

1-28-2011

Kickin' it with God: Clerical Behavior, Denominational Meaning, and the Expression of Emotion in Ritual

Christopher M. Donnelly

University of Connecticut Department of Sociology, chris.donnelly@uconn.edu

Recommended Citation

Donnelly, Christopher M., "Kickin' it with God: Clerical Behavior, Denominational Meaning, and the Expression of Emotion in Ritual" (2011). *Master's Theses*. 28.

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Kickin' it with God: Clerical Behavior, Denominational Meaning, and the Expression of
Emotion in Ritual

Christopher M. Donnelly

B.A. The University of Connecticut, 2009

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

At the

University of Connecticut

2011

APPROVAL PAGE

Master of Arts Thesis

Kickin' it with God: Clerical Behavior, Denominational Meaning, and the Expression of
Emotion in Ritual

Presented by

Christopher M. Donnelly, B.A.

Major Advisor _____
Clinton R. Sanders

Associate Advisor _____
Bradley R.E. Wright

Associate Advisor _____
Claudio E. Benzecry

University of Connecticut

2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Clinton R. Sanders, Bradley R.E. Wright, Claudio E. Benzecry, and Kristin Rushlow for their guidance and support.

An earlier version of this work was presented at the 2010 annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction in Atlanta, GA.

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In the contemporary West, religious worship is very much a collective, guided phenomenon. Based upon interviews and participant observation in Catholic, Congregationalist, and Evangelical services, this paper examines congregant emotional displays influenced via micro behavioral techniques utilized by church officials versus macro denominational meanings during religious ceremony. In particular, the argument is made that while performance acts used by church officials do have some impact upon the emotional expression of the congregation, it is the shared meanings expressed through the denominational tradition that exercise a significant influence upon emotional displays in rituals. Therefore, while ritual is guided, it is more through church culture than the “feeling tools” utilized by clergy.

As a topic of study, religion was used to examine far reaching areas of sociological interest, from economics (Corrigan 2002) to crime (Bair and Wright 2001). Similarly, the study of emotion enjoyed expansive application, featured in investigations from flight attendants (Hochschild 1983) to road-rage and funhouses (Katz 1999). In sociology, however, the two areas rarely coincided, culminating in a handful of insightful, yet few, analyses.

In classical literature, Durkheim (1995) created concepts of the “conscious collective” and “collective effervescence” to explain religious ritual and the role of emotion, where “emotion cannot be expressed collectively without some order” (218). Perhaps most profound was his illumination of mourning rights, where acts such as boring sticks into the forehead were examined. Yet in contemporary times, our fragmented academic landscape led to a characteristic neglect of the joint study of emotion and religion. The religious studies discipline is at the forefront of religious emotion research, yet lacks a focus on symbolic process and communal action. William James (2004) for example provided us with an in-depth analysis of the religious experience and a possible argument for its function (connecting with the subconscious), yet did not stray from individual experience, nor did he strongly engage ritual processes. This notes a similar trend regarding other core theorists in emotion-based studies of religion, where sometimes detailed methods of uniting self with divine were presented (for example, Schleiermacher 1958) yet nothing was said about social or symbolic practice. The debate was about the truthfulness of religion and the feeling of godly presence (Otto 1958; Schleiermacher 1928; 1958), not the social processes it entails.

Proudfoot (1985) provides an excellent commentary regarding these epistemological arguments of religious experience, yet restricts his comments to the philosophical.

While recent work in religious studies also tends to focus largely on the descriptive (see Corrigan 2004), some researchers did focus on more rudimentary symbolic acts within religious services, both within and without the phenomenological tradition (Squarcini 1995; Spickard 2005). Others focused upon particular emotions, such as ambivalence (Weigert 1989) and wonder (Fuller 2006). Emotion's functional aspect was also explored, ranging from cutting a deal with God (Corrigan 2002), to providing meaning (Mitchell 1997) and social control (Jules-Rosette 1980; Spickard 2005).

While other models were fronted and phenomenology itself criticized (Straus 1981; Yamane 2000), the phenomenological study of religion trumped any strict dramaturgical investigation. Inspired by Schutz's "tuning-in" process (1951) and Csikszentmihalyi's (1975a; 1975b; and Bennet 1971) "flow" concept, Neitz and Spickard (1990) posit this as the ideal qualitative methodology. Traces of this method are present in multiple works (Graham et al. 2008; Spickard 1991; Williamson and Pollio 1999, and Hood 2000; Wolff 1999), yet lack certain necessary elements. While many of these texts focus on the cultivation of collective sentiment, emotion is not at the forefront. Furthermore, as Donnelly and Wright argued (*forthcoming*), many of these works do not focus on the everyday, profane, dramaturgical processes at work in religious rituals. This last aspect is extremely important, for findings based on a face-to-face interactionist level have the ability to be compared and contrasted to other settings of social life.

Corrigan (2004) deals with many of these issues when he provides a phenomenologically inspired theory of religious *emotive* performance, where "emotion is

performed in such instances according to rules, as part of a script, the end point of which is the disclosure of patterns of order and cultural meanings fundamental to the life of the community” (16). This echoes sentiments expressed by Durkheim (1995)—ritual “awakens that feeling of support, safety, and protective guidance which binds the man of faith to his cult” and by extension, society (421). While accounting for emotion, this theory, like Nietz’s and Spickard’s (1990), encounters a similar, general problem. It assumes that all present in the ritual agree with these “meanings fundamental to the life of the [religious] community”, and further assumes those present are in fact tuned-in and flowing. Perhaps it is telling that this theory was developed by sociologists who studied extraneous forms of religion in Western society: for Neitz, Catholic Charismatics (1987) and Spickard (1991), Navajos. Their theory combining tuning-in and flow works excellently in these circumstances, where individuals are, in fact, tuned-in and flowing. Their method falls apart however when applied to mainline Christianity, where, as this and other (Donnelly and Wright *forthcoming*) works show, many people are not tuned in, causing the creation of a flow experience to be difficult. As Heilman (1976) warns us “[o]ne must be careful not to automatically equate collective silence with undivided collective involvement” (215), and contemporary mainline Christianity is dominated by congregant silence.

During his study of an AME congregation, Nelson (1996; 2005) took a novel perspective on how emotional processes operated in churches. Utilizing Hochschild’s “feeling rules” (1979; 1983), Nelson explained the manifestation of two forms of emotional expression in a charismatic African American congregation; shouting and - responsive behavior (1996). Building upon this, Donnelly and Wright (*forthcoming*)

outlined processes of behavioral enforcement in churches, and thus revealed the tacit understanding of feeling rules in religious services. In order to adequately account for emotions in church, the impersonal feeling rules and the self presentation of emotion must be studied concurrently. Such a synthesis demands a synthesis of theory, and therefore I propose a theoretical framework combining Hochschild's feeling rules (1979; 1983) and Goffman's impression management (1959; 1967).

Emotions are not only felt, they are performed. Much like the script, social actors are given a setting and a line (Goffman 1967) to follow, and then left to their own devices to perform these lines. In our case, Hochschild provides us with the script, and Goffman shows us its implementation and improvisation. In her chapter on feeling rules, Hochschild (1983) shows us that there are specific ways people are supposed to feel, and that "emotion management" (60) is expected and "emotion work" (56) is thereby necessary to, as Goffman would say, *give off* the appropriate impression for the situation (1959). Hochschild therefore provides us with a rubric to understand social life as a whole; people internally labor to produce both a feeling and outward expression corresponding with characteristics of the setting and company. Within religion, sometimes the feeling rules are directly dictated—such as in Catholic masses through the use of signs or announcements to enforce silence—but many times they are not. In fact, the only way to know what many are is to see them performed. This is specifically where Goffman enters the situation.

All individuals are actors in religious services, strategically working to *give* and *give off* favorable impressions of themselves during interaction (1959). This performance varies by location (the front versus backstage) and company (individually or within

teams; with those esteemed or those despised), but the objectives are always the same: fit in and make yourself look good by conforming to expectations for yourself and/or others' expectations for you (1959; 1967). Various techniques are available to fix interactions when they go awry, with others often working collectively to maintain the "face" or impression of all those present (1967). Not only does the contemporary religious ritual strikingly resemble theatre—where there is an individual or group of individuals performing for an audience—but it requires that the audience and clergy work together, along with the audience *within* itself. What emerges is a portrait of collective interaction, where for the definition of the situation to remain stable, the audience must give certain impressions at certain times, often, in this case, a display of passive emotionality, reverence, and focus. This is where Goffman and Hochschild align, for the feeling rules 1) need to be followed by 2) utilizing "emotion work" to 3) create the ideal impression of self. As Hochschild puts it after citing Goffman, "[a]s principles, avoiding pain and seeking advantage explain patterns of emotion management, but it is important to note that both operate within a context of feeling rules" (1983:62).

This model sufficiently skirts issues other sociological theories of emotion would encounter in this setting by, for example, avoiding a reliance on personal narratives (Ng and Kidder 2010). Furthermore, it detaches emotive performance from other processes such as the transformation, or metamorphosis of the self (Katz 1999), or phenomenological processes of linking the self with wider society (Durkheim 1995; Nietz and Spickard 1990; Joas 2008). What emerges is a clear picture of the operation of the two precursors necessary to achieve a successful religious sentiment or service: the

rules for how to go about feeling in the service (Hochschild 1979; 1983), and possible methods to express them (Goffman 1959; 1967).

This work engages a necessary topic, for not only is sociological insight regarding emotion and religion sparse compared to other fields (see Corrigan et al. *Emotion and Religion* 2000), but interactionist work in this area is especially thin, with most prominent contributions being dated (Heilman 1976; Nietz 1987) and not focused exclusively on emotion. Even the entry on religion in *The Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism* (Shupe 2003) is small in comparison to other areas (such as deviance). Additionally, dramaturgical works are difficult to come by, with one (Harrison 1977) shunning Goffman. None of these studies were conducted within a comparative light, and while Nelson's later work (2005) added to this area, his chapter on emotion in church lacked any reference to Goffman or Hochschild, and made questionable assertions regarding mainline, "unemotional churches" (148). Even pastors within the denominations studied realized the importance of emotion in church (Scazzero and Bird 2003), and this paper provides one way of addressing this scarcity of knowledge.

How to Kick it with God

This study was conducted over a year of covert participant observation within eighteen congregations, with sites visited multiple times. While there is a definite disadvantage in not situating this research within only a few churches, the wide variety of sites were necessary in order to recruit clergy and congregants for interviews. I conducted eighteen semi-formal interviews with three congregants and three clergy members in each denomination. All of the churches studied were either within the Roman Catholic, Congregationalist, or mainline Evangelical (Evangelical Free Church of

America and non/post denominational churches) traditions. Since this work is exploratory, I decided to cast a wide denominational net to include as much variation as possible.

I conducted this research in an inductive fashion (Glaser and Strauss 2008). While I read some work in the area of emotion and religion previous to my starting fieldwork (such as Nelson 1996), I simply entered the setting with the idea of looking at how emotions were performed in church. Correspondingly, I built my concepts from the ground up, completely based off observational and interview data. Previous work in this area (Donnelly and Wright *forthcoming*) prepared me for the Congregationalist and Catholic settings, and due to the simple structure of most Evangelical services, I learned the appropriate behaviors relatively easily.

I often attempted to arrive at the services around ten to fifteen minutes early in order to observe pre-service behavior. I engaged in all aspects of the ritual, and usually sat in the rear of the setting in order to watch as many individuals as possible. Most times I positioned myself at an extreme end of a pew, thereby setting my gaze on an angle and providing me with the ability to see individual faces. I was further aided in this regard by the design of post Vatican II Catholic churches and many Evangelical churches (see Appendix II), where pews were not always arranged in a row pattern, but semi-circles, allowing me to see individuals across the chapel. However, since many of these churches were densely packed, I often had issues seeing the faces of others in further proximity from myself. I also remained in the setting for a few minutes after the ritual ended in order to gather post-service data.

Interview participants were approached at the conclusion of services or, when referred by others, contacted via email or phone. Interviews generally lasted between a hour and a hour and a half, with the longest completed in three hours. Interviews either occurred in offices, homes, or public settings, and were recorded and transcribed for analysis. All participants signed informed consent forms, and this study was approved with expedited review by my university's institutional review board.

The Theatre and the Performer: Looking at Emotion in Church

During the course of this research, two themes developed that exercised a substantial impact upon congregant emotional expression: a) pastoral agency and b) denominational “feeling rules”. First, we will examine the skills and talents of clergy used to derive a reaction from the audience, grouped under the concept *feeling tools*.

The Pastor's Toolkit: Feeling Tools

Performance--it can sound as if there's something insincere in that, so in that way I wouldn't say that. I firmly believe in what I get up and say and that I think it's from the heart, but what you've done is you've prepared it, so in that sense it is a performance.

-Interview with an Evangelical Pastor

Through training and personal experience, clergy across all three denominations cultivated extensive skills to draw out some form of emotional expression from the congregation during the segment of the service pastors were most on display—the sermon. Feeling tools themselves can be divided into multiple components, the major being *construction tools* for sermon preparation, and *performance tools* for delivering the message.

Starting with construction tools, multiple Catholic priests stated the need for relating scripture to everyday life, or as one put it “a good homily is crafted with the

scripture readings of the Sunday in one hand and the newspaper in the other”. Another popular technique was utilizing (often personal) stories and metaphors (Nelson 2005), along with being clear and succinct in their message. Preparation times varied, between on the spot improvisation to using an entire week.

Congregationalist pastors also used stories and attempted to apply themes to everyday life, but had a much deeper understanding of the communication process. For example, one pastor actively worked to challenge the congregation, while another used a more dramatic composition style: utilizing techniques such as setting up a strawman, the “surprise reversal” (where he dramatically changed the direction of the sermon), and climax and release points to build tension. Congregationalist ministers varied to the same extent as Catholics in preparation time.

Like the other denominations, Evangelical pastors also utilized humor, application of topics to daily life, and “hooks and relateability” in their sermon preparation as well. Importantly, one pastor also stressed the need of using “conversational style” instead of an indoctrination stance, and spoke of the necessity to know your audience demographically and personally, for “when you can speak to that it adds credibility”. The use of release points in the message was also important, and clergy in this denomination always appeared to be more prepared for sermons, often spending entire weeks in preparation.

These construction tools are always enacted in the “backstage” (Goffman 1959: 112). It is “[h]ere the performer can relax”, and that the “illusions and impressions are openly constructed” which the pastor fronts every Sunday (112). The importance of this preparatory time cannot be understated, for many pastors asserted how they spent hours

upon hours reading and writing, along with one in particular who practiced in front of a mirror and videotaped his sermons for evaluation the following week. This is the safe-zone for the pastor, where he can test out and revise literary techniques—but the real work begins when the pastor takes to the pulpit.

Contrary to construction tools, performance tools are the commodity of the “front region” (107). These can be seen as an exercise in “deference and demeanor”, (49) where Goffman’s two rules of conduct are present—the pastor’s “obligations” for his/her manner and the “expectations” of how the congregation is to respond to the sermon. In church, the pastor is obligated to provide some assortment of meaningful messages for application to everyday life, and congregants are expected to play along and learn. Provided below are pastoral checks on this reciprocal process; throwing out various emotional expressions in order to ensure their expectations of audience focus and involvement. This is commonly ascertained through congregant emotional expression, where active and expressive displays assure the pastor he met his obligation, yet if passive and unfocused, call his performance into question.

Catholic performance tools were the most uniform, where few left the pulpit and many exhibited stiff body language. Deviations were minimal, yet often much to the appreciation of congregants. For example, leaving the pulpit was the most common way to break with tradition, and many congregants especially appreciated when priests utilized vocal fluctuation and instilled greater feeling into their vocal tone. Radical breaks from the procedural were rare, yet manifested in profound ways. Examples included one priest who changed his accent and choice of words to fit with congregants from different backgrounds, and another who physically used congregants as props to

illustrate a point. This served the purpose of showing, as described by a congregant, “this is how God is, this is how you are, God loves you and he wants you to get closer to him and you’re pushing him away”. The most extreme feeling tool involved a priest standing atop a pew, readying the congregation to fly to another continent and perform God’s work. Antics such as these did not come without a price, and this priest in particular was reported to his superiors by upset congregants (see Appendix I).

Extreme examples aside, Catholic priests were not drastically more passive than Congregationalists in their message delivery. Like the Catholics, Congregationalists also rarely left the pulpit, yet used increased levels of physical animation (such as moving eyebrows and making facial expressions) along with vocal fluctuation, and often spoke in a more conversational style. Extreme behavior in this denomination was, in all actuality, far from extreme, such as one pastor seeking vocal affirmation from his congregation—“Can we hear an Amen to that?”—and using his voice to imitate sounds on a heart monitor—“beep, beep!”— to illustrate his frustration. The most profound expression from a Congregationalist pastor was delivered in a more reserved fashion, yet elicited highly negative expression from one congregant in particular. This tool is what I call *evocative emotion*; resorting to highly emotionally charged content in order to guarantee a response from the congregation. In this case, it was expressed through an extremely sad story of how he played piano in his mother’s nursing home days before her death, uttering her words “that’s my boy playing my favorite song” repeatedly. This had such a profound effect upon one congregant that it caused her to turn red and cry¹.

Evangelical pastors were by far the most animated and expressive in their performance, and utilized a more active set of performance tools. These individuals used

¹ Interestingly, many in the congregation did not react at all; more on this in the following section.

techniques ranging from: vocal fluctuation; moving their arms, bodies, eyebrows, and facial muscles; leaving the pulpit (if they had one); creating sound effects with their voices; to putting a microphone in the face of a congregant and asking them questions. Other examples included using a ‘fill in the blank technique’, where one pastor said, for example, “we are more than _____” and paused until a woman said “conquerors”, and at another point saying “who can’t tell me ____” once again pausing until two people said “good news”. One pastor even used his physical disability to make a point, where he limped around the front of the sanctuary asking “why me?” only to illustrate how God turned his “failure to good” in his present occupation. This is a strategy Goffman clearly outlines in *Stigma*, where the effected views suffering “as a blessing in disguise, especially because of what it is felt that suffering can teach one about life and people” (11).

Extreme examples included a more aggressive version of seeking vocal confirmation from the congregation, where a pastor said at one point “Any response to this? I’m not letting you hum-drum through this”. This was followed with a blatant “I’m not feeling a response from you, we can’t go on”—demanding some form of affirmation from his church with the threat of stopping the entire service. Other examples included intricate skits or misquoting scripture by adding modifiers (such as ‘powerfully’ or ‘brilliantly’) to emotionally amplify the text.

In contrast to the largely uniform construction tools, these performance tools proved useful as methods for displaying a pastor’s “personal front”. As shown above, older denominations (Catholicism and Congregationalism) were not as reliant upon these tools, for they were already provided various insignia, costumes, and props to construct

their front. Furthermore, clergy in these denominations outwardly appeared less involved in the “deference and demeanor” game, opting instead for a more procedural performance. This comes as no surprise, for—as we will explore in the next section—these denominations were saturated with highly passive feeling rules, entailing particular emotional ramifications for clergy.

Evangelicals, however, were without vestments and many props, and therefore were forced to rely on performance tools as a method of “dramatic realization” (Goffman 1959). Here the pastor “infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure” (30). Without centuries-old tradition and its accompanying tools and symbols, the Evangelical pastor is forced to resort to oratorical and performative skill in order to create his holy personal front.

Versus construction tools, performance tools were much more effective at drawing emotional expression from the congregation. *Novelty* in performance emerges as a significant precursor for emotion displays in the audience, and is the topic of focus in the next section. Its role as a driving force behind feeling tools is demonstrated by the following quote from a Catholic congregant: “it’s something different—what is he doing? You got to pay attention”.

The Performance: Denominational tradition and the expression of emotion in ritual

In two of the three denominations observed, novelty is not a regular occurrence. In fact, in Catholicism and Congregationalism, a countervailing force is ever-present and at work; centuries old religious tradition or, from a social psychological perspective, denominational “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1979; 1983).

Feeling rules in religious ritual make everything the same week-in and week-out, and provide a definite sense of certainty. Some welcomed this certainty, where as stated by one pastor “one thing about Congregationalists—everything has to be the same...That's order for them; the soul likes order”. Many congregants also told me how they often connected with previous memories while in church, and felt a sense of calm during the ritual. Yet like all things in social life, nothing comes without consequence: few passed up opportunities to complain about feelings of boredom or being distracted. What develops is a dialectic—or, better put—a struggle, where on the one hand the “worship service...sets up an order that people are comfortable with”, yet on the other confronts clergy with the “the black hole phenomenon”, where a priest feels “like whatever I’m doing here is literally being negated by the people; their resistance, or resentment, or give a shit-ness”. Therefore, while tradition and its feeling rules can provide a feeling of comfort, it can also act as an impediment to any active or expressive feeling at all.

Catholicism: Tradition at all costs

The importance of following the sequence of the traditional Catholic mass can be best summarized with one observation. A few weeks before Christmas on a chilly December day I walked into a church in a large inner-city area. As felt upon entry and later confirmed by service officials, the furnace broke the night before and it was cold enough to see my breath. Instead of following standards often adopted by schools or other civic institutions and cancelling the event, the mass was performed anyways and included all the usual readings, communal prayers, and rituals, and also featured a full-length homily (the Catholic equivalent of a sermon). Aside from being extraordinarily

uncomfortable and possibly dangerous to many of those present², this mass was telling by demonstrating that no matter how miserable conditions were, the service must still follow the traditional, post Vatican II format. The show must go on.

During my years of research on this and other projects (Donnelly and Wright *forthcoming*), I often joked with friends and colleagues that the Catholic feeling rules were to not have feelings at all. During masses, active emotional expression was often absent from the congregation (and also the clergy), and usually manifested under only two conditions; while engaging in acts of deviance, or providing respectful levels of light laughter to mildly amusing jokes offered by a clergy member. Acts of situational deviance were examined in a previous work (Donnelly and Wright *forthcoming*), so for the purposes of the present article, discussion will be kept brief and limited to two instances. The first involved what Wright and I called “scornful laughter” directed at a cantor when he displayed poor official mastery and sung in a horrible fashion. The other transpired over at least half a mass where a mother and her child were chatting and chuckling to each other during very important segments of the service (such as the consecration), and reached the point where the mother herself began to initiate the interaction. These constitute “misfitting feelings” (Hochschild 1983:63), where emotion displayed did not correspond with traditional feeling rules.

Most Catholic parishioners, however, spent the mass watching the priest or reader with blank faces or, more commonly, looking down at the floor. This last aspect is very important, for it shows a lack of focus and engagement with the message, making it even harder for the clergy to create a shared religious experience. This reveals the foremost

² as is the norm in this denomination, many parishioners were elderly, and this mass occurred during the 2009 swine flu outbreak

Catholic feeling rule; passive and reserved emotionality, likely leading to straying minds. During interviews, parishioners attested to being calm, yet also claimed to be focused, thinking about the readings and, at certain times such as the consecration, even crying. However, during my year of fieldwork conducted for this project, I never *once* saw a single instance of such expression, and instead observed large proportions of the congregations looking forward, around the chapel, or down. I attribute the large discrepancy between the interviewees described expression versus what I saw to two main reasons: 1) participants were not in the religious state when the questions were asked, and 2) the quality of individuals interviewed; those who find enjoyment in attending church are by far the more likely to accept an interview invitation to talk about church—people want to talk about what they love.

The time before the start of the mass and the time at the conclusion (the pre and post service respectively) was dramatically different than the ritual. The pre-mass was often filled with an array of emotional displays, such as smiling, raising eyebrows, talking, laughing, occasional hugging, shaking hands, and other actions. This behavior was very interesting, for a traditional feeling rule of the denomination is that the pre-service is supposed to be a time of quiet reflection, reserve, and prayer, yet a large majority of parishes routinely violated this norm regardless of any reminders present (signs or announcements). As Hochschild (1983) said, “feeling rules can change” (63), and what occurred in this instance was the evolution and operation of a feeling rule separate from ecclesiastical mandate. The post service was almost identical, where all of the above actions were often performed along with quickly exiting the setting. Such

emotion displays for the pre-service, service, and post-service were quite regular, reflecting reliance upon certainty and pattern.

In effect, there are multiple forces at play within the contemporary Catholic religious service. Due to the inherent restraints of a sacramental system, the entire mass is directed by centuries old tradition and its feeling rule of passive reserve that dominates the service. The only segment allowing for active, individualistic expression for the clergy is the homily, a time held to ten to fifteen minutes (versus Evangelical sermons which range between thirty-five and forty-five) that must be based upon a gospel reading as determined by the denomination. These traditional restrictions rob the clergy of control over the content and feeling rules of the service, and are coupled with a highly disengaged congregation. This leads to a lack of novelty in the ritual, therefore reinforcing passive emotional expression. This result, and the conflict between clergy concerning traditional feeling rules is displayed in the following exchange:

Priest:

I really believe that before the emotional impact of something—at least in the Catholic Church—it wasn't something consciously striven for. I mean, so the product, you know, a good feeling or a spiritual feeling—a feeling of having been fed spiritually—it's an unintended byproduct of a good mass, a good liturgy. But for many liturgists, they begin by saying how can we make people feel good? You know and they begin backwards.

Researcher:

So it's supposed to happen after the service as opposed to when I do fieldwork in Evangelical services, it's obviously supposed to happen right there at that time?

Priest:

Right.

Congregationalism: Democracy and dissent

At first glance, the Congregationalist services I attended were not radically different than the Catholic. The pre-service was often dominated by loud talking and, like Catholicism, feeling rules dictated active emotional expression—smiles, hugs, shaking hands, patting backs, raising eyebrows, bodily animation, vocal fluctuation, etc. These expressions were commonly more intense than Catholics', where on several occasions it took the congregation some time to quiet down before the start of the service. The post-service was almost identical, where as one congregant put it, "it is almost like you turn a key" when transitioning from the postlude (or closing song) to the post-service; the congregation becomes loud and jovial. Differing from Catholics, the Congregationalists observed often remained in the chapel for extended periods of time to socialize, while either slowly leaving or moving to a fellowship hall for coffee hour.

During the service itself, Congregationalists appeared on the surface to be exactly the same as the flat-faced Catholics. While described as a "blank slate" by one pastor, there was an important difference—many of the Congregationalists observed were watching most segments of the service. Such engagement led to a marked reduction in the enacting of situational deviance during the rituals, thereby resulting, actually, in less expressed emotion during the services. While both Catholics and Congregationalists were highly passive during services, Congregationalists were, to a small degree, less expressive. Congregants defined their emotions as largely feeling a sense of calm.

What emerged from this analysis was Congregationalists widely observing feeling rules, while Catholics were more divided. This "blank slate" phenomenon of Congregationalist emotional expression appears to be derived from a variety of sources.

Of primary importance, like Catholicism, Congregationalism is a centuries old denomination with firmly entrenched feeling rules that allow for little expression, described by one pastor as “a holdover from Puritan Calvinism that just kind of lingers around—the ghosts of Puritans that frown on us whenever we emote or express emotion in any way so—its awkward [laughs]”. Secondly, Congregationalism is a chapter within the United Church of Christ—arguably the most liberal denomination of mainstream Protestantism in the United States—in which the independent autonomy of each congregation is guaranteed. This explains a few discrepancies in my findings from different sites, where all were very similar except for one, which was clearly fundamentalist in orientation. This church exhibited more active emotionality more closely related to Evangelical services (described below) where, for example, during hymns some individuals raised hands and congregants sung louder. The sermon and other passive moments however closely corresponded to the other churches in this denomination.

Aside from explaining between church variation, this high democracy culture had other fundamental consequences for emotional expression. For example, many in these congregations had some form of volunteer position, which some individuals were often thinking about during the ritual. The issue here is the inability to separate the sacred ritual from the profane social events (Durkheim 1995). This is evident from the following quote by a choir singer also in charge of church recruitment: “after the service I’m usually looking very specifically for new people because that’s my responsibility—actively—and I’m doing that too when I’m in the choir loft, because you can see—so I can be distracted a little bit with that”. Furthermore, this democratic mindset can lead to

powerful: 1) negative expressions—such as when a congregant used the announcements segment to chastise the congregation for not helping with an antique show, (drawing strongly-worded excuses back) or 2) expressions inappropriate for the church setting, such as a soloist who sang a pop song containing the lyrics “I’ve had so many men before”.

In summary, Congregationalists exhibited passive emotionality very much akin to Catholics, yet for entirely different reasons. A strong Puritan heritage of reserved feeling rules coupled with a democratic mindset led to passive emotionality and a difficulty of instituting change without conflict. This created services that were largely consistent, leading to a lack of novelty, and thus supporting passive emotionality. While pastors were usually able to pick readings to base their messages on and had more time for their sermons than Catholics, most clergy were forthright about their inability to pursue controversial topics. This was expressed via fear of losing their jobs by being voted out by the congregation. Therefore, while similar to Catholics on the surface, Congregationalist feeling rules operated in an entirely different manner.

Evangelicalism: Kickin’ it with God

Excluding the service segment, Evangelical pre and post services bore a strong resemblance to the other two denominations. The pre-service usually involved loud talking inside and outside of the chapel, along with all the other positive forms of emotional expression outlined above. Similarly, the post service reflected this same sentiment, where congregants almost immediately began to talk and exit the auditorium. Participants in interviews described the pre service usually as a hectic time of preparation, and the post service as a time of more relaxed conversation. Evangelical pre

and post service feeling rules thereby appeared to be closely related to those in Catholic and Congregationalist contexts.

Evangelical feeling rules during the service were also quite similar to the other denominations, except for the worship (or song) segment. As opposed to Catholic and Congregationalist services that were comprised of multiple rituals, communal prayers, and traditional hymns, Evangelical services were generally only two segments; the musical worship, and the sermon. While Catholics and Congregationalists generally spent hymns looking down at the floor, at hymnals, or forward, Evangelicals engaged in all kinds of active emotional expression, including raising hands or arms, swaying, dancing, closing eyes, singing loudly, or crying. Worship segment feeling rules therefore allowed for active, sometimes intense emotional expression or, jointly, more passive and reserved displays, substantiated by a music director who does not “judge people by their response, or whether they applaud, or whether they raise their hands, because I realize people’s worship is just a very private heart thing”. While she continues on to assert “it has nothing to do with their outward expression”, as shown below, this is clearly not the case.

Perhaps the most powerful example of intense expression occurred when an associate pastor at a particularly charismatic church was ‘slam dancing’; throwing his upper body downwards and swinging his arms while moving all around his immediate area. Furthermore, another woman was singing so loudly that she drowned out the PA system, and on a separate occasion the music was so loud that the floor of the chapel literally shook. While many individuals present expressed passive emotionality and would simply sing and/or sway, the uniform presence of a sizeable amount of

congregants engaging in active emotional behavior across settings revealed more liberal feeling rules. This was further assisted by technology, where instead of hymnals, all Evangelical services attended had powerpoint presentations that allowed the congregants freedom to glance forward during a worship if they became lost in a song.

Sermons in these services contrasted sharply from the worship segments. The congregations became uniformly passive, with most engaged and watching the pastor with flat faces. Some individuals still looked down, but others flipped through their Bibles to look up quotes, took notes, or engaged in polite laughter at mildly amusing jokes. These services usually concluded with a closing song that tended to be less expressive, after which the congregation immediately transpired into the post service segment. Evangelical feeling rules for the sermon were thereby similar, yet more involved, than Congregationalists’.

The large expressive gulf between Evangelicalism versus Catholicism and Congregationalism is simple to explain. As opposed to the last two denominations, the Evangelical churches visited often *did not* have centuries of traditionally vested feeling rules to draw from. Correspondingly, clergy and music directors had high levels of power and control over the content and presentation of the service. This is illustrated by the vast repertoire of contemporary styled songs at their disposal which were regularly rotated (one music director needed a search engine to go through his files), therefore providing a novel musical experience each week. Furthermore, pastors were free to preach about whatever they desired—often opting for the “series” approach, where they would spend a set number of weeks going over a certain topic—and were allowed more time (usually thirty-five to forty-five minutes). Combine lacking traditional norms with

1) settings where powerpoints were a usual occurrence and professional lighting was used and 2) agreeable congregations, and the potential for novelty in the service is successfully realized. This high level of novelty therefore supports feeling rules of active emotional expression. As one Evangelical put it, the traditional Congregationalist service was “thin”, “uptight”, and “hollow”, and a pastor voiced the following view from his ex-Catholics:

they felt like "all I had to do was show up on Sunday and I could live like hell on Monday through Saturday as long as I went to confessional---and as long as was darn sure I didn't miss church...as long as I do that, I'm OK.

As opposed to some Congregationalists motivated for attendance solely for community, and Catholics possibly by guilt (Sheldon 2006), Evangelicals were motivated for reasons of both active emotionality and indoctrination.

The Rules of the House: Negotiating Conflict between Past and Present; Tradition and Individuality

Hochschild tells us that feeling rules are everywhere; “[w]hat is taken for granted all along is that there are rules or norms according to which feelings may be judged appropriate to accompanying events” (1983: 59). These norms demand that individuals labor through “emotion management” to bring their internal feeling states and their emotional displays in line with the dominant ways. Concurrently, Goffman states the importance of strategic impressions, where we seek to control how others view us, and we utilize various props, titles, and behaviors in order to substantiate our “personal front” (1959). What develops is the operation of pain evasion and impression management that “explain patterns of emotion management”, which “operate within a context of feeling rules” (Hochschild 1983:62).

In this paper, I sought to explain this combination of Goffman's (1959; 1967) and Hochschild's (1979; 1983) theories within the contemporary Congregationalist, Catholic, and Evangelical (Evangelical Free Church of America and some non/post-denominational contexts) service. Goffman's (1959; 1967) concepts of deference and demeanor, regions, and personal fronts were used to explain preaching behavior for pastors, and Hochschild's (1979; 1983) feeling rules to examine the norms governing emotional expression in the settings. This study was inductive based (Glaser and Strauss 2008) and conducted over a year of participant observation in eighteen churches. Furthermore, eighteen semi-formal interviews were conducted with three pastors and three congregants in each denomination. While such an investigation is not the first of its kind (Nelson 1996; 2005), it delves into greater theoretical detail than previous attempts in this area, and investigates general feeling rule operation across multiple congregations in a comparative light.

This investigation revealed the almost universal feeling rule of active emotionality and sociability in the time before the start of the service and immediately after its conclusion in all settings observed. Within the service itself, Congregationalists and Catholics largely shared the same feeling rules of passive emotionality, yet with the important caveat of focus and attention in Congregationalist services versus distraction and deviance in Catholic. Evangelicals differed substantially during the musical worship segment of their services, where active emotionality was commonplace, yet largely conformed to Congregationalist feeling rules during the sermon of passive yet focused emotionality. While in some cases stating a desire to conform with service feeling rules, all pastors interviewed and many observed sought to break them by utilizing *feeling tools*

in the form of engaging and active sermons (and, in the case of Evangelicalism, providing changes in music). The aim was to elicit some form of active emotionality from the congregation, yet commonly failed in the face of traditional (and often centuries old) feeling rules that mandated passive reserve. This details the individual's attempted stake at creating novelty, analyzed with Goffman's (1959; 1967) concepts of the "personal front" and "deference and demeanor", to elicit active emotionality and combat predictable traditionalism.

This work has its shortfalls. I did not remain in any one congregation for an extended period of time, and most likely missed out on more inter-congregational variation. Furthermore, this research was conducted in the Northeast, and multiple pastors voiced how reserved and passive congregants in this region are compared to others. Additionally, this study examined congregations that were mostly white, and was conducted within predominantly mainline settings. Future research in the field should work to address these issues.

Due to the lack of recent interactionist and especially Goffman-based research in religion, this study provides provisional findings and acts as a necessary starting point for future investigation into the dramaturgical study of religion. Churches are ideal for further interactionist theoretical development, for they provide a highly controlled setting that is easily accessible with a captive audience.

The importance of this study and future interactionist work in religious ritual is best stated through the words of another—a Congregationalist pastor who saw his services through "a social constructionist point of view... as soon as I speak it, the

community becomes the interpretive community. So I don't own the words anymore,
[and] its up to them to decide what the meaning is in their social context".

Appendix I:

Additional Feeling Tools, Evaluation of their Effectiveness, and Notes on Social Control

The feeling tools outlined in the main text were only the most common. This appendix will explore other techniques pastors used in order to communicate with their congregants, and expand upon their assessment of success. During interviews, congregants also shared their thoughts about these performance techniques, and some ramifications of using feeling tools will also be explored in brief.

Additional Feeling Rules: Breaking the rules

Sometimes the best way to get a response from congregants is to break a centuries old ecclesiastical mandate. Rule breaking was only performed by Catholic priests (for in Evangelicalism's case, there were not many rules to begin with), happened rarely, and in most of the cases received a positive response from the congregation. Successful examples included when a priest told his congregation "I have nothing folks" at the start of his homily, and asked them to remain standing for the reciting of a communal prayer. This drew teasing from the congregation during the post-service segments. Another time this priest informally and quickly went through the closing ritual after the announcements (which he described as "commercials"), because once the ritual was profaned in this manner, "if I throw out a comment here and tease here then I feel that's fine because it's over, we're done". This line illustrates a clerical "technique of neutralization", where in this case the focus is upon "denial of injury"; for all intents and purposes the ritual is over so there is no harm in having a little fun (Sykes and Matza 1957:667).

These examples were relatively harmless in severity. Another priest—who had "people who complained to the cardinal about me"—was more radical in his rule

breaking, and commonly engaged in non-traditional behavior. This included having children act out skits during the mass, and taking youth group members to a charismatic Evangelical church; all in order to try and break the strict traditionalism of the denomination. This priest utilized a different “technique of neutralization” than his colleague by “appeal[ing] to [the] higher loyalties” he fostered toward his congregation to provide a richer and more satisfying religious experience (Sykes and Matza 1957:669). He characterized himself as fighting the “liturgy police” and the “cold, anonymous, check-off-the-boxes religious experience that doesn’t say anything”. As noted above, this behavior got him in trouble with his superiors, and led to a pointed conflict with a congregant where the priest “literally thought he might come into the church one day and shoot me”. Consequently, a large group of congregants routinely avoided his services. Such is the price one pays for deviance, yet, interestingly, the same priest put the situation as the following, an ideal segue into our next topic:

In this formal mass situation I’m trying to break through the formality of it and what people are expecting to get from these things—when I’m most successful I don’t think it’s me doing it.

Additional Feeling Rules: Abdication of responsibility

“This isn’t me who’s saying this, it’s Jesus”

– *Evangelical Pastor*

A more common tool used by clergy in both the Catholic and Evangelical traditions was what I termed *abdication of responsibility*. Here, the clergy member abandoned responsibility for his actions and attributed them to God, for different reasons depending upon denomination. Catholic priests fostered this sentiment largely because of their unique orthodoxy. Catholicism strongly subordinates the individual to God even in

the case of clergy, where priests worked specifically to eliminate themselves from key rituals. This was particularly evident concerning the consecration of the Eucharist. One priest aptly put the consecration ritual as this; “the formula must be followed with reverence and care. *So I must die to my individuality*” (emphasis added). The contemporary Catholic mass is completely based in text, where “it’s all prescribed; it’s all in the book” except for the homily (which has restrictions placed upon it as well; see the main text). Furthermore, as alluded to at the end of the previous section, whenever a positive event transpired, priests were quick to attribute it to a higher power. One priest expressed this sentiment as “when people are touched I really think the Holy Spirit is working through me”. Conversely, whenever something went wrong, the priests were quick to either blame themselves (the most common response), or, rarely, the congregation.

Evangelical pastors engaged in this behavior for both similar and different reasons. As noted in the quote beginning the section, sometimes it was used in order to substantiate a claim to authority, where the information fronted was presented as valid due to association with God or Jesus. This was a rare occurrence however, and most commonly pastors cited similar reasons to Catholic priests whenever the sermon was going well, where “when it does its good, and usually its probably good too that I don’t know when it’s happening so I don’t think it’s me”—once again, giving full credit of the performance to a higher power. However, it is important to note that one Evangelical pastor in particular had a different take on this processes than his Catholic colleagues. When I described the above priest’s desire to “die to [his] individuality”, the pastor stated how as a preacher you need to stop “fooling yourself that you’re going to be able to take

yourself out of it totally”. Through these examples, we see that being a pastor or priest is an entirely thankless occupation, where even when a performance is spectacular they still cannot allow themselves the credit. This is a situation other performers such as musicians do not have to face, for through the process of “[i]ntegrity of [a]gency”, success is based on “musical skill and virtuosity”, not divine inspiration (Godlovitch 1993:573).

Evaluating Feeling Tools

As outlined in the main text, clergy consistently sought some form of recognition from the congregation while performing in order to gauge the effectiveness of their performative techniques. This was conceptualized through Goffman’s “deference and demeanor” (1967) process as an evaluation of their “personal front” (1959). Pastors and priests sought behaviors such as head nodding, taking notes, following the preacher with their gaze, laughing at jokes, grunting, and looking up. Additionally, evaluation was not solely limited to the observable, and pastors often relied upon personal feeling to ascertain how the sermon was going. One pastor explained this process during a successful sermon, where “it wasn’t so much that I remember back to what I did as much as I sensed that I was feeling the bigness of it, and I felt like everybody was tracking” along. This sentiment was echoed by a Congregationalist pastor, where he could ascertain when “people are engaged and with you and listening—you can tell and you can feed off of that”.

Congregants freely informed me about what they perceived both as beneficial and not while viewing a sermon. Starting with the negative, congregants were distracted when clergy used the sermons to talk about financial contributions or parish upkeep, got off topic, displayed poor delivery, and used complex terminology. This last point is best

illustrated by a Catholic congregant, who stated “some of them really talk in nice laymen terms and others will use the—like what in the world did he just say? Why do you have to use these words that have thirty-five letters in them?” Cited successes were sermons where the pastor or priest told personal stories, appeared spontaneous, used jokes, was clear and concise, or encouraging. One Evangelical congregant desired creativity as well, but this sentiment did not hold across the other denominations. It is also important to note that many of the congregants interviewed could not remember the actual content of their favorite sermons, but *did* remember either the stories or the jokes. This echoes the sentiment of a Catholic priest, where “when I go on vacation I sit in the pew when I go to mass and, you know, I’d say most homilies are very forgettable, and there’s really the experience of suffering through it...its not impacting me”. This cuts to the heart of the last topic in this appendix: social control.

Social Control: Pastoral manipulation or traditional coercion?

The above quote is representative of congregants in at least two of the denominations studied. Catholics and Congregationalists universally attested to being unable to remember what recent sermons were about, and often had difficulty recalling their favorite. This point is of utmost importance concerning issues of social control and coercion, for if Catholic and Congregationalist clergy were successful at influencing thought and action, then the congregants should at least remember what the sermons—really the only period during a service that a pastor can *directly* indoctrinate a congregant—were about. Even the clergy in these denominations had difficulty remembering their favorite or best sermons. Evangelicals were not drastically different

either, often citing holidays as their favorite services/sermons; a sentiment shared by the other two denominations as well.

Further, clergy routinely acknowledged the potential for coercion in their messages, yet *also* routinely denied they engaged in this practice. Regardless if this is the case, the uniformity of such denials and condemnations were telling:

“I don’t do it to be manipulative”

“It’s not my mass, it’s our mass...so I don’t think that there is any sense of us needing to control or direct”

“Liturgy is the work of the people so they should still have some influence too”

“Emotions can be manipulated but it’s a bad way to preach”

“Hopefully you don’t avoid emotion, but also you shouldn’t use it to manipulate”

While there were instances of violating this belief—such as the Evangelical pastor in the main text who refused to continue with his sermon until he got a greater response from the congregation—what emerges from this brief analysis is data supporting my primary conclusion of this paper; religious tradition sets the feeling rules for a service and sharply restricts the amount of power and control vested in individual clergy members. Even in Evangelical services, where there is not a long standing religious tradition, clergy still largely avoided at least overt coercion of their church—perhaps due to these churches’ more moderate orientation.

While beyond the scope of this paper, findings from my analysis suggest the need for extensive study into the operation of social control on the interactional level of religious experience. While I argue the ghosts of days past still control feelings in church, there is still the fact that, as one Congregationalist pastor said “I’m in a certain position of authority, [and] there’s a temptation for people to want to do things to please me or get my favor or attention”.

Appendix 2

The Theatre: The Creation and Management of a Ritual Ecology

Every performance demands a setting. In this instance, the church chapel is where, as Goffman would say, the “action is” (1967). In the case of all interactions, not only is the physical space of importance, but so is the time and duration of the performance, along with its ability to create a separate social space insulated from the outside world. This appendix explores these aspects in the churches I visited.

Service times and length

Times of services were mostly contingent upon denomination and size of church membership. Congregationalist services almost uniformly occurred at ten o’clock in the morning, and smaller Evangelical churches widely followed this pattern as well. Bigger Evangelical churches often had two or three services, with one occurring early in the morning (around eight o’clock), one in mid morning (ten o’clock), and another in the early afternoon (twelve o’clock). Catholic mass times usually followed this sequence as well, with some of the larger churches sometimes performing four masses a Sunday.

Service time exercised influence upon emotional expression for two reasons. First, individuals who attended earlier services tended to be closer to the elderly age group and thus, as an Evangelical congregant told me, were more inclined to be traditionalists. The early hour also affected expression where, as one Evangelical musical director put it, people did not have their “second cup of coffee” and appeared lethargic. Evangelical interviewees were the most outspoken about this occurrence, probably because it was more readily visible in their denomination versus the others.

Service length also had a substantive impact on congregant expression as well. In general, the longer the services went, the more individuals began to apparently lose focus and fidget, thus leading to violations in acceptable feeling rules (Hochschild 1983). A prime example of this occurred in a Congregationalist service, where after a guest pastor was preaching so long that the service ended almost a half hour late, a male congregant in the rear of the chapel made his hand into the shape of a gun, pointed it in his mouth, and made a ‘pow’ sound loud enough to hear across the chapel where I was sitting. Also, another man sitting in the front leaned his entire body over onto the pew in front of him with his hands over his eyes. In response, the preacher stepped up his animation to the highest level of the sermon. It is important to note this process was stratified by denomination, where Evangelical churches appeared more tolerant of longer services than the others. On the other hand, if services were too short, this also triggered negative emotions for congregants as well. As one Catholic congregant told me when the mass lasted a half hour:

I feel that I'm missing out on the emotional high that I get... I feel that I'm being robbed of the opportunity to really connect and think about the message God wanted me to hear that day...[If] it's going to be a short mass I sort of feel like, "Oh, now I have to do all the thinking myself."

Music

Songs act on your emotion at church—if you have an organist that can really play a nice organ and you have somebody that has a voice I think it adds to the mass even more...when she sings I can see my mother in law from the corner of my eye go [sniffing sound] next thing you know I'm doing [sniffing sound] because it just touches your heart, and then that only makes you embrace the mass that much more.

—Interview with a Catholic congregant

Contrary to the above quote, music had a differential impact on emotion displays stratified by denomination³. As outlined in the article, Evangelical congregants displayed much more active emotionality during music than the other denominations. Congregationalists generally looked down at their hymnals and sang quietly, while Catholics either also sang quietly or did not sing at all, with a good proportion of congregants not even using hymnals.

Due to the design of the service itself, Evangelical songs (also known as worship segments) played a pivotal role in emotional expression—in fact, without music their displays would be nearly synonymous with Congregationalists. The importance of this segment was recognized by music directors themselves, who were careful when selecting songs to make sure they were profound and, as one put it, selected against songs that “didn’t say a whole lot”. This same individual described his main job as “creating a worshipful atmosphere”, and another church official at a different site told me they deliberately played the music loudly and dimmed the lights in order to create a private—yet at the same time communal—worship experience. Churches in the other two denominations did not engage in similar actions.

Decoration and architecture

Architectural design of the worship space is another ecological aspect that is very important for the operation of the service and the type of individuals who come to it. Evangelical churches were the most modern, and varied widely in appearance and structure. In some of the smaller congregations, these churches could not afford their own building, and consequently were forced to hold services in school cafeterias and

³ Possible reasons for disparities between interview data provided by Catholic congregants and the emotional displays observed are accounted for in the main text.

auditoriums. This was not always a disadvantage, however, for especially in the case of auditoriums, the setting was equipped with state-of-the-art audio, lighting, and visual equipment, and the stark black and white features created a blank canvas highly malleable to the desires of the pastor. Other more established churches (all except for two of the Evangelical Free Churches visited), were in old Congregationalist, Baptist, or other protestant churches. This provided a barrier to malleability of the setting, and required extensive renovations of the space in order to create a contemporary chapel. Some of the churches visited invested substantial funds for this purpose, such as in one case where an old Baptist church was completely transformed from the traditional model; old pews were replaced with comfortable cushions; new rugs were installed; lighting, audio, and projection equipment was put to use; and a control booth built which housed the production team. Other churches more strapped for cash were able to enact only minor alterations, such as new curtains, audio systems, or professional lighting. The importance of such modifications should not go understated, for as one music director put it “I’ve learned sometimes aesthetics change people’s feelings... space can dictate an awful lot”.

Congregationalist settings were universally symptomatic of classical, colonial styling. All except for one arranged pews in the standard row fashion, with one church dividing them into cubicle-like spaces. The churches were largely bare as well, usually with an alter looking more like a table against the back wall and an undressed wooden cross above it, reflecting classic Puritanical styling. One Congregationalist pastor expressed his frustration to me regarding this set-up, where “church properties are not conducive to vulnerability, transparency, and radical honesty—they're too big; they're

architecturally intimidating”. A congregant voiced another ramification of this architecture where older churches (of which almost all Congregationalist churches in New England are) “attract a different type of person”. My fieldnotes identified that person—a quiet, reserved, and passive emotional worshipper.

In Catholicism, church architecture underwent a radical transformation after the Vatican II council, where the denomination sought to create a more inclusive and participatory worship experience (interview data). New churches were built that differed fundamentally from the classic model; instead of lining pews up in the traditional row formation and placing columns in front of pews, many moved to a fan shape much like a contemporary theatre. Furthermore, many churches began to incorporate modern décor, such as flower arrangements, vases, and other decorative props. Priests interviewed had differing beliefs about this change, where a progressive priest saw it as an opportunity for congregants to not feel as an audience but as “participants”, while another, more conservative priest saw it as a distraction from what it is “supposed to be all about”. What is of extreme importance is how this change illustrates the power of denominational feeling rules. Even when those in charge of the church change a drastically important element of the worship service—the space itself—they still cannot break the centuries old feeling rule of passive emotionality. This aspect provides the perfect introduction to our last topic in this appendix.

Boundary work and the limits of ritual space

While this appendix explored the multiple ways setting can effect expression, there are limits to its power. This is best illustrated by the following quote from a Catholic priest talking about his special masses at the local prison:

The best mass I've ever done happens every week...because they're the poor. They know their need for something greater than themselves; they're attentive, they're eager, they're responsive—I mean the music is appalling; I mean there's a nun there who has a tape recorded thing and she presses a button, and nobody sings, including myself. But it doesn't matter—and it's in a very *institutional room* and in the winter it's *too cold* and in the summer *too hot* but it's a wonderful experience (emphasis added).

This is why churches vary in expression. While setting in many cases does indeed add to and enhance the worshipful nature of the rite, it is still primarily dependent upon the very people present, and the denominational feeling rules. It is these very people and the norms about how to conduct a service that allow it to be separate from the outside world, thus creating the sacred space necessary to escape the profane (Durkheim 1995). This escape, however, is partial and wholly unattainable for, as one priest put it to me, “a prime purpose of liturgy” is for people to be touched by the message in this “neutral zone” and see it applied “where they came from and where they're going”. This objective was the prime focus of almost all the sermons and homilies I heard during my fieldwork, and provides a modification on Durkheim's explanation of separating the sacred from the profane. No longer is the aim to create a sacred space entirely detached from the outside world; an insulated spot where individuals can achieve transcendence. Now the religious ritual is a permeable time, where the outside world is recognized and even harnessed for the purposes of moral indoctrination and, as one priest would say, entertainment. This is the very real process that phenomenological investigations often ignore, and that the conservative priest quoted above was fervently against: the further profanation of the sacred world.

Appendix 3

A Brief Note on Theory

As considered in the main text, there were other theoretical avenues I could have chosen. In this section, I briefly elaborate upon two other possibilities outlined in the article, and explain my reasons for not selecting them.

The first is a recent addition to the literature, presented by Ng and Kidder (2010). Like the Corrigan theory outlined in the main text, this work is also on emotional performance, yet is situated within sociology. The authors conceptualize “emotive performance” as “reflexive and communicative” (211), and is achieved by linking multiple theories, similar to my approach. Mead’s (1934) concepts of the “I” and “Me” encompass the reflexive component (allowing for the evaluation of the self as an object), with an expressive construct similar to Goffman’s work (1959), where individuals narrate their feelings to others and appeal to culturally mandated forms. As stated in the main text, while their work attempts to encompass everything from Mead, to Hochschild (1983), to Goffman, their method is almost entirely substantiated upon speech. This makes it particularly difficult to integrate this theory into the religious setting, where for a large extent of the service the congregation is silent.

Furthermore, the situations they studied did not take place in highly regimented and controlled social settings, allowing individuals power to shape meaning in the interaction—power congregants for the most part do not have. Therefore, while Ng and Kidder’s theory does successfully unite the self with communication and appeals to cultural concepts, it does not adequately capture more covert expressions, nor does it sufficiently account for situational restraints upon expression (i.e. “feeling rules”)

(Hochschild 1979; 1983). This last aspect is especially important, for by utilizing Hochschild's work, I was able to account for how context shapes emotional expression, and further, how *time* achieves this as well. As I demonstrated, social actors dead and gone for centuries still exercised considerable control over how people felt and expressed emotion in Catholic and Congregationalist churches.

In *How Emotions Work*, Jack Katz (1999) also outlined a three part theory on emotion with an interactionist component. He first conceptualized emotions as interactionist, where he took into account "how people perceive and anticipate the responses of others", and then added a hermeneutics component, detailing how people coped with "both the situation-specific and the situation-transcending projects" (315). His last concept was "incorporation", where he outlined "how emotions are the metamorphoses of the embodied, sensual foundations of personal action" (315). While a useful theory, as far as practicality goes, it was an unfit model for the ethnographic study of religion. Katz relied largely upon either video data or fieldworkers in positions to directly ask others what they were feeling and thinking, and also to provide their motivations for behavior. When embedded within a religious ritual, it violates age old feeling rules if I turned to the stranger next to me and asked them how they felt during the consecration of the Eucharist. Videotaping, for obvious reasons, was out of the question as well. While I did ask congregants and priests alike questions about their feelings, my inability to do so in the setting severely limited the appeal of Katz's theory to this project. Therefore, due to inflexible methodological components mirroring methods like conversation analysis, and a stronger focus on acute emotional expressions (anger, joy) versus those that develop over extended periods of time, this theory was not utilized for

this project. It also expands outside the reach of the present research, for he was keenly interested on how events from other stages of life transcended the current situations.

While very interesting and a useful concept, other theorists such as Durkheim (1995), already noted a similar process in religious ritual and rite, and discussion of the issues in phenomenology concerning this study were already outlined in the main text.

In closing, while other interactionist bent theories were possible for use (see Turner and Stets 2009) few offered the flexibility needed to observe behavior covertly and in real-time. Furthermore, churches are a special environment with unique characteristics where, for example they embody a highly regimented social setting—restricting speech and often relying upon displays. These elements demanded a theoretical innovation that captured both performance behavior and contextual restraints, and the theories of Erving Goffman (1959; 1967) and Arlie Hochschild (1979; 1983) not only accounted for these elements, but also allowed them to be summarized in a clear and concise manner.

Appendix 4

Talking About the Self and Others

During interviews, I took the opportunity to ask people not only how they evaluated the emotional expressions of their own church, but how they felt about the expressions of the other denominations studied. These questions were not easy to answer, for some of those asked had never been to a service in the other traditions, and were forced to rely upon media images or hearsay of what occurred in the settings. The answers provided were quite useful however, and provided insight into what individuals saw as normal in their setting⁴, and abnormal in others.

Talking about the self

While my analysis of Catholics in the main text could be construed as critical, Catholic clergy substantiated these claims with their own assertions. When speaking about their churches, Clergy were often harsh, and judged the passive emotional expressions negatively: “I was telling the people in the church two weeks ago of this experience and what’s wrong with us that we can’t be a little more spontaneous? Why do we have to be so contained?” Furthermore, as stated in the article, Clergy even sought a direct contradiction of traditional feeling rules (Hochschild 1979; 1983) from the congregation, where a priest complained about how congregants were “not accustomed to becoming physically involved in worship outside of prescribed gestures”. In the end, another priest summarized the ramifications of these passive denominational feeling rules, where he stated “the strength of something like the institution of the Catholic church is that you have something to keep it going—at the expense that there’s a lot of *death* as part of it” (emphasis added).

⁴ This first section acts as an elaboration upon points presented in the main text.

Congregant feelings about their churches were mostly reflected in the main text. Overall, many saw it as a calming event and a method for connecting with past memories, with feelings of sadness also occurring during depressing high holidays (such as Easter). Concurrently, individuals also complained of distractions from other congregants (shuffling in pews, talking) and the clergy. The later complaints were comprised of instances where, as cited in the article, the clergy used vocabulary that they did not understand, or when a clergy member kept tying the theme from his homily into the later parts of the service. This last aspect clearly violated the procedures of how a service was to be run for, as one priest said, “it’s all in the book”.

Aside from a sense of calm, Congregationalist congregants also viewed their services as important occasions fostering fellowship and a sense of community. The key evaluation was how, as one congregant told me, they felt that “you can accomplish things”. Aside from complaining about the occasionally boring sermon or—more rarely—sermons that were inappropriate for occasions (such as one pastor who preached about prostitutes on Mother’s Day), Congregationalist’s had more positive evaluations of their religious community. In addition, tales of squabbles amongst congregants were also rare, and handled in indirect, non-confrontational ways.

Clergy viewed their congregations slightly more negatively. As stated in the main text, one saw his as a “blank slate” and lacking affect. However, this same pastor also characterized the congregation as embodying a sense of freedom: “they want to think they have the sense of freedom to express themselves, they just don’t want to think that they have to—it’s there if you want it but they’re not going to take you up on the offer”. This notion heralds back to the highly democratic nature of the denomination, and

acknowledges the tacit understandings underneath expressions in the congregation. This was best illustrated when the same pastor told me “we don’t talk about it [emotion in church] because it’s a private, personal thing, but we all understand it and share it together—we’re not going to talk about it because we all know we understand”. While another pastor saw many contemporary churches in this denomination as “fallen institution[s]”, the others interviewed reflected the underlying tacit reserve and understanding when evaluating their settings.

Evangelical congregants and clergy alike took a similar perspective on their religious emotional identity. While Catholics were characterized by either conflict or calm, and Congregationalists by tranquil community, the Evangelical interviewees largely also cited community and family as a strong attribute of their church society. As one music director put it, “you become a family with them”, and a focus upon the church body as community led to viewing others both in a positive, ‘big tent’ light, yet also expressed some negatives, such as disagreements and struggles. Out of all the denominations investigated, the Evangelicals conceptualized their churches by far the most as families, with all of the pros and the cons that come associated with this arrangement.

Where Evangelicals differed however, was at the limits of the family. Reflecting their protestant heritage, these individuals saw worship and communication with God as an intimate and personal experience. While Congregationalists conceptualized all aspects of the service as community, Evangelicals allowed for individual experience within this framework as well, where as a female congregant stated individual experiences with God were commonplace, and “it’s about who he is—that’s how I become edified. When I see

who he is that lifts me, because I see he's God and I'm not". This attitude reflected the conclusions fronted in the main text; while Congregationalists saw the service through the eyes of the good of the collective, and Catholics largely through the eyes of the individual, Evangelicals were able to combine the two and present them in a mainly positive light.

Talking about others: Catholics

Put politely, Evangelicals and Congregationalists did not view the Catholic tradition in a positive way. This attitude most likely originated from roots in the Reformation, and Congregationalists—who had the most in common with Catholics—were the harshest. Congregants expressed dislike for the papal hierarchy (in one case perceived as tyrannical) and the lack of leadership opportunities for women, along with, as one person put it, “all those rituals”. Furthermore, they also saw the individual as “anonymous” within the setting, and positioned themselves as being more “open to change”. Negative feelings without basis were also provided, such as one congregant who stated “I just kind of get the shivers when I go in a Catholic church, I really—I don't know—no offense”.

Congregationalist clergy were even more forthright about their issues with Catholicism. As one pastor jokingly put it “I'm always under the impression if you show any emotion in a Catholic service someone comes and hits you”. Clergy also commented (perhaps a bit ironically) on the mundane boredom of Catholic ritual—“my perception is that within a Catholic Church is you sit there, you pay attention, you kneel, you stand, you kneel”—and as out of touch and misguided, where “they don't have anybody who can help them understand exactly what the hell's going on.”

Evangelicals, by comparison, were much more cordial in their assessment of Catholicism. As one pastor raised Catholic summed it up, masses were characterized with “boredom... from my personal experience”. Furthermore, while an Evangelical congregant felt that “all the ritual... [was] a little out of my comfort zone”, there were some positive notes from individuals in this denomination. For example, Evangelicals commented on how they enjoyed the Gothic architecture of many of the churches, along with rituals involving incense. However, Clergy took issue with the presence of tradition standing between individuals and scripture, and the maintenance of social distance between clergy and congregation, where as one pastor put it “you don’t see that in Jesus’ ministry—he never kept a professional distance, he connected with people”.

Talking about others: Congregationalists

Catholic dissatisfaction about Congregationalism ran directly counter to feelings Evangelicals fostered toward Catholics: “we always have to return to the sources, and for the Catholic Church it would be scripture and tradition. Protestant people would say it’s just the scripture”. Therefore, as stated by this priest, some Catholics interviewed displayed discomfort with the lack of ecclesiastical tradition in the Congregationalist denomination. Another priest asserted that Congregationalists lacked feeling in their preaching, and were mainly focused upon delivering moral mandates. Interestingly, the one Catholic congregant interviewed who had experience with this denomination enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere, and had nothing negative to say about the denomination at all. This discrepancy therefore appears to illuminate a simple reality of religion in the United States and worldwide; competition for membership (Hamberg and Pettersson 1994; Miller 2002).

Evangelical congregants were more critical about Congregationalists than Catholics, yet their clergy did not provide any opinion on this tradition at all. As we saw in the main text, one congregant in particular saw Congregationalist services as “thin”, “uptight” and “hollow”, and also lacking a feeling of “depth of worship”. Another Evangelical (in this case a music director), took issue with the “lack of creativity” in these settings; essentially saying in a polite fashion they were boring.

Talking about others: Evangelicals

Catholic priests appeared especially antagonistic toward Evangelical services and feeling rules. After sharing with one priest how an Evangelical pastor I interviewed associated running his church with running a business, it prompted the following blatant reply “[he’s] marketing a product, and it happens to be Jesus”. Another priest stated how these pastors needed “an immediate response” from their congregation, and another noted how “they don’t have any tradition that guides them, it’s just totally left up to the individuals’ own inclination and inspiration”. While this last priest viewed this situation as disturbing, another priest actually took children from his parish to an Evangelical service, and noted how the congregation was welcoming and embracing even though they had leadership issues. Regarding Catholic congregants, due to all interviewed being extremely devout, none of them encountered any experiences within Evangelical settings (and, as shown above, rarely in Congregationalist), except for one, which was within a charismatic revivalist setting and in no fashion reflected mainline practices (as there were healing ceremonies and other rituals present during this service).

Congregationalists had even less to say about Evangelical services and emotional expression, where the only congregant willing to say anything on the topic said “they’re

hardcore...They're very extreme", and saw her church as being more "laid back". Clergy offered no negative assessment of them at all, and simply commented on their individualistic orientation, lack of tradition, and ability to avoid being "trapped with hymnals". Reflecting what any social psychologist would agree with, a pastor put it simply as "there's just a different set of expectations".

This appendix served the function of providing testimony from congregants and clergy about their and other denominations' feeling rules and expressed emotion. While individuals may have been biased in a favorable light toward themselves and a negative toward others, the statements presented agree with the analysis in the main document. These findings therefore lend credibility to my conclusions, and further extrapolate the complex business of expressing emotion in contemporary churches.

Appendix 5

Studying People You Don't Like: A Note on the Researcher's Feelings

Since this is a paper on emotion, it would fall short of its stated purpose if it did not account for the Researcher's feelings in one way or another. Running the risk of producing a mini-autoethnography, I decided to include this section as the closing statement on this project that encompassed a year of my life.

I am not religious. I have never been religious—nor as far as I can foresee—will I ever be religious. Studying church provides an optimal setting for ethnographic research in social psychology, and due to a relative lack of dramaturgical or interactionist research in this area, it presented itself as an ideal opportunity. Furthermore, there were no barriers to gaining access, and for all intents and purposes, the IRB did not really care about what I did there. This is not to say I chose this setting solely out of convenience, but there were many perks associated with studying a church.

But there were also drawbacks that, in my case at least, were highly emotional. On the whole, church was extremely boring. There were few things more difficult than waking up at six o'clock on a mid-winter Sunday during my first year of graduate school, knowing that I had to dress up and drive to rural Connecticut and sit in a pew for a hour while listening to messages that, on the whole, I did not care about. The pews were wooden and uncomfortable, the music subpar, and the parking lots a nightmare. Boredom makes ethnography extremely difficult, for when you are tired, worn-out, and uncomfortable, who feels like watching people at church? This situation demanded not only work on focusing my thoughts and attention, but “emotion work” as well (Hochschild 1983). While I had to force myself to look interested in singing a hymn I'd

heard multiple times and appear invested in my spiritual development when talking with others, it also applied to a feeling at the opposite end of the emotional spectrum; fear.

Being raised Catholic, going into an Evangelical setting—even the mainline churches attended—required sometimes extensive “emotion management” (Hochschild 1983) to not *give off* (Goffman 1959) the appearance of sheer terror. While in many of these instances the people were warm and welcoming, nothing in my past prepared me for the modern Evangelical worship experience. The anxiety peaked when, at one service, a woman was crying before the songs even started and a fellow congregant told me to “buckle up” as the service was getting under way. I am not an overly excitable person (perhaps that’s why I’m studying to be a sociologist), and trying to present a front where I am passionately engaged in the ritual was just not going to happen. I did not raise my hands, close my eyes, or dance around my seat. I stood mostly still, shook my left leg a bit while lightly tapping it with my hand, sang softly, and smiled.

Anger was present as well. This was a rarity, but when it did happen it became quite difficult to remain in the setting (I never did leave a site). The only times this happened was when one Congregationalist pastor decided to speak about the inherent evils of being gay, and the other was the ‘furnace incident’ as outlined in the article. Aside from the sociological implications of the later act, there were human implications as well. This observation was especially potent for me, for while over the years I knew the Catholic Church was not in what I would call lock-step with the times, I always gave them the benefit of the doubt that they cared about the people in the pews. I still believe there are priests out there who do care (I met some through this study), but watching a priest mount the pulpit while his largely elderly congregation was shivering during a flu

pandemic was simply disgusting. In my mind, this instance illuminated what I had known, but perhaps after being raised in the denomination had not wanted to admit—a church that does not care about its people is not a church at all.

Interviews presented their own form of challenges as well. At the conclusion of many of them (or even during them), it was customary for participants to attempt a conversion. Over the course of the interviews and fieldwork, I had the opportunity to become 1) a Congregationalist 2) an Evangelical 3) a youth coordinator 4) a church reviver and 5) a seminarian. This heralds the most difficult emotion I faced; being disingenuous. Without even saying anything, all of my interview participants appeared to believe that we were ‘on the same team’. Clearly, if I was interested in their religious lives, then I must be interested in *my* religious life as well. This is not a foolish assumption, for why would I study religion in the first place? I had no desire to paint any denomination black, nor was I interested in conversion. But did this situation lead to participants—especially clergy—telling me things they probably should not have? Yes. Should I have refrained from using this sometimes damaging information in my report? I believe not, for two specific reasons.

First, I mostly studied elites. My loyalty was not to the pastors I observed or interviewed; they were exclusively white and middle to upper middle class. They held the psychological keys to the wellbeing of hundreds of people, and were in a role allowing the possibility of coercion and manipulation. I was not Mitch Duneier in *Sidewalk* (1999) studying the socially vulnerable, I was Chris Donnelly in one of the richest states in the union. Second, as is the essence of any democracy, the people need to know what their leaders do, believe, and think, and while this work obviously is not

going to be distributed on newsstands across the country, it will still be read by *someone*. Such were my rationalizations for “black hole phenomenon[s]”, “blank slate[s]”, and stories about putting your congregants in danger.

But it is also important to remember what these services were for. Not only were they for connecting with God and reinforcing a collective sentiment (Durkheim 1995), but also for discussing morality and human rights, taking up collections for the down and out, and praying for a just and peaceful world. Feeling tools themselves were methods of gaining attention in order to convey usually very profound and important lessons about what being a human is all about. While there were issues of abuse and moral questionability, a vast majority of the time, feeling tools and rules focused the congregation so they could learn important and necessary teachings, along with expressing themselves (or not) during songs and worship.

In closing, there were people I did not like in these settings; people who I disagreed with in fundamental, possibly irreconcilable levels. But refusing them their humanity—even though in some cases they had to others—is not what sociologists do. Through works like this and others that came before (Duneier 1999; Wacquant 2004), sociologists presented a full spectrum of humanity; not the warm and fuzzy inspirations; not the motivational life changes; but a multifaceted view of what being human is. This paper showed how others were human in church, through all the inconsistencies, failures, and contradictions. But it also showed the joy, enthusiasm, and comfort, and illuminated the social processes that we shape and shape us (Bourdieu 1977). While my emotions were multiple and sometimes contradictory, at least I was able to partake in this one, central area of social life, and write about it to share with others.

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