# Prayer and Liturgy as Constitutive-Ends Practices in Black Immigrant Communities

## MARGARITA A. MOONEY AND NICOLETTE D. MANGLOS-WEBER

ABSTRACT

Much social theory tends to emphasize the external goods of social practices, often neglecting the internal goods of those practices. For example, many analyses of religious rituals over-emphasize the instrumental and individualistic ends of prayer and liturgy by describing such religious practices as effective means for achieving external ends like positive emotions, psychological benefits, social status, or social capital. By contrast, we use a neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics perspective to analyze the relational goods, such as trust and intimacy, which are expressed and sustained through ritualized social practices. Using ethnographies of Haitian and Ghanaian Christians in the U.S., we demonstrate that prayer and liturgy can also be understood as constitutive-ends practices, practices in which human persons engage to sustain relations with others because there are goods inherent to those relationships. We further argue that in many religious practices, the end goals and the means—i.e. specific aspects of the practice—are insepa-rable. Our approach to developing theory combines critical engagement with numerous other theorists and also exploring how well various theories can explain the motivations and experiences of participants in the religious rituals where we conducted our ethnographies.

Keywords: religion, rituals, relationality, virtue ethics, constitutive-ends prac-tices, social action

## SOCIAL ACTION AND RELATIONAL GOODS

A growing criticism of contemporary sociological theories about human action is that they emphasize rational, instrumental action much more than action guided by morals or ultimate concerns (Mooney, 2014; Gorski, 2012; Sayer, 2011; Smith, 2010, 2003; Archer, 2004). Yet, even studies of culture, morality and religion still

often adopt an instrumental and individualist view of human action (Smilde, 2013). For example, Swidler (2001; 1986) rightly rejects a Parsonian view of culture, in which human action is largely determined by society's shared values. In her book *Talk of Love*, the object of her analysis consists of "the cultural resources themselves—the traditions, rituals, symbols and pieces of popular culture—that people drew on in thinking about love" (2001, p. 4). She argues that humans select from a repertoire of cultural practices to solve the daily problems that arise in social life, but she still does not examine what are the ends that people pursue (Smilde, 2013; Smith, 2003). Hence, Swidler's notion of cultural repertoires or culture as a tool-kit still implicitly assumes that cultural activities are pursued as part of a strategy to attain other ends, leaving the nature of those ends unexplored.

Although Bourdieu's (1987; 1977) works on culture certainly challenge reductionist or materialist assumptions about human action, his explanations of social practice always refer to the field and habitus of the agents. Hence, for Bourdieu, social practices are not analyzed as ends in and of themselves, but are assumed to be part of a strategy people use to pursue separate individual ends such as status, prestige and power (Winchester, 2008). Therefore, in the works of Swidler and Bourdieu, two of the most prominent and widely cited theorists of culture, the nature of the ends that human beings pursue through social and cultural practices remains either unexplored or implied to be external to the activity itself (Richardson & Manglos, 2012). By neglecting to consider goods internal to social practices, much theorizing about cultural and social practices tends to fall back on an often unstated strategic or instrumental logic whereby social and cultural practices are a mechanism to achieve symbolic capital, status or power, goods that are external to the practices themselves and that are fungible with other types of goods such as economic capital. These above examples illustrate two common assumptions in much sociological theorizing: a) that human behavior is dominated by means-end rationality—what we call instrumentalism—and b) that whether people pursue material or cultural ends, the end goal of human behavior is personal gain or fulfillment, what we call individualism.

Some notable recent work has returned to classical theory for more robust understandings of the internal goods of social action. For example, Gorski (2012) argues that Durkheim rejected a utilitarian or instrumentalist view of social action and argues that Durkheim's view of social action as moral bears much resemblance to Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing. In other words, Durkheim did not depict social rituals as simply accruing pleasure or material goods for individuals. Like Aristotle, Durkheim argued that humans can only flourish through social interactions. Similarly, Collins's (2004) work on interaction ritual chains, which he founds in the symbolic interactionism of Goffman (1971), explicitly rejects the idea that social action is primarily motivated by the desire for material ends that are obtained by strategically interacting with others in social situations. Collins proposes that: "The individual, although self-interested, is

nevertheless interested in what can be found only in social situations" (2004, p. 22). Although Collins at times seems to overemphasize the self-serving nature of the emotional energy produced in interaction ritual chains, nevertheless his work questions the common assumption of the strategic relationship between means and ends in many types of social actions.

<div align="center">VIRTUE ETHICS AND CONSTITUTIVE-ENDS PRACTICES</div>

The virtue ethics paradigm arose in the late 20th-century as a partial return to an Aristotelian view of virtue, human motivation, and the nature of being. Virtue ethics scholars (Anscombe, 1958; MacIntyre, 1984; Ricouer, 1992 [1990]; Murdoch, 1997; Hursthouse, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000) are not identical in their language, their conclusions, or in their reading of Aristotle. Nevertheless, as theoretical psychologists working in this vein have noted (Slife & Wiggins, 2009; Fowers, 2010; Smith, 2010; Richardson, 2012; Richardson & Manglos, 2012) neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists share the concern to rectify individualist and instrumentalist views of the human good and human action. They attempt to elucidate the highest human goods, based on the assumption that these highest human goods arise directly out of what human persons ontologically *are.* They recognize that human goods are not the possessions of human individuals but can be seen as emergent properties that arise in particular social settings through particular practices.

From this perspective, virtues should not be understood simply as the search for individual excellence; rather virtues are collectively enacted in relationship, and this co-enactment of virtue is constitutive of human flourishing. In other words, ". . . my good as a man is one and the same as the good of the others with whom I am bound up in human community . . . because the good is neither mine particularly nor yours particularly" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 229). Human goods are shared by communities and emerge from ongoing social relationships. Similarly, Margaret Archer (2012) proposes that relational goods entail "emergent properties, namely 'internal goods' (such as love, reliance, caring and trust) that cannot be produced by aggregation and are *also* deemed highly worthwhile in themselves" (p. 99).

In contrast to much sociological theorizing that is linear, there is an inherent and intended teleological circularity characteristic of a virtue ethics perspective. In examples of constitutive-ends practices, ends and means exist in an inseparable, interdependent relationship.

This understanding of the relationship between social life and the virtues is therefore not linear in the sense that one action directly produces another known consequence, as an instrumentalist vision would suggest. Rather, all actions contribute to an ongoing narrative that a social group is in the process of telling about itself. These narratives are told through social exchanges or conversations that are

fundamentally about what sort of life is best for human persons. It is in these narratives where orientations towards what is perceived to be good vs. bad, desirable vs. undesirable—come into play (Smith, 2003).

One of the most useful tools of sociological analysis coming out the neo-Aristotelian perspective is the idea that there are particular kinds of practices in which means and ends cannot be separated. The constitutive-ends practice is a "practice with goods internal to itself" (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 227). Whereas in instrumental practices, means are measured only by their effectiveness at reaching a certain end, in constitutive-ends practices, the means are inseparable from the ends. In constitutive-end practices different means are not interchangeable, as the desired end requires a particular means of achieving it (Fowers, 2010).

Many activities undertaken in art, play, and religion have important constitutive-ends, where the goods are internal to the practice. For example, visual artists often talk about how results cannot be separated from process, which illustrates one component of constitutive-ends behavior, namely that the means and the ends are inseparable. Even games like basketball, which at first glance seem to be only about winning, also create social bonds. In *Religion and Human Evolution*, Robert Bellah (2011: 92) demonstrates how many forms of play can be analyzed using MacIntyre's notion of goods internal to practices. Sociologists tend to emphasize the instrumental benefits of play—such as exercise or winning—to the detriment of the goods internal to playing games (Bellah, 2011, xxii), thereby overlooking how social activities like play and rituals express fundamental human desires for meaningful connection with others. Hence, even social actions that have instrumental ends can also have important constitutive ends.

In sum, much sociological theorizing focuses on individualist and instrumentalist types of action, thus missing much of the activity that makes human life so rich, meaningful, and enjoyable from the point of view of social actors themselves. Thus, our goal is not to provide a completely alternative and all-encompassing theory of action, but rather bring a particular type of human action, constitutive-ends action, back into the forefront of sociological analysis.

## PRAYER AND LITURGY AS CONSTITUTIVE-ENDS PRACTICES

The tendency to emphasize strategic action and external goods of social practices to the detriment of constitutive-ends practices with goods internal to the practice have influenced many explanations of personal and collective religious behaviors. For example, Jerolmack and Porpora (2004) argue that rational choice theories of religion emphasize means-end rationality and thus explain religious behaviors as means to attain egoistic, self-satisficing ends. Jerolmack and Porpora further argue that most critiques of rational choice theory of religion fail to critique the logic that human behavior is at its root instrumentalist and individualist. By contrast, they argue that some people may engage in religious behavior for normative reasons,

such as the desire "to conform to a standard of moral appropriateness that is supposed to govern our behavior independent of our interests," (Jerolmack & Porpora, 2004, p. 147). Even if some people use religious practices as a means to an end, it does not necessarily follow that all people do so. They state: "As long as at least some or even many people are religious and religiously committed for non-instrumental reasons, RCTR's [Rational Choice Theory of Religion's] needed reduction fails not just on conceptual grounds but on empirical grounds as well," (2004, p. 149). We argue that although religious practices do sometimes follow instrumentalist ends, nevertheless the primary intention of religious practice is found in the building and expressing of relational intimacy with God and others, which is constituted by the ritualized, interactive, and repetitive practices that take place in and around religious social settings.

Some recent work in sociology of religion has noted the problematic tendency to explain religious behaviors by reference to external goods pursued strategically. For example, Riesebrodt (2010) argues that theories of religion that rely on the instrumental benefits produced by religion cannot explain the meaning of religious actions. Riesebrodt defines religion as "a complex of meaningful practices—that is, of actions—that are situated in a relatively systematic web of meaning"; which have their specific meaning "in [their] relation to personal or impersonal superhuman powers, that is, to powers that control or influence what escapes human control" (2010, pp. 71–72).

David Smilde (2013) and Michal Paglis (2013) concur with Riesebrodt (2010) in arguing that religious meanings are not solely located in one person's subjective interpretation or the interpretations of religious intellectuals, but rather in liturgies—such as spoken words, symbolic actions, gestures, and songs. Thus, Smilde (2013) argues that the lived religion perspective which focuses on everyday practices and beliefs needs to be combined with an institutional perspective on religion which analyzes the shared contexts and collective practices people engage in. Bellah's (2011: 92) argument that religious rituals build off of forms of play with goods internal to practices further turns our attention to the constitutive-ends of one common form of ritual: religious liturgies.

If religious practices constitute webs of meaning between persons and with the supernatural, then the meaning of religious practices cannot be found in instrumental or individual ends. Using examples from both Christianity and Buddhism, Pagis (2013) describes how even deeply personal experiences like mediation and conversion are often relational and embodied. Rather than starting from a presumption of the autonomous self common in much social theory, Pagis argues that the study of religion should begin by seeing "the self as an embodied process contextualized in ongoing social relations" (2013, p. 92). Ethnographic research on religion thus should focus on the practices and repetitive processes that constitute and reconstitute the collective group and subjective religious selves.

Our work thus moves beyond a common reductionistic view of religion in which people strategically engage in religious rituals to achieve individual

psychological states. In contrast, we draw on a virtue ethics perspective of human action to theorize about religious rituals as constitutive-ends practices that collectively produce inter-subjective meanings and experiences with regards to ultimate concerns about the human good. We particularly emphasize that some (though arguably not all) of the goods of religious practice, such as intimacy with others and God, are internal to those practices. By this we mean that the goods enjoyed are located within and are inseparable from the form of the practices that produce them. Further, we show how bodily engagement in religious rituals contributes to producing collective religious experiences. Finally, we argue that religious leaders' sermons guide religious practices and shape inner transformations, thus illustrating how to fruitfully combine an institutional analysis of religion with the lived religion perspective that focuses on personal experiences.

### HAITIAN AND GHANAIAN CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANS

We now use these concepts of constitutive-ends practices and the goods internal to those practices to present our ethnographies of Haitian (Mooney) and Ghanaian (Manglos-Weber) Christian communities. Our approach applies insights from "reflexive sociology," in that we use our own experiences and perceptions as deeply-relational participant observers as key pieces of supportive evidence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Burawoy, 2009). As we ourselves experienced the interplay of social relations and the mutual understanding that develops through participation, as researchers we were able to achieve a deeper, phenomenological understanding of the social practices we analyze.

What were some of the preliminary theories we had about Haitian and Ghanaian Christians? Studies of Christians in Africa and the diaspora often focus on religion as a means to attain one or another instrumental end, such as this-worldly prosperity, physical healing, psychological comfort, or security in the face of disruptive and unpredictable global markets (Gifford, 2004; Meyer, 2004; Robbins, 2004; Marshall, 2009). Similarly, much research on Catholicism in Haiti emphasizes the political influence of the Catholic Church throughout Haitian history and, in particular, the strong influence of liberation theology in the democratic revolution of the 1980s (Greene, 1993). When Africans or Haitians migrate to the U.S., migration scholars often describe their religious communities as generating social capital that promotes successful socio-economic integration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

Scholarly emphasis on the political engagement of Christian churches in Haiti and in Africa, combined with scholarship on religion and social capital among migrants to the U.S., led us to form preliminary assumptions about our the motivations for religious participation among Haitians and Ghanaians. As illustrated below in our ethnographic accounts, we each began our research looking for instrumental ends of religious practice. Our participation in the religious

rituals we studied and our ethnographic methods led us each to slowly discover the constitutive ends of Haitian and Ghanaian Christianity.

Our ethnographies illustrate similar and related points: a) religious behaviors and experiences are both personal and collective; b) religious practices express and sustain relational goods between persons and between persons and God; and c) religious settings inculcate virtuous behaviors in various ways, including through expressive bodily practices and listening to sermons, practices that aim at transforming inner selves to align with the meanings of external practices.

## NOTRE DAME D'HAITI IN MIAMI

From the start of my research my (Mooney's) research design was influenced by assumptions about the political and social engagement of Haitian Catholic churches. I specifically chose to do my fieldwork at Miami's Haitian Catholic Parish called Notre Dame d'Haiti because one of its founders, now the Archbishop of Miami, Thomas G. Wenski, was well-known for his social service work and political advocacy during the 20 years he worked at Notre Dame (Mooney, 2009). My initial research plan only included interviews with key informants such as Wenski and Haitian Catholic clergy about their social services and political engagement. During my first interview with Wenski, I asked a long list of questions about his social and political programs but asked little about the religious practices of Notre Dame. Sensing my instrumentalist assumptions, Wenski explained to me numerous times that the spiritual mission of Notre Dame was the primary end the religious community. Other Haitian clergy also described their political and social engagement, but pointed out that the primary purpose of Notre Dame was to build the religious community as an end goal in and of itself.

Realizing that my starting framework was flawed but not quite yet understanding how to revise my theories, I expanded my study to include intensive participation in Notre Dame's religious activities and to interviews with participants in those rituals. Illustrating how little I understood the constitutive-ends of religious practice, early in my fieldwork I turned to Marie, who was sitting next to me at a scripture study class. Having seen her at various activities at Notre Dame nearly every day that week, I said, "Haitians like to spend a lot of time at church. Could you tell me why?" She looked me in the eyes and replied, "Because we love God." I was trying to find a way to get Marie to describe to me the benefits she gets from being a member of Notre Dame, such as help paying medical bills and guidance in applying for legal papers. Marie's brief reply pointed to the fact that she goes to church because she loves God, and her prayer groups, scripture study, and volunteer work at the church all deepened her relationships with others at church and with God. Although Marie later told me that Notre Dame has indeed helped her with various socio-economic issues, her comment led me to ask further

questions about why Haitians spend so much time praying and participating in religious rituals. I learned two important things. First, I learned that many migrants in Miami receive instrumental benefits of the Catholic Church social programs and political engagement without belonging to any parish or even being Catholic. On a daily basis, hundreds of people came to Notre Dame to attend English language classes, literacy classes, receive legal advice, or drop their children off at day care. Some, but not all of them, attended Notre Dame's religious activities. Second, I learned that many people like Marie primarily see their religious practices as a way of establishing a relationship with God and others.

Prayer as Relationship with God and Others

As I continued my fieldwork, I still held instrumentalist and individualist assumptions that people prayed to God as a means to solve their personal material problems. I often inquired how often people prayed the rosary, how often they attended Mass, and whether they prayed at home. When I finally asked what they pray about, the answers again surprised me. When people who are so poor and needy told me they pray first and foremost to give worship and thanks to God, I thought their words confirmed Marx's assertion that religious practices and beliefs distract people from worldly concerns. But I slowly learned that my interviewees saw their relationship with God as an end in and of itself. My interviewees repeatedly told me it was more important to pray for others' needs, for peace in the world, and for peace in Haiti before even asking God to help oneself. In their view, treating prayer only as instrumentalist nor individualist would distort the intention behind prayer and take away from the constitutive end of prayer: establishing a right relationship with God and fostering relational intimacy with others.

An interview with a woman named Georgina, who I frequently saw attending daily Mass before the start of English class, further illustrates how I learned about the shortcomings of an instrumentalist framework on prayer. Georgina answered patiently all my questions and recounted her difficulties in moving from Haiti to the U.S., including health problems, her divorce, losing her job and not having legal papers. With all those troubles, I thought she must pray to ask God to relieve her problems. When I asked her what she prays for, her reply surprised me because she emphasized first and foremost that she gives thanks to God and that she prays for others' needs. She told me, "First I ask for forgiveness. Then I give thanks. Then I pray for everyone else. I pray for people I know, and for people I don't know. I pray for people who don't pray. Only then do I ask God for what I need." Perhaps sensing my surprise that given her health problems, poverty, unemployment and lack of legal papers, her prayers were not more self-centered, she further explained, "We are not supposed to be selfish in our prayer." Although

she did not deny that she did ask God for help with her own problems, prayers of supplication were far down on her list. Her words clearly illustrated that even if prayer could be used a means to try to improve her situation in life, her reason for praying was to sustain her relationship with God and others. This example reveals a further assumption behind my words, an assumption most Haitians did not share. When I asked, "What do you pray for?" I expected an instrumentalist answer along the lines of: I pray to achieve a certain goal (better health, legal papers, etc.). My individualist framework largely led me to overlook that for my respondents, what they pray for is to sustain a relationship that has value in and of itself. Their words answered a more fundamental question—why do you pray (i.e., to be in relationship with God)—rather than my instrumentalist question: what do you get from praying (i.e., does prayer solve a problem?).

Understanding the relationship with God as an end in and of itself helped answer a nagging question: How could Georgina and so many others at Notre Dame hold on to their confidence in God if, despite all the time they spent in prayer, they were still poor, unemployed, and unhealthy? If prayer is not effective at solving material problems or if praying for something but not getting it leads to emotional discouragement, wouldn't she give up prayer? However, her under-standing of prayer expressed that prayer is a constitutive-ends practice oriented towards relational intimacy, not just an instrumental practice to achieve better health or good feelings. As she explained, when her prayers are not answered, "I ask God to give me more confidence in him, more trust in him. You have to have confidence in God. Jesus said, 'Whoever believes in me is already saved.' God always helps me. But you have to persevere. If you don't have faith, you don't have anything." Georgina, like others at Notre Dame, prayed because it estab-lishes their identity in relation to God and others.

## The Eucharist and Easter Triduum

If Haitians have so many worldly problems to solve, why exert so much time and energy in collective prayer rather than collective political action, I wondered? My participation in Eucharistic celebrations at Notre Dame, such as that during the Easter season, further illustrates the shortcomings of an instrumentalist view of rituals. I slowly learned how Haitians' liturgical practices express the constitutive end of relational intimacy between humans and with the supernatural. To illus-trate, over Easter weekend, thousands of Haitian Catholics gathered for three days of liturgies lasting between three and five hours, including a Good Friday ritual in which they bodily enacted Jesus' suffering. Bodily movements such as kneeling down and kissing the wounds of Jesus on the cross enact the repentance they wish to foster in their hearts; jubilant singing of praise to God at the Easter Vigil collectively expresses their desire for salvation; and patiently and quietly listening to lengthy sermons, even during at an outdoor Mass under the scorching

Miami sun, live out the message of the Easter Sunday sermon—that a true transformation does not occur without struggle.

More than any other aspect of Haitians' religious practices, their emphasis on the transformative power of suffering both for individuals but also for the community most challenged my instrumentalist views. The bodily re-enactment of Jesus's suffering and death on Good Friday through the two-hour outdoor Stations of the Cross, communally enacts the virtues of humility and courage Haitians desire to imitate in their own lives. "We Haitians have been humiliated," one person told me, but Jesus was also humble, he was rejected by his people. Another person explained to me, "we Haitians know what it is to suffer." Bodily, vocally, and communally re-enacting Jesus's suffering and his courage in the face of that suffering, provide a moment in time, a space, a place for individuals whose own lives have had much suffering to fight the loneliness that comes from suffering and build a community that acknowledges that suffering and both physically and symbolically embodies how to fight against discouragement in the face of much suffering.

The Saturday Easter Vigil began in darkness, symbolizing Jesus being dead in the tomb, but ended with personal testimonies from adults being received into the Catholic Church through the sacrament of confirmation, symbolizing Jesus' resurrection from the dead. At the end of each of the personal conversion testimonies, the crowd jumped up and sang, waving their hands in the air, "I'll never forget what Jesus did for me." As people exited the church, they smiled, laughed, and talked loudly, expressing a deeper relational intimacy produced through the three-hour long ritual.

These liturgical celebrations—processions, singing, shouting spontaneously or in response to the celebrant, listening to a homily—all shape community behaviors and self-understandings in ways that profoundly transform the people who participate in these rituals. Without enacting the religious meanings learned through liturgy in one's personal and social life, those external religious practices would cease to be virtuous. Living the virtues of humility and courage is not easy, hence the constitutive-end of the long and often seemingly repetitive religious practices is the alignment of internal dispositions and external actions toward virtuous behavior expressed in relationships with God and with others. Loving God and loving others requires virtues such as perseverance that are enacted in community rituals. Furthermore, liturgical celebrations express and embody relational intimacy with God and others. As Wenski and other leaders explained to me, this relational *raison d'etre* may indeed give rise to collective actions with instrumental value, such as social services and political advocacy. However, those instrumental actions grow out the constitutive end of liturgy, building relationships among humans and fostering relationships between persons and the supernatural. The instrumental ends of religious practice may (or may not) follow the constitutive ends, but instrumental ends do not replace or precede constitutive ends.

EVANGEL MINISTRIES: RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AMONG GHANAIANS ABROAD

Although my participatory fieldwork took place in a different city (Chicago), and among a different immigrant population (first-generation Ghanaians), I (Manglos-Weber) went through a very similar journey in which my instrumentalist and individualist presumptions about religious life were challenged as I talked to, sang with, and lived life alongside others within a small Ghanaian Charismatic congregation. I have come to see that religious practice is a central focal point of modern-day African life and is one of the primary ways in which individuals express and foster relational intimacy with others. One cannot understand the social life of Ghanaians at home or abroad without understanding religious practices both within and apart from traditional religious spaces because a) religious practices create, sustain and transform relevant goods or virtues; b) religious practices form internal dispositions towards those virtues; and c) religious practices establish close relationships in which virtues are enacted. Their religious practices are constitutive-ends practices that express the strongly relational character of human life.

Evangel Ministries, where I did most of my ethnographic observation, is a global Charismatic church organization that originated in Accra, Ghana, in the late 1980s. It is part of the large-scale move towards independent Charismatic Christianity that has taken place across urban West Africa in the past several decades (Gifford, 2004). In Chicago, the church community is primarily made up of first-generation Ghanaian migrants and their children and spouses. Most Sunday mornings there are about thirty adults in attendance, and they maintain close ties with the founding organization.

SUNDAY MORNING IN ACCRA

When I first attended Evangel Ministries' headquarters in Ghana, my primary interest was in whether switching from Catholic or older Protestant congregations to new-wave Charismatic churches produced measurable material benefits. I observed young people flocking to these new, locally originating churches, which in a span of thirty or so years have come to claim roughly 40 percent of the population (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, 2008). In my own work and that of others, the mass conversion of these younger generations was explained in terms of the material and social benefits that these adaptable, grassroots religious organizations provide (Manglos & Trinitapoli, 2011; Manglos, 2010; Meyer, 2004; Gifford, 2004).

My thinking began to change, however, after a long conversation with a warm, optimistic young woman named Mary. She devotes much of her time to Evangel Ministries, which includes Sunday morning services, Tuesday night services, and periodic services on Saturday nights as well. When I asked her to talk about what draws her in, she said,

> "I feel a lot of the youth, they go to church, they love God, but they go to the discos. It's not that they want to be there, but the churches they go to, you go, you sing one hymn, you don't get to express yourself, you have passages read to you. Here, you are told to be happy . . . But being here in Evangel, I don't have time to go to a disco. You dance! And you are happy, you are active, it's here! If you invite me to a disco, I would have to practically carry myself because I don't feel like this is a time to go and be happy. I am active and happy almost every day of the week, Tuesday, Sunday, you know."

This quote came towards the end of our conversation, but it was preceded by many moments in which Mary told me that she is happy at Evangel because *people* make her happy. For her it is a place that attracts the new generations because it is fun, like going to a bar or a disco. The thought occurred to me, after hearing her draw this analogy, that social scientists rarely try to get at the "real" motivations for going to bars or clubs—the internal enjoyment of those activities is somehow self-evident to us. Mary was saying there is a self-evident enjoyment she gets out of being with the Evangel Ministries group as often as she can. She says that young Ghanaians can be "happy and active" at Evangel Ministries and other youth-oriented Charismatic congregations, but in a way that does not have the dangers of the disco (such as drug and alcohol use) and is more acceptable to one's parents and other authorities.

Still skeptical within our conversation, however, I noted that she works at the snack bar during the week. I wondered if part of the draw was in fact the availability of jobs within the organization in a context where stable employment can be very difficult to find. She replied that she is not paid a wage to work in the snack bar, and earns only tips. Then she added,

> "If you are money-driven, the church will not be your option. But I think personally I'm happiness-driven. Yah, what makes me happy, I do it. And ok, so in a way, somebody may say money makes him happy, but me I think people make me happy. And now, as I grow God makes me happy, you know. Being a Christian, reading my Bible, praying, knowing God makes me happy. And so I used to pray and ask God, I wish I could be where you are. You know, I wish I could be, when I wake up I'm in the church, when I'm walking around, I'm in the church. And I was like, wow, there's an opportunity to work there, all the time. So, I'm happy."

Mary was again challenging my presuppositions about what draws her to Evangel Ministries. The job she has there is not primarily about material betterment. It was an opportunity for her to spend even more time where she is most happy: where she can enjoy positive relationships with her peers and feel closer to God. Some who do come to Evangel for the primary reason of finding jobs or making strategic connections, but in the end they are rarely satisfied. As Mary stated, there are much more efficient ways to meet one's goals if one is "money-driven." For those who are "happiness-driven," however, there is no better place to spend their time than Evangel and other churches like it.

Sunday Morning in Chicago

A year or so after this conversation, I entered a small basement theater space in Chicago where Evangel Ministries' new branch had been meeting. I was immediately struck by how different the two branches look in terms of their location, their space, and their interaction with the wider urban landscape. Evangel in Accra is an enormous campus, reminiscent of a small university, which occupies several city blocks and can be seen from miles away. By contrast, the meeting space of Evangel in Chicago is marked only by a small removable placard placed out on a sidewalk, in a post-industrial neighborhood where foot traffic is minimal. Further, Evangel's churchgoers in Accra spend their Sunday mornings travelling in the sunny open air, walking or waiting in bus and taxi depots in a comfortable, relaxed, almost festival-like public atmosphere. In Chicago, Evangel's churchgoers travel long distances in cars, often under dark clouds and in cold weather. Their rented basement space is as private as the space of the headquarters in Accra is public.

After participating with and getting to know the thirty or so regular attenders of the congregation in Chicago, I started to observe very familiar themes, specifically the attention to building relational intimacy and the many conversations about what it really means to be happy. I was struck by how often the pastor, Elijah, would counsel members not to primarily pursue individual wealth and success. This seemed incongruous with what I was hearing in the member's personal stories. Most of them were relatively successful in Ghana but came to the U.S. looking for new and better educational and professional opportunities. Why would the pastor repeatedly remind them not to prioritize the goals that had brought them abroad in the first place?

The members of Evangel in Chicago also have to produce their worship space from scratch each Sunday morning. To prepare the space for liturgy, they lay a red carpet on the floor; set up a podium in the center; hang a sweeping banner along the back wall; straighten the chairs into rows; sweep the floor; erect a projection screen; test the portable sound system and microphones; give small children juice and toys; tell jokes in a mixture of Twi[1] and English; and play worship music. The men wear suits or dress shirts and ties, and the women all wear trendy and fashionable dresses or pant suits with high heels.

Although the service is scheduled to start at a designated time, its actual starting point does not follow the clock. Rather, it follows the ritual activity of those involved, and hence only begins after a quorum of participants arrives and the leaders have arranged the space. Depending on the weather, the number of people who need rides, the time of year, and a host of other factors, the starting time could be anywhere from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Starting the liturgy[2] when enough members have gathered recognizes that the liturgical practices gain their worth through the people who participate and each member's participation contributes to the effectiveness of the practice. As a participant observer, I could

literally feel the difference (in how expressive people were, how loudly they talked, and how much they danced during the worship songs) between days in which the group was quite small (10–15 people) and when it was larger (30–35 people).

This observation started to make more sense alongside another common theme that showed up in public prayers, that God would make Evangel's members "the head and not the tail," a reference to a verse in Deuteronomy 28:13. The idea that God desires the faithful to lead as the head rather than be swung powerlessly as the tail was as pervasive throughout each Sunday morning as the idea that members should not be too caught up in the pursuit of personal success. At times leaders dedicated the entire liturgy to declaring that members were not essentially the victims of colonial history, poverty, suspicious American bosses, or cryptic immigration codes, but rather empowered leaders advancing onwards inevitably toward success.

My instrumentalist starting point led me to initially interpret these teachings as reflective of religious entrepreneurs capitalizing on the unmet desires of African societies. Having figured out where people's needs and insecurities lie, these aspiring religious leaders make grand promises that people believe out of desperation. Yet I could not ignore that the leaders' messages given at Evangel Ministries were also challenging member's to *re-think* their understandings of success. Over and over again, the pastor would remind the group that the end *goal* of their life is not to attain wealth, and that seeking only their personal benefit will make them unhappy. Even as the pastor himself wore a nice suit and had an iPad, he also took a significant pay cut when he moved from Iowa to Chicago for the church, and was working as a doctor during the week but earning nothing for leading the church. He repeatedly emphasized that we "work to live, we do not live to work." Speaking to this highly educated immigrant group with dreams of rapid upward mobility, the pastor said that what matters at the end of the day is not the expensive car, the Harvard degree, the nice house, or even the happy family. What matters most is one's participation in community, both religious and otherwise.

I came to see that this juxtaposition of "anti-success" and "pro-success" discourse could only make sense when coupled with an understanding that *real* success does not primarily lie in the attainment of individual external goods like wealth, status, and security. Rather, real success lies in the quality of one's relationships with God and with other people. The quality of these relationships is enhanced by the practices they engage in with each other, many of which are explicitly liturgical but many of which are also more informal (i.e. chatting, telling jokes), that constitute the relationships themselves. While there is a clear means-end relationship between working at a job and being paid—an instrumentalist activity—there is no such relationship between time spent with others and the relationships with those others. The time spent is constitutive of the relationships, and there are no "short cuts" to developing real intimacy. In order to be truly successful, therefore, Evangel's congregants must be careful not to let the

"world's" model of success (wealth and status) get in the way of real happiness and fulfillment.


Music and "The Anointing"

In Evangel Ministries, the peak of bodily engagement and energy in the liturgy occurs during the worship time, which follows the group prayer time and precedes the sermon. Once the prayer time is closed and a few practical announcements are made, the pastor invites the song leader to the stage, along with a choir of 4–5 people. The choir takes the stage with several microphones, and then sings and dances along to recordings of Charismatic music from internationally known congregations in the U.S. and Europe such as Hillsong in London. The rest of the congregation also stands and dances, sometimes moving into the aisles, usually singing so loud that it sounds like a group twice its size.

   My own musical background made it natural for me to become part of this choir during my research. Singing in the choir was also perhaps the best way for me to grasp the constitutive-end quality of liturgical celebration, because it forced me to engage my own body and emotions in a unique way. Singing in the choir and participating in other Charismatic practices was initially disorienting and uncomfortable, as I've observed it to be for others who are new or less integrated into the life of the congregation. Such expressive singing and dancing requires a denial of familiar, inconspicuous bodily practices in favor of something new, and something that—if performed in any other setting—would be very unusual and indicative of psychological disturbance. In performing these practices along with the group, the individual need for comfort and control over one's body is subjected to the energy that is being created by the group. Yet the practice can be quite different if one's inner state remains reluctant, self-conscious, or uncomfortable. There is a moment at which I had to decide to really participate, as opposed to just pretend to participate, because the latter is painful but the former is exhilarating. The interior disposition with which this liturgical practice is engaged in is as important as the practice itself. What matters, as Charismatics often say, is what is in the heart. Thus, singing, dancing and shouting are constitutive-end practices where every aspect of the group process connects intimately to the end result.

   Liturgy so frequently contains music and physical participation because the expressive experience is valued for itself. One example that illustrates this most clearly was a Sunday morning at Evangel in Chicago when a newly appointed choir director named Gift received "the anointing." This young man was single, had not been in the U.S. very long, was not wealthy, and was very quiet, soft natured, friendly, and not at all expressive in his every-day manner. As he was being groomed for the role of choir leader, other male choir members encouraged him to loosen up, let go, and "get into the spirit." One Sunday, during the worship

time, his soft-spoken personality was transformed: he began to pray loudly and emphatically, and his voice became raspier, filled with emotion, and expressive. In response to this clear shift from being a quiet, shy young man to an expressive and "anointed" speaker, the energy of the group increased dramatically. Everyone became more vocal, the simmering prayers got even louder, and there was an electric excitement in the room.

In this example, Gift engages in the group by "letting go" of his self-restraint, and in response he is rewarded with a deeper sense of group connection. Importantly, however, he is not the sole beneficiary of this act—the other group members are rewarded with the same heightened sense of connection. Therefore, the anointing—which may at first seem like a deeply personal experience—is equally a deeply relational experience.

The terminology of "the anointing" is quite similar to the concept of being "born again," which is also a widely used term in Evangel Ministries. Sermons regularly explained that without the anointing, which is the transformation that allows one to "see the kingdom of God," even one's best-intentioned works will go awry. It almost doesn't matter if you are Catholic, Presbyterian, or Charismatic; if you are not born again and anointed, you cannot truly flourish. Without an inner transformation, liturgical practice will produce little fruit and you will always find yourself falling into self-destructive behaviors. Indeed, members of Evangel Ministries insisted that any religious act is seen as fundamentally meaningless if a person's internal state is not aligned with this ultimate good.

When I started to view the relationship between external practices and inner states as more circular than linear, I was initially troubled. "Circularity" within sociological explanations is typically seen as a weakness rather than a strength. I wanted to determine which "mattered" more—the practices or the inner states—and to find a single motivating factor such as Collins' "emotional energy" (2004) behind the activities I was observing. The more that I reflected and analyzed on the life of the religious community, the more impossible it became for me to separate practices from their products. For example, as the discussion of being "born again" shows above, and as I had started to observe about born again conversions in earlier work (Manglos, 2010), inner transformation is attained through liturgical practice, and yet the inner transformation is necessary for liturgical practice to be virtuous. One can start on this circular, incremental path with either the practices or an experience of inner transformation, but ultimately the end goal feeds the means, and the means feed the end, until the separation of "means" and "ends" becomes meaningless.

I therefore concluded that when we define "understanding" a practice as being about identifying causal motivations that are analytically distinct from that practice, we will inevitably misrepresent prayer and liturgy, among many other of life's most meaningful social activities. Certainly investigating *how* people engage in liturgical practice is a worthwhile endeavor, but to seek to explain *why* people

engage in liturgical practice by seeing liturgy as a means to some other end such as greater material prosperity, status, or emotional satisfaction fails to ultimately explain why people engage in liturgy.

CONCLUSIONS

While an instrumental logic may certainly be at work in Haitian and Ghanaian religious practice, the more fundamental rationale for prayer and liturgical practices among Haitians and Ghanaians is to express and to develop relational intimacy with God, within their new communities in the U.S, and with friends and relatives in the homeland. Instrumental action constitutes a part of human action, but an exclusive focus on instrumental action fails to explain why humans engage in practices like prayer or liturgy because the purported ends those practices achieve (solving material problems, making one feel better) do not always occur as an outcome of engaging in the practice. Margaret Archer (2004) argues that the Enlightenment model of the person presumes that means-end rationality precedes action, whereas in fact, many rational explanations for action emerge *after* engaging in action. Prayer and liturgy can thus be considered constitutive ends practices because relationships with others and with the supernatural are not something people pursue just as a means to another end, but are rather seen as goods in and of themselves. In the circular process of developing and expressing relational intimacy through religious practices, the means and the end are joined. Repeated interactions do not just build the relationship; in a very real way those interactions are the relationship.

   Liturgy or prayer often times do not have an instrumental outcome. In addition, if human motivations are just instrumental, than any means is equally viable. But for being in relationship with God and the religious community, means and ends are joined; and the instrumental effects of this relationship are secondary, if there at all. We thus caution against interpreting expressive forms of Charismatic Christianity such as those we observed among Haitians and Ghanaians from a strictly instrumentalist or individualist framework. We do not deny that religious movements can have political dimensions, that immigrant religious communities in the U.S. may indeed generate social capital, and that religious rituals produce emotional energy. But we do question whether the external goods associated with religious practice, or even individual feelings experienced during rituals, suffice as an explanation of why people engage in those religious practices. Understanding the constitutive-ends of numerous types of social rituals, such as music, art, and play and seeing human persons as oriented towards building meaningful connections with others as an end in and of itself, helps illustrate how religious rituals express and sustain relationships and the goods internal to those relationships. Simply identifying an instrumental end of religious practice fails to explain the motivation for engaging in prayer and ritual.

One potential objection could be that our interpretive framework led us seek examples to support our preconceived theories. However, Mooney's interviewees repeatedly challenged her initial theoretical framework for being too instrumentalist. Likewise, Manglos-Weber's initial questions about Ghanaian's church participation revolved around differences in socioeconomic status and attempts to build bridging social capital within the host community. Thus, our theory of relational ontology and the good of relational intimacy inherent in religious practice emerged out of a self-reflexive and bodily engagement with the people in the settings we studied. Sociological theorizing in general would benefit from confronting the scholar's understanding of human action with the meanings of the people doing the actions.

Some may argue that we uncritically accept people's own explanations for their religious behavior. One might object that such discourses are a veneer over fundamental dynamics of power, status, and the cultural reinforcement of inequality. Certainly, conflict and struggle are part of human life. Our respondents are often alienated by racial hostility, born into relative poverty, and must navigate unfamiliar and often hostile environments. They acutely desire greater social status and improved material situations. Nevertheless, the fact that they repeatedly talk and act as if such needs are in fact means to ends rather than ends valued in themselves—"we work to live"—is telling. What if people seek status and power in order to ensure that they will be desired by others? What if social conflict thus arises out of our need for relational harmony? Social psychologists who have worked with committed partnerships—and perhaps anyone who has been in one—recognize that conflicts arise out of fear in the partners that their relational needs will not be met, rather than any innate need to control the other. We attempt to control others because we are dependent on them to respond to us positively in order to exist in relational intimacy. If such is the case—as we believe it is—then pursuing status and power is a means-end or instrumental practice, rather than a fundamental logic of human behavior. Constitutive-ends practices, on the other hand, such as making music, making art, chatting about nothing in particular, or participating in religious ritual thus come closer to the deepest levels of human motivation.

Another possible objection is that our interpretations uncritically accept the statements that our respondents are making about the reality of God and their personal experiences with God. However, one does not have to conclude that religious persons' claims are real in order to enter into and understand their experiences of their relationship with God as real. Nor does a researcher have to share the beliefs of the community he or she is studying in order to experience the meaning of religious practice. Religious experiences are worth investigating as a way to understand human motivation, whether the real source of those experiences is the unconscious, the imagination, the collective consciousness, or in fact God. The people we studied are deeply committed to their belief that God is real and relatable, and furthermore they frequently perceive their own experiences

and events in the real world as evidence of God's involvement. The relationship with God is thus cultivated through liturgy, just as human relations are cultivated through ritualized behaviors. Ignoring the centrality of people's relationships with God misconstrues one of the fundamental motivators of religious activity—that relationship itself (Smith, 2007).

Finally, others may object that we give an overly-rosy view of religion, arguing for religious practices as absolute goods in and of themselves and ignoring the many divisive and oppressive effects of religious participation, especially among formerly-colonized peoples such as Haitians and Ghanaians. Although we do see religious participation as a social setting in which the universal goods of relational intimacy and virtue can be developed, we do not argue that religious settings are the only places in which this process occurs or that it always occurs in such a positive way. We observed tensions between in-group vs. out-group attitudes, exertions of social control, and at times alienation from religious communities. Understanding the interplay between the negative and positive aspects of religious practices is an important area for future research. Our goal is simply to draw attention to the constitutive-end side of religious practice and to situate those constitutive ends in a strongly relational view of human personhood. Like Taylor (2007) and Gorksi (2012), we argue that a post-secular social science should neither exclude religious visions of morality as a legitimate object of study nor take religious visions of morality as axiomatic.

How extensively does the concept of constitutive-end behavior apply beyond liturgical practices and prayer? Religious practices are not the only way people engage in collective or ritualized practices as constitutive-ends behavior. A virtue ethics perspective sees the highest human good as the collective and strongly relational enactment of virtues, and religious rituals are one context in which this takes place. Yet all human relationships—especially very intimate ones—are constituted in part by ritual interactions. We have focused on religious rituals because they are perhaps one of the most intensely social and value-oriented types of action in which people engage. Nevertheless, the principle that human beings are fundamentally oriented towards human relationship as an end in and of itself, and that they participate in social practices that have no other instrumental purpose, extends far beyond the realm of religious behavior. The instrumentalist framework that dominates much sociological theorizing reduces human motivations and behaviors to asking: how do other people benefit me? The framework of virtue ethics challenges the idea that material things and individual ends constitute the human good. Rather, it asserts that there are objective human goods that exist and are expressed within the context of relationships. Future research in sociology of religion, culture and morality should not just analyze relationships as transactions or exchanges between egoistic individuals, but also explore the goods internal to those relationships and analyze the constitutive-ends practices that sustain those internal goods.

*Margarita A. Mooney*
*Department of Sociology*
*Yale University*
*P.O. Box 208265*
*New Haven, CT 06520-8265*
*USA*
*margarita.mooney@yale.edu*

*Nicolette D. Manglos-Weber*
*Assistant Research Professor*
*Department of Sociology*
*The University of Notre Dame*
*Nicolette.D.Manglos.1@nd.edu*

## NOTES

[1] *Twi* is the most widespread of Ghana's traditional languages.
[2] Although "liturgy" is not a term that Charismatics use to describe their ritual services, in a broad sense, liturgical practices are understood as formalized, group ritual practices that occur in a regular pattern in designated religious spaces.

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