Sacrifice of Praise: Emotion and Collective Participation in an African-American Worship Service*

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This paper draws on interviews and participant observation in an AME congregation to document the normative system of emotions and behaviors that make up an "emotional" worship service. First I discuss the system of "feeling rules" which are operative in the service and how individual emotions are evoked through liturgical discourse. Next, I show the unique aspects of the "emotional" service, including "shouting," the encouragement of response behavior, and the diffusion of behavioral expectations throughout the congregation. Finally, I discuss reasons for the continued vitality of "emotional" worship ritual among African Americans and critique traditional explanations of the link between "emotionalism" and social class.

On the corner of a rundown street in Charleston, South Carolina there is a small African Methodist Episcopal church. The modest brick structure sits on a lot entirely enclosed, as are all of the church lots in this poor urban neighborhood, by a substantial fence. Visible through the straight iron bars is a sign that proclaims "Eastside Chapel AME Church. Sunday morning worship 11:00 AM. Thursday Prayer Service 7:00 PM. Rev. R. L. Wright, Pastor." If one were to open the doors of this building on a Sunday morning shortly after 11:00, step through the tiny narthex and into the red-carpeted sanctuary, the scene would look something like this: James Ravenel, organist and choir director, is seated at his instrument directly behind and slightly above the pulpit. While the worshippers continue to arrive and file into the pews, he quietly plays a gospel song. On the back wall above the choir loft, a computer-generated banner proclaims "WE'VE COME THIS FAR BY FAITH." The adjacent wall holds a similar banner that features a rendition of praying hands and the caption "WHAT A MIGHTY GOD WE SERVE." These banners are the sanctuary's only adornment. As Ravenel plays, Tony Green sets up his drums on the floor to the side of the pulpit.

After several minutes, as most of the hundred and fifty or so worshippers have settled into their places, Ravenel begins playing the refrain to the Isaac Watts hymn "Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed," more popularly known as "At the

* Special thanks to Martin E. Marty, Gerald Suttles, Robert Wuthnow, participants in the workshop at the Center for the Study of American Religion at Princeton University, and three anonymous reviewers. Direct correspondence to Timothy J. Nelson, 193 S. Main St., Milltown, NJ 08850.

1 The names of the church and all persons have been changed to protect their identity.
Cross.” At this cue the congregation stands for the processional, their singing scattered at first but quickly gathering force:

At the cross, at the cross
Where I first saw the light
And the burden of my heart rolled away
It was there by faith I received my sight
And now I am happy all the day

So begins another Sunday morning worship service at Eastside Chapel. Starting off slow and measured, with an opening prayer and hymn, the service rapidly builds in intensity and congregational involvement. By the time the choir sings its first selection, swaying slowly from side to side, many worshippers are standing and clapping to the music. Soon several of the “church mothers,” older women in the first row or in the front flanking pews known collectively as the “amen corner,” start to “shout” or dance in a stylized way with their heads down and eyes closed, moving across the front of the sanctuary. The choir stops singing but the music continues while several other worshippers begin to shout in the pews, some moving out into the center aisle. Cries of “Glory!” and “Hallelujah!” punctuate the heavy beat and churning bass of the organ and drums. This continues for over ten minutes before the shouters move back to their seats, worshippers begin to sit down, and organist Ravenel plays several closing chords. Service leader Nazarene Simmons steps up to the pulpit and announces the next activity in the order of worship.

The display of enthusiastic response and shouting I have just described (and which is often repeated two or three more times throughout the three-hour service) is a common one at Eastside Chapel. Sociologists, anthropologists, and other observers have labeled this type of worship as “emotional,” and it is most characteristic of lower-class African-American congregations (Daniel 1942; Johnston 1956; Drake and Cayton 1962). Scholars have generally discussed a tendency toward “emotional” worship in terms of the latent functions that such services provide for their participants (Baer and Singer 1992; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). However, it is not my purpose here to engage explanations of the causes or origins of this type of religious ritual among lower-class African Americans (although I will touch on this point in the conclusion). Rather, this paper treats the “emotional” worship service as an instance of face-to-face interaction and analyzes the system of emotional and behavioral norms which operate upon congregants during the course of the ritual.

First I discuss the explicitly emotional aspects of the service and draw on Arlie Hochschild’s (1979, 1983) concept of “feeling rules” to argue that there are normative standards which identify how a worshipper is supposed to feel. I then show how these particular feelings are evoked within the service through the discourse contained within liturgy, prayers, songs, sermons, and testimonies. Next, I discuss norms of expressive behavior and identify two types of “emotional” expression — response behavior and shouting — both of which operate according to somewhat different sets of expectations. Third, I examine the “emotional” service as a type of collective behavior with a particular dynamic of involvement that is generally absent from “nonemotional” rituals. Finally, I
explore several reasons for the continued vitality of this type of cultural expression and why it is found particularly among poor and working-class African-American congregations.

An understanding of these processes is important not only because of the historical significance of this type of ritual for African-American patterns of religious expression (Raboteau 1978; Pitts 1993), but also because this type of worship is currently associated with those black denominations (The Church of God in Christ) and congregations (the "neo-Pentecostal" movement in the African Methodist Episcopal Church) which have experienced rapid growth in recent decades (Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches 1992; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990).

METHODS

This paper is based upon data gathered through ethnographic field research. For twelve months in 1991 and 1992 I was a participant-observer at Eastside Chapel on Sunday mornings and evenings, weeknight prayer services, Bible studies, and many revival meetings. In addition to my field notes on these occasions, I obtained and transcribed twelve audio tapes of complete worship and revival services. Toward the end of my time in the field I was generously granted permission to videotape several revival meetings and Sunday morning services, and these recordings became invaluable sources of reference as I constructed the analyses in this paper. Finally, I interviewed Reverend Wright and twenty other members of Eastside Chapel at length about their experiences in and conceptions of the worship service.

EMOTION NORMS AND THEIR FULFILLMENT

A situation (such as a funeral) often carries with it a proper definition of itself ("this is a time of facing loss"). This official frame carries with it a sense of what it is fitting to feel (sadness). Work to make feeling and frame consistent with situation is work in which individuals continually and privately engage. But they do so in obeisance to rules not completely of their own making (Hochschild 1979: 563).

An "emotional" worship service, like a funeral, carries with it a proper definition of itself. According to the understanding which Eastside Chapel members have of the Sunday morning service, it provides an occasion for God to meet with his people in a time of celebration and praise; it is a party which worshipers give in honor of God for who he is and in gratitude for what he has done in their lives. This definition of the situation carries with it implications for the particular emotions that congregants should feel throughout the service. Hochschild calls these emotional standards "feeling rules" and indicates that these rules not only pressure people into displaying the situationally "correct" emotion (what she calls "surface acting") but actually motivates them to try and experience appropriate emotions and suppress inappropriate ones (or "deep acting"). From my participant-observation at Eastside Chapel I have identified five particular emotions that operate as normative standards throughout the worship service.
The fundamental emotion expected of congregants attending a Sunday morning service is worship or praise. Indeed, the Sunday morning service at Eastside Chapel (and most other Christian churches) is called a “worship service,” and those who attend are identified as “worshippers;” therefore, this particular emotion is built into the occasion itself. Lest those in attendance forget this, there are numerous “feeling reminders” throughout the service.

Hymns often serve as powerful reminders of this emotion norm. The “Hymn of Worship” is sung directly after the “Call to Worship.” One popular hymn for this segment is *We Praise Thee O God* with the words “All glory and praise to the Lamb that was slain. . . .” Other hymns of praise include *Praise Him* ("Hail Him! hail Him! highest archangels in glory; Strength and honor give to His holy name!") or *Down at the Cross* with the chorus, “Glory to His name, Glory to His name; There to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His name!” After the scripture reading, the congregation always sings Hymn #10, *From All That Dwell* ("From all that dwell below the skies, Let the Creator’s praise arise"), and during communion service they might sing “Let us praise God together on our knees" (*Let Us Break Bread Together*).

The message that praise and adulation is the appropriate emotion during the ritual is also proclaimed from the pulpit in numerous ways. What follows are two examples, the first from a pastoral prayer and the second from a sermon, both by Reverend Wright.

In Jesus’s name we’ll give You the glory, the honor, and the praises, because all of it belong to You to start with.

Oh He is a mighty God, and we should adore Him. We should adore our God. We ought to sing hymns of adoration and praise to the living God.

The emotion of gratitude or thankfulness is also held up as a standard during the Eastside Chapel worship service. This feeling rule is often invoked during prayers, as it is almost a requirement for those approaching God on behalf of the congregation to thank Him for the opportunity to “be in the house of the Lord one more time.” This can be seen in the following two excerpts from Reverend Wright’s pastoral prayers.

Precious Father in Jesus’s name. We are grateful for another day. We are thankful that You kept us all the night long. We’re grateful that You allowed us to enter into the house of worship once again.

Father in heaven. We thank You for this wonderful privilege to enter into Thy house again. And Lord, we — we are just so grateful.

Love for God and for fellow Christians is also held as a normative standard during the worship service. This is particularly evident in the Eastside liturgy. In the traditional AME Call to Worship the minister proclaims: “Lord, I love the habitation of your house, and the place where your glory dwells.” Another regular Sunday feature, the Summary of the Decalogue, repeats Jesus’s famous words:
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

The Benediction exhorts congregants to, “... keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Finally, the words of hymns also remind worshippers of their duty of love toward God with such lines as: “I will ever love and trust him” and “Fill me with Thy love and power” (I Surrender All); “Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart, in-a my heart” (Lord I Want to Be a Christian); “But drops of grief can ne’er repay the debt of love I owe” (Alas! And Did my Savior Bleed); “Fling wide the portals of your heart... adorned with prayer and love and joy!” (Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates).

Along with praise, joy was perhaps the most talked-of emotion within the service. The traditional AME Call to Worship contains several lines which speak of gladness and joy (“I was glad when they said to me let us go unto the house of the Lord,” and “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth...”), and many hymns also contain reference to this emotion: “O the joy of full salvation” (I Surrender All); “I am so glad I entered in” (Down at the Cross); “It makes me happy when I sing... to know that I have been born again” (I Know I’ve Been Changed); “It was there by faith I received my sight, and now I am happy all the day” (Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed); “Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor, Thou my soul’s glory, joy, and crown” (Fairest Lord Jesus); and “A joy I can’t explain is filling my soul since the day I met Jesus my King” (Learning to Lean).

Reverend Wright frequently mentioned joy in his sermons:

He is a wonderful God. Somebody said, ‘This joy that I have, crack didn’t give it to me. Alcohol couldn’t give me this kind of joy. Oooooh, beer couldn’t give me this kind of joy!’ [sings] ‘This joy that I have, the world didn’t give it to me.’ But I declare I got it from my God. You ought to come to the altar and drink, get some of this joookkayy down on the inside!

Ah, I love to enter into my master’s house. It’s, it’s a joy for me to come into his house.

The discourse of worship at Eastside Chapel also includes hope, though not as often as some of the other emotions. Hymns which speak of hope include Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross (“Near the cross, I’ll watch and wait, hoping, trusting ever, ‘Til I reach the golden strand just beyond the river.”) and My Hope is Built (“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’s blood and righteousness” and “When all around my soul give way, He then is all my hope and stay”). One of the Sunday School classes that I attended took as its theme “The Gift of Living Hope,” based upon the New Testament passage, “By [God’s] great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1: 3).

This particular list — praise, gratitude, love, joy, and hope — are the individual feelings which constitute Eastside Chapel’s normative constellation of emotion, and through the liturgical discourse worshippers are constantly reminded of these standards. Thus far I have shown how feeling rules are
incorporated into an "emotional" service through the discourse within hymns, prayers, sermons, Sunday School lessons, and segments of the liturgy. Yet these discourses not only remind congregants of these feeling rules, they also work to evoke these feelings and thus help worshippers to achieve these standards. In order to understand the process by which particular emotions are evoked it is necessary to recognize that emotion operates according to a specific logic. By this I mean that every individual emotion presupposes a particular cognitive structure — a structure which includes both objects and grounds (Proudfoot 1985; Ortony et al. 1988). That is, each emotion has a person or thing to whom it is directed (an object) and a supporting reason or rationale (the grounds). Because of this structure, a feeling can be aroused by invoking the object and grounds for that particular emotion.

Within the context of the worship service, the object of the emotion of gratitude is God and the grounds include all of the good things that believers attribute to the action of God in their lives. The prayer which contains the lines, "We are grateful for another day. We are thankful that You kept us all the night long" not only reminds Eastside worshippers that they should feel grateful to God but also recalls to their consciousness some of the good things God has given to them. The same is true of the other emotions specified earlier. When the Eastside congregation sings the final stanza of Amazing Grace, "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun; There's no less days to sing God's praise Then when we'd first begun," each congregant is reminded of his or her belief in God's provision for the future and the emotion of hope is evoked within them. When the choir sings "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing," those present are reminded of the power and majesty of God, an image which evokes feelings of praise and worship. When members sing the old spiritual "I know I've been changed, the angels in the heaven have changed my name," it calls to mind their own spiritual journeys and evokes joy within.

Despite the traditional label for this type of ritual there appears to be nothing unique about the emotions generated within an "emotional" worship service. Certainly, "nonemotional" Christian worship services also have feeling rules (which probably involve the same set of particular emotions) and they also have methods for evoking these emotions in the service (perhaps even using many of the same hymns, at least in Protestant congregations). Rather, the observable difference between the two types of services lies in the types of expressive behavior worshippers engage in, and it is to that topic that I now turn.

BEHAVIORAL NORMS

Some social occasions, a funeral, for example, . . . [possess] a distinctive ethos, a spirit, an emotional structure, that must be properly created, sustained, and laid to rest, the participant finding that he is obliged to become caught up in the occasion, whatever his personal feelings (Goffman 1963: 19).

Mourning is not a natural movement of private feelings wounded by cruel loss; it is a duty imposed by the group. One weeps, not simply because he is sad, but because he is forced to weep.
It is a ritual attitude which he is forced to adopt out of respect for custom, but which is, in large measure, independent of his affective state (Durkheim [1915] 1965: 443).

Norms not only operate internally upon the feelings of the congregants but upon their external behaviors as well. These standards of appropriate behavior cannot be reduced to the internal feelings of the participants — as both Goffman's observation on funerals and Durkheim's discussion of mourning rites illustrate quite clearly. Instead, they form a separate but related system of expectations, and these expectations can differ quite markedly from one congregation to another. The following account gives a graphic picture of the kind of behavior that was considered completely appropriate at Eastside Chapel that would be out of place (to put it mildly) during a "nonemotional" worship ritual.

One Sunday morning in mid-November Reverend Wright invited Reverend Rose Drayton, an assistant pastor at a nearby AME congregation, to act as guest preacher. The delivery of her sermon started out calm and measured, began to build in intensity and congregational response, and ended with most of the congregation on its feet clapping, while a handful of members engaged in prolonged shouting. Here is how it happened.

She began by reading a portion of scripture from the Old Testament book of Daniel, where the Babylonian king Belshazzar sees a disembodied hand writing on the wall during a banquet. When a Jewish captive named Daniel translates the writing, the King hears a prophecy regarding his impending demise. After reading this passage, Rev. Drayton closed the Bible and announced that her theme was going to be "The Party's Over." The gist of the sermon, which was delivered in the traditional call-and-response style, was that people should start living right because God was going to come back soon and announce to the world that "the party's over." The congregation was very quiet during the scripture reading and remained quite still for the several minutes it took Rev. Drayton to set out her general theme and establish her rhythm. Then she moved out from behind the pulpit and said, "Pray with me for a little while, now," and people started to come alive.

It happened gradually. At first one person in the choir stood up. Then after about half a minute, another choir member stood up. Then more choir members stood, and then people in the congregation started standing up, until after several minutes almost the whole choir and about half of the congregation was on its feet. The responses to her phrases became louder and more emphatic during this time. Several women choir members in the front started smiling and waving their arms at Rev. Drayton in a "go on now" motion. The drummer tossed a drumstick in the air and caught it again with a flourish. People began clapping and shouting back at her during the response time in the cadence. One young man started running to the front of the center aisle, pointing his finger and shouting at her, then running back to his seat. He did this over and over. The organ and drums started chiming in during the response times, building in

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2 Although one need not go as far as Durkheim and say that the two are completely divorced. Certainly, at least within Eastside Chapel, there is some concern that internal emotional states match those which are externally expressed. The amount of alignment between the two, which apparently did not concern the Australians, might be considered a cultural and situational variable.
volume and emphasis until finally at the end of the sermon they took the congregation immediately into a song. As they started playing several members began to "shout" in earnest, moving out to dance in the unconfined spaces of the aisles and in front of the pulpit.

A close examination of this scene reveals two types of behavior. First there is what I will call "response behavior" which includes both vocal and physical reactions to the music, preaching, prayer, or whatever provides the current focus of attention and stimulus. The response behavior in the above story includes cries of "amen," and "hallelujah" as well as the bodily actions of standing, running, pointing, and clapping.

In nonemotional churches, the norms guiding response behavior are quite simple: none is allowed, not even the polite smattering of applause at the conclusion of a performance which characterizes secular occasions. Contrast those standards with the response behavior exhibited at Eastside Chapel, where those in highly visible positions (in the choir loft behind the pulpit) stood up and waved their arms, where a congregant ran down the aisle pointing and shouting at the preacher, where the musical instruments played loudly during the pauses in the preacher's delivery. If congregants in a "nonemotional" service behaved in this overtly responsive manner they would immediately disrupt the proceedings; the situational order would be completely shattered and all such behavior would have to cease before the service could proceed.

However, in some important respects the norms of behavior at Eastside Chapel are not so different from standards operating in other types of gatherings. For example, the response behaviors at Eastside Chapel bear a resemblance to those at sporting events where it is expected that spectators will cheer a good performance by their team of choice. In fact, a visiting pastor once scolded the congregation for not responding to his point with sufficient enthusiasm by saying, "You should be on your feet and cheering about that. If you had just seen Michael Jordan slam-dunk the ball on the court, you would be up on your feet. Well, the Lord has slam-dunked your sins into the sea of forgetfulness, and that is something to cheer about!"

One fundamental difference, then, between "emotional" and "nonemotional" worship services is simply the set of rules governing congregational response. The range of permitted response behavior sometimes leads a naive observer who is used to "nonemotional" norms to the assumption that there are no holds barred concerning congregational activity. However, it was my observation that at Eastside Chapel and other "emotional" churches, the conduct of worshippers was very tightly monitored.

This is true even of the more sensational behavior known as shouting. On one hand, shouting may be seen as an extreme form of physical response — like clapping, only with the whole body rather than just the hands. Certainly this is true from a behavioral standpoint. One can watch congregants progress from clapping and verbal responses to more vigorous behaviors like swaying and stomping their feet and finally "cutting loose" into a full-blown shout, and from this perspective the transition from clapping to shouting seems to be simply a matter of degree.
Yet from the perspective of the individual undergoing this transition, there is a radical break between clapping and other response behavior and shouting. To get a sense of the internal state of the actor during a shout I interviewed several Eastside members in detail about their experiences while shouting. When a congregant engages in response behavior such as standing, clapping, pointing, waving, and their verbal counterparts, it involves them more completely in the service. Indeed, this behavior is only possible for the congregant who is completely "tuned-in" to the sermon, prayer, song, or testimony that is providing the stimulus (it's hard to clap to the rhythm when you're not listening to the music). But a congregant who is shouting has entered another realm of consciousness; he or she has left the service far behind and is aware only of the presence of God. I asked Darryl Lawson, a teacher's aid in his mid-twenties and active member of the senior choir, about his state of consciousness when he was shouting and if he was aware of his surroundings. He replied:

You would know what's going on — cause I remember bumping into a couple of benches. [But that's not where I am focused]... I don't try to figure out who's around me or anything, because I'm just enjoying my Jesus.

This withdrawal of consciousness is taken by Eastsiders as the sign of a genuine shout and is attributed to the work of the Holy Ghost. However, shouts which congregants suspect are simply responses to external stimuli are considered counterfeits. Because music provides such a powerful stimulus, and because much shouting occurs during musical selections, congregants may have reason to suspect that some dancers are simply responding to the music rather than undergoing a true shift of consciousness prompted by the Holy Ghost. Sherline Singleton told me that "it is a proven fact that every shouting doesn't have the Holy Ghost — they just shouting." When I asked her how congregants could shout without the prompting of the Spirit, she answered:

Music. Cause when you were younger and you hear something you like even if you didn't get up and dance, you knew how to move to the music. What are they doing? You know how to dance already — and when you hear drums or hear a good beat on an organ that you can dance to [then you can do it].

When a worshipper is in the midst of what members consider a genuine shout, they are perceived by others to have stopped responding to external stimuli and are acting solely upon the internal stimulus of the Holy Ghost. While in this state others treat the shouter as if she is not in control of her own behavior. However, despite the apparent chaos which sometimes erupts when many people shout at the same time, the conduct of the shouters is highly structured and strictly monitored. Although it may appear to the uninitiated observer that "anything goes," particularly when one sees such behavior as con-

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3 For this reason scholarly accounts which portray shouting as an automatic means of securing status are overly simplistic. Not only are congregants always concerned about the "genuineness" of the shout, but there is a developed and often-used discourse which subordinates shouting to other aspects of Christian life and practice, such as knowledge of the Bible and abstinence from immoral behavior.
gregants running laps around the church aisles or jumping up and down like child on a pogo stick, there is actually a tightly defined range of permissible behavior in effect even during these shouting episodes. Mona Lisa Scott, a young woman who danced quite frequently told me, “People come up to me and say that they have never seen anybody dance [the way I dance] before, and that I’m not for real.” Although her style might have been a bit unorthodox by Eastside Chapel standards, it was not so far from the norm that she was prohibited from shouting; most people simply ignored her. However, if someone were to exhibit behavior which fell far outside the acceptable domain, it would probably be interpreted as the influence of the demonic and thus would be subject to stronger sanctions. Reverend Wright once admonished the members of his Saturday night prayer group to be on their guard against such unholy influences and even suggested some possible symptoms for them to watch for.

Some of the folks that dance around on Sunday, they are not reacting to God but a familiar spirit. When somebody is rolling around by the wall and fighting everybody who tries to help them, that’s not God . . . our God is a God of order and discipline.

This order, which is so different from the order of “nonemotional” services, is enforced by the whole congregation through sanctioning (e.g., the number of people who have censured Mona Lisa Scott), but it is the particular duty of the ushers. These guardians of ritual order, with their uniforms and white gloves, stand at attention at their posts in the four corners of the sanctuary and constantly monitor the behavior of participants. When someone begins to shout, they are immediately surrounded by ushers of the same sex who will link arms around the dancing person. Officially this is because of the belief that the shouter has no consciousness of those around him and might inadvertently injure himself or others. But it is also a very effective form of surveillance and control, and ushers will remove someone who they feel is disrupting the service. Also, by not surrounding someone who begins to dance, ushers can withhold legitimacy from their shout, as often happened when Mona Lisa Scott began to dance.

“EMOTIONAL” WORSHIP AS COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

The behavior of a rioting mob, a screaming audience, or an ecstatic religious congregation is markedly different from that of either an enduring informal group or a large, formal organization (Turner and Killian 1957: 3).

Ambiguity, Reluctance and the Evocation of Expressive Behavior

So far I have argued that a key difference between an “emotional” and “unemotional” service is simply that response behaviors and shouting are permitted in the former but not the latter. There is more to the story however. In fact, these “emotional” forms of participation are required of the congregation, but in a particular way. The norms pertaining to “emotional” response are not

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4 According to Eastside Chapel interpretation this New Testament term refers to a demon.
imposed in the same way as those which pertain to "nonemotional" activities like singing hymns or responsive liturgical readings. In responsive readings, for example, there is an obligation upon every individual congregant to contribute verbally in a prescribed manner, complete with cues for when to begin and end participation. Thus each person's role is scripted for these segments of the service and there is no ambiguity about what one should be doing from one moment to the next. Things are not so simple in an "emotional" service because expectations of response are diffused throughout the entire congregation and are not assigned to particular individuals. For example, the preacher expects that somebody, or a handful of people perhaps, will say "amen" when he or she makes a strong point, yet no person or group of persons is designated to respond in this way. According to this structure, the involvement of each congregant is constantly ambiguous in that at each point one may choose to respond or to not respond. There is no set script to follow, although each congregant knows the general story line.5

There is another factor at work also. Responses are supposed to become more and more vigorous as the service progresses, culminating in shouting or, sometimes, speaking in tongues. This process was illustrated by the Eastside congregants' reactions to Reverend Drayton's sermon. At first there was only vocal responses of "amen" and "that's right." Responses progressed to standing, then clapping, then pointing or waving, and then finally into shouting. This process is normative and it is an expectation that is diffused throughout the congregation. That is, no one is designated as the first one to bring congregational responses to the next level. Yet while this process is normative, from the perspective of the individual there is a certain cost to initiating a higher level of response in that the more vigorous responses make one more visible to other congregants, who are in a position to critically evaluate the genuineness of the response. For example, the first person to stand may stand alone for several minutes before someone else joins them, and shouting always makes one highly visible while in the midst of a somewhat embarrassing display of ecstatic behavior. Thus, congregants may be reluctant to initiate the response level to a higher pitch.

These factors of structural ambiguity and resistance to high visibility, both of which operate to inhibit congregational response, must be overcome. It is the task of those in performance roles to evoke congregational participation through the nature and quality of their performances, and in this they draw upon several resources. I will focus here upon two types of performances: music and spoken discourse.

Music is a very important resource for drawing out congregational participation and includes such elements as the number and type of instruments (particularly the use of drums), style (volume, rhythm, instrumental breaks, elaborate or simple structure), the proportion of the service dedicated to music as well as the length of each particular song, the expected participants (soloists generally evoke less fervor than choir or congregational singing), and finally, the

5 However, responsibility is not evenly distributed across the entire congregation. Because of their visibility, those in the front pews, in the choir, and the two front pews flanking the altar (commonly known as the "amen corner") have higher expectations placed upon them; those who choose to sit in the "amen corner" feel most keenly the pressure to say "amen."
lyrical content of the songs (emotional sentiments of praise or comfort in everyday language rather than abstract concepts or archaic words and phrases).

While the power of music to stimulate a collective response is fairly transparent (and therefore somewhat suspect among some ritual participants, as we have seen), the use of language to stir the congregation is less obvious. From my observations of Eastside Chapel, I noted two rhetorical strategies used for different types of ritual speech. First, there is the use of standard formulas and stock phrases which appear primarily in prayers and testimonies, a phenomenon noted by many other scholars of the African-American church (cf. Goldsmith 1989: 110 and Lewis 1964: 145). Drake and Cayton (1962: 620) reported that "there is a common stock of striking phrases and images which are combined and recombined throughout the Negro lower-class religious world." In fact many of the same phrases that Drake and Cayton recorded in Chicago over fifty years ago can still be heard almost every Sunday at Eastside Chapel and at almost any other black congregation in the Charleston area. Such phrases as "I thank the Lord that he woke me up this morning clothed in my right mind. He didn't have to do it but he did," and "He took my feet out of the miry clay and He placed them on a rock to stay" are particular favorites.

Although one might expect that this formulaic repetition would act to dampen congregational response, at Eastside Chapel the use of certain well-worn phrases invariably brought about an enthusiastic, emotional response. In fact, they elicited much more response than a less formulaic statement with the same content would evoke. This was brought home to me in a personal way one morning during the monthly "Men's Prayer Breakfast." When it was my turn to pray, I began to ask for safety on the road for my wife and myself as we were going to be driving a long distance on the following day. In my spontaneous prayer, I framed the request as if I was making ordinary conversation, making it up as I went along. While previous prayers had evoked heartfelt cries of "Yes, Lord" and "amen" from the other men, my prayer did not meet with the same agreement until Lenard Singleton interjected the phrase "We ask for your traveling mercies" over my own words. When this stock phrase was uttered, all of the men responded "Yes, Lord" in unison.

While the use of verbal formulas seem to work during prayers and testimonies, sermons made much more use of metaphor to evoke a strong congregational response. The most effective metaphors were those which were spontaneously generated (or at least appeared that way), involved some sort of word play, and which subverted items of modern life or popular culture into the congregation's spiritual world view. For example, by using the metaphorical strategies recorded in the following short excerpt, Reverend Wright was able to take the congregation into a peak of response and even stimulate about ten minutes of shouting at the very beginning of his sermon. (The congregational responses are indicated in the brackets.)

And I'll tell you what — I'm excited about my Jesus! ["Yeah"]
I'm gettin' more and more excited about him daily
He's my bread you know
That's right, if you come to my house, I got some bread there
That's right, and I didn't get it from the Pig 6 ["That's right"]
But I got it at the foot of the cross ["Well"]
He is my Wonder Bread ["Yeah"]
He is my Roman Meal ["Oh yes"]
Oh yes, when you read Romans 8, I tell you, it will tell you about that Roman meal bread!
[clapping, "Yes Lord!", someone starts shouting — organ starts playing ]
He is my Galations bread! ["All right" — more vigorous response]
He is my Revelation bread!
Then, what I like about him — he is not only my bread, but he is meat in the middle of my bread [clapping, shouting, organ]
And you can eat him allllll the day long! [more shouting, organ, drums kick in]
He is good for what ails yah!
Then, I T L I [stutters] can take you to my refrigerator
Then I can take you to my faucet and I can turn it on
And I've got water in my house [drum/organ beat]
I'm not talking about the water that comes out of the ground
But I'm talking about the Living Water that come down from God out of Heaven!
It's good for you if you're thirsty!
It'll quench your thirst!
And give you life on the inside!
My God, my God!
Oh yes! My God! Hallelujah! Oh yes! [Reverend Wright pauses here as many congregants are now shouting]

In fact, many of Rev. Wright's sermons are built around extended metaphors, some of which can be discerned by their titles alone, including "Does the Church Know First Aid?" or "Hostile Takeovers, Friendly Mergers."

Call, Response, and "Circular Reaction"

At Eastside Chapel it is not entirely up to the preacher or choir to move the congregation to higher levels of excitement. A good deal of the responsibility rests upon the congregation itself. In fact, it is impossible for a preacher to fulfill his or her role without the active support and response of the congregation. John Dollard, a white academic who, in the course of his research on "Southerntown," regularly attended an African-American congregation in that community was asked several times by the preacher to "say a few words." He finally accepted the invitation and later described how congregational responses enhanced his speaking ability.

Helped by appreciative murmurs which began slowly and softly and became louder and fuller as I went on, I felt a great sense of elation, an increased fluency, and a vastly expanded confidence in speaking. There was no doubt that the audience was with me, was determined to aid me in every way... The little talk ended with a round of applause, which, of course, was permitted in this case; but more than that, the crowd had enabled me to talk to them much more sincerely than I thought I knew how to do; the continuous surge of affirmation was a highly elating experience. For once, I did not feel that I was merely beating a sodden audience with words or striving for cold intellectual communication (Dollard 1957: 243).

6 Reference to the Piggly Wiggly supermarket chain.
The responsive feedback from the congregation increased Dollard's confidence and enabled him to give a better performance than he otherwise would have. Because his performance improved, it evoked more enthusiastic responses, which then further enhanced his abilities. When the congregation did not respond with sufficient enthusiasm at Eastside it severely hampered the ability of the preacher to maintain his or her performance. Because Reverend Wright and other preachers depended so heavily on this response, they made sure that the congregation kept their responses up to a satisfactory level. If the congregation was quiet and unresponsive, the preacher had various ways to signal his or her dissatisfaction and provoke a more vigorous reaction. Such expressions ranged from gentle proddings ("Can I get an 'Amen'?") to somewhat harsher statements; when Eastside Chapel got too quiet, Reverend Wright would chide the congregation by saying, "Oh, I wish I had me a church!" and sometimes even pointedly switched roles and made the response himself ("I'll say it, 'Amen, preacher!' ").

By using particular resources, performers are able to evoke a response from the congregation. This response increases the intensity and quality of the performer's actions, which in turn evoke a greater congregational response. This "feedback" dynamic is operative particularly during the sermon but to a somewhat lesser extent for all performance segments of the service, especially those which involve a single performer, like the opening prayer or a vocal solo. This structure, in which the actions of one party affect the actions of a second party, which in turn amplifies the actions of the first party, and so on, has been called "circular reaction" and it is a hallmark of collective behavior. The overall trajectory of this type of behavior is one of oscillating movement toward higher levels of intensity and participation, culminating in widespread and prolonged shouting.

"Emotional" Worship and the Transfer of Control

From the above discussion it is apparent that "emotional" worship services are not simply a matter of an energetic preacher or a particular style of music — the congregational response plays a crucial role facilitating the production of "emotion." In fact, we could say that an "emotional" service is a joint creation, produced cooperatively by both the designated performer, the organist and choir, the "amen" corner, and the rest of the congregation. One necessary precondition of this collective process is that individual congregants allow their actions to be increasingly influenced by the quality of the performance as well as by the actions of other members of the congregation as the levels of participation become more and more intense. The key dynamic here, one which operates in all forms of collective behavior, is the individual's willingness to transfer control over his or her actions to the group. James Coleman writes:

[The difference between a group that has a potential for extreme collective behavior such as a panic or a riot and one that does not is simply the difference between a group in which the members have transferred large amounts of control over their actions to one another and one in which the members have not done so (1990:201–2).]
Darryl Lawson indicated that when congregants had a common desire to worship God unclouded by factional rivalries or resistance toward the preacher, then a higher level of ecstatic behavior would be evident in the service.

If everybody in the church was in one accord — and there have been Sundays that people have been in one accord — God just moves through. But if everybody was on one accord, I mean people — you'd be stepping over people [in the aisle].

DISCUSSION

In this paper I have used data from interviews and participant observation to show that the “emotional” worship service can be analyzed as a stable system of norms and expectations that act upon individual congregants to collectively produce such a service — one that conforms to idealized standards of what a worship service is “supposed to be like.” This leads to larger questions of why these standards exist at all and why they are particularly strong among congregations which draw their members from the lower socioeconomic segments of the population.

First, what are the benefits of a more “emotional” form of worship for the congregation as a whole and for individual participants? In order to answer this, one must first understand what members themselves perceive to be the goal of the worship service. During my year of participant-observation at Eastside, Reverend Wright instituted his own Call to Worship in the Sunday service. The first line of Wright’s self-authored liturgy has the minister proclaim: “Effective worship consists of two grand movements,” to which the congregation responds, “The people of God must move toward God and God will move toward the people.”

The first part of this double movement is represented by the congregation, who “move toward God” by expressing their humility, praise, love, joy, and gratitude in song, prayer, and testimony. By allowing themselves to be caught up in and contribute to the “circular reaction” of performance and energetic response, congregants offer God a “sacrifice of praise,” a Biblical phrase which has been incorporated into contemporary African-American sermons and songs. Genuine shouting gives evidence that God has responded to this offering and is moving with power among the people. Thus, intense emotional and expressive participation first invokes the presence of God, and the shouting (or, more rarely, speaking in tongues) then embodies this presence within the congregation. This is why it is almost invariably congregants who engage in the most vigorous forms of response behaviors who shout, despite the vast difference in consciousness between the two acts that I discussed earlier. Shouting represents the end point of a process that is begun in such simple acts as saying “amen” or clapping along with a hymn.

It is important to underscore the fact that it is this experience of God’s immediate and powerful presence, which Eastside members call a “breakthrough,” which is the goal of the worship service. Shouting and other forms of ecstatic display are seen by congregants simply as manifestations of this experience and are not considered to be the goal itself. It is necessary to highlight this because
many observers have written as if the whole point of the service was to provoke an emotional release among congregants.

Eastside Chapel prides itself on being a "lively" congregation that maintains a high level of participation and shouting in the worship service. In fact, it is this attribute rather than denominational affiliation or distinctive doctrinal teaching which members use to distinguish themselves collectively from other congregations in the neighborhood. Because a lively service provides evidence of God's presence, Eastsiders label other churches which do not exhibit such fervor as "dead" or lacking in religious commitment. Some members even questioned whether anyone could be saved and still attend a "nonemotional" church. Once, when I remarked about several neighboring AME churches characterized by their more somber and restrained worship services, Mother Pinckney exclaimed, "Shoot! All of them churches is dead, man — all of 'em. I mean it's just — I don't think they really know God." Mother Gadsden grew up in one of these congregations and told me how she came to be involved at Eastside Chapel. After her daughter started going to Eastside, she began to visit more and more frequently, drawn by the lively nature of the worship service.

So then I just visit and visit and visit. So [my daughter was] going there for about two years. I had been praying, and suddenly I got a taste — oh! taste and see the goodness of the Lord! [pounds on table] And once you taste, you cannot go sit in no dead, dry, cold church!

In addition to providing an identity based upon religious fervor, the "emotional" style of worship may also serve to bolster African-American racial and cultural identity. Reverend Wright once remarked that the form of ritual practiced at Eastside Chapel was more true to African worship styles, but that it had been suppressed in the years following emancipation by AME Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne and other highly educated religious leaders.7 Anthony Scott, one of Eastside's lay ministers, told me that the new type of shout that he had displayed at a recent Sunday morning service was African in origin because he had dreamed of performing the dance within an African tribal village.

In sum, the "emotional" service is a religious ritual guided by collectively recognized norms of emotive and expressive behavior. These norms provide participants the means of attaining a desired end — the experience of God within the worship service — and also serve to bolster congregational and racial identity. Yet how is it that this type of service is more common among the lower than among the middle classes of African Americans? What is the nature of the well-documented relationship between socioeconomic status and worship style?

Although this question has not received sustained scholarly attention, academics — particularly those writing in the decades before the 1970s — have tended to explain this relationship in terms of the supposedly unique psychic needs of the lower class. For example, Kenneth Clark (1965) wrote of the ghetto dweller's need for emotional catharsis, William Pipes ([1951] 1992), E. T. Krueger (1933), and Vattel Daniel (1942) surmised that "emotional" religious rituals provided a necessary periodic "escape" from the bleak and unforgiving

7 Mamiya (1994) recorded this same argument among other neo-Pentecostal leaders in the AME, a movement with which Reverend Wright openly identifies.
world of lower-class life. More recently, Wilson and Clow have argued that shouting and speaking in tongues can be linked to the need of the poor and oppressed to symbolically express their lack of power through ritual acts in which they "lose total control of themselves (1981: 249)."

This perspective — which has also been applied to the religious rituals of poor whites (Anderson 1979; Holt 1940) — can be criticized on several grounds. First, it assumes a simple and direct connection between the observed behavior of congregants and their inner emotional states. This ignores not only the fact that such subjective states are not available for empirical analysis (Wuthnow 1987), but also the operation of emotional and behavioral norms which transcend individual psyches. A second difficulty with this approach is that it treats the ritual simply as an arena for the emotive expression of individual participants without recognizing the mutual cooperation necessary to produce the successful "emotional" service.

Beyond these specific criticisms, however, a more fundamental issue needs to be addressed. Academic observers have often treated the presence of the "emotional" service among the lower class as the phenomenon to be explained, instead of examining the variation of ritual style across all socioeconomic status groups. Thus, scholars have used the "nonemotional" worship of the middle and upper classes as an implicit normative benchmark, and treated "emotional" worship as a deviant form of ritual, explicable only by reference to unique psychic needs endemic to life at the bottom of society.

To correct this bias we first need more comparative research among congregations with differing class compositions. We need data not only on variations in ritual style among churches from the entire class spectrum, but also on the attitudes and opinions of individual congregants about the worship styles of their own and other churches.

At a theoretical level, we need to make the absence of "emotion" among the middle and upper classes as problematic as its presence among the lower classes without resorting to the unsupported and self-serving claim that there is simply no "need" for such behavior among those who are better off. One step in this direction might be a recognition that "emotional" behavior is not merely a topic for academic reflection but a source of active contention within many African-American congregations, particularly those composed of different class fractions. In some congregations, "emotionalism" is absent not simply because parishioners do not have the psychic "needs" to provide it with a hospitable environment; rather, it has been consciously and systematically weeded out by those with the power to suppress it. Ruby Johnston's (1956) mid-century study of African-American clergy in Massachusetts and South Carolina is very instructive in this respect, and documents the powerful influence of those who opposed "emotionalism" in the church. Nor is the suppression of "emotional" ritual by the upper classes limited to African-American churches or even to Christianity. Max Weber (1958: 137) wrote that the Indian Brahmins and the Chinese Mandarins — both classes of "genteel literati" — were alike in removing the "orgiastic and emotional ecstatic elements" from the systems of magical rites which preceded both Hinduism and Confucianism.
In light of these facts, future research on this topic might do well to move away from a functionalist discourse grounded on assumptions about the differing psychic needs of the social classes. Instead, the class location of "emotional" worship might best be understood as one aspect of a larger cultural struggle between classes and class fractions, an approach which has an affinity to the emerging theoretical perspective of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984; Swartz 1996).

REFERENCES