

Sacrifice of praise: Emotion and collective participation in an African-American worship service.

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

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Abstract

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

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