

ALONE/TOGETHER: THE PRODUCTION OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN A CHURCH FOR THE UNCHURCHED

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ABSTRACT

One perennial problem for maintaining religion's place in the modern world is the question of how to make the traditions (the old) new and relevant, while conversely, relating the new and rapidly changing culture to the traditions of the past. This is more than a question of recruitment and growth, though these are certainly concerns of the modern era. It is also a question of where, how, and in what contexts do religious bodies negotiate the distinction between the sacred and the secular on an ever-shifting cultural field. My dissertation employs ethnographic data gathered from a large Mid-Western evangelical Protestant congregation to track the shifting boundary between the sacred and secular as it is elaborated in everyday practices. Employing theoretical and methodological tools from cultural sociology and the sociology of music, I explore the relationship between popular culture and religious experience arguing that this relationship is gendered and in part mediated through emotion.