals in the quasi-mystical barbershop concept of "harmony." Barbershop singers often describe their style as "close harmony," a phrase that points not only to its distinctive arranging style but also to the physical process of performing those arrangements. Like harmony, closeness carries both musical and social significance for barbershoppers. See Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting,* chaps. 3 and 5. As this article demonstrates, this *close* dimension of barbershop praxis is underemphasized in existing studies of barbershop singing and its history, but it is critical for understanding race and gender in this genre because closeness (both harmonic and physical) provides a direct link between the modern barbershop style and Victorian modes of performing white masculinity.

[24] Averill has noted the importance of "small town" imagery in the barbershop revival, especially for the founders of the Society. See Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting*, esp. 98–107, 153–58.

[25] *Barbershop Ballads: A Book of Close Harmony*, ed. Sigmund Spaeth (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1925); *Barbershop Ballads and How to Sing Them,* ed. Sigmund Spaeth (New York: Prentice Hall, 1940); Claude Trimble "Deac" Martin, *A Handbook for Adeline Addicts: A Starter for Cold Voices and a Survey of American Balladry* (Cleveland: Schonberg Press, 1932). For a detailed history and contextualization of the barbershop revival, see Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting*, chap. 3, esp. 87–91.

[26] As host of *The Tune Detective* radio program on NBC between 1931 and 1933, Spaeth analyzed popular melodies to determine their origins.

[27] After completing his doctoral dissertation at Princeton University on Milton's knowledge of music, Spaeth became a popular broadcaster, educator, author, and composer. See Sigmund Spaeth, "Milton's Knowledge of Music: Its Sources and Its Significance in His Works" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1913); and *Fifty Years With Music* (New York: Fleet Publishing, 1959). Spaeth's role in shaping popular and scholarly perceptions of American popular music in general warrants future study.

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vaudeville, variety shows, and recordings twenty years earlier. Indeed, the introduction to the 1940 edition of *Barbershop Ballads* ridicules the very diversity that had characterized quartet styles earlier in the century:

> All over the country the old custom of close harmony has been revived and barber shop [*sic*] quartet contests are now a recognized form of entertainment and competition. (The Keith theatres held one of the earliest of these contests, but ruined it by admitting mixed [gender] foursomes, with the finals at the New York Hippodrome exhibiting the gruesome sight of two men and two women singing the quartet from *Rigoletto*!)[28]

This limited barbershop repertory complemented a fictionalized, nostalgic narrative of the genre's amateur, rural, spontaneous origins.[29] Many of his chosen songs, listed below, celebrated the performance of Victorian masculinity, either with mentions in the lyrics of the places and behaviors associated with developing character (e.g., "The Heidelberg Stein Song"), or by associating the genre with the public, masculine settings (e.g., saloons, minstrel and variety shows) in which amateur and professional groups sang his chosen examples before the turn of the century.[30]

"My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean"
"Sweet Adeline"
"And She Lives Down in Our Alley"
"In the Evening"
"Some Folks Say ['Down Mobile']"
"I've Been Workin' on the Railroad"
"Levee Song and Extra Chorus"
"Mandy Lee"
"My Evaline"
"Love Me and the World Is Mine"
"Heidelberg Stein Song"
"Good-Night, Ladies, and Farewell"

Songs included in the 1925 edition of *Barber Shop Ballads* by Sigmund Spaeth

In one account of singing "Sweet Adeline" with a quartet, Spaeth asserts that such masculine closeness has long been an essential feature of barbershop singing:

> Probably everyone within earshot swooned with emotion. We were elevated. . . . No one except those who have participated in the singing of this immortal quartet will ever know the feeling, close to divinity, that came over us that afternoon. No one, we say? No one, save the countless adventurous bands of men that have similarly gathered, arms upon one another's shoulders, since the siege of Troy.[31]

Spaeth also casts barbershop as a sporting contest or manly competition, the primary forums in which white masculinity was demonstrated during the Victorian era: "The spirit of competition may also enter such a game. Glee Club contests

[28] Spaeth, *Barber Shop Ballads and How to Sing Them*, viii.

[29] For a more detailed discussion of this rural imagery and its importance for situating barbershop in America's "national imaginary," see Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting*, chaps. 3–5.

[30] Many of the "coon" songs included in Spaeth's collection were performed in variety and minstrel contexts that were associated with bachelor subculture, as noted above.

[31] Spaeth, *Barber Shop Ballads: A Book of Close Harmony*, 12.

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Example 1. A collection of endings from *Barber Shop Ballads: A Book of Close Harmony*, ed. Sigmund Spaeth (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1925), 18. Spaeth includes many such abstracted and labeled phrase endings, "swipes" (chords changes around a held pitch), and chords, all of which present close voicing as the norm.

are now regular events in schools, colleges and clubs, and there is no reason why any congenial gathering cannot be divided into rival groups and thus left to work out, harmoniously and musically, the eternal ambitions of human nature toward self-expression."[32] Though competition in barbershop singing might produce fellowship, Spaeth cautions singers not to humiliate one another when mistakes are made. Rather, he urges his audience to view quartet singing as a process and to work through places of difficulty with success in mind.

Spaeth's musical directions for barbershop singing further associated quartet singing with male camaraderie. Drawing on the precedent of minstrel, comedy, and recording quartets from the turn of the century, Spaeth in his arrangements placed the melody, or lead voice, below the tenor, creating chord voicings that are "close," rather than open, and require more careful listening and tuning while singing. Example 1 shows a collection of endings in Spaeth's *Barber Shop Ballads*. Spaeth discouraged instrumental and hummed accompaniment, female singers, and solo

[32] Ibid., 15.

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verses, all of which were common in the golden era of barbershop singing even among the quartets that served as his models. Instead, he promoted eye contact, cooperation, and interaction between the singers.

In his 1932 book *A Handbook for Sweet Adeline Addicts,* C. T. "Deac" Martin, like Spaeth, links the practice of barbershop singing to previously working-class, male spaces. Quoting cartoonist R. V. Cutler, Martin credits the creation of barbershop singing to turn-of-the-century youths who frequented the nostalgically recalled male haven of a small-town barbershop, which he likens to the urban saloon.[33] His introduction casts barbershop as an outgrowth of blackface minstrelsy.[34] The second chapter of the book likewise bears the title "Gentlemen, Be Seated," the famous interlocutor's phrase that would follow the introduction in a minstrel show.

Viewed against the backdrop of quartet singing during the golden era, the revivalist choices made by Spaeth and Martin narrowed style and repertory to create both physical and emotional closeness between men in order to facilitate the performance of Victorian masculinity. They legitimized this closeness by invoking the nostalgically constructed "barber shop," with references to specific, working-class, urban social institutions—minstrel shows, urban youth gangs, and the saloon—that were widely viewed as havens of masculinity and manly intimacy at the turn of the century. Alluding to the physical and musical closeness that these barbershops fostered, Martin autographed one copy of his book as follows: "What this country needs is more . . . and much *closer*. . . harmony. Deac Martin" (emphasis in original).

As the Great Depression fueled neo-Victorian sentiment in the United States, revivalist writings about barbershop grew increasingly nostalgic. One of the founders of the Barbershop Harmony Society, O. C. Cash, wrote: "[W]hat this country needs is some good old-fashioned barbershop singing. . . . If we're trying to get back to normalcy, let's go all the way back to handlebar mustaches, horsehair sofas, and

[33] Martin, *Handbook for Adeline Addicts,* writes: "As to the origin of the word 'barber shop' to indicate a soul-filling harmony, it is definitely a small town product from the days when the young bloods of the town associated in the barber shop for a sing out. R. V. Culter, the cartoonist, in his 'Gay Nineties' series paid a tribute to the 'tonsorial parlor in the days when such places were exclusively *masculine* institutions, where anecdote and tobacco juice ran freely. That was before the razor had been made safe for democracy. The flowery names on the private shaving mugs formed a roster of the town's most substantial citizens.' But the barber shop in the small dry town fulfilled another mission as well. In all but serving refreshments it was what the neighborhood saloon became in the city, a meeting place, a *'poor man's club,'* a forum, a port in a storm, and a singing society [emphasis added]." Like Spaeth's *Barbershop Ballads*, this book was intended for a general male readership. The purpose of the *Handbook* is to facilitate casual group singing by providing a list of song titles that serve as memory cues. Unlike Spaeth, Martin provides virtually no guidance as to how harmonizing should be accomplished, nor any polyphonic examples. Rather, he suggests how parts should behave, discouraging tenors from doubling the baritone in the final chord, for example. Baritones, he notes, occasionally double the tenor or bass, but "find their way" (63–65). What the *Handbook* lacks in musical specificity, it makes up for in repertory: Martin lists hundreds of diverse song titles, along with a few melodies, drawn from, among other places, minstrelsy, English folk songs, African American spirituals, "Hill Billy" music, pioneer songs, carols and hymns, Civil War songs, vaudeville and ethnic caricatures, Tin Pan Alley ballads, and novelty songs. Though the repertory is quite expansive, and far more diverse than Spaeth's, it still excludes the more formal arrangements and accompanied solos that many quartets performed during the golden era.

[34] Ibid., 10.

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bicycles built for two."[35] This yearning for a return to Victorian fashion, conveyance, and social mores made Victorian masculinity, performed through closeness, all the more desirable to revivalists. Consequently, barbershop revivalists after Spaeth and Martin emphasized physical and emotional closeness throughout their writings, often giving as much attention to closeness as to singing. For instance, in 1941, Cash wrote the following for one of the chapter bulletins:

> There are two things I particularly like—good music and good fellowship. I take the first for granted when I am around Barber Shop Singers, but although I attend several conventions each year, only at our Society Conventions do I find the genuine, old-time, small-town, neighborly affection and fellowship so manifest when our bunch gets together. That's why I like our old scalawags so much, and why I never miss an opportunity of being present when they congregate.[36]

The barbershop movement also mourned the loss of public masculine spaces during the Great Depression, and viewed quartet singing outside the home (and the domestic sphere) as a way to reclaim the vanishing mode of masculinity that they supported. This anti-domesticity was a political reaction to the social reform policies of the New Deal. New Deal reformers had emphasized the domestic sphere as a site for social improvement and the creation of masculinity. Good mothering and an orderly home, liberal experts argued, would produce rugged, productive, active male citizens, who could then improve the public realm. By contrast, "deviant" mothers emasculated both their sons and husbands and thereby fostered racism, criminality, and delinquency. In keeping with this view, New Deal programs attacked the perceived causes of bad motherhood, including poverty and male unemployment.[37]

Conservatives, by contrast, clung to the neo-Victorian notion that manhood was not created by good mothering but by contact with other men. Competition and closeness with other men at the fraternal society, barbershop, boxing ring, or sports field nurtured manly character, while mothering weakened it. This neo-Victorian

[35] Quoted in *Barbershopping: Musical and Social Harmony*, ed. Max Kaplan (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993), 14.

[36] O. C. Cash, November 1941, in *The Best of O. C. Cash: A Collection of Thoughts* (Kenosha, Wis.: SPEBSQSA, 2002), 1. The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America (SPEBSQSA) is now the Barbershop Harmony Society. In the mid-nineteenth century, the term "scalawag" (also spelled "scallawag") referred to a "disreputable fellow; a good-for-nothing; a scapegrace; a blackguard. " After the Civil War, the term was applied to white southerners who accepted the terms of reconstruction and to trade union members who would not work; see *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Scalawag," http://www.oed.com. With its allusions to delinquency and disreputability, the term invokes the idealized street gang or club of bachelors that was central to the revivalist narrative of barbershop's origins.

[37] Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930–1965* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), chap. 1; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Suzanne Mettler, *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998). See also Theodore W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, R. Nevitt Sanford, in collaboration with Betty Aron, Maria Hertz Levinson, and William Morrow, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950); Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (1942; repr. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955).

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political stance and sense of loss was clear even from the founding of the Society, as this paragraph from the Society's first invitation attests:

> In this age of Dictators and Government control of everything, about the only privilege guaranteed by the Bill of Rights not in some way supervised or directed is the art of Barber Shop Quartet Singing. Without doubt we still have the right of "peaceable assembly" which I am advised by competent legal authority includes quartet singing. The writers of this letter have for a long time thought that something should be done to encourage the enjoyment of this last remaining vestige of human liberty. Therefore we have decided to hold a songfest on the Roof Garden of the Tulsa Club on Monday April 11, at six-thirty p.m.[38]

Such tongue-in-cheek opposition to the reforms of the New Deal was even apparent in the name of the new organization founded at this meeting, the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America, or SPEBSQSA, which parodied the acronyms that were applied to government programs at that time.

Ideally, the barbershop musical style of the late 1930s and 1940s would foster the performance of Victorian masculinity by reviving the physical and emotional closeness that had characterized turn-of-the-century clubs, gymnasiums, and sporting events. Revivalists gathered outside the domestic sphere in hotels and clubs, away from the influence of women. They drew closely together in order to match vowel shape, gesture, facial expression, breath, and timing, and reached for such a level of social and musical harmony that they could improvise together simultaneously. Invocations of "gangs," "the Bowery," and "Times Square" in countless barbershop lyrics, along with hyperbolic self-identifications as "scalawags," likewise memorialized this closeness by referencing the geographic places and social settings that were established homes to the turn-of-the-century bachelor subculture, with its values of mutuality, anti-domesticity, and camaraderie.

Race, Politics, and the Origins of Barbershop

The conservative stance adopted by Cash and other revivalists, however lightly presented, had serious implications for the racialization of the barbershop style. New Deal reformers of the time argued that racial equality and integration were possible in the United States if social reforms could be extended to black homes, where bad motherhood was thought to be rampant.[39] Reformed black mothers would raise productive, responsible black men, allowing for their integration into American society. By contrast, the early leaders of the Barbershop Harmony Society subscribed to a social Darwinist view in which manhood was defined by "character," which was a mark of white racial superiority and a means of preserving the white race. Racial integration through social reform was therefore neither possible nor desirable. Since, for revivalists, one of the main purposes of barbershop singing was to foster character through masculine closeness, this opposition to racial integration

[38] O. C. Cash and Rupert Hall, open letter, repr. in "And How They Grew," *Harmonizer* 24/1 (January–February 1964): 9, quoted in Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting*, 100.

[39] Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue*, vol. 1, *The Depression Decade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

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applied to barbershop singing as well. Barbershop singing became a white genre and, despite objections of some more liberal singers and negative press coverage, the Society retained its policy of accepting only "white men of good character."[40] The ideological link in barbershop between masculine closeness and whiteness persisted in the Society past midcentury. A resolution passed by the Society Board in 1959, for example, stated as its first reason for the continued exclusion of African Americans from membership the "involved and close social and fraternal intercourse that became more firmly established year by year and which we have come to recognize as a wholesome, vital and indispensable part of Society activities."[41] The Society preserved its racist membership policy until 1963.

Though the revival racialized barbershop singing as white, the style did not become monochromatic in all respects. The barbershop repertory and style retained many symbols of blackness, including black dialect, burnt cork, "blackvoice" mannerisms, "coon" songs, and minstrelsy repertory. Though masculine closeness defined the barbershop style and constituted a primary goal of the Society, the performance of race in barbershop was more complex and regularly ventured into the blackness of minstrelsy.[42]

Early revivalist efforts to document the origins of barbershop supported the process of racialization. Indeed, within the barbershop revival race first appears as an explicit topic in discussions of the origins of barbershop singing.[43] In the 1940 revision of *Barber Shop Ballads*, Spaeth advances two hypotheses for the origins of the style that, though casually presented, offer a complicated blend of scholarship and conjecture. His first theory, based on internal evidence, is that quartet singing was, at least in part, an outgrowth of African American culture. Spaeth writes that "in any case, barbershop harmony contains the elements of folk music, particularly in its improvisational character. Its technique is of the naïve and spontaneous type, and its effects may well be associated with the natural music of the Negroes themselves."[44] Though a great deal of historical evidence indicates that most key features of the barbershop musical style originated with African American amateur and professional quartets,[45] Spaeth is the only early historian of the barbershop style to credit African Americans with a role in its creation.[46]

[40] As Averill has noted, this dissension symptomized an important ideological, political, and geographic division within the barbershop revival between New York singers and the "Heartland" founders of the Society. For a detailed discussion of this controversy, and the "Red Caps" incident that estranged these groups, see Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting*, 109–14.

[41] Society Board, *Resolution*, January 1959.

[42] For a more detailed discussion of the legacy of minstrelsy in post-revival barbershop and its importance for performers, see Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting,* esp. 131–33.

[43] In his 1925 edition Spaeth likens barbershop to black music as follows: "Its harmony tugs and strains in every direction, just as ragtime and its jazz offspring rip orthodox melody and rhythm into tatters." Spaeth, *Barber Shop Ballads: A Book of Close Harmony*, 14.

[44] Spaeth, *Barber Shop Ballads and How to Sing Them*, 2.

[45] See Abbott, "'Play That Barber Shop Chord.'"

[46] An explanation for Spaeth's open-mindedness emerges in the 1920 edition of *Barber Shop Ballads* in his discussion of his barbershop arrangements, which violate "the laws of strict harmony" and will disappoint "expert theorists" (26). As Alexander Rehding has documented, deviation from the established norms of Western tonal harmony and voice leading signified racial otherness for German musicologists of the late nineteenth century investigating the origins of music. See Rehding,

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Spaeth's other theory for the origins of barbershop, based solely on the external evidence of the word *barbershop*, posits the origins of the style in Elizabethan barbers' music. Ironically, though no documentary evidence supports this theory, it was advanced by later writers for decades to the exclusion of the African American origins theory until Lynn Abbott's groundbreaking work in the 1990s.[47] By offering a theory, however unsubstantiated, for the white origins of barbershop, Spaeth's work supported the racialization of barbershop as a white musical praxis.

Whereas the style of barbershop singing proved to Spaeth the racial otherness of its origins, its capacity to foster closeness and camaraderie between men appeared even more important: "Whatever its origin, [barbershop singing] represents a distinct style, with social values perhaps outweighing those of musical significance."[48] Consequently, even though barbershop groups regularly drew on performance practices and repertory from minstrelsy, a primary function of revivalist barbershop was to perform a neo-Victorian mode of white masculinity through closeness.

Fathers, Buddies, and Teammates: Contemporary Barbershop Closeness and the Politics of Manhood

In 2002, barbershoppers continued to re-create the physical closeness that barbershop revivalists codified musically. This physical dimension of barbershop praxis is often accompanied by an emotional closeness described by Averill:

> The relationship of the internalizing and externalizing of the self and others in collective musical encounters encourages the production of a powerful, transformative experience of the self as a participant in a community, resulting in a greater sense of unity and solidarity. Collective audition—hearing together—is a persuasive, physical confirmation of connectedness.[49]

Barbershop listening can likewise become embodied. Several barbershoppers described to me in interviews and in conversation their bodily manifestations of Averill's transformation—the physical experience of listening to an outstanding barbershop quartet or recording and "feeling what it would be like" to sing those

"The Quest for the Origins of Music in Germany Circa 1900," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53/2 (Summer 2000): 345–85. See also Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 252. Spaeth may have become familiar with these ideas during his doctoral studies in music at Princeton University before 1913 (Spaeth, "Milton's Knowledge of Music"). His dissertation concerns Milton's knowledge of music and its importance in his literary works, and therefore focuses on the music of sixteenth-century England, leaving aside questions of the origins of music. None of the key sources for the early debates on the origins of music are cited in the bibliography. Nonetheless, it seems probable that Spaeth would have encountered debates on the origin of music in his studies at Princeton. In any case, Spaeth's notions of the role of race in determining musical style reflect these ideas. As German musicologists resurrected their musical style in scholarship using racial discourse, so did Spaeth ten years later.

[47] Abbott, "'Play That Barber Shop Chord.'" Similar revisionism was also applied to the spiritual; see Dena Epstein, "A White Origin for the Black Spiritual? An Invalid Theory and How It Grew," *American Music* 1/2 (Summer 1983): 53.

[48] Spaeth, *Barber Shop Ballads and How to Sing Them*, 2.

[49] Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting*, 178.

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sounds. Thus the experience of intimacy in contemporary barbershop is not limited to singers but extends to some listeners, particularly those with singing experience. Contemporary barbershoppers use this closeness to perform a range of masculinities that comply with hegemonic modes of masculinity.[50] The following accounts from interviews and fieldwork experiences represent some of the approaches to barbershop masculinity that emerged repeatedly during my fieldwork.

At thirty-two, David R. was the second-youngest member of The Sounds of Liberty (I was the youngest).[51] His enthusiasm and fifteen years of experience in barbershop, including several years with the accomplished Alexandria Harmonizers chorus, made him an influential person in the Philadelphia Chapter. He originally joined The Sounds of Liberty to assist with planning choreography, a duty he continued to fulfill throughout most of my fieldwork. David also sang with one of the best quartets in the Philadelphia Chapter and often organized informal quartet singing after rehearsals.

During our interview, David spoke at length about the masculine relationships that barbershop singing facilitates. He ascribed to the barbershop style the power to bring men together physically and emotionally to a degree that would otherwise be impossible for heterosexual men. His chosen example was the tag, or ending of a song, which is often excised and sung informally by four singers.[52] David explained that successful barbershop singing produces closeness and camaraderie between the singers that lasts well beyond the song itself.

> DR: I remember at director's college I sang a tag with this one guy.
> RM: What tag?
> DR: It was, uh, "falling leaves"—you know that tag.
> RM: Yeah, we do that a lot.
> DR: I sang "falling leaves" with this one guy . . . and all of a sudden you could hear it building—building—building and then this sound just went through the roof and through the floor just like it was a beam of light, that laser beam that just went forever, and it was that sound—we were standing in a box [formation]. And ever since then I've seen this guy a couple of times at conventions or you know at other environments and we give each other a big hug. When it was done we just tried to hold that chord as long as we could 'til we ran out of breath because it was just so good. And then we gave each other big hugs and it's like every time I see this guy he's like—he's like a buddy, you know? So there's something special

[50] Here I draw on R. W. Connell's discussion of how hegemonic power relations observed among class and race groups, such as subordination, domination, complicity, and marginalization, manifest also among masculinities. See R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 76–81.

[51] David, like all members of The Sounds of Liberty at the time of my fieldwork, is white. In keeping with the Human Subjects Research Protocols of my study, all narrators have been assigned pseudonyms in this article. This decision was made to allow narrators to speak candidly about the relationships between barbershop singing and potentially sensitive aspects of their identities and experiences, such as sexuality and race.

[52] "Tag singing" regularly occurred before and after rehearsals, with sessions sometimes lasting for hours. As Liz Garnett notes, "The imaginative and gestural vocabulary displayed in these [tag] session is closely matched to the musical experience, and the interpersonal bonds forged during them are strong and enduring." See Garnett, *British Barbershopper,* 137. Garnett provides a detailed account of tag singing in chapter 7, in which she observes that tag singing offers a private manifestation of the musical and social values that are often represented more publicly in barbershop praxis.

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> about that, and you can't put anything concrete on that, it's just a very special thing that you can have between two, four guys.[53]

In keeping with the observations of Garnett and Averill, David considered emotional closeness a natural aftermath of executing successful tags.[54] The physical acts of hugging, running out of breath together, and standing "in a box" (all four singers shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle) provided a foundation for this emotional experience. As David explained to me later, the barbershop sound provides an opportunity for physical closeness that would *not otherwise* have been permissible between men in that time and place, a closeness that makes barbershop one of the most important forces in his life.

By contrast, Ed M., one of the older members of the Philadelphia chapter at age seventy-nine, often referred to the quality of barbershop singing in terms of "each man doing his job."[55] Ed was the chapter librarian, editor of the chapter bulletin, and an elder with fifty years of quartet singing experience who often implored the members of the Sounds of Liberty chorus to improve their individual vocal technique and knowledge of barbershop "craft." His emphasis on teamwork and duty in manly conduct references a mode of masculinity that was promoted among servicemen during World War II, a period that Ed identified as an important transition in his life: "[Being drafted] was sort of a breaking point from being at home all the time. And basically from the time I was in high school, really, I was doing things on my own, very little family involvement."[56] This mode of masculinity was the primary lens through which Ed viewed barbershop singing.

Ed was the only openly gay member of the forty-member Philadelphia Chapter, and I asked him later if he felt that his sexual orientation had given him a different perspective on the reasons barbershoppers enjoy their hobby.[57] He replied:

> The *only* thing that I can think of is that there is something as far as performance is concerned, which doesn't have anything to do with [sexual] orientation. It's the kind of thing that you, in so doing, if it's done nicely, that you get the response and the feedback from your audience. . . . And the pleasure in the fact that you have done some of the musical

[53] David R., interview with the author, Philadelphia, 23 March 2002.

[54] Garnett, *British Barbershopper*, chaps. 5 and 7; Gage Averill, "Bell Tones and Ringing Chords: Sense and Sensation in Barbershop Harmony" *The World of Music* 41/1 (1999): 37–51.

[55] Ed M., interview with the author, Philadelphia, 31 August 2002.

[56] Ibid. See also Dubbert, *A Man's Place*, 234–36. Dubbert writes: "In a very significant way the military offered a unique form of security by stressing 'team philosophy' and cooperation and in defining the *job to be done*. The soldier was provided with all he needed and was only expected to carry out his orders, accommodate the bureaucracy, and accept his assigned station [emphasis added]." See also Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

[57] Like many gay men of his generation, Ed did not discuss his sexual orientation explicitly. For example, he referred to his partner of fifty years as his "friend" (often in hushed tones) and never used the word "gay" with reference to himself. Nonetheless, his sexual orientation was understood within the chorus. For a more detailed exploration of the difficulties in discussing sexuality with older gay and lesbian narrators, see Sherrie Tucker, "When Subjects Don't Come Out," in *Queer Episodes in Music and Identity*, ed. Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell, 293–310 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

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> things. And that's the way I'd sort of look at it. I don't think that there should be any other explanation why you'd do the songs that way.[58]

Ed's response turned the focus of our interview away from the topic of intimacy and homoeroticism in barbershop and back to the mode of masculinity that he performed by "doing his job" and the pleasure that this provided for audiences and singers alike. This indicates the degree to which the barbershop hobby is an overwhelmingly heterosexual space, despite the neo-Victorian intimacy and homoeroticism musically encoded in its close harmony style.

In my own experiences singing with the Corner Notes quartet, the musical structures of barbershop songs often facilitated physical closeness between singers. This novice quartet gathered primarily for fun, but also offered singing telegrams on Valentine's Day. When their tenor stopped singing for health reasons, the remaining members of the quartet—Tom K., Greg B., and Rob H.—reconfigured and invited me to join as their lead in 2002. Greg, who sang baritone, rewrote the words of the nostalgic song "Wedding Bells Are Breaking Up That Old Gang of Mine" to create a quartet theme song: "The Corner Notes Are Singing With That Old Gang of Mine."

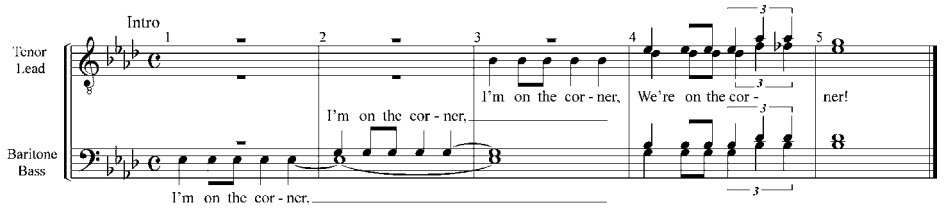
> There's a crowd down on the corner.
> That's a pretty certain sign
> That the Corner Notes are singing with
> That old gang of mine.
>
> Everyone is singing love songs
> Hear them chord "Sweet Adeline"
> Yes the Corner Notes are singing with
> That old gang of mine.
>
> Now here comes Jack, here comes Jim
> To croon an old refrain.
> Their notes may be a bit off key
> But they sing them all the same.
>
> We get that down on the corner feeling
> When we harmonize in time.
> Come on, listen to the Corner Notes
> Like that old gang of mine.
>
> Lyrics of the "Corner Notes Theme Song," adapted from the lyrics of "Wedding Bells are Breaking Up That Old Gang of Mine." Used by Permission.

Greg's efforts revitalized the ethos of anti-domestic, street-corner gangs by converting a nostalgic lament into a celebration of the "old gang" and its continued popularity. The new lyrics still invoke common symbols of romanticized bachelor subculture and male intimacy, the gang and the street corner, but they also invite the audience to participate and become "like that old gang of mine."[59] With the

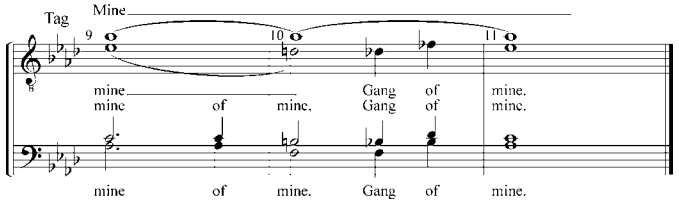
[58] Ed M., interview with the author, Philadelphia, 31 August 2002.

[59] Later, this passage was later revised to make it more singable. "As days go by, won't you be like that old gang of mine?" was replaced with "Yeah, we Corner Notes love singing with that old gang of

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Example 2a. "Corner Notes Theme Song" introduction. Used by permission.



Example 2b. "Corner Notes Theme Song" tag. Used by permission.

assistance of the chorus director, Rob wrote a new introduction and tag for the song, given in Examples 2a and 2b, both of which provide compact, useful examples for analysis.

Our bodily encounters with the imitative opening of the introduction depended upon the specific circumstances of our singing. In rehearsal, we sang most often in a semicircle or in a "box" format. Entrances in this case usually involved a slight lean inward towards the rest of the quartet. The baritone and I tuned the triad during these three measures by focusing on the bass singer's pitch and vowel placement. The other three parts then watched me in m. 4 to match my rhythmic interpretation of the triplet at the end of the bar, which was free. The box standing configuration made synchronization easier in m. 4 by allowing direct visual communication between me and the other singers.

By contrast, when singing for an audience the quartet became far more involved physically. Individual entrances in the introduction usually featured a small step forward and a hand gesture towards the audience. Because synchronization in m. 4 was more difficult to achieve with the singers facing the same direction, especially between the lead and baritone, the quartet often drew together slightly at that point, the tenor and baritone facing at an angle towards the lead and bass. This measure became the focus of a musical, lyrical, and physical gathering, as bodies turned inward, polyphony became homophony, and pronouns shifted from "I" to "we."

Ironically, this moment of group "harmony" often took place in spite of the sound of the chords at the beginning of the measure. These first-inversion dominant seventh chords were extremely difficult for this particular group to tune because

mine." The revision, though less directly inviting to the audience, retained the general theme of the song as a celebration of quartet singing and bachelorhood in the context of street culture.

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of a whole-step dissonance between the lead and tenor on one side and a tritone between the lead and bass on the other. After a sour attempt in rehearsal, the group would stop, attempt to find and correct the mistake, and begin again with the hope of better results. The Corner Notes seldom sang this introduction with perfect accuracy, even after spending much rehearsal time working on it, and yet the fourth measure still functioned physically and musically as an introductory moment of closeness for the quartet. We looked at one another, the bass put his hand on my shoulder, and the soloists became an ensemble. Likewise, the tag of this song facilitated a similar kind of closeness between the lower parts. Beginning in the first measure, the bass, baritone, and I drew together, glancing at one another to synchronize our slow glissando into the first chord of the second measure. On several occasions, I recall smelling Tom's breath to my right, and feeling a hand rest on my shoulder as we arrived on the final chord.

The introduction and tag to the Corner Notes theme song provided an effective and balanced combination of closeness and challenge for the members of the quartet. Yet this closeness could be both opportunity and danger, since its homoerotic charge sometimes threatened the heterosexual space of the hobby.[60] The members of The Sounds of Liberty Barbershop Chorus negotiated this potentially transgressive aspect of their emotive, sentimental musical practice in a variety of ways. On many separate occasions during my fieldwork I saw a barbershopper break this tension during a song by pretending to get carried away, "mistaking" another singer for the female object of the song's lyrics, kissing him, and then recoiling in disgust. The singer thereby policed the heterosexual boundaries of the group by lapsing momentarily into a homosexual role only to reject it. Others employed sports metaphors to represent the virile, heterosexual masculinity of barbershop closeness: during one rehearsal, an accomplished barbershop coach urged the group to "put your hands in, slap each other on the butt and go out there."[61]

[60] Robert Walser has likewise noted that many musicians in the masculine world of heavy metal express anxiety with regard to the homoerotic aspects of their subculture, specifically the subjection of male musicians in androgynous garb and makeup to the male gaze of audiences. Through homophobic jokes and comments, these men also seek to protect the heterosexual coding of their genre. Like barbershop, however, closeness (in this case, the intimacy of the gaze) carries an important function, allowing young men to "grow away from women." See Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1993), 114–17.

[61] Mainstream comedians have capitalized on the friction between barbershop's wholesomeness and counter-hegemonic emphasis on male closeness by explicitly linking barbershop with homoeroticism, much to the delight of audiences. For example, in September and October of 2006 the program *Talkshow* on the Fox Network featured two appearances by the Dapper Daniels, "a barbershop quartet that sings about homoerotic encounters." Their revised lyrics to such standards as "Down By the Old Millstream (Where I First Met Jim)"—the original lyric is "Where I first met you"—and "I've Been Working on the Railroad" included explicit references to homosexual acts, whereas the group's name, an obvious parody of the Dapper Dans quartet that entertains visitors to Disneyland, along with the group's striped vests, armbands, and straw hats, clearly invoked Victorian social mores. By contrast, British stigmatizations of barbershop, as Liz Garnett has noted, filter barbershop's associations with "sexual deviance" through references to the clergy. See Garnett, *British Barbershopper*, chap. 4. In both contexts, however, such comic references to barbershop quartet singing highlight the tensions between neo-Victorian and contemporary hegemonic modes of masculinity.

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The Sounds of Liberty managed this problem, in part, by casting the sentimental, "emotional" quality of barbershop singing in feminine terms. Leaders of the group praised female barbershoppers, or "Sweet Adelines," as models for male barbershop singers in terms of stage presence. As one barbershopper explained to me, "The women are better at choreo[graphy], because they're more in touch with their feelings, more in touch with their emotions." Likewise, the director of The Sounds of Liberty Chorus sometimes mentioned "pulling emotion out" of the singers as difficult or even impossible at times because men are "less emotional."

This casting of sentimentality as feminine reveals a point of rupture between the neo-Victorian masculinity of the barbershop revival and hegemonic modes of masculinity in contemporary Philadelphia. Whereas the emotionalism and sentimentality of a barbershop ballad like "Sweet Adeline" were cast in feminine terms in 2002, Spaeth took the opposite view in 1925. "Adeline, whoever she may be (and the song is by no means as ancient as some would believe), has unquestionably figured as the flower of your heart for many years, if you are half the man you seem to be. Go ahead and serenade her to your heart's content."[62]

The Sounds of Liberty often became quite passionate and animated in front of an audience, even winning praise from contest judges in competition for this aspect of their delivery. The demand that barbershoppers perform "with feeling" sometimes served as a liberating force, allowing men to perform heartfelt emotions that might otherwise remain mute within a hegemonic mode of masculinity. While waiting for their turn to compete in October of 2001, experienced members of the chorus shared their strategies for emoting during the ballad "You Keep Coming Back Like a Song," about the loss of a loved one. One man spoke of his wife, who had passed away four years earlier. Another referenced the 2001 terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center. All emphasized the importance of cultivating and expressing appropriate feelings while singing, because, as one experienced member put it, "then your voice and body will go with it as well."

Anxiety about emotional performance is compounded by the potentially feminizing position that barbershoppers adopt by wearing makeup and brightly colored clothing when performing onstage. By becoming objects of the masculine gaze they draw attention to what Laura Mulvey calls their "to-be-looked-at-ness."[63] This spectacular mode of performance offers a point of contact between barbershop and other forms of entertainment that grew from vaudeville, including Hollywood musical films. As Steven Cohan has noted, many musicals starring Fred Astaire interrupt an otherwise coherent, "straight" narrative with an extradiegetic "showstopper."[64] The Sounds of Liberty took this principle to an extreme in their annual shows, using

[62] Spaeth, *Barber Shop Ballad: A Book of Close Harmony*, 30.

[63] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 19.

[64] Steven Cohan, "'Feminizing' the Song-And-Dance-Man: Fred Astaire and the Spectacle of Masculinity in the Hollywood Musical," in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema,* ed. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (New York: Routledge, 1993), 66. This mode of performance has other generic precedents, including vaudeville and minstrelsy, that also warrant exploration. For reasons of space, I have chosen to focus primarily on this one because it best draws out the "showstopper" format that drives barbershop shows. In addition, most of the barbershoppers with whom I worked had more direct familiarity with Hollywood film and the work of Fred Astaire than they did with vaudeville and minstrelsy. Cohan's notion of a "straight" narrative interrupted also

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a plot, advanced in brief sections of dialogue, as a pretense for singing otherwise unrelated songs from their repertory as "showstoppers." Their audiences expected as much; one member noted to me, "People don't pay to hear us act. I mean, we really don't do that very well—they come to hear the music!"

The spectacle of barbershop, even with its makeup and camp costume, does not create androgyny. Rather, it enacts a mode of close masculinity complicit with modes of viewing and performing from prewar popular cinema and, more remotely, from the vaudeville and minstrelsy traditions that barbershop participated in. Put in the terms of R. W. Connell, although the barbershop style commonly references codes of pre-Vietnam-era masculinity that are no longer current, it is "complicit" with hegemonic constructs of masculinity to the extent that it encourages patriotism, masculine sensitivity, and devotion to family.[65] And yet, barbershop's emphasis on sentimentality, male closeness, and intimacy (not to mention striped vests, armbands, and bow ties) places them outside dominant modes of masculinity in the contemporary United States.

Postindustrial Barbershop and the Cultural Work of White, Male Closeness

Like masculinity and closeness, race has remained a factor in barbershop singing since the revival years. As the formal definition of the barbershop style matured, mainly through the establishment of rules for contests, a racially charged, stylistic opposition grew between barbershop and "modern" musical styles, including "popular" and avant-garde music.[66] By offering an alternative to jazz, rock, and other sites of profound African American influence on mainstream culture in the twentieth century, barbershoppers defined their position as a white cultural force through musical aesthetics, in addition to closeness. Histories of the genre that neglected to mention the importance of African Americans for its origins bolstered whiteness as a defining feature the barbershop movement. And prior to 1963, this lens was matched by an exclusive membership policy that prevented "non-whites" from joining the Society.

Since the abolition of racist membership guidelines, however, the representation of barbershop as antimodernist, neo-Victorian, and culturally white has persisted.

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points to a queer reading of narrative in barbershop performance and related styles, a project I shall undertake elsewhere.

[65] Connell, *Masculinities*, esp. 76–81.

[66] By "popular" music, I do not mean the entirety of American vernacular and mass-marketed musics. Rather, I use this term (in quotes) to indicate the stigmatized collections of genres and artists that barbershoppers often referenced in writings about barbershop and during my fieldwork. This category has taken different form at different moments and for different individuals. For O. C. Cash and the founders of the Society, the barbershop style stood as an alternative to both swing and hot jazz. By contrast, many barbershoppers in 2002 cast their style in opposition to rap music, hard rock, and Top 40. Furthermore, this is not to imply that barbershop singing has not been influenced by some aspects of these musics. For more discussion of the relationship between barbershop and other genres in the 1950s and 1960s, see Richard Mook, "The Sounds of Liberty: Nostalgia, Masculinity, and Whiteness in Philadelphia Barbershop, 1900–2003" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2004), esp. 159.

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This is not to say that the Society or its chapters continue to exclude singers of color actively. On the contrary, since 2001 the Barbershop Harmony Society as a national organization has become more aware of the racial dimensions of its membership and activities. Articles in the *Harmonizer* from that period stressed the importance of outreach to communities of color, political sensitivity, and diversity.[67]

Despite these initiatives, however, many of Philadelphia's barbershoppers continued to assert their stylistic and social opposition to contemporary popular music in terms of race. In particular, many barbershoppers defined their style of singing in opposition to rap music, which served an important symbol of blackness and youth.[68] Riding in the car to a quartet appearance, Jake F. expressed to me his distaste for rap, which he viewed as unmusical and unintelligible: "You can't *sing* rap music! Half the time I can't understand what they're saying, or don't want to!"

Similarly, another barbershopper contrasted the clarity of barbershop diction with the lack thereof in contemporary popular music generally: "Kids these days mumble. You can't understand what they're singing."

Rather than prescribing the membership of the group explicitly, whiteness persists as an ethnic marker that informs contemporary barbershoppers' perceptions of their style's cultural work. Whereas rap represents disorder and social decay, the barbershop style represents and promotes clarity, harmony, and good will. Put differently, the style is a social panacea to the members of The Sounds of Liberty. While driving me home from one of my first rehearsals with the chorus, Terry D. explained the social potential of barbershop music.

> They sang a song tonight that sort of sums it up: "Keep the Whole World Singing." That song, the first couple times I heard it I said, "Yeah, that's great. We should keep the whole world singing." If the whole world was singing there'd be a lot less . . . problems in the world. Because it's kind of hard to stay mad when you're singing. You ever noticed that?[69]

In Terry's view, barbershop singing promised to extend "musical and social harmony," which Averill and Garnett have identified as essential aspects of barbershop social ideology worldwide.[70] The Barbershop Harmony Society actively promotes

[67] Charlie Metzger, "Are You Politically Correct?" *Harmonizer* 63/4 (July–August 2003): 20–23; Scipio Graling, Ray Yeh, Carlos Bermudez, John Krizek, Kendall Williams, and Tim Emery, "A More Diverse Society," *Harmonizer* 64/3 (May–June 2004): 16–22.

[68] Barbershoppers often associated youth and youth culture with "modern," non-barbershop music. This sometimes resulted in ageist misunderstandings about my relationship to barbershop and The Sounds of Liberty repertory. When The Sounds of Liberty added "American Bandstand" to its repertory, several of the older members associated it with youth, implying that it was the kind of music that young people like me would listen to. I replied to the contrary that I had never heard the song or seen the show, which was first filmed in Philadelphia decades before I was born. The Barbershop Harmony Society came to similarly ageist conclusions when they published a series of arrangements labeled "Harmony Explosion," intended to attract high school and college singers: it included arrangements of rock and doo-wop songs from the late 1950s and early 1960s that most youths had little direct connection with. The role of ageism in defining the barbershop style warrants further exploration, and I plan to take up this topic elsewhere.

[69] Terry D., interview with the author, Philadelphia, 20 February 2001.

[70] See Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting*, chap. 5. Liz Garnett has analyzed connections between musical harmony and an "ideology" of social harmony in British barbershop: see Garnett, *British Barbershopper,* chap. 2.

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this goal, as evidenced by recent outreach programs in China and Russia, and in the lyrics of "Teach the Children to Sing," a closing song written by Joe Liles:

> What is a heart without harmony?
> What is a soul without song?
> A bird with no wings,
> A harp with no strings,
> A world without right or wrong![71]

In my interviews and conversations with them, barbershoppers often discussed the reluctance of more diverse singers to join this musical and social movement in terms of musical taste. In one interview, I asked John W. for his thoughts about recent efforts of the Society to recruit a more diverse membership and audience.

> I often said, and I've been saying this for years, that we've got to get some black fellas in who can sing, and we'll have none of these goofy guys running around destroyin' things or murdering people or— I think that [more diversity] would be a great thing for our society. But they don't seem to like our kind of music! For *some* reason.[72]

David expressed a similar opinion during a casual discussion of an "open house" membership drive after a Sounds of Liberty rehearsal. However, he argued against the assertions of others that more recent popular repertories are incompatible with the barbershop style, citing "How Do I Say Goodbye to Yesterday" by the quartet Boyz II Men as a good option for barbershop arranging.[73] "That would be *great,*" he added, noting that such arrangements would attract younger and more diverse singers and audience members.

By linking the racial demography of their group with musical taste, The Sounds of Liberty drew attention away from the myriad nonmusical factors that might discourage people of color from joining the chapter, including some potentially offensive repertory, or a lack of strong links between The Sounds of Liberty and communities of color in Philadelphia. Shifting the problem of racial homogeneity to one of musical taste also obscured and normalized the important cultural work that whiteness did for the group by defining its social goals. For many of Philadelphia's barbershoppers in 2003, their style was a dwindling voice of community, unity, good citizenship, and "character" in a city marred by the division and violence embodied in rap and popular music, a distinction they often cast in racial terms. This social outlook gave them power and reason to argue that their music is good, important, and worth preserving in America's landscape.

Consequently, their particular blend of neo-Victorian nostalgia and whiteness also helped to define the group's location, or "home," in the city of Philadelphia.

[71] Joe Liles, "Teach the Children to Sing" (Kenosha, Wis.: SPEBSQSA, 1995). Used by permission.

[72] John W., interview with the author, Philadelphia, 3 February 2002.

[73] The song was originally recorded by G. C. Cameron on the Motown label for the 1975 movie *Cooley High.* It was then covered by Boyz II Men on their 1991 album *Cooleyhighharmony* (Motown 37463620-2, 1991). For a study of popular ballads by Boyz II Men and others, including analysis of their "musical blackness" in the context of American culture, see Richard Rischar, "One Sweet Day: Vocal Style in African American Popular Ballads, 1991–1995" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000).

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Between 1947 and 1974, the Philadelphia Chapter of the Society enjoyed free access to Center City rehearsal spaces, including the elegant Bellevue Stratford Hotel ballroom, thanks to the members' personal and business connections.[74] As Philadelphia transitioned to a postindustrial economy, the group's membership shifted to the northeast section of the city and the personal connections to Center City institutions evaporated. Unable to pay for rehearsal space and Center City parking, the Philadelphia Chapter abandoned its home in 1974.

The displaced Philadelphia Chapter then gravitated towards the traditionally white, working-class neighborhoods of Northeast Philadelphia not only for their reduced cost and convenience, but also because these neighborhoods shared the chapter's racialized view of Philadelphia's economic, demographic, and cultural metamorphosis. This connection first became apparent to me during a Sounds of Liberty appearance in a parade in the urban neighborhood of Port Richmond.

The district was packed with small, two- to three-story row houses, with a few businesses located on corners. Most people were out on their porches and seemed to know their neighbors. Children chased a basketball through the street and onto nearby porches, but no parents seemed worried. Tables were set up on sidewalks and porches with pizza, food, beer, soda, etc., for everyone to share. The people looked happy to be together. And they were all white. I saw not one person of color in two-and-a-half hours of traveling throughout this neighborhood, an experience that I had never had elsewhere in Philadelphia. When I asked other members of the chorus about these striking demographics, they told me: "These folks keep out the undesirables"; "They don't move"; "This is one of the stable neighborhoods in the city"; "Mostly blue-collar"; "They've lived here forever"; "Lithuanians, Poles. . . ."

During this event, I was struck by the strong affinity between the social environment of the neighborhood, with its friendly neighbors and active urban street life, and the sociability and Victorian imagery of barbershop singing.[75] I also noticed that the barbershoppers I interviewed explained the state of the neighborhood by emphasizing its endurance and persistence in the face of change. This view of sociability and unity as parts of a struggle for preservation, a major theme for the Barbershop Harmony Society, seemed also to connect barbershopping with the Port Richmond neighborhood. Intuitively, it made sense to me that they would hold rehearsals there, as they did from 1991 to 1993.

The history of Port Richmond explains this connection between the worldviews of barbershoppers and the residents of that neighborhood. Like other urban neighborhoods in Northeast Philadelphia, such as Kensington, Northern Liberties, and Bridesburg, Port Richmond entered the twentieth century as a mill district with two thousand factories and the "densest concentration of manufacturing plants

[74] This story of the chapter's founding and migration was narrated in an interview with the Philadelphia Chapter Historian and confirmed using correspondence, programs, minutes, and photographs in the Philadelphia Chapter Archive, private collection of the chapter historian. These include the following letters: Randolph Gilman, open letter "Notice to All Barbershoppers," 21 November 1947; James M. Selby to Carroll P. Adams, 23 June 1947; William A. Mechesney to Herman E. Herbst, 29 August 1958; James M. Selby to Herman E. Herbst, 31 July 1959.

[75] Averill details the importance of Victorian "Main Street" imagery for barbershop singing and iconography using lyric analyses and interviews in *Four Parts, No Waiting*, chap. 5.

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and skilled labor in the [Philadelphia] metropolis."[76] An active social atmosphere and strong sense of community made the Northeast a good home for the types of fraternal organizations that later served as models for the Barbershop Harmony Society.[77] They also helped the Port Richmond community to preserve itself through the deindustrialization that shook Philadelphia in the second half of the twentieth century, even though the benefits of economic restructuring have bypassed the community and many of its families as jobs moved to the suburbs or elsewhere.[78]

Unlike some nearby neighborhoods, however, Port Richmond has preserved extensive neighbor and community networks, and church parishes remain the most important social, educational, and architectural structures in the community.[79] Indeed, the sense of community is so strong in Port Richmond that its residents feel more allegiance to the neighborhood than to the city of Philadelphia as a whole.[80]

[76] Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennylvania Press, 1968), 181. Historians use a variety of names in referring to the area encompassing Kensington, West Kensington, Richmond, Northern Liberties, Frankford, and Fishtown, including Northeast Philadelphia and North Philadelphia, depending on the period under consideration. In current parlance, North Philadelphia is an official planning district that includes the northwest areas of the city, which are largely African American, and "the Northeast" includes all territory to the northeast of Juniata and Bridesburg. Housing development in this area was fueled by the onset of industrialization in the city.

[77] Warner, *The Private City,* 179–83. Warner notes: "Far from being a place of a mass of isolated and alienated metropolitan workers, the residents of the Northeast had more habits of organized activity than those of any other district. Northeast Philadelphia was the home of benefit associations, craft unions, fraternal orders, and ethnic clubs. It also enjoyed some of the street life and neighboring qualities generally associated with lower-class, immigrant districts like parts of south Philadelphia" (179–80). See also Jean Barth Toll and Mildred S. Gillam, *Invisible Philadelphia: Community Through Voluntary Organizations* (Philadelphia: Atwater Kent Museum, 1995), 9. On the importance of fraternal organizations for the barbershop harmony society, see Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting,* 102–4.

[78] Judith Goode and Jo Anne Schneider, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia: Immigrants in a Divided City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 120. The geography of Port Richmond became a handicap when Philadelphia's manufacturing sector began to decline and restructure. As Caroline Adams has summarized: "In Philadelphia's traditional districts for manufacturing—Center City, Kensington, Port Richmond, Northern Liberties—there was little vacant land, and the cost of demolition and reconstruction was generally prohibitive. These sections of the city were also handicapped by the age of their infrastructure. Built to the standard of nineteenth-century technology, streets were narrow and blocks were small, creating congestion and adding significantly to the costs of transportation. Only in the late 1950s and afterward were public programs created to subsidize the costs of demolition and infrastructure development, and they were often too little and too late." Adams, *Philadelphia: Neighborhoods, Division, and Conflict in a Postindustrial City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 42. These factors, along with increases in city taxes and declines in city services, helped to drive to the suburbs the manufacturing jobs that had previously supported neighborhoods like Port Richmond and Kensington. The many factories that stood in Port Richmond were replaced with malls, supermarkets, chain retail stores, and fast-food restaurants.

[79] Goode and Schneider, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia*, 99–100, 120. Polish immigrants who settled in Port Richmond and later moved to other areas often return to the neighborhood to visit friends and relatives or to patronize the Polish bank, bakeries, parishes, travel agencies, restaurants, and other businesses.

[80] Ibid., 118. Today, the traditional community organizations that remain have hardly any links to the urban revival or antipoverty programs. Noting that many citywide organizations and improvement initiatives bypass Port Richmond, Goode and Schneider observe: "Port Richmond is very different from the other two neighborhoods in the way public linkages are articulated, relying more on informal communication than on formal structures. Although Port Richmond is dotted with sports leagues, parish structures, and other groups, there are no large civic umbrella organizations, empowerment

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TABLE 1. Racial Make-up of the Near Northeast Communities in Philadelphia Based on 1990 Census. Adapted from Judith Goode and Jo Anne Schneider, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia: Immigrants in a Divided City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 106. (Data drawn from multiple census tables.)

	% in Kensington	% in Olney	% in Port Richmond
White	49.5	28.9	96.7
Black	7.1	45.2	1.9
Asian	1.2	8.6	0.09
Latino	51.8	31.8	1.3
Other	42.2	17.3	0.5

In terms of demography, Port Richmond is unique among Northeast Philadelphia neighborhoods in retaining established, white, working-class residents and maintaining property values despite the loss of manufacturing jobs (see Table 1). Like many of Philadelphia's barbershoppers, residents of Port Richmond view the trends of deindustrialization, decentralization, and migration of African Americans to Philadelphia in racialized terms, seeing "invasion" of the city by black "outsiders" as the primary cause of the city's decline since the 1970s, and fearing "forced integration" of their neighborhood by the city and a "domino effect" of black encroachment and decay from outside their community.[81]

And yet, despite this protectionist, racialized outlook, white residents of Port Richmond take for granted the few established African American and Puerto Rican families within the community. Workplaces in Port Richmond are integrated, as are parochial schools and friendships. This contradiction suggests that community organizations in Port Richmond draw sharp, racialized lines between insider and outsider not out of simple prejudice but in order to define their community in terms of involvement and participation. Racism, in this context, represents a fear of outsiders moving into the neighborhood, and the social or economic change that such migration symbolizes.[82]

Similar contradictions surfaced in an interview with Mike C., when he interpreted the changes to his neighborhood in racial terms while qualifying his statements carefully to ensure that he was not perceived as racist: "It used to be all white, yeah. Like I say, if you have nice class people they're the same as you and I."[83] When Philadelphia's barbershoppers invoke nostalgia in their music and work towards their goals of cultural "preservation" and sociability in response to social "decay"

groups, or community development corporations in the community. Groups here rely more on personal communication between people known to each other" (122).

[81] Many of the economic and social transformations that have reshaped neighborhoods around Richmond are commonly cast in racialized or ethnicized terms. A riot in 1964 closed many white-owned businesses in North Philadelphia and shifted these white residents north and east into Kensington, Olney, and Richmond. This hardened the geographic and economic lines between white and black in Philadelphia. Today, Aramingo Avenue serves as a symbolic boundary and a point of contact between residents of Richmond and the groups that have come to occupy Kensington and Northern Liberties, including Latinos and African Americans. See Goode and Schneider, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia*, 101–2, 121–22.

[82] Ibid., 102, 121.

[83] Mike C., interview with the author, Philadelphia, 3 February 2002.

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they become complicit with local constructions of whiteness in neighborhoods like Port Richmond, where residents see their communities as bulwarks against encroachment by racialized others. Drawing on these claims to entitlement and power in postindustrial Philadelphia gives The Sounds of Liberty a home in their city. When the Port Richmond community invites The Sounds of Liberty to sing in their local parade they, in turn, make barbershop nostalgia a part of their cultural landscape and heritage, adding weight to their bulwark.

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For contemporary barbershoppers in urban Philadelphia, whiteness is about more than their personal race affiliations or simple prejudice against other groups.[84] It does cultural work for The Sounds of Liberty by positioning them geographically, historically, economically, and aesthetically. It binds together race, class, gender, and sound to create belonging and entitlement in a postindustrial city, an important achievement for a group dedicated to the promotion of a musical style that has been largely outside the popular mainstream for nearly a century. The revivalists who encoded whiteness in barbershop singing decades earlier were similarly under siege. Amid the turmoil of a languishing economy, the New Deal threatened their beloved masculine social spaces and gender roles. Through a newly whitened musical style, characterized by closeness, barbershopping promised a return to the vanishing musical and social norms of Victorian America. In both of these contexts, whiteness offered barbershoppers musical ways to respond to economic, demographic, and social change, making discourse about race an important site of contact and exchange between the sound of barbershop and its social significance.

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[84] For a more detailed critique of studies and media representations that reduce racism to "simple prejudice," see John Hartigan Jr., "'White Devils' Talk Back: What Antiracists Can Learn from Whites in Detroit," in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, ed. Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene J. Nexica, and Matt Wray, 138–66 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).

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