I dedicate this thesis to my parents, who have been unconditionally loving and compassionate throughout my entire academic career. I could not have succeeded without your continuous prayers and encouragement, and I am truly blessed to have you in my life.
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Since the late 1960s, Contemporary Christian Music, or CCM, has developed into both an established musical genre and successful entertainment industry. The concept of “Jesus Music” has thrived not only in the music business, but also within the walls of the church, becoming an accepted form of worship music among numerous congregations. This study explores the role of Jesus Music within modern youth culture, locating its function in shaping identity and fostering spiritual growth. CCM is present not only in contemporary Christian churches, but also in traditional denominations such as the Catholic Church and United Methodist Church. Older members of these congregations are less enthusiastic about the presence of “Jesus Rock,” but its increasing use suggests it is a necessary tool used to appeal to younger audiences and maintain their church participation. The use of music as a transformative tool in Christianity frames the direction of this study. Music within Christian practice has historically evolved and reflected the faith over time, suggesting that CCM growth is a continuation of this trend. Scholarship on popular worship music in Latin America supplements this literature, conveying music’s function within Christianity in a larger
context. Modern worship in Brazilian Protestantism and Catholicism highlights the importance of music in Christian youth culture, serving as a useful case study on a global scale. On a regional level, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork within churches and organizations in Lexington, KY, Nashville, TN, and Gainesville, FL to reveal the role of CCM in youth culture today. I interviewed worship leaders and young adults to identify how CCM functions as a tool that fosters a particular Christian experience and identity, emphasizing participatory activity and a personal relationship with God. The resulting case studies demonstrate how young adults use this music to maintain a relevant and meaningful faith through musical expression. This role focuses on the importance of modern worship in creating a participatory experience that also promotes a community and shared experience among believers, thus transforming how Christianity is experienced and has developed over time.
“Jesus Rock” often incites diverse feelings across social groups and connotes everything from watered down rock and roll to an invigorating and emotional form of worship music. As the style progressed into an established musical genre in the late 1960s known as Contemporary Christian Music, or CCM, it developed into an accepted form of worship music for young adult Christians. Its success has resulted in an explosive Christian music industry with radio stations, evangelical television programs, and concerts that reach audiences across the world. The popularity of this genre continues to grow rapidly, with “records outselling those of Classical, Jazz, and New Age combined.”¹ The success of this genre implies that there is a large market that has accepted and embraced CCM. That market consists largely of the Baby Boomer generation that saw the beginning and development of the genre and now their children of Generation X. This thesis seeks to explore this second generation of Christian rock enthusiasts, focusing on how the music shapes identity and is used as a tool to reach these young adults and foster their spiritual growth into adulthood.

Although modern Evangelical churches primarily use CCM, traditional denominations such as the United Methodist Church and Catholic Church have adopted the style for contemporary services. As CCM is increasingly used in these traditional churches, it promotes an ecumenical movement that reaches numerous young adults and crosses denominational boundaries. While older members of traditional congregations are critical of CCM use, its popularity among younger participants

suggests the importance of appealing to young adults and their worship preferences to maintain church attendance and involvement. How does the use of Contemporary Christian Music shape the Christian experience for this younger generation? I interviewed worship leaders and young adults to understand how CCM functions as a tool that fosters a particular Christian experience and identity, emphasizing participatory activity and a personal relationship with God. I additionally conducted fieldwork in Lexington, KY, Nashville, TN, and Gainesville, FL to reveal how audiences engage with the sound and lyrical content of worship songs to elicit particular responses. The resulting case studies demonstrate how young adults use this music for a participatory experience that also promotes a community and shared experience among believers. Thus, the popularity and success of CCM across various denominations suggests a transformation in how Christianity is experienced and has developed as a result of this unique musical genre.

**Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this research is to understand Contemporary Christian Music and its role within the Christian faith today. The music is associated mainly with White evangelical churches, and many scholars have addressed its connection with conservative politics and its relationship with White Christian culture. The focus of this study, however, is the relationship of the music to transform the identity of a younger generation and its appeal to youth culture. Similar trends are evident within Pentecostal churches as well as Black congregations, in which hip-hop and rap music are frequently used to connect with the younger generation. In both cases, the focus is on contemporary music and its use as an approach to appeal to young adults. I analyze many facets of the Christian music scene, observing how participants respond to the
music and questioning how it shapes their view of Christianity. Is the transition to CCM representative of a larger shift in how young adults understand their Christian identity and practice their faith? How has the Christian experience changed? CCM has become an important tool in not only drawing a younger generation to church, but also engaging them in a distinct way that fosters a new Christian identity and maintains their presence within the church.

Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson, authors of *The Hip-Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture*, address many of the same issues within Black congregations that Christian rock music faces across primarily non-denominational and Protestant churches. The tension that exists between older and younger generations over the use of “Holy Hip-Hop” in church is the same as the debate over CCM. The authors explore whether hip-hop culture and Christianity can coexist, arguing that hip-hop’s influence on youth culture deems it a necessary tool in order to engage them in church and keep the faith relevant.\(^2\) Because these issues are uniform across White and Black churches, this study positions Christian rock in terms of its relationship between generations, rather than between racial divisions.

This study additionally emphasizes the way CCM differs from music of other Christian religious traditions in a powerful way that is revolutionizing the Christian experience. Throughout the thesis, I refer to “Christianity” as a whole, allowing the term to encompass all denominations. I do recognize, however, that denominations have differing interpretations of the Bible and understandings of how the faith should be practiced. While I understand these differences, I use the term “Christian religion,” to

refer to those who believe that the Bible is the true Word of God and practice the Christian faith by regularly attending church services. Throughout the study, I differentiate Protestant churches from the Catholic Church because of the historical divisions in theological belief and practice between denominations. When referring to the Roman Catholic Church, I will often use the term “the Church,” because it is historically represented as such. When referring to Protestant denominations like the United Methodist Church or Pentecostal Church, I will simply use the term “churches.” Finally, when describing those churches that do not affiliate with any particular denomination, I use the term “non-denominational” or “Evangelical” church, representing the “modern” or “contemporary” churches that I believe to be part of the revolutionary process of the Christian faith.

One of the main concepts I address throughout the thesis is the transformation of Christian faith from an organized religion to a “relationship” with God. By this, I mean that many non-denominational and contemporary churches stress this idea of a relationship with God above everything else, framing it in opposition to the rules and rituals of traditional congregations or Catholic practices. They emphasize the notion that Jesus saved all of humanity and bore our sins on the cross in an act of merciful love, of which we are all undeserving. Rather than follow rules to get something from God, contemporary churches emphasize that God has already given humanity the biggest free gift, so followers then choose to honor Him by doing their best to live by His Word. Thus, as churches remove the focus of rules and rituals from Christianity, followers are less inclined to feel disqualified from God’s blessings or mercy when they sin. In realizing Jesus’s sacrifice and conceptualizing faith as a personal relationship with Him,
followers aim to honor God’s Word by *choice* instead of obligation. I believe that these concepts are central to the difference between contemporary and traditional churches, and they will appear several times throughout the study.

The notions of a relationship with Jesus are much more central to the framework of contemporary churches, and the music they employ reflects these ideologies. CCM is very personal in terms of depicting Jesus as a friend in its lyrical content, and songs are less structured and not restricted to a particular canon or set of hymns. CCM rather promotes participation (clapping, lifting hands, swaying, movement, etc.), which I argue is a key factor in its appeal to young people. Additionally, contemporary churches that use CCM view music as simply another facet of life, in which faith can become a part. This modern worship itself reflects these ideals, as it clearly breaks rules of the traditional canon and adopts contemporary musical forms and instrumentation. Despite ongoing debate over its appropriateness in sacred settings, CCM nevertheless has become very powerful in terms of bringing youth to Christ and maintaining church attendance and participation.

The purpose of this study is finally to shed light on a musical style that is often represented from those outside of Christian culture. Much of the literature is from the perspective of people who have researched in the field, but admit to being outsiders of the Christian faith. While this etic perspective is valuable to reveal an objective understanding of Christian musical practices, I believe an emic perspective is equally important. As an insider and a participant in the younger generation that has adopted CCM, it is my aim to represent this group from within the Christian community. Because CCM draws on rock music traditions and carries associations of promiscuity and
rebellion while using Biblical text to glorify God, there is a tension that surrounds its use in churches. Older and younger church members have different interpretations of rock music, and therefore opinions of CCM are often divided even within congregations. I believe that for the younger generation that has adopted CCM, the music occupies an important role in their spiritual lives. My research involved going into these communities and speaking with informants about how the music functions in their faith, revealing its effects on Christian identity and religious experience today. I asked young adults to tell me about the CCM concerts and church services they attend, why they enjoy the music, and to describe what effects the music had on them and other participants. After reviewing my fieldwork material, I found similar trends across case studies that have shaped the foundation of this thesis. I posit that as Contemporary Christian Music appeals to the popular tastes of a younger generation, engages worshippers through participatory activity, and fosters both individual and group identity, it occupies an important role in Christian life, transforming religious experience both inside and outside of the church environment.

**Review of Literature**

Scholars Jay Howard and John Streck, among others, provide information on the creation and development of CCM and its impact on audiences. This scholarship lays the foundation for understanding the genre’s origins and why it has resonated with young adults for over forty years. Howard and Streck provide an extensive exploration in *Apostles of Rock, The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music*, examining this movement within popular culture. Analyzing interviews, performances, and websites, they uncover the cultural scene around CCM from the perspectives of
performers and listeners. They trace the history of “Jesus Rock,” beginning with the “Jesus Movement” of the 1970s, through the early 2000s.

Authors Dan Lucarini and John Lindenbaum offer differing scholarship on the role of CCM in Christian culture. Lucarini, author of *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement*, frames CCM from a theological viewpoint as a negative facet of Christian practice today. His work argues that CCM is Biblically and morally wrong and offensive, presenting an ideologically biased yet insightful comparison to other literature. While other authors write as outsiders of the Christian faith, Lucarini is a believer that gives an account of CCM from within Christian-based scholarship. On the contrary, John Lindenbaum admits to being an outsider of the Christian community and a non-believer that writes from an objective viewpoint. In “The Pastoral Role of Contemporary Christian Music,” Lindenbaum illustrates CCM as an important component of Christian worship, highlighting its value in proselytizing to a community that uses the music to infuse Christian faith into everyday life. Both works suggest the tension that still exists over the use of CCM, and they offer valuable commentary on the function of the music for different Christian communities.

Don Quantz also speaks to this tension in his “Canons and Collision: Hymns and Contemporary Christian Music,” addressing how “the hymnic canon has been increasingly replaced by CCM.” Drawing on the notion that the term *canon* suggests a standard or norm that has achieved a certain status, Quantz links this to traditional hymns, which he asserts have attained a level of canonicity. These traditional hymns adhered to a standard that resonated with traditional Christian believers and reflected

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their values.⁴ Having established this idea, Quantz then questions what happens when the canon of hymns fails to meet the needs of worshippers. The result is a new form of Christian song, which has developed in the modern church. The idea of a canon is helpful in explaining why such a tension exists between Christian generations, and Quantz offers insights into the importance of new expression of song in order to maintain meaning within Christian worship.

Jeff Titon uses interviews and observations to represent a particular religious group and their musical practices. His *Powerhouse For God* documents his research with a Baptist church in Virginia, and he draws on interviews to analyze their practices and experiences with music and the Holy Spirit. Application of his phenomenological model to this study helps convey how worshippers actually experience Christian faith, how this experience has evolved, and what role CCM has played in that development. Titon discusses how people are “moved” through performance during church services, and how the music is used to reach a deeper communion with God. Although this work focuses on the experience of a specific rural group that practices “Folk Christianity,” the ideas of “affect” and emotion resulting from music can be usefully applied to what takes place in modern churches where CCM is performed.

Thomas Turino’s analyses of musical traditions reveal the participatory and performance concepts of musical engagement, which are applicable to this study. In *Music as Social Life*, Turino examines the potential of participatory forms of music to embody and express emotion and enhance personal and social experiences. This line of analysis is helpful in understanding the individual and collective function of music in

⁴ Quantz, “Canons in Collision” 32.
religious musical contexts like that of CCM. Turino explains that presentational performance involves clear distinctions between the artist and audience, cued by devices like a stage, microphones, and stage lights. The goals of presentational musicians are to prepare music for a nonparticipating audience, which is contrary to participatory performance involving everyone’s active contribution to the sound and motion of a musical event. Turino clarifies that participatory performance often involves dancing, singing, clapping, and playing musical instruments, and he claims that the quality of the performance is judged by how participants *feel* during the activity. The emphasis on participant feeling and emotion during musical activities is something that is very central to CCM performance. Thus, I believe the participatory element of this musical style is a fundamental quality that has attracted youth culture to modern forms of worship.

Turino’s “Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience” discusses the Peircian model of semiotics, offering an explanation as to why certain emotional experiences are elicited through music, evoking particular responses. His discussion is useful in understanding how music conveys meaning to its audience. As illustrated numerous times throughout this thesis, the lifting of hands is a central participatory act during CCM worship that communicates a felt presence of the Holy Spirit, in which emotion plays a large part. The physical act represents the culmination of feeling produced from the music that allows participants to physically engage with both music and God simultaneously. My informants have described this act in many ways; it is interpreted as

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6 Ibid., 28-29.
everything from a sign of surrender to God and receiving the Lord’s power, to simply a celebratory act of immensely felt emotion that is indescribable. In this thesis I draw on Turino’s work to interpret and analyze such acts within the context of the CCM scene.

Because Turino’s work is such a complex yet important component to my own analysis, I want to clarify the concepts he discusses that inform my own research. Turino discusses notions of icons and indexical signs, positing that objects acquire meaning through resemblance or associations within a social context, and this meaning is then mediated through the use of signs. It is through these associations that people develop particular feelings, emotions, and thoughts that are recalled when they encounter such signs in the future. Turino claims that Peirce’s theory of semiotics is “revolutionary for understanding the social effects of music, art, and expressive culture, and people’s myriad ways of experiencing the world.” When applying these concepts to the study of how CCM operates within modern Christian culture, it is evident that notions of iconic and indexical processes are prevalent within Contemporary Christian Musical contexts. Employing Turino’s “theory for music,” based on Peirce’s concepts, I discuss how CCM acquires different meaning through personal experiences and semiotic processes among audiences. These diverse experiences result in varied interpretations and value judgments of worship music, accounting for the tension that exists over the use of CCM in churches among Christian communities today.

The semiotic process can be a complicated concept to unpack, but understanding the relationship between signs and the objects they signify offers an

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explanation of how music acquires meaning. Turino’s breakdown of Peirce’s model best explains these notions in a succinct way:

For Peirce, semiotic processes (semiosis) have three basic elements: (1) the sign, something that stands for something else to someone in some way; (2) the object, which is the “something else,” or entity, stood for by the sign, be it an abstract concept or a concrete object; and (3) the interpretant, which is the effect created by bringing the sign and object together in the mind of a perceiver.  

When applying these concepts to music in general, music itself serves as a sign, which acquires meaning through the context in which it is experienced. Therefore, the objects that are signified could be anything involved in the experience itself. Because people have very different experiences on a daily basis, music can take on meaning in a variety of ways to numerous people. Turino explains that the observer creates the interpretant of a sign, which includes the feelings, sensations, and physical reactions that ensue, as well as the ideas that are communicated through language. As a result, there are many different outcomes and reactions that people may have toward a given musical sign, and this is very present within the responses and feelings that come with the use of CCM among various Christian groups.  

In my thesis, I establish that CCM grew out of the rock style of the sixties. The generations that experienced rock in this era have a particular experience with the music in this social context that differs from younger generations today. Because of this, there is a divide in how CCM is interpreted that can be theoretically explained through semiotics. An index refers to a sign that is related to its object through co-occurrence within one’s own actual life experiences. The sign then becomes intimately bound to

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8 Turino, “Signs of Imagination,” 222.
9 Ibid., 227.
this experience, and that is how it takes on meaning within its context. Rock music during the counterculture was experienced in a period that directly followed the Cold War era that was defined by conservative behavior and strict rules of how men, women, and families should operate. Rock was experienced in the context of teenage dancing and what was perceived as sexual immorality, and this context was considered risqué and impure compared to the norms of the previous decade. For those that experienced rock in this context, the music itself carries signifiers of these experiences and feelings, accounting for their beliefs of its inappropriateness as part of worship music. CCM uses the instrumentation of rock music (guitars, drums, bass), as well as the singing style of popular music, and these aspects can represent the risqué behavior of that counterculture era for those that lived through it. In this case, semiotics provides one explanation for why some members of older generations are offended by CCM worship in sacred institutions.

Turino further discusses the notion of an icon as relating to its object through resemblance. He identifies three types of icons (image, diagram, and metaphor), claiming that musical icons operate primarily as images. He explains, “In an image, the sign-object relation is based in simple qualities shared; a musical “trace” or quote in one piece calling forth another piece would be of this type, as are most musical icons.”

Relating this idea to CCM, it follows that the sound of CCM shares qualities or musical “traces” with popular rock music songs. Depending on one’s own personal experiences with rock music, this affects how they will perceive these rock worship tunes. For an older generation, CCM could be iconic (or an image) of the rock music of the sixties era.

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Rock music additionally carries its own indexical meaning, thus layering CCM with further associations through the semiotic process.

On the contrary, CCM may remind today’s younger generation of the popular music they hear on the radio, which affects what they associate with the music. The younger generation of worshippers has experienced rock music in a completely different era and social context than those of the sixties. Unlike previous generations, the behavior associated with rock music does not contradict a former lifestyle because today’s youth grew up in a culture that was already permeated by the rock tradition. The activities of dancing and partying to rock and pop music is a prevailing part of culture; it is not in opposition to a previously experienced fifties cultural standard, but simply is the standard that was already in place. Therefore, negative associations of impurity or vulgarity that were directly experienced by the older generation are not necessarily the experiences of the younger generation. Rather, everyday experiences that co-occur with popular music (i.e. concerts with friends, listening to music while driving, dancing at social gatherings, etc.) are potentially recalled from the music. The ensuing feelings of these experiences are also signaled upon hearing the music, which likely accounts for the positive attitudes young adults have concerning the use of rock music in church.

Throughout my thesis, I discuss Contemporary Christian Musical contexts that demonstrate the subsequent interpretants of the semiotic process within worship music. The Christian communities that have adopted CCM as their accepted form of worship interact with the music in particular ways. I discuss Christian events and groups in which young adults display physical reactions such as lifting hands, jumping up and down, and kneeling and bowing heads, throughout the course of worship songs. These are the
interpretants that result from interacting with the sign (the music) that signifies the religious experience. In these cases, the music is used in the context of giving praise to God and singing words that are either borrowed from or allude to Biblical text. As the music takes on a specific meaning from its co-occurrence within these religious contexts, it carries associations that are closely bound to this experience. The resulting interpretants are generally emotional expressions, and Turino explains why this is, stating, “When given indices are tied to the affective foundations of ones personal or communal life . . . they have special potential for creating direct emotional effects.”

Because religious contexts have a personal and communal element and construct both individual and collective identities, the use of CCM in these “affective foundations” of life evoke particularly emotional responses (interpretants) from church members.

It is clear that the context in which music is experienced greatly affects an individual’s interpretation and understanding of it. This idea is key in understanding the tension surrounding CCM, and I feel Turino’s work lays an important groundwork for my analysis of the function of this music for the younger generation. While many other sources exist on the subject of Contemporary Christian Music, the authors noted above provide some of the most valuable research and theoretical frameworks for the study of music. Their work has greatly informed my research and provided valuable models to understand a phenomenon that has swept Christian culture both inside and outside of the church for the past forty years.

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Methodology

An ethnographic approach is useful when researching how believers understand CCM and its function within the contemporary church setting and as a part of spiritual identity. Gerard Béhague writes, “Ethnomusicology concerns itself essentially with non-written musical traditions and attempts to integrate musical expressions of a given culture or community group with the whole cultural complex of that group.” Behague highlights the goals of ethnomusicological studies, and I believe that the discipline will allow for the exploration of how music operates both inside and outside of church environments. I engaged in ethnographic fieldwork in order to integrate the musical expressions of worshippers with Christian religious expression as a whole. As part of my research, I observed the ways in which audiences interacted with CCM both in and outside of the church context. I interviewed worship leaders, musicians, and church members of different Christian communities. My informants represent the following churches: Southern Hills United Methodist Church and Quest Community Church from Lexington, KY, Cross Point Community Church from Nashville, TN, and St. Augustine Catholic Church and The Rock of Gainesville from Gainesville, FL. My observations are from these organizations, as well as from the concert event, Night of Joy, held at Disney World in Orlando, FL. Finally, I attended and observed services from the organizations JesusU and Campus Crusade for Christ, which are aimed at college students at the University of Florida.

As I spoke with people across many locations and institutions, I observed similar modes of worship and attitudes toward the role of CCM among the younger

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generations. The culmination of this research has led to a greater understanding of how Christianity is evolving and how CCM has played a large role in its growth. My research has led to a greater understanding of how the Christian community that uses CCM as part of daily life understands its purpose in their Christian faith and identity. It further reveals how the music functions within both traditional and modern church environments, and on a larger scale, how its use represents the development of Christian experience and practices.

**Plan for Thesis**

Chapter 2 of the thesis presents examples within the history of Christianity in which music has been a transformative tool. I discuss the use of Gregorian chant and Lutheran chorales, identifying their roles in unifying Christian practice in the Catholic Church and Protestant church respectively. I then discuss Pentecostal worship practices, using religious movements in Brazil as case studies to exemplify the influence of popular worship music on a larger scale. I demonstrate how Pentecostal worship has both drawn younger audiences to the Protestant faith and inspired the Catholic Church to employ similar musical styles throughout Latin America. This section is meant to provide a global perspective on the impact of worship music on the Christian faith.

Chapter 3 draws on the framework provided in Chapters 1 and 2, applying many of the concepts to case studies within the United States. It discusses the function of CCM within the church structure, using interview material and field research to express the role of music in young Christian worship experiences. I begin with regional studies based in Lexington, KY and Nashville, TN, and I end with local studies in my current location of Gainesville, FL. The chapter highlights the use of CCM in both traditional and contemporary congregations, showing how it fulfills the worship preferences of young
adults and allows them to actively engage with the music and participate in services. I further propose that this is one of the main factors in transforming the Christian experience for this generation inside of the church.

Chapter 4 focuses on the use of CCM outside of the church structure and the role of music in transforming secular spaces into sanctified ones. I examine the function of music in Christian outreach outside of religious institutions and highlight its importance in engaging youth in their faith as a part of daily life. I additionally explore the organizations Young Life and Campus Crusade for Christ as well as discuss Christian concerts in large arenas and secular venues, noting how the music operates within these settings. Through these case studies, I show how music is used to negotiate the boundaries of sacred and secular identities to create a more relevant Christian experience for young adults today.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents my conclusions and highlights the many objectives of CCM within the young Christian community that accepts and supports it. I particularly emphasize the participatory elements of worship that CCM fosters, and I convey its importance in Christian outreach for younger generations. I also return to the concept of Christianity as a relationship with God rather than a religion that focuses on rules and rituals. I discuss how music has been a part of this evolution in how Christianity is conceptualized, highlighting its role as an important tool in transforming Christian experience and identity for young adults today.
While this study aims to demonstrate the transformative power of Contemporary Christian Music in modern Christian culture, I want to acknowledge that this is not a new phenomenon; throughout the history of Christian practice, music has played an important role in the overall experience of congregational worship. From the earliest modes of plainchant to the modern use of Contemporary Christian Music, worship styles in the church have continued to transform, and have thus shaped the Christian institutions of which they are a part. Because worship music has been at the center of Christian practice for centuries, its development reflects how Christianity has evolved, conveying music’s power to transform religious establishments through time. The use of Gregorian chant and Lutheran chorales are just two examples of how music was historically used to fulfill the worship needs of the Christian community. Throughout history, music has occupied an important role in reflecting the values of Christianity, affecting the unity of its followers, and thus creating change within the faith.

Throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, the decline of the Roman Empire marked an important turn for the future of the Christian church and its influence within European culture. As the Catholic Church sought the advancement of its institution and beliefs throughout Europe, music played a significant role in its mission. In “Gregorian Chant and the Romans,” author Kenneth Levy explains that Gregorian chant spread throughout Carolingian Europe through Frankish compilations that drew from old Roman repertory.¹ This transmission of plainchant repertory resulted in multiple

versions of the original source, which would become problematic for Frankish leaders. Leo Treitler further expounds that this varied repertory was interpreted as corruption of Roman chant that led to an "editorial enterprise" to "restore and reestablish the original."² This initiative was realized in the form of ecclesiastical reforms beginning in 753-54, in which edited, officially authorized Gregorian chants were issued to replace locally sung chants under Frankish control.³ It is clear that in order to create uniformity among Christian practice, Frankish leaders aimed to standardize chant performance. As a result of using uniform liturgy and music within the Church, worshippers throughout the continent could ideally experience the Christian faith in one distinct manner.

Treitler discusses Frankish ruler Charlemagne’s desire to unify the Church according to Roman practice, claiming that his mission to lead reform,

served the end of political unification, but it was also motivated by a deep religiosity and a genuine feeling of reverence for Rome. The project quite explicitly included an attempt to impose everywhere a uniform tradition of plainchant.⁴

According to Treitler, Charlemagne attempted to impose uniformity for both political and religious purposes by way of the plainchant tradition. The musical practices of the Church played an important role in this undertaking and were considered powerful tools of reform. Helmut Hucke reinforces this notion, claiming that after the Franks adopted Roman liturgy under Charlemagne’s command,

chant received an importance and meaning which to our knowledge it had never had before. Before then it seems that every church had its own tradition and its

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⁴ Treitler, "Homer and Gregory," 338.
own music. But now, chant became a sign of unity, of the right tradition of liturgy, of faith itself.\textsuperscript{5}

Hucke highlights the significance of chant and its representations of unity within Christian practice. The use of chant signified an important change within the church, as local traditions were increasingly suppressed. Charlemagne’s efforts to stabilize the chant repertory and limit local variations perpetuated uniformity, conveying the power of music to unify the Church and its followers at this time.

Gregorian chant is effective in the way it heightens devotional words through melody and rhythm, serving to emphasize the words of the text. David Hiley describes chant as “a vehicle for the ceremonious declamation of sacred Latin texts” in a “measured, disciplined manner.”\textsuperscript{6} This notion of a “measured, disciplined” tradition highlights the systematic, structured efforts to create a uniform practice for a universal Christian experience. The importance of music in accomplishing this aim and unifying the Church during the eighth and ninth centuries cannot be overstated. Pope Gregory I is considered “the single most important figure in the development of Roman liturgy and chant,”\textsuperscript{7} and his efforts to formalize Christian practice through this process culminated in the “most important Solesmes publication,” the \textit{Liber Usualis}, in 1895.\textsuperscript{8} This book of chants for the Mass and Office represents the legacy of Gregorian chant, preserving this musical tradition and making it accessible to Christians throughout Europe for centuries to come. The music took on a transformative function by creating a more


\textsuperscript{8} Hiley, \textit{Gregorian Chant}, 213.
universal Catholic worship experience, uniting believers around Europe through this standard and “disciplined” repertory.

By the early sixteenth century, the rising power of the Catholic Church was met with opposition through the influence of Martin Luther. As Luther promoted his religious beliefs that differed from the Catholic Church, his views developed into a rebellion against the authority of the Church, resulting in liturgical and musical changes of what would become the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s direct experience and reading of Scripture influenced his views, and his study of the Bible led him to believe that faith was not concerned with God rewarding or punishing people for good deeds or sins, but rather, the offering of salvation through faith alone. His views contradicted Catholic doctrine and authority, asserting that humans are justified before God by grace through faith alone, and Luther used this issue as a starting point for liturgical reform.⁹

Luther’s newly held beliefs shaped the music within the Lutheran church by rejecting texts that did not adhere to the idea of justification by “grace through faith,” deeming them unacceptable for use in his strophic hymns. While Luther’s musical traditions did use Gregorian chant and sacred texts, they also incorporated the vernacular and folk melodies, substituting lyrics with sacred text, otherwise known as contrafacta.¹⁰ The resulting chorales were meant to enhance the congregation’s role in worship, as opposed to the hierarchical roles of Catholic liturgy. Richard Schoenbohm further articulates the differences between Catholic and Lutheran musical practices:

The musical system of the Catholic church proceeded from the Gregorian chant which is strictly a detail of the sacerdotal office. The Lutheran music, on the contrary,

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is based primarily on the congregational hymn. The one is clerical, the other laic; the one official, prescribed, liturgic, unalterable; the other free, spontaneous, and democratic. Where the Catholic church had been consistent in withdrawing the office of song from the laity and assigning it to a separate group, or minor clergy, the Protestant church was to give the laity the gift of worshiping their God through participation in congregational singing.\footnote{Schoenbohm, “Music in the Lutheran Church Before and at the Time of JS Bach,” \textit{Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture} 12, no. 3 (1943), 195.}

While Catholic practice does also allow for the participation of the congregation, Schoenbohm clarifies that certain parts of the liturgy (the Office) are assigned to those who are ordained by the Church. He frames this in opposition to the Lutheran emphasis on congregational hymns sung by the laity, in which practices are “free” rather than restricted to particular groups. William Mahrt describes Gregorian chant in the Catholic Church as a means of active participation and clarifies, “but this is a hierarchical participation, one in which each participant, whether, priest, choir, or congregation, plays a proper part.”\footnote{William Mahrt, “Active Participation and Listening to Gregorian Chant,” \textit{Sacred Music} 138, no. 1 (2011), 21.}

Mahrt emphasizes that Catholic practice does permit congregational participation, but explains that it follows a particular structure. Lutheran musical practices, on the other hand, are meant to engage congregations in a less ritualized manner, further reflecting the differences between Catholic and Protestant religious ideologies at large.

The concern for the congregation’s role in the church service reveals a supposed unmet need within the Catholic Church that Luther viewed as problematic. For Luther’s church, music was central in occupying this gap in religious experience, and he desired the participation of the entire congregation so they could engage in “spiritual emancipation.”\footnote{Schoenbohm, “Music in the Lutheran Church,” 195.} The music, therefore, served an important function in unifying a new church that held a different set of values than the Catholic Church. While music played

\subsection*{Footnotes}

\footnote{Schoenbohm, “Music in the Lutheran Church Before and at the Time of JS Bach,” \textit{Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture} 12, no. 3 (1943), 195.}
\footnote{Schoenbohm, “Music in the Lutheran Church,” 195.}
an important role in Luther’s Protestant practices, the division that ensued between Catholic and Protestant believers reveals multiple effects of this tradition; the music played a powerful role in unifying the practices of a newly established church, while also becoming an important element in the division among groups, as evidenced in the rift between Catholic and Protestant institutions. Lutheran chorales, which were considered a fundamental development of the Reformation,\textsuperscript{14} are symbolic of the breach from traditional Gregorian chant, and more largely, the Protestant break from Catholic beliefs and foundational practices.

The use of Gregorian chant and Lutheran chorales exemplify the power of music in transforming Christian practice and unifying (and dividing) its followers. While the focus in this study is primarily on music’s role in creating unity among participants of the Christian faith, the division that musical practice creates cannot be ignored. Music clearly functioned to formalize Catholic practice throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, but also challenged the accepted canon in later centuries, splitting congregants and providing a framework for new Protestant practices. Music nevertheless occupies an important place in the Christian church, functioning not only as a tool for institutional change, but also for religious fulfillment through the declamation of sacred text. As worship music transforms over time, it will continue to play a significant and central role in both unifying and dividing Christian practice and its devotees.

\textbf{Local and Global Pentecostal Worship}

In terms of my observations within CCM worship, the musical elements and active audience participation appear closely related to those of both Black

\textsuperscript{14} Leaver, \textit{Liturgical Music}, 209.
congregations and Pentecostal worship services. The worship experience within these establishments are known for being highly emotional and energetic, with importance placed on the presence of the Holy Spirit during services. Don Cusic examines the development of American Gospel music in *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel Music*, mentioning these qualities of African American worship. He discusses the characteristics of both White and Black church music and makes note of the “holiness” movement as one of the fundamental differences between the two styles. Cusic explains that the holiness church is most prevalent in Black Christian culture and particularly in Pentecostal congregations. He describes the holiness movement further in depth, stating,

> The terms “holy rollers” comes from this movement because people are liable to scream, shout, dance, jump or roll on the floor for Jesus. These churches place a heavy emphasis on “saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit” which means a possession by the spirit so the person is not chained to this world but free to act or say whatever God wants done or said, using the individual’s voice and body. Speaking in tongues, or glossolalia . . . is often practiced.¹⁵

The physical expressions of screaming, dancing, shouting, and speaking in tongues exemplify the highly emotional style of Black worship. The idea of “possession” by the Holy Spirit could account for why there is a division between White and Black ways of expressing devotion. It may be something that White congregations fear or do not consider an acceptable or comfortable way of experiencing God and worshipping Him. While the idea of Holy Spirit possession is not something I found in my own research, I did discuss the notion of experiencing the Holy Spirit during CCM worship with informants. Physical movement and dancing were also common across my

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observations, suggesting that some elements of Black worship have crossed over into White forms of expression. These aspects are increasingly popular within churches that use CCM and particularly those aimed at attracting young generations of Christians.

As Cusic discusses the influence of Pentecostal worship in America, he describes its development on a local scale. He explains that Pentecostalism developed in 1900 and began at Bethel Bible College. Leaders of Pentacostalism encouraged students to study the Bible and focus on the gifts of the spirit, and these factors would become central to the experience of worship. Speaking in tongues and emotionally charged worship styles are characteristic of services, in which congregants engage in highly participatory singing and movement. These elements were common across my own observations, and my interviews revealed the importance of the Holy Spirit within CCM worship in today’s modern Christian rock musical contexts.

Cusic also identifies the influence of Pentecostalism on secular music during the onset of rock and roll, stating,

Pentecostalism also had a direct influence on rock ‘n’ roll music because so many of the pioneers of rock—Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard and others—came from a Pentecostal background, transferring the Pentecostal energy to the rock ‘n’ roll stage.

The connection between CCM and Pentecostal worship is thus more conceivable when considering the influence of rock ‘n’ roll music on CCM development. If CCM drew from the rock ‘n’ roll tradition previously influenced by Pentecostal worship elements, then CCM could be arguably linked to the highly energetic and emotional performance styles of Pentecostal worship. This influence is further suggested when accounting for the relationship between Pentecostalism and modern forms of worship on a larger scale.
Global Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Latin America and Brazil

While it is possible that Pentecostal worship influenced contemporary modes of worship in the United States, the impact of Pentecostalism is more apparent when considering its role internationally. Drawing on Christian practice in Latin America reveals how Pentecostal worship practice has transformed in the Catholic Church and particularly among younger audiences. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Christianity has experienced significant transformations in its traditions, missions, and membership around the world. Christian practice in Latin America greatly exemplifies many of these transformations, and Brazil serves as a useful case study in particular. Protestant and Evangelical churches continue to gain popularity, and Pentecostalism has been identified as the driving force behind this phenomenon. In addition, the music of Pentecostal worship is at the core of the movement, which suggests the significance of music in creating religious transformation. As the Roman Catholic Church experiences decline, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal represents the Church's response to the threats of rising Protestantism, and its use of popular music is significant in the development of Catholicism. Many young adults are drawn to both Pentecostalism and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, or MRCC, and the music functions as an important tool in achieving this mass appeal and creating change within Christian practice and experience.

Scholars R. Andrew Chestnut and Edward L. Cleary offer insight into these religious movements. They highlight the values and major figures behind growing Pentecostalism and the changes taking place within traditional Catholicism. The authors

frame the religious values of the movements in contrast to the structure and traditions of
the Catholic Church, emphasizing the transition in Christian experience. As the ideals
shift from a ritualistic focus to a more personal understanding of Christianity, they
represent the needs of a younger generation that desires a faith of relevance and
purpose. For Protestant and Charismatic denominations, music is fundamental in
creating this relevance and conveying the modern ideals of Christianity in a powerful
and convicting way. The rapid growth of these churches suggests that the use of
popular music is a crucial aspect of the mission to appeal to young Brazilians and
maintain their church membership and participation.

Protestant growth in Brazil is a phenomenon that is changing the religious
landscape of the nation. Between the years of 2000 and 2010, the Protestant population
of the country increased from 15.4% to 22.2%, with 60% of those individuals identifying
as Pentecostal.17 The appeal of Protestantism, and the Pentecostal faith in particular,
rests in the approach of how faith is both proselytized and experienced. Sherron A.
George discusses this approach when stating, “In contrast to the Roman Catholic
emphasis on sacramental rituals, Latin Protestants emphasized the centrality of the
Bible, evangelistic preaching, and planting new churches.”18 George indicates the
primary focus Protestants place on evangelism through Biblical text, which is framed in
opposition to the performance of rituals and sacraments during Catholic services. In
addition, one of the main differences between Pentecostal and Catholic congregations

17 “2012 Census: Number of Catholics Falls and Number of Protestant, Spiritists and Persons Without

18 Sherron K. George, “Brazil: An "Evangelized" Giant Calling for Liberating Evangelism,” International
is the emphasis that the former places on incorporating Christian beliefs into every aspect of life. George further elaborates when stating, “Pentecostal churches stress the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion, healing, exorcism, evangelism, and all of daily life.”\(^{19}\) The notion that the Holy Spirit takes a central role in one’s life is a fundamental aspect of Latin American Pentecostal belief, linking up with notions of Afro-Brazilian spirit possession as well. These differences are highlighted when Pentecostals evangelize to young Brazilians, and they are finding success as represented in the previous statistics.

Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, authors of *Global Pentecostalism*, point to music as the underlying source of Pentecostal evangelism: “The heart of Pentecostalism is the music. It touches the emotions. It is populist in tone and instrumentation. And the lyrics give voice to feelings—the pain, the joy, the hope for a new life.”\(^{20}\) As the authors suggest, music is at “the heart” of the Pentecostal mission to touch people in an emotional and powerful manner. The worship music used to reach people is “populist,” meaning it speaks to the ordinary person through the sound and lyrical content. The use of music to appeal to the common listener is an effective way to make Christianity relevant to a younger generation, and the growing number of Pentecostal members and churches reflect the success of using music in this way.

R. Andrew Chestnut offers a description that best illustrates the Pentecostal practice of targeting young adults. He succinctly explains how churches identify the music that will most resonate with a younger generation when stating,

\(^{19}\) George, “Liberating Evangelism,” 105.

\(^{20}\) Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*, 17.
Pentecostal churches in Brazil and throughout the world have been extraordinarily adept at incorporating local folk and popular music into the worship service . . . In churches where youth groups actively participate in the music, hymns are often popular tunes heard on the radio and in soap operas that have been set to evangelical lyrics by Protestant recording artists.\textsuperscript{21}

Chestnut suggests that the fusion of popular music into Christian worship is a particular skill that the Pentecostal church has mastered. As he describes the church as “extraordinarily adept” in this practice, Chestnut implies that this has developed into a successful tool to attract youth groups and young adults to church. These groups are exposed to music from popular media outlets that surround them daily. If young adults are most familiar with music from the radio and popular telenovelas, then their attraction to popular music in a church setting seems logical. The Pentecostal church has identified the potentials of this approach and has experienced success with their youth to “actively participate” in both the music and the congregation. This notion of participation, which will later be discussed in-depth, is significant in the transformation of the Brazilian Christian experience. While traditional Catholic congregations practice a more structured and ritualized form of Christianity, the Pentecostal church fosters a highly participatory and emotional worship experience.

The result of offering such a drastically different worship option for young Brazilians is the decline in membership within the Roman Catholic Church. According to the 2010 Population Census, the number of Catholics fell from 73.6% to 64.6%.\textsuperscript{22} While other factors may attribute to this decrease, the option of a more relevant and popular


\textsuperscript{22} “2012 Census.”
religious alternative accounts for a portion of the decline. Mike Berg and Paul Pretiz provide a list of reasons for the growth in Evangelical churches in Latin America. They point to the use of popular music in particular when writing, “The gospel expressed in Latin America must fit into its surroundings. If salsa is the prevailing rhythm on the pop music radio show, it becomes the beat to which choruses are sung in church.”

Protestant and Evangelical churches understand the importance of making religion “fit” with the environment in which people live, and music serves as an important medium to achieve this. Their method of exposing the Gospel in this distinct manner is transforming religion, and the Catholic Church is evidently experiencing its effects.

In response to the threats of rising Protestantism, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement, or MRCC, developed as a campaign of religious change to withstand competition. Edward L. Cleary discusses the movement in-depth and claims, “The charismatic renewal in Brazil cannot be ignored. It represents a radical shift in religion in the country.” This “radical shift” refers to the way in which Brazilians practice and identify with the Christian faith, which greatly differs from conventional religious conceptions. The changes that took place within Catholicism began with the Vatican II Council of 1962; the celebration of Mass in the vernacular was one of the most significant changes that also allowed for the use of new worship songs in the

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Mass. The MRCC campaign responded to these changes, incorporating popular music into the mission of spreading the Gospel to Brazilians. Similar to the Pentecostal custom of using popular musical rhythms to attract youth, the MRCC is actively drawing on current musical styles as a means to transmit the sacred message.

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal is considered a globalizing force in universal Catholicism, which is evident in the campaign’s efforts within Brazil. Authors Marjo de Theije and Cecília Mariz discuss this notion extensively in the article, “Localizing and Globalizing Processes in Brazilian Catholicism.” The authors state that MRCC traditions are connected to an “Americanized” popular mass culture and further claim,

> Many songs have a pop, rock, or other international rhythm... What matters is the sound and its capacity to touch the faithful. Because the followers tend to have “globalized” ears, the music acquires this characteristic, too. The MRCC songs are based on rhythms that are popular in the secular world.  

As de Theije and Mariz convey, international popular culture has greatly influenced young Brazilians, whose “globalized ears” are particularly attuned to the secular rhythms of the world. The MRCC recognizes the tastes of their target market, and the movement uses the music of youth culture to “touch the faithful.” This notion of “touching,” or moving people in some way, reflects a change in how Catholicism is practiced; music is no longer just a hymn or psalm sung to God on Sundays, but rather a means for the worshipper to experience something emotional and powerful. This type of language is highly present within Evangelical churches, in which the desire to touch or emotionally impact followers is common.

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Jeff Titon’s work, discussed briefly in Chapter 1, is relevant when examining the use of Christian music in this Brazilian case study. His notions of “affect” are applicable, in which performance of worship songs is intended to move people in specific ways.\(^\text{28}\) This idea of being “moved” through performance is what the MRCC strives to achieve through music, and they recognize the ability of popular songs and rhythms to produce this effect. The power of worship music to create “affect” is therefore influential in the transformation of Christian experience. The Church’s adoption of popular worship forms represents a substantial rupture from past customs; the music allows young Brazilians to experience God in a direct emotional way that may not have otherwise been possible through traditional Catholic practices and rituals.

The method of using popular music to spiritually reach young adults in the Catholic Church dates back to the late 1960s in the United States, and Padre Zezinho is credited with breaking ground for Christian music in Brazil\(^\text{29}\) through U.S. influence. Zezinho learned evangelism through mass media in the United States at the time when the Jesus Movement popularized Contemporary Christian Music in North America. Edward L. Cleary writes, “Zezinho was witnessing the modern birth of Christian contemporary music and carried back to Brazil many of its characteristics.”\(^\text{30}\) The “Jesus Rock” that Zezinho brought to Brazil was a fusion of rock music with Christian lyrics that developed into Contemporary Christian Music, detailed in this thesis. Zezinho composed songs for his own parish, which attracted many musicians and followers; he


\(^{29}\) Cleary, *The Rise*, 133.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 135.
began touring and exposing his music to an estimated 120 million Brazilians.\textsuperscript{31} Cleary further explains that Zezinho “opened up the world of religious music in Brazil,” resulting in the growth of Catholic bands and singers that led Mass using popular religious music.\textsuperscript{32} The singing priest not only appealed to younger Brazilians through popular music, but also empowered other musicians to explore additional ways of expressing faith through secular forms. This increase in Catholic singer-songwriters and bands reflects the changing religious landscape in Brazil, as the structured norms of the Catholic mass give way to popular forms of Christian worship.

While Vatican II changes permitted the integration of secular tastes to spread the Gospel, there were limits to what was considered an acceptable way to represent the Catholic Church. In Rio de Janeiro, Padre Zeca emerged as a key figure that also desired to reach the youth, but “eventually went beyond the comfort zone of the archdiocese of Rio because of his unorthodox beach liturgies.”\textsuperscript{33} In his attempt to “meet the un-churched,” Zeca brought Catholic bands to the popular “Rock in Rio Café” festival to bring the Church where youth culture congregated.\textsuperscript{34} Events such as these were held in open spaces and Rio beaches such as Ipanema, drawing thousands of Brazilians together in an experience comparable to Woodstock. The atmosphere of these “beach liturgies” would ideally resonate with young adults, but the spectacle of the events drew a large amount of criticism from the Church. Cleary explains that the disapproval led to an end to beach masses, in which Padre Zeca was disciplined and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[31] Cleary, \textit{The Rise}, 135.
\item[32] Ibid., 136.
\item[33] Ibid., 138.
\item[34] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
withdrew from public view for subsequent years. This backlash from the Catholic Church represents the concerns of the older archdiocese in contrast to the popularity of the beach masses among young adults. It is evident that while the younger generation embraced new methods of preaching to the masses, there was a limit to which traditions of the Church could be compromised.

The backlash towards Padre Zeca raises question of why the Church considered beach liturgies to be outside appropriate activity. It is possible that the archdiocese could not allow their name to be attached to events taking place in such an extremely secularized location. While concerts in storefronts and open spaces are also non-sacred spaces, they are not settings in which young people congregate for the particular purpose of shedding their clothing. James Freeman discusses the politics of public space in Rio de Janeiro and claims, “The beaches and bars of Ipanema are third places in the sense that they provide a multitude of social settings that people can engage in outside of work and home.” The idea of beaches serving as locations for a “multitude” of social activity and behavior could potentially damage the Church’s reputation. Adopting secular musical styles for worship was a large step for the Catholic Church, but entering such a diverse public space filled with secular activities was evidently too far from the Church’s comfort zone.

Perhaps the most significant figure in the MRCC is São Paulo’s Padre Marcelo Rossi, who is considered the most popular priest that represents the campaign.

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Rossi’s goal is to “lead his listener, especially the younger ones, to commit themselves to Jesus, allow the divine spirit to enter their lives, and live according to a Christian code of ethics.” His approach to proselytizing echoes that of the Pentecostal church, in which a relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit is central. Rossi’s desire to reach the “young ones” highlights the emphasis that the movement places on a particular generation. While reaching Brazilians of all ages is important, there appears to be a specific stress on meeting the youth, and music is identified as crucial in achieving this objective. Through music and movement, Rossi strives to involve young adults in these engaging masses, while still communicating Christian beliefs. His efforts to never bore his audiences are attained through the use of popular music, suggesting the power of the genre. As a young adult, Rossi left the Catholic Church from boredom, indicating his genuine understanding of the need for a relevant and meaningful religion.

Philip Jenkins elaborates on the popularity of Rossi and his “pop-star” status. He claims that Rossi runs “what looks like a Pentecostal church,” recognizing the need for the Catholic Church to adopt Protestant forms of worship:

The only option for the Catholic Church is to play catch-up with the Pentecostals, and that is where priests like Father Rossi come in. They present the Christian message in a style that has become the standard expectation in Brazilian life, with all the elements that the Pentecostals have made familiar—powerful contemporary music, emotional charismatic worship and, above all, a sense of excitement.

This notion of “playing catch-up” with the Pentecostals suggests the extent to which Catholics felt the pressure and threat of rising Protestantism. Jenkins notes the

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38 Cleary, The Rise, 140.

39 Ibid., 141.

Church’s intentional adoption of powerful music and charismatic worship to invigorate masses and compete with other denominations. This has evidently become the expectation for church services, and therefore the style of worship music is of great importance. Andrew Downie writes, “By comparison with the Protestants’ approachable pastor next door, the rock and roll liturgy and the 24-hour service, the Catholic Church could look cold and distant.” His comment clearly illustrates the major differences between traditional and modern approaches to Christian practice. For Brazilians who feel detached from the traditional rituals and sacraments of Catholic worship, Protestant practices offer relatable messages and familiar music. Popular worship forms and relevant messages are essential to meeting the new “expectations” of Brazilian religious services, exemplifying the shift from conventional to contemporary Christian practices within Brazil.

Technology is one of the most valuable forms of communication for young adults, and Padre Rossi’s use of it has proven successful for reaching a wider audience. Through technological means, the “church experience” is no longer restricted to attending mass in person, but is now available via Christian television and radio programs, as well as concert and outside performance settings. Jenkins describes Rossi’s methods of reaching the world through his music recordings, television and radio shows, and films: “He epitomizes the kind of rock-star televangelist that has emerged around the globe in recent years.” The comparison to “rock-star televangelists” suggests the impact of the media on the way Christianity is experienced.

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42 Jenkins, “Mass Appeal in Brazil,” 45.
today. Popular worship music is distributed through radio and television, which has promoted both Rossi and the Catholic Church in ways similar to those of Evangelical institutions. These technological mediums have transformed how the Catholic Church conveys its message to followers, and they continue to foster the “globalized ears” of Brazilian youth. The music and messages that come from these entertainment channels have thus created a shift from traditional religious experiences to more technological, globalized ones.

Footage from a 2012 concert illustrates Padre Rossi’s mass appeal, and it is useful when analyzing the particular experience that the music fosters. Rossi sings a popular worship song called “Te Louvarei,”

43 which is the Portuguese version of the North American hit, “Draw Me Close.” The video reveals the large crowds that gather to hear Rossi, and though the performance is from a concert series, it still exemplifies the type of music and technological production involved in his masses. A full rock band accompanies Rossi as he leads the worship song, offering a glimpse into how popular Christian music affects its audience. Numerous people in the crowd lift their hands in the air, sing, and sway to the music. As they engage with the sound and lyrical content of the song, their physical actions indicate their expressions of faith in an emotional manner. While the performance maintains a mellow tone and is not an upbeat, energetic rock song, it does contain the elements of rock music in its instrumentation and structural form. There are moments in the song when the music appears to elicit visible reactions from the audience; this is often when the drums crescendo to the chorus, which provokes listeners to lift their hands and dance to the music. As they

actively participate through singing and movement, they display the similar style of religious expression that is popular within Pentecostal services. This participatory nature of music has become an important facet of the Christian experience, and music is a key tool that has perpetuated this development. The actions that take place in Pentecostal and charismatic worship services link up with Turino’s discussion of participatory musical experiences. Singing, lifting hands, swaying, and physical expression are actions in which church members regularly engage, serving to enhance their personal and collective religious experiences.

Padre Rossi demonstrates both participatory and presentational performance in “Te Louvarei,” and it is probable that the entertainment factor of the event is another facet of its popularity. Rossi, however, is not a natural singer and does not have an exceptional voice, suggesting that the religious component of these concerts and events does account for the audience’s desire to attend. The idea of a relationship with God is expressed through the style of music performed in both masses and concerts, and “Te Louvarei,” exemplifies this notion in its lyrical content. When the crowd sings, “Perto quero estar” (“Close I want to be”) and “Teu amigo me tornei,” (“I became your friend”) they express notions of being close to God and address Him as “friend.” The lyrics highlight the concept of a personal relationship, and words such as “close” and “friend” convey that sentiment. As people sing these praises to God, their movement and physical expressions of lifting hands and swaying suggest that the music and lyrics evoke such responses. This expressive component of music is unique to the atmosphere and tone of contemporary masses and Protestant worship services. Such
physical activity is not characteristic within traditional Catholic practice, and its prominence within the MRCC shows how Catholicism has evolved through generations.

Jeff Titon’s research with the Independent Baptist Fellowship Church indicates that such physical responses during worship are indicators of “the intensely felt presence of the indwelling Spirit.” It is established that music functions to deepen religious experiences by “moving” Christians to “dwell” in the Holy Spirit. This idea of interacting with the Holy Spirit is popular within Pentecostal worship and, as previously discussed, is common within charismatic Catholicism. The question of what it means for someone to “dwell in” and experience the Holy Spirit is a difficult concept because of its subjectivity. Miller and Yamamori explain the difficulty in understanding supernatural experiences, but help in describing how Pentecostals understand these manifestations:

But clearly many people have experiences that they interpret as the product of divine intervention. For them this is “proof” that Christianity is true and that this is the place where they should anchor their spiritual commitment.

The authors suggest that as believers witness the Holy Spirit and signs of the supernatural through worship, they interpret this as evidence of God. They confirm their Christian beliefs through these divine experiences, seeking out this type of spiritual validation in the future. If Pentecostal and charismatic practices foster this type of experience, it follows that people would be drawn to them as a source of “proof” of their faith. In addition, as popular musical forms elicit emotional expression and serve to “move” people to these deeper levels with the divine, they play a critical role in spiritual lives. As Christians encounter, pursue, and continue to expect signs of the Holy Spirit

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through worship, music becomes the powerful element that drives religious experience and spiritual belief in Brazil.

The use of Brazilian popular music for sacred purposes not only cultivates a religious community and elevates spiritual interaction, but also fosters a unique blend of a sacred and secular identity. Padre Rossi singing in traditional priest attire while backed by an elaborate, crashing drum set presents a unique juxtaposition of sacred and secular imagery. These images represent two aspects of identity that have historically been kept separated from one another. In “Renegotiating the Sacred-Secular Binary,” Paul Y. Chang and Dale J. Lim articulate these separate identities as a “sacred-secular binary,” and their ideas are useful when analyzing the movements taking place within Brazil. The authors suggest that Christian rock uses secular music to present a sacred message that ultimately crosses divisions of mainstream and religious life. Pentecostal churches and the MRCC have both identified music as a key tool to appeal to young adults, and they use it to negotiate between sacred and secular identities. Therefore, popular worship music can be understood as merging elements of both areas of life, and Chang and Lim highlight the role of music in this sense. This aspect of popular worship music, while not directly expressed in scholarship that concerns Brazil, could still account for the popularity and success of Pentecostal and charismatic churches within Latin America.

The idea of popular religious music as a meeting place for two separate identities is a concept that represents Christian transformation and warrants further attention.

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Chang and Lim, “Sacred-Secular Binary,” 397.
Rock music has historically been a source of identity formation for youth culture, and music is an element around which young adults build and define social groups.\textsuperscript{47} Because it did not originate in the church environment, popular music is thus contextualized within social and secular settings. As it accrues and creates meaning from within these contexts and people interact with it, the music becomes an important facet of identity, removed from religious and spiritual associations. Therefore, it becomes part of a secular identity separated from aspects that are formed within a religious context. As the Pentecostal church has demonstrated, an approach to Christianity that synthesizes aspects of sacred and secular identities resonates with young Brazilians. Music serves as a means to achieve this, thus bridging a gap that exists between the church and daily life outside its walls. As the Catholic Church uses modern worship to “compete,” they nurture a transformation in which people can now glorify God through secular means, encouraging a new composite identity that embraces both sacred and secular identities for Brazilians.

When concluding why popular music plays such an important role in the religious landscape within Brazil, Edward Cleary offers a valuable comment: “Music has always been an integral part of Christianity, but it seems now to have acquired or reacquired a place as fundamental as spoken language.”\textsuperscript{48} Music has reshaped the way that the Brazilian Catholic population experiences and practices Christianity. It has become a method to reach people who feel a separation between their church and everyday lives. Through the MRCC campaign, the Church has adopted practices similar to those of


\textsuperscript{48} Cleary, \textit{The Rise}, 148.
Protestant denominations and the Pentecostal church in particular. The type of worship experience that these churches provide is one that encourages a relationship with God and an emotional interaction with the Holy Spirit. The music is used to reach a younger generation, and worship incorporates the music from their everyday lives to resonate with their tastes and spiritual desires. As traditional religious institutions such as the Catholic Church lose membership, the appeal to this taste becomes increasingly important. Secular styles of worship replace the rituals and structured masses, transforming the expectations of how church is experienced; services and masses now include physical expression and participation that encourage church involvement. This is significant in the development of the Catholic Church and accounts for the rise in Protestant converts.

In addition to transforming expectations, popular religious music combines facets of both a sacred and secular identity, making church a more enjoyable and relevant experience. Contemporary songs combine aspects of Brazilian identity from both inside and outside of the church, creating an identity that embraces both aspects of life. Because young Brazilians can gather together and worship God in church and concert settings, the music serves to not only foster this new identity, but also maintain a sense of community and shared experience. Padre Marcelo Rossi is a key figure propelling religious change within Catholicism, and his mission to appeal to youth has brought thousands of followers back to the Church. Jenkins provides a comment conveying how this will affect religion in the future, claiming, “In Brazil, men like Father Rossi are in the front line of a denominational war that will have enormous consequences for the fate of
Christianity worldwide.”\textsuperscript{\textcopyright} Jenkins presents an interesting idea of the ways in which both Pentecostal churches and the MRCC are changing religious practice in Latin America; as the Protestant and Catholic denominations compete for followers and use popular music and methods of outreach to do so, they actually work together to transform how Christianity is experienced within their congregations and Christianity at large. Both campaigns have made religion more relevant for the generation that has a different set of expectations. It is clear that worship preferences and the emotional experiences they provoke are of great concern to each movement, conveying the significance of popular music in transforming Brazilian Christian experience and identity. These case studies demonstrate the impact of popular worship forms on a large scale, providing a helpful foundation for the discussion of CCM in the United States in Chapters 3 and 4.

\textsuperscript{49} Jenkins, “Mass Appeal,” 45.
CHAPTER 3
CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC INSIDE OF THE CHURCH

“My grandparents call it the Boom-Boom Room,” responded twenty-one year old Austin Wilson when I asked him to describe the sanctuary that holds contemporary church services using Christian rock music.¹ His comment epitomizes the varying degree of acceptance and non-acceptance of this popular religious music, highlighting the tension surrounding its use in church. Wilson’s grandparents reference the heavy instrumental sounds of the bass, drums, and electric guitar when calling the sanctuary the “Boom-Boom Room.” The nickname not only pokes fun at the use of rock music in church, but also conveys an understanding of the music as loud and “booming” inside of what is a normally a quiet and sacred space. While older generations may view the music as simply loud noise, many young Christians understand it as a tool for legitimate expressions of praise to God. Because people have diverse experiences with rock music, they also have different sets of associations that link up with the music. It is through these associations that music carries particular meaning to groups of people, and thus accounts for the tension surrounding Christian rock and the varying responses to it within sacred contexts.

Contemporary Christian Music, or CCM, has become a popular genre for worship services in many churches across North America,² and its popularity is often referred to as a “phenomenon” that has drawn people to the Christian faith in a significant way. The genre developed from the popular rock and roll style that emerged in the fifties and grew

¹ Austin Wilson, interview by author, Lexington, KY, June 27, 2012.
² Stowe, No Sympathy, 1.
rapidly in the sixties, causing older generations to take issue with its use in a sacred setting. By the early 1970s, however, the Evangelical church gradually incorporated rock styles into music if the songs were filled with Christian rhetoric.\textsuperscript{3} During this time, the “Jesus Movement” became popular, incorporating these new sounds into the spread of the Gospel and giving rise to a new style of Christian music: Jesus Rock. This would later be called Contemporary Christian Music, or CCM.\textsuperscript{4} As musicians linked this music to Christian messages, they attracted a younger generation that has not only used it as an expression of religious belief, but also as a source of identity formation.

Wilson’s comment above reflects the shift within Christianity since the 1970s Jesus Movement and emphasizes the tension that still surrounds this music today. His grandparents’ view of CCM contrasts with that of the generation that has adopted it, revealing a tension between age groups concerning the genre in church. The evolution of Christian experience has left many traditional congregations and older members to question and challenge the direction of Christian practice for the future. As CCM becomes increasingly popular, however, its use in both modern and traditional churches continues to grow, thus shaping Christian experience and identity construction among today’s younger generation.

Since the sixties, rock has provided a sense of identity for young adults, who initially used this music as one way to reject the structured norms of the fifties Cold War era. To this day, rock music serves as a source of age-set identity formation and the creation of community,\textsuperscript{5} and Christian rock music operates in a similar fashion. Jay

\textsuperscript{3} Howard and Streck, \textit{Apostles of Rock}, 29.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.

Howard and John Streck articulate the value of CCM in Christian youth culture, identifying how the style differs from traditional rock music:

The dilemma for Christian adolescents then is clear. On the one hand, rock and roll music plays a critical role in establishing identity and defining their social groups, but, at the same time, it appears to contradict many of the values they hold as Christians. Since 1969, contemporary Christian music (CCM) has attempted to offer the resolution to this quandary. 6

CCM provides its audience with the upbeat, driving sounds of popular music joined with lyrics that affirm Christian religious values. For people who feel a contradicting sense of self inside and outside of the church, CCM becomes a medium that allows for a synthesis of those worlds, resulting in a new type of genre. Rock music is itself indexical of experiences of everyday secular life, and as CCM is continuously experienced within Christian devotional contexts, it becomes indexical of both the secular and sacred world. The music not only serves as rock music that has long been a source of entertainment for young adults, but also incorporates this identity with that of a Christian sense of self. The inclusion of CCM in the church thus provides a place where these two identities meet through the indexical linking of the two realms of experience for youth. This linking is partly responsible for young adult acceptance and adoption of CCM within worship contexts, suggesting the significance of the music in youth and young adult Christian outreach.

I wish to return to Chang and Lim’s description of these separate realms of identity and experience as a “sacred-secular binary” that continues to be renegotiated and reconfigured through CCM. 7 They claim that musical categories such as rock and

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6 Howard and Streck, Apostles of Rock, 1.
7 Chang and Lim, “Sacred-secular Binary,” 397.
rap, which were “originally considered as secular music, antithetical to the Christian way of life,” are now perceived as “value neutral media through which they can imbue and transmit the sacred gospel message.”\(^8\) Because secular music was considered “antithetical” to Christianity, young adults were left to negotiate between their sacred and secular identities when inside and outside of the church. Chang and Lim suggest that worshippers now understand CCM as a tool that allows these binaries to work together rather than against one another. Instead of listening to “the devil’s music” outside of the church and singing praises to God inside, many young Christian adults can now recognize rock’s potential as another form of praising God, thus joining these two worlds that comprise their identity. In this regard, CCM becomes influential in appealing to young adults and maintaining their presence within the church.

Chang and Lim’s assertion that rock music is perceived as “value neutral” media to transmit the Gospel\(^9\) is worth further exploration when considering the tension over CCM in church. Is it possible for music to be neutral in today’s environment? Like any object or concept, when music is placed in a context, it acquires meaning and requires a value judgment on the part of the person who experiences it. A value judgment attributes merit or demerit to something according to personal standards or priorities,\(^10\) and it is through contextual settings and experiences that individuals can do this with music. For those who have not experienced CCM in the context of a church worship service, the music can still carry value based on their experiences with rock music in

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\(^8\) Chang and Lim, “Sacred-Secular Binary,” 408.

\(^9\) Ibid., 397.

other settings. Therefore, one does not need to be in a religious context to perceive CCM a certain way due to the indexical and iconic meaning that rock music itself carries.

Because the meaning of rock music is very much based on subjective, personal experience, CCM will naturally have some sort of value judgment already in place. Generations with different experiences of rock music will have varied associations, accounting for the tension that exists concerning CCM use in church. Therefore, I believe that it is not possible for the music to be value neutral. For the older generations that reject CCM, they likely have a negative value judgment of the music within a sacred context due to its secular origins and behavioral associations. Younger generations that accept CCM, however, have a positive value judgment based on a set of completely different social contexts and personal experiences. Contemporary worship music is therefore not neutral because all communities involved in CCM have likely experienced general rock music within a context that gives it some sort of value. Because of its roots in rock music, CCM is thus assigned a value prior to its experience within religious contexts through semiotic processes and the function of icons and indexical signs.

Because of the varied experiences and associations that groups have with rock music, some congregations have debated its inclusion in services because it challenges cultural tradition for many people. Don Quantz speaks further to the opposition toward the genre in his article “Canons in Collision: Hymns and Contemporary Christian Music.” He suggests that CCM’s sharp contrast to hymnic styles has led many to believe it is

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inappropriate within the church, stating, “Hymns achieved canonicity because they adhered to a standard, ideal, and norm of music that spoke to certain deeply held values and norms of a group of Christian believers.” Because rock music was a commercial commodity and filled with secular rhetoric, traditional Christians believed it to be inherently against religious values. Therefore, worship music that draws on the rock tradition violates the accepted canon and values of these older Christians, challenging what is considered appropriate and ideal for musical devotion.

For people not in favor of using this style of music in church, the idea of appealing to popular tastes is also problematic. Contemporary music not only challenges the traditional cannon, but also takes the focus off of God and places importance on people’s personal needs. Dan Lucarini, author of Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement, presents the argument against CCM. He discusses the immoral dimensions of rock music and explains that the stigma of the genre cannot be removed with the substitution of Christian lyrics and musicians. When asserting why the use of rock music offends Christians, Lucarini claims, “They are rightfully offended because the music style reminds them of its immoral dimension. They quickly associate the music with sensuality, depravity and rebellion. The music is ‘guilty by association.’” These types of associations are part of the semiotic processes outlined in Chapter 1; rock becomes indexical of sensuality and promiscuity from the co-occurrence of these behaviors with the music. While it is difficult to discern the majority

12 Quantz, “Canons in Collision,” 32.
14 Ibid.
that Lucarini represents when he references “they” in his statement, he hints at a particular generation through his language. Words such as “rebellion” are closely linked to the counterculture and sixties era of rock, suggesting that Lucarini refers to the feelings of the older baby boomer generation or their parents. Because Lucarini provides insight into how critics understand Christian rock, he offers a valuable point of comparison when examining the use of this musical style.

While the argument for Christian rock’s immorality continues to be present in today’s Christian culture, there are numerous musicians and young adults who firmly believe in the genre’s importance in reinforcing the Christian faith. Proponents of CCM view rock music as a neutral tool to transmit and communicate the Gospel.\(^\text{15}\) William Romanowski further addresses the idea of rock music as a neutral medium: “Christian Rock stars and the industry have argued repeatedly for the neutrality of music as a defense against contentions that the beat of rock is inherently evil.”\(^\text{16}\) I have previously established my view that rock music cannot be a neutral medium, so perhaps this notion should be described in terms of rock music’s changing associations over time. Rather than linking rock music to evil behavior or ideologies, musicians have a different set of associations with music that deem it appropriate for worship. For these younger groups, rock music is iconic of popular music they hear on the radio as part of daily life, which then becomes indexical of everyday life activities (i.e. enjoying music with friends, going

\(^{15}\) Chang and Lim, “Sacred-secular Binary,” 408.

to concerts, listening to music in the car). In an attempt to become more relevant and relatable to youth culture, CCM uses these indexical relationships to its advantage.

Romanowski’s claim that Christian artists and the industry have “argued” for the use of rock music in the church illustrates the defensive stance many musicians and churches have taken regarding this issue. The insistence that the music itself is devoid of immoral associations suggests the transformation in rock music perception; while older generations understand rock music as representative of a secular culture and lifestyle, younger generations do not necessarily associate the music itself with “depravity and rebellion,” as Lucarini suggests. In fact, Christian rock artists and bands emphasize a Biblical ideology and lifestyle through their lyrics, often times addressing Jesus and the need for repentance. These groups consider CCM to be an appropriate means to reach their audiences, demonstrating how church music has developed since the arrival of rock and roll. As contemporary worship becomes popular within modern churches and the hymnic canon is gradually replaced by CCM, it is evident how traditional notions of rock music as “inherently evil” are increasingly diminished.

I began my fieldwork in Lexington, KY at Southern Hills United Methodist Church, and this case study became the cornerstone for my thesis on music as a transformative tool in Christian experience across denominations. Austin Wilson references this church when discussing the “Boom-Boom Room” that uses Christian rock music during services. In an interview, Wilson describes this service called “The Source” aimed at

17 Lucarini, Why I Left, 91.


young adults, which includes contemporary music and is offered at the same time as
the traditional service. Wilson explains the rift between the generations within the
church community, and Don Quanz’s article suggests this is due to clashing musical
canons. In explaining this tension over “The Source,” Wilson states, “My grandparents
call it the Boom-Boom Room. The older generation expects the younger people to
assimilate and come to the older church, but the young people aren’t going.”20 The
success of The Source has led to failed expectations that young adults will “assimilate”
into the traditional Methodist service, and this is problematic for the older generation.

A few months after my interview with Wilson, I emailed him asking if he could
offer clarification on why his grandparents refer to the Boom-Boom Room as such,
specifically asking if the name was due to implications related to rock music and its ties
to sexual promiscuity. He responded with a forwarded email from his grandfather,
George Wilson, whose message I felt would more accurately represent the older
generation at Southern Hills:

Our main complaint has been the noise which I do not feel is any way
related to social ills which you have theorized about. . . . For your historical
edification, the Boom-Boom Room was a popular watering hole in down
town Lexington for many years. I never frequented the place but you could
have benefit of the drums just walking by the door! The big question I have
for your music major friend is, Why is it that the mega churches with all their
spirited (if not spiritual) music are booming and the traditional churches are
in many cases, aging to the risk of drying up? Example: Southland Christian
and Quest?21

As George Wilson indicates in his message, the older members of the church find the
The Source’s music problematic due to the noise rather than associations to rebellion,

20 Wilson, interview.

21 George Wilson, e-mail message, March 28, 2013.
promiscuity, and other "social ills." He clarifies that the name comes from an old "watering hole" in Lexington, linking the sound of the contemporary service to that of a loud bar scene. It seems that in this particular case, Lucarini’s claim that Christian rock is offensive because of its associations with sensuality and depravity do not apply. Wilson does, however, convey associations to loud drums and music heard in a bar setting. When he inquires why large contemporary churches are “booming” while traditional ones are at risk, Wilson highlights this transformation in Christian experience that I believe to be central to this thesis. My response to him addressed the changing concept of Christianity from a religion to a relationship with God, and I explained how the music reflected these new ideologies in terms of its lyrical content and promotion of participatory acts of expression to God.

While The Source’s music may be considered “noise” to older generations at Southern Hills, the congregation’s young adults openly accept the contemporary service and its music. Austin Wilson represents this younger generation, and he makes a statement that speaks to the transition taking place in Christian culture when saying, “Given the choice I would much rather go to the contemporary church. The days of singing out of the hymnal are numbered I think.”22 This idea presents an interesting position for the future of this traditional church; as the older generation begins to pass away, this traditional United Methodist Church could experience a dwindling community if it does not attract younger followers. Thus, contemporary music becomes particularly important for the continued viability of the church. While there are other factors that differentiate the two services, the music is a large part that distinguishes them and is the

22 Wilson, interview.
greatest factor of contention between generations of the congregation. This suggests that music is also the major element that is transforming Christian practice within this historically traditional church and within Christianity at large.

I spoke with the pastor of The Source, who offered further insight into this shift within Christianity. Adam Vodicka helped to create The Source five years ago and has witnessed its development at Southern Hills UMC. He states, “In The Source I feel like Jesus is more a friend. In college they want a relationship with Jesus.” This notion of a “relationship” is key to the development in how many people view Christianity today.

Numerous non-denominational and evangelical churches emphasize the importance of a “personal relationship with Jesus.” Many churches frame this concept as oppositional to the rules and rituals of more traditional churches, suggesting an attempt to appear more relaxed and less intimidating. These contemporary churches emphasize that people come as they are and begin to “know” Jesus through personal prayer and Bible scripture. Vodicka suggests that for many young adults, it is easier to identify with the idea of talking to Jesus as if he is a friend, rather than reciting prayers or responsorial psalms within a traditional service.

As Howard and Streck claim, the notion that Christians should develop a personal relationship with Jesus is not a new concept. The authors state that a personal and emotional Christian experience was emphasized during the Jesus Movement, and that “a common cliché for evangelicals both then and now is that Christianity isn’t a

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religion, it’s a relationship.”25 This notion is one that greatly affects how modern churches approach their services; the goal is to lead people into a growing “relationship” with Christ, and this concept translates to the type of music chosen for worship. Contemporary worship typically consists of music that evokes movement and physical expression from worshippers. Many songs, which will later be discussed in-depth, consist of personal lyrics that address God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit directly. The combination of these types of lyrics with physical movement results in an outwardly emotive expression of faith that suggests a relational approach to worship during the service.

Vodicka’s interview addresses why young adults choose to come to the contemporary service at Southern Hills UMC. He claims,

They get to express themselves more. The reason they come is for the music. It’s the same kind of style you hear on the radio. They’re more familiar with it. We take those hymns and put a contemporary band behind it. They can relate to the hymns better when they can express themselves. They can lift their hands, clap, be on their knees.26

Vodicka’s explanation reinforces the semiotic relationship of CCM to popular mainstream music. He claims that the music is the same style heard on the radio, suggesting that youth accept CCM because it is iconic of rock and pop music. His reasoning as to why young adults enjoy this service also points directly to the music and the ability of members to show physical expression during worship. This suggests that emotional expression through physical movement of the body is understood as an important part of worship for many young adults. Because the music is believed to

26 Vodicka, interview.
evoke such physical expression, CCM serves as an important tool for eliciting responses from church members, which Vodicka claims is what appeals to this younger generation. Thus, CCM additionally serves as a means through which churchgoers actively participate in worship through song and movement. This participatory quality of the music is important in modern expressions of worship, and it is key to drawing young adults to church and fostering their specific spiritual needs.

Thomas Turino discusses this participatory aspect of music in various indigenous and African social contexts in his *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*. He compares participatory musical experiences with presentational ones, and these elements are both present within modern church worship services. Turino highlights the values and contextual features of each performance style, and applying his ideas help to further address how CCM functions for worshippers. He comments further on the effects of participatory music when writing, “I would suggest that participatory music making connects people more intimately and powerfully because of shared interactive engagement among all participants in the actual doing of the activities with each other.”

Within the modern worship context, the act of singing, lifting of hands, and other physical expressions are key participatory actions that many church members share. When considering Turino’s ideas, I would argue that shared actions such as these connect people “intimately and powerfully,” indicating CCM’s role in fostering a sense of community and shared experience among worshippers.

This participatory aspect of CCM differentiates it from other traditional forms of worship, and according to Pastor Vodicka, this aspect greatly appeals to a younger generation.

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generation. I suggest that an increased level of participation is both expected and desired among the younger generation of Christian worshippers. According to Vodicka, many young adults now desire the physical expression of faith that CCM often elicits, which Turino claims is a powerful way to engage and connect a community. Throughout my observations of Christian services and musical events, movement was always a central part of the experience. In my conversations with concertgoers or church members, movement was frequently identified as a defining characteristic of these events. This leads me to believe that movement is key to the overall participatory experience of modern worship and accounts for a large part of its popularity and success in Christian youth culture.

While the participatory quality of CCM exists within modern worship, there is also a presentational component to these services. Turino writes, “The presentation of a given musical style creates a fulcrum around which given identity groups can form or be maintained.”28 He cites concerts and clubs as two social gatherings people attend “because they like to be with other like-minded people.”29 In this sense, the band that performs CCM during worship serves a similar purpose of presenting this musical style to a “like-minded” group of people that share similar values and religious beliefs. The church performance, therefore, operates in a concert-like fashion, in which the musical performance ultimately acts as a “fulcrum” to create and maintain churchgoers’ specific identity group. The presentation of the CCM genre fosters this group identity, while the

28 Turino, Music as Social Life, 61.

29 Ibid.
The added participatory nature of the music further engages the congregation in a deeply expressive form of worship.

Quest Community Church is a large non-denominational congregation in Lexington, KY that epitomizes the transition in Christian experience. Quest serves as one of the most intriguing case studies in the way it has used media to incorporate youth culture and reach people around the city. Walking into a service at Quest is unlike most experiences of other modern churches, and the music plays a large role in creating the unique ambience of the environment. Multiple services include not only Christian rock songs during worship, but also mainstream secular songs heard on Top 40 radio. It is common to hear music from popular artists such as Justin Bieber, Rihanna, and Taylor Swift during a Sunday morning service. Quest used the popular Rihanna song, “We Found Love,” one morning, featuring the catchy, pop chorus “We found love in a hopeless place.” The song was a mainstream hit single in 2012 and is clearly a secular pop song, but I believe that it was used because the lyrics could be interpreted in a spiritual way if one felt so inclined. I interpreted the song as such within this context, and I believe that when done in this manner, it conveys the notion that people generally look for love and happiness in material and worldly objects and goals. The preceding sermon discussed that these are hopeless places, and God is the only source of true love and happiness, which the song affirms when interpreted in a religious way. Those who have accepted Christ have thus truly found love in the “hopeless place” that is this earth, which evidently called for celebration within the congregation. And celebrate they did; the Quest pastor invited all of the middle and high school students up to the stage to sing and dance to the song. The atmosphere was
very similar to that of an actual rock concert, in which young adults sang, danced, and clapped both on stage and in the audience. I questioned whether Quest Community Church made secular music “Christian” by using it for worship. Even though Rihanna’s intent was not likely for religious purposes, does the music become sacred within the church context? Based on the various tensions discussed thus far, generations will undoubtedly disagree on the subject, but Turino’s notions of indexical relationships provide one interpretation of how completely secular songs function in church; as the music co-occurs with religious emotion and Biblical sermons, it likely becomes indexical of God’s hope and spiritual happiness for the audience that experiences it in a religious context. Nevertheless, Quest’s decision to incorporate completely secular songs into worship represents a radical shift in Christian experience in an already very modern religious era.

I conducted an extensive interview with the Quest worship leader, Anyerin Drury, who provided further insight into the use of secular music in church. He offers a valuable perspective on the phenomenon of Christian rock and how the music has changed the religious landscape across the nation. Drury explains the purpose of including mainstream songs within Quest’s worship repertoire:

> Quest is a culture of trying to reach un-churched people, people who don’t like church . . . We try to anchor the service in some way that pulls people in, and for a lot of people that’s rock songs from the radio. You’ll find a performance song almost every single week. It’s designed for people walking in expecting to hear hymns and walk out unchanged. Then they hear this song they know from the radio. ‘Oh I love Taylor Swift, Bieber! Bieber!’ They’re drawn in; their hearts are open and engaged to hear what God has to say.\(^{30}\)

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\(^{30}\) Anyerin Drury, interview by author, Lexington, KY, July 11, 2012.
Christian rock music as an evangelical tool to reach the “un-churched” is a concept that dates back to the origins of CCM. The use of mainstream pop songs as worship itself, however, is an entirely new concept. Drury claims that many non-believers fully expect to hear hymns at church and leave unaffected, which I believe relates to Quantz’s notions of clashing canons. Using relevant musical styles to appeal to a generation that is already disconnected with religion is central to Quest’s mission. Quantz writes, “Our acts of worship must be rooted in the present and have meaning within our immediate circumstances and situations.”

It seems that Quest has perfected the act of identifying the “immediate” through its use of popular music from Top 40 radio. As Drury explains, non-believers walk into church expecting an irrelevant and impersonal religious experience, but are met with an atmosphere that is familiar and relatable. Rock music is largely responsible for creating such an experience, which he claims engages their hearts and minds. Drury implies that these young adults essentially relax after entering this type of environment, allowing them to “open” their hearts to the message and Word of God. As Quest continues to reach people in this manner, their use of mainstream popular music could become a revolutionary method of proselytizing to young adults.

The notion that CCM allows listeners to “open their hearts” is somewhat difficult to grasp. Drury offers a comment, however, that may assist in illustrating how hymns differ from contemporary worship music to connect with audiences. He compares the music to a language that must be learned, suggesting that once it is understood fully with the mind, the heart can then feel the emotion that the words evoke:

I’m great at worshipping in music. I connect with Jesus through music. It’s my language. But I was having a hard time with the hymns. The way the

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words were worded, it was heady; I was having trouble accessing it with my head, let alone my heart. I was having trouble worshipping. When you think about ‘he loves us, oh how he loves us,’ my head can get that, and get out of the way and let my heart feel that. I can engage that with all my heart. The hymns were so wordy, I had trouble engaging, just sitting back and feeling His love. But I can see how people who grew up with hymns have trouble engaging. You have to learn the language.\textsuperscript{32}

Drury suggests that listeners better internalize the music when they can quickly understand the meaning of the song. He claims that hymns are worded in a complex manner that requires more thought and interpretation to understand the meaning. If this is true for numerous young adults, it seems likely that they would become disconnected from and critical of hymns during worship services. There is little time to ponder and interpret the meaning of a particular stanza before the congregation has moved on to the next verse. Therefore, certain hymns have less significance and relevance to those who cannot engage with the words. Drury compares the words of two different hymns to exemplify the concept. He sings the lines and explains how he understands each:

"What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.' Okay I can get that. 'He plunged me to victory beneath the crimson flood.' I have to interpret that."\textsuperscript{33} Drury suggests that many hymns are similar to the latter, stating that they are typically complicated and rhythmically complex compared to modern worship songs. When there is a detachment between lyrical meaning and personal understanding, it is probable that this leaves people feeling indifferent towards the religious experience, and as Drury notes, “unchanged.” If contemporary worship is capable of communicating religious

\textsuperscript{32} Drury, interview.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
meaning more clearly and easily, it potentially creates a more memorable and meaningful church experience for the audiences that encounter it.

The emotional aspect of worship is another theme that Drury discusses, and he offers a perspective that is unique from other interviewees. He claims that as a worship leader, it is often times frustrating to see people who are not engaged with the music, because as a leader, he just wants to help people experience Jesus through worship. He claims, “You say you’re Christians, but you’re not focusing your attention on God and what He has.”\textsuperscript{34} Drury emphasizes the multiple functions of CCM with this statement. For the un-churched, modern worship music is meant to draw people in and provide a comfortable atmosphere in church. For mature believers, however, the purpose of the music is to connect with God, rather than appeal to aesthetic musical tastes. He expounds on this topic and his role as a worship leader when stating,

As a worship leader, you have to be aware of where people are and you can adjust the song to help people. You want to joyfully allow people to enter in. We want people to know Jesus. I don’t want people to meet a song, or feel good from a part of a song; I don’t want them to meet me. I want them to meet Jesus.\textsuperscript{35}

It is evident that Drury views the role of worship leader as instrumental in pointing congregations to Jesus and achieving this deeper relationship with God through music. The idea that people can “enter in” and know Jesus through music echoes Titon’s notion of musical “affect” and its ability to enhance religious experience. Similar to previous interviewees, Drury cites movement such as lifting hands as indicators that audiences are emotionally engaged with God through the music. He makes a distinct

\textsuperscript{34} Drury, interview.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
comment, however, suggesting that these emotional responses are not exclusive to Christian music. He compares these reactions to those evoked by the popular alternative rock band, Coldplay, from the United Kingdom:

Coldplay is worship music for our generation; it’s just not for Jesus. They’re a very popular band. People listen to it and cry and get taken to another world. They get lost. In concert, they go nuts, hands raised, singing as loud as they can; there are quiet moments. All the same expression you may have in church. It’s just not directed towards anything. Even Coldplay will say their lyrics don’t make any sense, that’s why they don’t print them. So where are these people directing their emotions? What is it going towards?36

Drury’s reference to Coldplay as “worship music . . . just not for Jesus” is an innovative claim warranting further exploration. According to Drury, Coldplay’s music elicits the same types of emotional responses from its listeners as CCM, but the emotion is not directed toward a higher power. Drury suggests that these responses are indicative of worship, but questions what the act is going towards. Drury also claims that many Coldplay lyrics are nonsensical, further questioning what audiences are thinking about when they cry, lift hands, and “get lost” in the music. Perhaps audiences are engaged with the sound of the music itself or the performers creating the musical experience on stage. It is also possible that the participation with other audience members in this musical experience is rewarding, therefore evoking such emotional responses.

What supposedly differentiates Christian rock music from acts such as Coldplay is the aim of the music towards Jesus. Concerning the way in which young adults emotionally connect with music, Drury claims, “Our generation is already doing it, why not feel it the same way, just now direct it towards somebody. That’s what we’re

36 Drury, interview.
With lyrics that affirm Christian belief and either reference or allude to Biblical text, CCM points listeners to Jesus in an expressive manner. According to Drury, it is the same emotion that is felt with secular music, but its direction toward Jesus is a distinguishing factor. Drury offers a final comment on the topic regarding the emotional aspect of CCM connected to identity formation: “It’s communicating who we are. Why not express it [the music] the same way, but shift it to a focus, Jesus, who we believe is our life anyway.” This notion that CCM communicates “who we are” indicates its role in reflecting a Christian identity with Jesus at the center. The belief that Jesus is life is addressed in John 14:6 when Jesus proclaims, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” The idea that worship music places the focus on Jesus because He is life reinforces Biblical text and the command to follow Him to ultimately “come to the Father.” Quest uses music to help mediate this relationship with Jesus, creating an environment that reinforces these ideals for participants.

As I continued my fieldwork, I observed a church with a similar mission as Quest in Nashville, TN called Cross Point Community Church. I attended a service with three first-time attendees with different religious backgrounds, who provided comments on their experiences at this non-denominational church. Speaking with first-time visitors is valuable in assessing the effect of the non-denominational church mission. Do the aims of the modern church line up with how the “un-churched” actually perceive them in

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37 Drury, interview.

38 Ibid.

39 John 14:6 (NIV).
practice? Brian Biederman, who describes himself as agnostic, discusses his church experience as a first-time visitor:

I didn’t know what I was expecting because I had never been to a church like that. I didn’t know it was gonna be a broadcast service or anything. The thing that tipped me off honestly was the audience. It was a really mixed group of people, a really young audience. The people weren’t dressed like they were going to church. They weren’t dressed in church clothes. These were the people who were downtown the night before, drinking, but then they go to church because they believe and it fits the vibe.⁴⁰

Biederman’s initial observations are what many churches hope to communicate to their visitors. This “vibe” that the young audience gives to the church is a significant part of the mission of numerous modern churches. The idea that many church members are the same ones who were “downtown the night before” speaks to this notion of how the church has transformed over time. Rather than a place that focuses on following rules in order to please God, the modern church promotes acceptance of people at any point they are in life. If young adults were drinking downtown the night before, this does not immediately disqualify them from the Christian faith or the church. The non-denominational church emphasizes a community of real people, in which everyone is a sinner, and together they grow in a relationship with Christ. These notions are highlighted in the values that Cross Point outlines on their website. They clearly define the mission of the church and express many of the ideals that other modern churches promote as well:

Christianity is about relationship not religion. . . . Somewhere along the way, church became known as a place where people must “fake” their way through life. However, we value creating an environment where there are no masks. You don’t have to fake it. We want you to be able to be real about where you are in life. . . . Cross Point Church is a place for people on every part of the spiritual journey, from those just investigating whether

there is a God, to those who have made following Christ the priority of their life.  

The depiction of Christianity as a relationship, involving “real” people at different points in a “spiritual journey” represents the goals of numerous contemporary churches. The young audience that Biederman describes is the ideal member for a church such as Cross Point, suggesting that the “vibe” of the church is very present through the community that represents it.

Cross Point’s worship music is a large part of the service that creates the vibe as well. Biederman states that he felt the environment was more like a venue setting than a church, and he goes in-depth about the music itself in comparison to other churches:

My view of it was the stereotypical view. Going in, I thought it was gonna be cheesy music, but it wasn’t. There was still a religious message to it, but I didn’t feel like it was beating me over the head with it. As opposed to going to the traditional church, where it’s like ‘Jesus Jesus, Christ Christ Christ! Amen. Hallelujah. Thank you Lord. Amen. Hallelujah.’ There’s no real message. At Cross Point, I listen to that type of music, pop and rock and stuff. The thing I was most surprised with was you could tell there were some really talented musicians up there. It’s not just some guy who owns a guitar and sings a song he wrote last night. These guys have a set list that they’ve rehearsed.

The assumption that CCM is “cheesy music” is a popular opinion, or “stereotypical” as Biederman asserts, among those both in and outside Christian circles. Music becomes important in creating the atmosphere that modern churches wish to create, and Biederman suggests that CCM fits the overall feel of Cross Point. He claims that more traditional churches inundate listeners with religious rhetoric through hymns, which does not present a message that resonates as easily as that of CCM. While Biederman does

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42 Biederman, interview.
not make any statement about desiring to become Christian after one visit, he does make a comment that the modern church would likely find fulfilling. He claims, “At Cross Point, if I decided to go a hundred more times or never again, I felt like I was always welcome to come and go as I please.”

Biederman expresses a level of comfort at the non-denominational church that is often times a reason that keeps young adults from attending traditional churches. His appreciation for the skill level of the professional band seemed to enhance his overall experience at Cross Point. Another observer, growing up with a traditional Church of Christ denominational background casually noted in the middle of a worship song, “It’s like church Coldplay.” This reference to Coldplay was particularly interesting after the interview with Anjerin Drury, in which he notes the similarities to CCM in musical qualities and emotional effects. The high quality of musicianship from these church bands creates an aesthetic experience that is emotionally charged like that of a professional rock concert. The comparison to Coldplay once again highlights the importance of musical production in creating an atmosphere that moves people in some way, resulting in a positive experience that the “un-churched” will appreciate.

As I completed my fieldwork in Gainesville, FL, I found similar trends in my case studies as those documented in Lexington and Nashville. The first case study I will discuss from this region is St. Augustine Catholic Church, which shares a similar experience to that of Southern Hills UMC in terms of its young adult outreach. Similar to the United Methodist Church, the Catholic Church has historically rejected contemporary worship styles in the past. Various churches affiliated with this

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43 Biederman, interview.
denomination, however, have incorporated Contemporary Christian Music into services, demonstrating a transition that is currently taking place within religious institutions. The Catholic Church represents this transition in its adoption of vernacular worship styles since the second Vatican Council of 1962-65.\textsuperscript{44} Don Cusic describes the rise of modern musical styles in the Catholic Church when writing,

Musically, Vatican II meant the introduction of a whole new set of songs in the Mass and the encouragement of individuals to write songs for the services. Thus was born the “folk mass” as the antiquated faith renewed itself with modernization. This modernization led to a musical movement in the Catholic Church, which embraced popular music of the day.\textsuperscript{45}

The musical transition within the Catholic Church coincided with the Jesus Movement of the 1970s, which suggests the impact of the movement in various sects of Christianity. According to Cusic, the Catholic Church experienced its own movement that “embraced popular music,” which modernized this “antiquated faith.” This reveals how the trend in popular music not only affected non-denominational and Evangelical churches, but also manifested itself in traditional churches as well. In addition, Cusic notes, “The result of these movements within the Catholic organization was a charismatic renewal in which many individual Catholics developed a direct personal relationship with Christ.”\textsuperscript{46} This “personal relationship” was previously noted as central to the ideals of contemporary Christian churches, and its presence in the Catholic Church convey how traditional congregations have transformed over time.


\textsuperscript{45} Cusic, The Sound of Light, 131.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
St. Augustine Church, a Catholic congregation of Gainesville noted above, uses contemporary worship music during a particular mass aimed towards young adults and college students. This “student mass” is offered on Tuesday evenings and is known as the Catholic Gators Student Newman Mass. Erica Scarano, a vocalist for the student music ministry, leads many of the worship songs while playing guitar. She describes the student mass, stating,

When it comes to contemporary masses, it’s gonna be exactly the same as a regular mass, but instead of singing stuff out of the Missalettes, or the Gather Book, which is a huge catholic hymnal with old school hymns, they just put contemporary songs in the place of those. The mass goes exactly the same, but instead of singing, for example, “Taste and See” during communion, we’ll sing stuff like “Remembrance” by Matt Maher. . . . The students come more to the Tuesday contemporary service instead of on Sunday.47

Scarano’s description of the student mass highlights the music as the only differentiating feature between a traditional and contemporary mass. The Church has thus identified contemporary music as the main factor that will resonate with young adults and encourage their attendance and congregational participation. In addition, the popularity of the Newman Mass among the majority of students reveals the success of the music as a tool in attracting a younger generation. When describing the Catholic practice of the Eucharistic Adoration, Scarano adds, “The music for me especially just adds another level of intimacy in my prayer. Intimacy would probably be the best word for it.”48 Scarano’s account of “intimacy” in her faith echoes the relational aspect that Cusic describes, which frames Christianity as an increasingly personal experience that contemporary music fosters.

48 Ibid.
In addition to the St. Augustine case study, I observed a Christian college group in Gainesville, FL that illustrates many of the concepts described throughout this thesis concerning the function of CCM. The group “JesusU” is a college ministry organization affiliated with the non-denominational church called The Rock of Gainesville. JesusU holds regular meetings on Wednesday nights at 9:00 pm, in which a band performs worship songs (serving as presentational performance), and college students gather in front of a stage to actively sing and worship (indicating participatory behavior). During specific services, I observed many actions that further the hypothesis that CCM engages young adults in a significant way and fosters a Christian identity. Before the worship service began, the college pastor spoke with the group, stating that this was a safe environment to praise God. He encouraged everyone to clap, lift their hands in worship, move around, and use the space in any way to express their worship. He stated that worshipping through music can allow for a more intimate encounter with God, and “if you are willing to let yourself get to a deeper place, God will meet you there.” I interpreted this statement as the pastor’s effort to encourage students to freely move and engage with the music in a liberating form of worship. I did not ask him about this comment, but I believe he was encouraging students to move and express any emotional effects of the music in a physical manner. The pastor implied that physical movement and the lifting of hands are symbolic physical expressions of reaching a “deeper place” with God, suggesting that the music functions as a tool to help listeners progress to this point.

I observed the most energetic expressions of faith from members as the JesusU band opened the meeting with the song “I Am Free.” I was familiar with the song from
my own experience in the non-denominational church and from Christian radio, and the lyrics clearly embodied this notion of freedom of movement and physical expression. The words to the chorus are “I am free to run, I am free to dance, I am free to live for You, I am free, yes, I am free.” During the chorus, members were engaging with these words in a literal manner; students were energetically jumping up and down with their hands in the air, and one member was even running around the room while singing. The song itself promotes this activity with the words “I am free to run, I am free to dance,” and participants physically enacted the words of the song in their devotion. Their active participation demonstrates the significance of this quality in worship today, illustrating its key role in modern Christian experience.

While “I Am Free” evoked the most energetic movement from the group, it was the last song of the worship set, “Revelation,” that elicited the greatest physical and emotional responses from almost all JesusU members. During this song, students lifted their hands in the air, swayed to the music, and some even jumped up and down. At a specific point during the song, it seemed nearly every member in the room had their hands lifted at the same time. Directly before this moment, the band sang the chorus of "Revelation" the first time; the drums and guitar were omitted, and only the lead vocalist sang the melody. As the band approached the repetition of the chorus, the drums and guitar entered softly, while slowly building intensity and growing louder. As the chorus began again, the drums and guitar were at their loudest, which is when the entire room reacted energetically by lifting hands, falling to knees and bowing heads, or moving to the music in some manner. The pastor’s words prior to the service assured these young adults that “like-minded” people surrounded them in a safe place to worship God.
Further, it seemed as if the pastor gave the students “permission” to physically express their faith, which Pastor Vodicka of Southern Hills UMC would argue is appealing to a younger generation.

I used the concepts outlined in Turino’s “Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience: A Peircean Semiotic Theory for Music” to analyze the behavior that took place at JesusU and how the music functions in these religious experiences. Turino adapts Charles Peirce’s writings of semiotic theory to music, claiming that it will “begin sketching a theory of music, emotion, and identity based on semiotics.”49 This organization of the semiotic process, though very dense, explains the relationship of the sign, object, and interpretant in creating emotional effects from music. (See Chapter 1 for theoretical structure). Turino focuses mainly on icons and indices within the semiotic framework, explaining how signs are related to the objects they signify through a type of resemblance (icon) or an experience of co-occurrence (index). Turino gives the example of the love song, or “our song,” in which a song and the experiences with a loved one co-occur. When this takes place, the song becomes an index of the relationship and the feelings associated with it. The song, therefore, has become an indexical sign, allowing an individual hearing it in the future to recall those specific feelings.50 These semiotic relationships provide one explanation for why music has an emotional effect on listeners and can be used to interpret how CCM affects its audience.

Harold Best describes this same notion in a non-semiotic manner, which aids in grasping the concept. He writes, “The more a piece of music is repeated in the same

49 Turino, “Signs of Imagination,” 222.

50 Turino, Music as Social Life, 8-9.
context, the more it will begin to “mean” that context.”\textsuperscript{51} He explains that music is like a sponge within its context, and through repetition, it is soon perceived to equate with that setting. Therefore, meaning that was originally created by the circumstance itself, “appears to come directly from within the music.”\textsuperscript{52} Because feelings of joy, fellowship, and closeness with God are experienced with the music at church, those songs, even outside of church, begin to “mean” that church context and those associations with God. Therefore, listening to CCM in the future can serve as a form of praise and worship due to its contextual recurrence. Turino theoretically explains these concepts, and he goes further to assert that specific emotions and feelings associated with indexical signs are signaled in particular contexts. In the case of CCM, the music is the sign that signals the feelings of joy, a sense of nearness to God, or any other emotions that participants may have previously experienced in conjunction with the music.

The concepts that Turino and Best articulate are applicable to the JesusU case study when analyzing how music operates within the services. The group allows young adults with shared Christian beliefs to fellowship and worship together. As they gather each week and hear CCM in this environment, the music adopts and helps shape the meaning of the context and the feelings and actions associated with it. The music then becomes an indexical sign for the listener’s faith, relationships with fellow believers, and acts of worship to God. The music additionally becomes indexical of this college age-set, resulting in a particular Christian identity formation. This is because the music co-occurs with these experiences, and through its expressive elements, serves in eliciting

\textsuperscript{51} Best, \textit{Eyes of Faith}, 54.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
the very acts that convey worship and adoration. As these acts and feelings are shared among members of the group, this Christian community is strengthened through shared practice, and individual Christian identity is further developed through the use of music and the meaning it conveys.

Turino’s notion of *semiotic density* similarly applies to CCM because of the multiple meanings and experiences the music signifies. He suggests that musical indices are emotionally powerful due to their ability to condense a variety of meaning into one sign. This concept operates within CCM, in which multiple signs exist simultaneously in one art form. Turino states, “A written text is less dense than someone speaking the text. . . . Songs are denser still with the addition of melody, instruments, harmony, etc., to the sung text.” The notion applies to CCM because it is an exceptionally dense sign; it has a rock basis, which carries historical signifiers of identity and indexical relationships in itself as it is experienced within a variety of contexts. When adding the religious text to the music, the words that carry spiritual meaning cause CCM to become particularly dense. Turino writes,

> Due to the very density of the objects called forth by the sign, we experience layers of feeling which will tend to remain undifferentiated and simply felt. The emotional power of such signs, of course, depends on the salience of the objects indexed.

It is apparent that CCM creates powerful emotion, suggesting that the objects indexed are highly “salient.” In the JesusU case study, the objects indexed are faith, fellowship, and a sense of nearness to God, which elicited powerful emotional responses from the

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54 Ibid., 237.
audience. These salient objects are aspects of a Christian identity that the music begins to convey as it is consistently used during worship. CCM thus functions as a tool that not only condenses these aspects of Christian identity, but also conveys and affirms this identity when it is used during worship. As the music (sign) signals the emotions and feelings associated with the context (object), it evokes physical responses (interpretant) from participants, demonstrating what I would consider one of the key factors that differentiate this worship experience from traditional ones.

I interviewed one of the worship leaders for JesusU, asking him to comment on how young adults and leaders understand the function of CCM. Brett McCollum plays guitar and sings in the JesusU band, and he serves the church through his musical leadership. When I asked him if he considered Christian music to be a part of his identity, he responds, “It’s absolutely part of my identity. The more you sing something, be it Christian, be it not, if you sing it everyday for a week, it starts to become a part of who you are.” Kenneth Hull echoes this sentiment in the article “Music Wars, Neuroscience, and Self Psychology,” suggesting the importance of worship music in shaping identity. Hull writes, “The “how” of our worship, including and perhaps especially its musical aspect, shapes our image of who God is, of who we are, and who we seek to become.” This is essentially what McCollum expresses when stating that singing and listening to particular music becomes “a part of who you are.” He implies that the morals and lyrical content of the music reflect beliefs and can affect feelings and behavior. As Hull asserts, worship music shapes our image of God and ourselves,

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implying CCM’s ability to transmit images and ideas of God and Christians through words and physical experience. As CCM lyrics saturate listeners with Christian imagery, they, according to Hull, influence how worshippers perceive God and themselves as Christians. CCM therefore functions as a way to project images of God and Christian ideals to audiences, which generates certain beliefs and feelings of identity.

McCollum made an additional claim that audiences lift hands as a sign of surrender to God, claiming that this is how people show they are receiving God’s power. He states, “Think about it, when police tell you to freeze and put your hands in the air, what does that mean? They’re telling you to surrender; it’s a sign of surrendering yourself.”58 His account offers insight into the meaning of this expressive act of worship that is provoked through the influence of music. Therefore, Christians not only use this music for moral emphasis and identity formation, but also to surrender to God and “receive” His power. The influential ethnomusicologist John Blacking writes, “The function of music is to enhance in some way the quality of individual experience and human relationships.”59 It is evident from the JesusU community and McCollum’s interpretations that CCM enhances such experiences, further conveying its function in particular religious contexts.

In *Powerhouse for God*, Jeff Titon demonstrates how music enriches religious experiences and discusses its emotional effects. Titon examines religious folklife, specifically observing the Fellowship Independent Baptist Church near Stanley, Virginia, and his observations relate to the concepts discussed thus far concerning CCM. He

58 McCollum, interview.

studies a form of Appalachian religion and focuses on the performative use of language to express beliefs. Returning to this notion of “affect,” Titon writes, “Affect is brought into being by performance. . . . The people who perform songs, prayers, sermons, and testimonies intend something by those performances. They intend to move people and to do so in specific ways.”\textsuperscript{60} This idea of being “moved” through performance is evident in the emotional responses observed in various CCM worship settings. CCM performers and worship leaders, like those of the Fellowship Baptist Church, recognize the ability of the music to produce affect. Titon further claims that signs of affect, such as tears or shouts, are causes of “the intensely felt presence of the indwelling Spirit.”\textsuperscript{61} The idea that tears and shouts are signs of affect from the Holy Spirit implies that the music is used to reach a deeper place with God. It thus suggests that music functions to deepen religious experiences by “moving” Christians to dwell in the Holy Spirit.

The notion of dwelling in the Holy Spirit through worship is something Adam Vodicka also mentioned from Southern Hills United Methodist Church. I wish to return to my initial case study because I feel it firmly exemplifies the extent to which Christian experience has evolved. When describing why the older generation is critical of The Source and its use of CCM, Vodicka claims, “From my discernment and interaction with them, they’re afraid of the Holy Spirit.” As Vodicka lifts his hands in the air, he adds, “They say, ‘You’re the service that does this.’”\textsuperscript{62} Vodicka associates physical acts of worship with the presence of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing Titon’s observations. As listeners engage with worship music through movement and physical expression, they

\begin{footnotes}
\item[60] Titon, \textit{Powerhouse for God}, 8.
\item[61] Ibid.
\item[62] Vodicka, interview.
\end{footnotes}
experience the presence of the Holy Spirit, which Vodicka claims the older generation fears. Such actions are certainly not characteristic of a traditional Methodist service, and this applies to other traditional churches as well. The shift in worship experience in this church represents the larger transformation in how young adults practice Christianity; this generation uses CCM to reach a "deeper place" with God and encounter the Holy Spirit, and these experiences are provoked through the spiritual and emotional effects of the music.

The interviews, observations, and case studies discussed thus far reveal the function of Contemporary Christian Music for young adults within the church environment. This modern form of worship reflects Christian morals and values, and songs are filled with positive lyrics and Christian imagery. With origins in the rock tradition, the music fosters a contemporary identity that allows for the synthesis of both sacred and secular features. While CCM uses popular musical forms and instrumentation, the content is clean, spiritual, hopeful, and generally redemptive, emphasizing much of the Biblical text that Christians hold as truth. The music allows worshippers to express faith in a physical way that cultivates an active and participatory experience. These actions are further representative of encounters with the Holy Spirit, and they are experienced through the powerful influence of music.

When churches such as Southern Hills UMC question the future of their establishment, the desires of young adults are particularly important. Adam Vodicka offers a closing comment on this concern, stating, “The leadership has talked about that. In ten, fifteen years when the older people pass away, if we don’t draw more young

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63 Best, *Eyes of Faith*, 166.
people, the church is going to die." His words embody the issues that traditional churches will continue to face, representing the transformation of Christian experience over time. The appeal to young adults and their worship preferences becomes important for the future of traditional congregations, and music has been identified as a device that fosters this need. St. Augustine’s adoption of contemporary worship further exemplifies this notion, which suggests the critical function of the music. The music acts as an ecumenical mode of communication that stretches across Catholic and Protestant Christianity within the church structure. CCM thus operates as an engaging tool that resonates with young adults and allows for physical expression and a “relationship” with Christ. This type of relationship is something that modern churches like Quest and Cross Point emphasize and traditional churches like Southern Hills emulate. Therefore, as Contemporary Christian Music continues to foster the spiritual needs of the younger generation, its increasing use within “Boom-Boom Rooms” across multiple denominations continues to transform Christian experience and identity.

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64 Vodicka, interview.
CHAPTER 4
CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH

While the use of Christian rock music continues to grow within congregations across the United States, it has also permeated youth culture outside of the church environment in a substantial way. The music plays a similar role in appealing to young adults to share the Gospel, promoting evangelism and discipleship through concerts, after-school organizations, and college groups. These events and programs foster an ecumenical Christian experience beyond the walls of the church; students, youth groups, and young adults across denominations gather at these events to fellowship, worship, and live out their Christian faith. Because these programs and concerts are open to the public, they are not directed towards any one Christian denomination. Each one shares the common goal of reaching a younger population, meeting them in their own environment and speaking “their language.” The Quest case study from Chapter 3 identifies music as a “language” that strongly resonates with young adults, and its use for Christian outreach continues to pervade all aspects of culture.

John Lindenbaum emphasizes the role of Contemporary Christian Music as “pastoral” in “The Pastoral Role of Contemporary Christian Music: The Spiritualization of Everyday Life in a Sacramento Megachurch.” Lindenbaum argues that CCM has a proselytizing function for people in a Sacramento community, and the music reinforces Christian faith in daily life. He views the role of CCM through a geographic lens, noting how space affects different religious and musical practices. Lindenbaum examines a monthly concert series called “First Friday” that guides evangelical Christians in their
faith and provides a sense of community. First Friday is an event in which members of Sacramento Faith Ministries gather as a community to engage in music and fellowship with other Christians. The concerts take place at a coffee shop located inside of the church called Solid Grounds Coffeehouse, and Lindenbaum argues that this is a secular venue that is transformed into a sacred space. He highlights how the repetition of ritual practices such as prayer, Biblical sermons, and the use of CCM cause this space to acquire sanctity. These insights echo those of Paul Chang and Dale Lim, in which sacred and secular boundaries are negotiated through the incorporation of Christian practices in everyday experiences. For many Christians, these acts affirm the Bible’s assertion that God is a part of every aspect of life, as noted within the Quest case study. In the Bible, Colossians 3:4 states, “When Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” The notion that Christ “is your life” is central to Christian faith, suggesting that Jesus is at the center of each facet of life. Therefore, the incorporation of faith into relationships, music, and even secular spaces such as coffee houses or concert venues, is meant to honor God by making Him a part of everything. In doing so, Christ is no longer just a piece of life on Sunday mornings, but rather, is life.

While Solid Grounds Coffeehouse is not considered a holy or sacred space, its location inside the SFM church does not deem it completely secular either. The concept of transforming secular spaces is perhaps more evident when Christian concerts take

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2 Ibid., 76.
3 Ibid., 77.
4 Colossians 3:4, (NIV).
place in stadiums or arenas, completely divorced from sacred associations. Hillsong UNITED is a popular Christian band whose arena concerts demonstrate CCM’s mass appeal and popularity outside of the church. The band originated from Hillsong Church, a Pentecostal megachurch in Australia, and their original songs are widely accepted in worship services across the world. Michael C. Hawn writes, “The music of Hillsong is undoubtedly the best-known church music export from Australia to the world.” The lyrics of their songs highlight this idea of “knowing” God and having a personal relationship with Christ. For example, the song “With Everything” illustrates Christ as glorious, wonderful, and majestic, alluding to Psalm 145:5 from scripture. While the song does not use verses as direct quotes from the Bible, it does use similar Christian rhetoric and imagery found in scripture, which resonates with listeners who are familiar with the Bible. In addition, lyrics such as “For you our King, with everything, we will shout forth your praise” not only embody Psalm 71:23, but also encourage audiences to express worship through physical action; the song’s command to “shout forth praise” with “everything” implies more than singing with the voice, but praising God with all of oneself during worship. The music thus becomes a medium allowing audiences to perform such expressive acts.

Footage of Hillsong singing “With Everything” at the American Airlines Arena in Miami, FL reveals how audiences react expressively to this music in physical ways.

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5 Michael C. Hawn “Congregational Singing from Down Under: Experiencing Hillsong’s ‘Shout to the Lord,’” *The Hymn* 57, no 2 (Spring 2006), 15.

6 Psalm 145:5 (New International Version). The verse reads, “They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—and I will meditate on your wonderful works.”

7 Psalm 71:23 (NIV). The verse reads, “My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you—I whom you have delivered.”
Thousands of young adults sing, sway, lift hands, jump up and down, and move their bodies to express emotion throughout the duration of the song. As the music continues to build, the drums grow louder and at the climax of the song, the audience reacts by jumping energetically and raising their arms and hands in the air. As the camera pans over the crowd, some people have tears in their eyes, some have their eyes closed and sing, and many smile enthusiastically. It seems that while the emotional effects of the music clearly range from excitement to serious religious intimacy, they appear to be expressed similarly through this act of lifting hands.

Louie Giglio adds valuable commentary to the discussion of lifting hands during worship as part of a DVD series called *Symphony: I Lift My Hands*. Giglio is an author and pastor of Passion City Church in Atlanta, GA. He is known for his Passion conferences for college students that feature some of the most popular Christian music artists and aims to unite young adults for spiritual awakening. Giglio addresses the tension that forms when traditional churchgoers experience events where people lift their hands. As Adam Vodicka from Southern Hills UMC noted, older generations recognize this act as being particularly unfamiliar or unusual. Giglio challenges the notion of lifting hands as unusual, claiming that this is not a “spiritual thing,” but rather a “human thing” that is a natural act of joyful expression:

…lifting our hands is not a denominational thing, right? It’s not about we’re in this denomination or that denomination, or another denomination. It’s not even really a spiritual thing, it’s a human thing, and you see it everywhere in humanity . . . I mean has anyone here ever been to a Saint Louis Cardinals baseball game? Anybody here ever been to see the Cardinals? What did you see when you were there?

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Giglio references the exciting 2011 World Series, in which the Cardinals made an incredible comeback to win the championship, noting how “Cardinal nation” threw their hands in the air in jubilant celebration. He claims that religious affiliation or denomination had nothing to do with this physical act, and further comments, “Nobody’s lookin’ at each other goin’, ‘I didn’t know you went to that kind of church.’”

Giglio continues to give examples of this expressive act, displaying pictures for the audience of various groups with raised hands:

You’ll appreciate this next one. You’re like ‘Wow, I get that, worship concert, that’s cool’ No, that’s a Coldplay show in a big stadium in Germany. . . . And I couldn’t leave this one out, it’s a little Justin Bieber. You’re like ‘How did Justin Bieber get into this?’ Because of those hands, those are middle school and high school hands, because it’s a human thing. . . . Those are the Druids at Stonehenge. It’s the summer solstice, the longest day of the year in June, and they are at Stonehenge for sunrise, lifting their hands in praise of the sun. Not the son of God, to a star made by the son of God . . . This is a human thing. When something of worth or value is placed in front of the human heart, the human responds, the human delights, the human celebrates, and when the human celebrates, almost all the time . . . people respond with everything they’ve got.

Giglio’s notion of responding to joyful situations “with everything” is reminiscent of the Hillsong UNITED song previously discussed. The idea that this is not a spiritual, but rather a natural, response implies that music acts like any other stimulating experience. The comparison to Coldplay is found yet again in his description, and the comparison to Justin Bieber and the Druids at Stonehenge further highlight this act as a celebratory and natural response found in all of humanity. In the worship context, Giglio removes the denominational divisions of this response, promoting the act as one that crosses

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10 Giglio, Symphony.

11 Ibid.
religious boundaries. He frames it as an act of celebration when something of value is experienced, suggesting that its occurrence in worship contexts should be embraced.

Disney World’s Night of Joy exemplifies a Christian experience that crosses denominational boundaries and demonstrates how CCM has permeated culture outside of the church on a large scale. Night of Joy is a two-night concert series that features the most popular Contemporary Christian bands and artists in a secular environment. Thousands of people come to the event, receive wristbands, and listen to several different performances that last for hours throughout the Magic Kingdom theme park. Disney is closed to the public, and only people who have purchased tickets for this event are allowed in the park for rides and music. Churches of all denominations bring their youth groups to the park for the concert; as youth across all Christian backgrounds unite with the purpose of listening to CCM, they break down the barriers of denominational differences. Christianity has long been divided in the ways each denomination practices the faith, but concerts such as Night of Joy serve one purpose of worshipping God through the same medium. Before the first act took the main stage, someone came out to welcome the crowd and stated, “Let the name of Jesus be lifted in everything we do tonight. I can’t believe we get to lift up the name of Jesus in the most magical place in Central Florida.” It is evident that though this was a secular environment, the purpose was to glorify God through this experience. My field notes from the event are included to capture the feeling of the environment:

There are a lot of youth groups here, which is evident by the matching shirts they wear to represent the church they come from. There was even a youth group leader check-in table upon entering the park, so this appears to be a large attraction for church groups to bring their youth for a fun night. Just looking around, I see a lot of people who have cross necklaces. It is obvious that we are in the presence of many Christians based on these
indexical signs. There are many t-shirts that people wear that not only show what church they come from, but also express their faith. Just a few I jotted down: “God is love” “Jesus saves,” “Jesus loves me and my tattoos.” – one of the funnier ones I saw.  

There is evidently a diverse group of people that gather at these events. Adults, young and old, teenagers, men, women, and people dressed in everything from summer garb, to biker gear, comprised the varied audience. Though CCM is primarily associated with White audiences, there was a mix of ethnic backgrounds, possibly because of the location in Florida where there is a larger population of Latin Americans. But nonetheless, this seemed to unite a diverse group of people, reinforcing the notion that CCM fosters an ecumenical Christian experience. Events such as Night of Joy remove people from the boundaries of the church, where members tend to be more segregated based on their individual Christian practices.

Harold Best describes CCM and its purpose as a musical genre, claiming, “It remains clear that the overall intention of CCM is to be Christian, both as to textual content and the witness of the artists themselves.”  

This idea of the “witness” of the artists is very present when attending Christian music concerts, and Night of Joy is no different. The artists shared their testimonies of faith with the audience, conveying a sense of authenticity behind the words of their songs. This projects an understanding that the singers themselves are practicing Christians and have stories of faith and words of encouragement to share with their fans. Brandon Heath is one artist that exemplifies this, and he talks about his personal life and how it has been fifteen years that he has been following Jesus, and the crowd cheers. He talks about how love is patient and

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13 Best, Music Through the Eyes, 160.
kind, and how we, as Christians, should show that to others because that is what God does for us each day. His on-stage testimony highlights the very content of his song lyrics, which is important in building a sense of legitimacy behind the music. The intent of the performers is to affirm Christian values, and this is evident in how they interact and communicate with the audience between songs. As the artists provide personal testimonies of their Christian faith, they continue to incorporate Christian belief into the entire concert experience and not just through the music itself. This creates an experience that allows listeners to not only identify with the musical content, but also with the artists who perform CCM. These concerts allow for evangelization through music and the performer, conveying the importance of Christian concerts in reaching young adults.

While the witness of the performers is an important part of these Christian concerts, not every Christian band or artist is blatantly out to share the Gospel through personal testimony. For many un-churched young adults, this approach is also attractive because it does not force something on them that they are not ready to receive. A band at Night of Joy that seemed to embody this approach was NEEDTOBREATHE, a southern rock band from South Carolina. The band came out on stage and the lead singer shouted, “Are you guys ready to hear some rock and roll?” There was no mention of Christ or any testimony through the entire performance, but simply a band playing what they perceived to be rock and roll music. The popular Christian magazine, Christianity Today, describes the band as having “an edgy sound, explosive performances, and a reality-based message, appealing to those uncomfortable with
Christian clichés."\(^\text{14}\) This seemed like an accurate description from their performance. The lyrics of their songs were not overtly religious, but songs like “Washed by the Water” evoked Christian images of baptism. People responded to their set list as they would any ordinary rock concert. During this song, however, many audience members lifted their hands in worship. The band’s versatility came across throughout the performance, and the variety of audience responses to their songs conveys the multiple functions of their music.

Jordan Nelson, a twenty-two year old fan, recalls seeing NEEDTOBREATHE perform in a small club in Nashville, TN called Exit/In. He discusses one song that the band played, which elicited a reaction from the audience in the form of worship:

> When NEEDTOBREATHE came, they played “Signature of Divine,” and people put their hands in the air and started worshipping, and that was in a _club_. If that’s how they know to worship, that’s what they’re gonna do. It’s not a grassy field or in a church, it’s a _club_. They heard a worship song, and they’re like, ‘oh, this is how I can show I worship.’\(^\text{15}\)

Once again, the lifting of hands is a central part of how these young Christians express their faith. It may be surprising that this occurs in a club environment, which has secular connotations often disparaged by the church due to the activities that take place there. Drawing on Peirce’s theory of semiotics, the club scene is itself indexical of drinking, dancing, and sexualized behavior that are paradoxical to the principles of the Christian church. It raises questions as to how people could worship in this type of environment, being so far removed from what the church represents. Nelson proposes that regardless of the venue, it is the music that provokes acts of worship from listeners in the form of

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physically lifting hands. This indicates that CCM acts as a mediating agent, indexing spirituality and the church environment within the club context.

NEEDTOBREATHE does not overtly express their Christian faith in every song, but the content of certain songs allows for physical expression. If people want to worship they can, and if not, then they can just enjoy the concert. The music thus additionally serves as an event around which young adults can gather and take from it what they choose. If teens leave with nothing more than an experience of rock and roll music, then that is their personal decision. This type of Christian rock is more fluid and can meet the needs of young adults who have differing backgrounds of religious experience. From those who are strong believers to those who are atheists, the music of NEEDTOBREATHE can serve everything from a pastoral role to simply southern rock entertainment. It resonates with a variety of audiences and meets young people across varying religious backgrounds and phases of life. What distinguishes them from other Christian artists is that they are signed to both Christian and mainstream record labels, Sparrow and Atlantic, respectively. The band actively negotiates the sacred-secular binary within the music industry, illustrating the fluidity of their music and mission as a band; their songs demand nothing more than to be taken as music, but provide the potential for spiritual communion and intimacy to those prepared to accept it.

Meeting young adults in their differing stages of life is a popular approach to sharing Christianity, and it is something an organization called Young Life has done successfully. This outreach program claims that their mission “starts with adults who are concerned enough about kids to go to them, on their turf and in their culture, building

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16 Argyrakis, “Attention Please.”
bridges of authentic friendship.”17 Young Life leaders introduce Christ to high school kids through personal investment and relationships with these teens. Jordan Nelson provides further commentary on his experiences with the organization as a volunteer. He claims that the purpose is to meet teenagers and focus on building relationships with them. Nelson describes the typical atmosphere of Young Life, stating,

We do games, skits, music, singing, and someone gets up and does a talk for like ten minutes max and reads a passage out of the Gospel. It could be your job to just hang out with kids and build relationships with them. The idea is, ‘let’s try to meet people and hang out. We should have a thing where we all hang out, and we’ll call that “club.”’ It’s not called a church meeting, come to club. It’s supposed to be fun and exciting, and we have skits, costumes, music, pop songs—Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber. The last song is sometimes a worship song.18

It is evident that Young Life wishes to share the Christian faith with young adults, but desires to do so through personal connections with kids that require time and investment. Music becomes an important tool for relating with teens and creating enjoyable atmospheres, and the use of secular music does not overtly push religious beliefs on them. The aim to “hang out” with these teens and spend time playing games and listening to music creates trust and builds relationships with them. They incorporate aspects of everyday life to connect with them and only include a short Biblical message, which Nelson suggests is “ten minutes max.” Bob Goff, author of the inspirational Christian book, Love Does, also describes the organization of which he was a leader: “Young Life is an outfit that does a great job with high school kids introducing them to Jesus of Nazareth without making it a big religious deal.”19 This description accurately


18 Nelson, interview.

captures the mission of the organization, centering Christianity on Jesus rather than its religious ideals. After speaking with Nelson, it seems that the use of music plays an important role in this mission to make Christianity “not a big religious deal.”

Lindenbaum discusses how faith becomes part of everyday life, and Young Life demonstrates this concept through its use of music. The idea is to experience life as one normally would, but gradually introduce issues of faith to teens who are not directly exposed to Jesus. As these teens continue to come to “club,” they experience Christianity each time with people they know and trust. Music is incorporated into their club activities, and their use of secular songs with some worship music is similar to the method of Quest Community Church discussed in Chapter 3. Music is used to build relationships with these kids in a comfortable environment, then allowing them to be open to hearing the Gospel. Nelson offers a comment that embodies the transformation in today’s Christian experience when stating, “If you wanna reach kids in high school with the Gospel, how do you do that? You don’t start by going to the church.” Nelson makes a powerful claim that speaks to the role of the church in reaching young adults; it is not necessarily its place. He implies that the idea of “church” and “religion” is not what will spread the Gospel and message of Christ. It is personal outreach that uses aspects of everyday life, such as music, that connects with teens. The Christian faith is transitioning from a set of religious practices that takes place inside of the church to relationships developed outside of it. This is reminiscent of the transition previously discussed, in which religious practices are replaced with a relationship with God, suggesting a changing faith that is based on personal investment rather than rules and

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20 Nelson, interview.
regulations. Music becomes an important tool in this transformation. It is used to not only worship God, but also to build these relationships with believers and the unchurched, making it instrumental to the mission of the Young Life organization and the changing Christian landscape at large.

While Young Life is aimed towards teenagers and young adults in high school, programs to reach college-aged young adults are present across universities in the United States. Campus Crusade for Christ, or CRU, is one of the largest college organizations that aim to attract young adults to the Christian faith. Whereas Young Life uses mostly secular music to create the atmosphere for their mission, CRU creates a church-like environment, employing Christian rock music and messages to reach students. At the University of Florida, CRU meets in secular venues such as the University Auditorium, the J. Wayne Reitz Union Grand Ballroom, and Flavet Field, an outdoor lawn on campus. As students file into these venues, they greet one another while music plays. Similar to the notions discussed at Disney’s Night of Joy, it is evident how these areas are seemingly transformed into sacred sites through Christian practice. I observed numerous CRU meetings in which Christian rock music led college students to lift their hands in worship, similar to the many settings discussed thus far. After the worship music, an adult takes the stage and gives about a thirty-minute sermon, as kids follow along in their Bibles or on their phones through the “Bible app.” It is clear that this type of meeting functions almost as a church service in itself, but it takes place on Thursday nights as a supplement to church on Sunday mornings.

College is a defining moment in many lives, as young adults form character and create a sense of identity away from the care and supervision of immediate family. As
they transition into this lifestyle and are faced with discovering their own passions and career paths, many young adults are met with both opportunities and challenges to the lives they have previously led. Through organizations like CRU, Christ becomes a part of this identity formation process, which is important for the development of the Christian faith among the younger generation. For students that wish to maintain their Christian beliefs, CRU brings together large groups across denominational boundaries to fellowship and worship together. Concerning the role of CRU music, Don Quantz’s notions of Christian song are strongly applicable to the organization. He writes,

> Christian song adapts and gives survival power to believers by helping them maintain their identity and values within a mix of competing voices, cultures, and narratives. . . . The challenge to maintain identity is as real today as ever before in history. Christian song allows groups and individuals to rehearse and reaffirm their faith.²¹

The notion that Christian rock creates “survival power” to Christians to maintain identity is evident in the context of CRU meetings. This idea of “competing voices, cultures and narratives” is very present in the college environment, and the gathering of Christian students for the purpose of music, message, and fellowship allows for this affirmation of Christian identity. For many students, CRU acts as a church family in itself, offering small groups for more personal relationships and Bible study. The church building is completely absent, yet each CRU venue functions as a sacred environment. Drawing on Lindenbaum’s work, I would suggest that repetitive religious actions are what sanctify these secular spaces that affirm identity for these young adults.

When considering the formation of identity through college, it is useful to examine the works of sociologists who incorporate aesthetics into their work. Virginia Postrel’s

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notions of identity construction are helpful when considering how Christian worship functions for many college kids in organizations like CRU. Postrel writes,

The more choices we have, the more responsibility we face—whether or not we want it—to define ourselves aesthetically. Because others make similar selections, for similar reasons, *I like this* becomes *I'm like this.*

Postrel suggests that people adopt a sense of identity through these aesthetic choices that produce pleasure. Aesthetic identity will “turn our ineffable sense of self into something tangible,” allowing us to outwardly express who we are. She further explains that these choices help us associate with others who present similar aesthetic signals, thus forming a collective identity. Christian rock music functions in this manner by acting as an outward expression of Christian identity. A young adult that likes CCM makes a larger statement about their identity when choosing to attend a concert or listen to Christian radio. “I like this” translates to “I’m like this” both in and outside of Christian circles. In this case, “I like Christian music” is easily read as “I am Christian” without directly stating that fact. The choice to listen to Christian music or regularly attend CRU worship calls forth assumptions of Christian affiliation or identity simply through this aesthetic medium. For young adults in college, attending events such as CRU becomes an easy way to define themselves with others that “make similar selections,” thus forming a collective Christian identity.

Tia DeNora, author of *Music in Everyday Life,* offers similar ideas as Postrel when examining music and identity from a sociological perspective. She describes music as “a means of organizing potentially disparate individuals such that their actions

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23 Ibid., 108-109.
may appear to be intersubjective, mutually oriented, co-ordinated, entrained and aligned."\textsuperscript{24} This idea is helpful when applied to the role of music in creating an ecumenical Christian environment in CRU (and many of the other events for that matter). These occasions draw people across denominations from varying degrees of religious faith, and the music is always a core part of the gatherings. It allows people that are otherwise “disparate” to engage with music that causes them to “align” through a common taste and way of practicing faith. DeNora further explains that many people resort to music to generate pleasure, create occasion, and affirm self and group identity.\textsuperscript{25} With this in mind, the worship music of CRU could be seen as the “occasion” that fosters the group identity of the community that gathers to hear it. As music takes on such a role, it becomes a central part of Christian development for young adults in their most formative college years.

Musical events like Night of Joy and other Christian concerts, as well as popular organizations such as Young Life and Campus Crusade for Christ demonstrate the degree to which CCM permeates culture outside of the church environment. They teach the Gospel in non-threatening ways that reach young adults on their own ground, in their own time, and in their own language. According to Lindenbaum, “the everyday” of life is sanctified through the incorporation and repetition of Christian practices; prayer, spiritual messages, and personal testimonies create sacred atmospheres within secular spaces. Music plays a large role in this negotiation of the sacred and secular, conveying


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 16.
its importance in how the Christian faith is experienced in today’s youth culture. This all plays a pastoral role in spreading the Gospel in relevant ways for young adults.

All of these spaces offer fellowship and freedom of expression in environments where young adults can “align” with other like-minded individuals. For some, this is an important part of religious expression, while others find the non-cliché experience more attractive. Regardless of religious background, the organizations discussed in this chapter promote everyone from all circumstances to be a part of the community, thus creating an experience that is more inclusive and ecumenical in nature. While the church is still an important part of the Christian experience, it is outside of this establishment that a strong Christian identity can flourish for young adults. As Jordan Nelson noted, starting outside of the church is often times the most important place to begin with Christian outreach. Both spiritual and secular music play an important role in creating these spaces and forming identity and community, suggesting its vital role in transforming how the Gospel is communicated in today’s youth culture.
The function of Contemporary Christian Music is widespread and quite versatile within modern Christian practice. The earliest musical forms of Gregorian chant illustrate how music has unified worship practices in Christian history, and the transition to Lutheran chorales in later centuries demonstrates how the Christian faith has historically evolved and met the needs of worshippers over time. Examining Christian musical practices globally reveals how worship forms have advanced worldwide, as exhibited in the Pentecostal and MRCC Brazilian case studies. The MRCC and rise in Protestantism demonstrate the changing religious landscape abroad, driven by a younger generation. Popular worship music is used to make Christianity more relevant to young adults, fusing aspects of sacred and secular Brazilian identity. These examples demonstrate how popular music within Christian practice is a phenomenon that has stretched across both denominational and regional divisions. They further serve as a useful foundation for the case studies presented throughout this thesis.

Austin Wilson’s early depiction of the “Boom-Boom Room” provides a clear example of the role of music inside of the church, while Jordan Nelson later illustrated its importance in evangelism outside of it. Both contexts are significant in reaching young adults and transforming the way Christianity is experienced today. Worship music adapts to the needs of particular communities, fulfilling everything from spiritual intimacy with God to entertainment purposes. There is a sacred and secular component to this type of music, in which the binary is continuously negotiated. The music thus serves as a mechanism that works within church structures, but also creates a community outside of it that incorporates elements of daily life. It cuts across denominational boundaries to
help create an ecumenical worship environment that has transformed the way Christianity is practiced and experienced.

Churches like Quest Community Church and Cross Point demonstrate how CCM operates within modern non-denominational environments. Anyerin Drury's insight on the use of both sacred and secular songs stresses the role of music in appealing to a younger audience, and particularly the “un-churched” youth. Mainstream music is used to create an environment that is more comfortable and less threatening to young adults. The aim to first engage youth and then introduce them to Christ is a popular approach for many congregations. The continuous comparison to Coldplay suggests CCM’s similarities to mainstream rock music, evidently accounting for a large part of its success and appeal to Christians and non-believers. This desire to reach the un-churched influences the style of many worship songs, and as Brian Biederman mentioned, the music itself is familiar and not overbearing. Christian rock thus becomes the music of choice for churches reaching a wide audience of young adults.

Organizations like Young Life and Campus Crusade for Christ also emphasize the importance of this approach. They embody a movement that conceptualizes Christianity as a relationship with God and not a religion. These notions are reflected in the music that is employed, in which lyrics use language that resonates with young adults more easily than responsorial hymns and psalms. These types of contemporary songs encourage personal engagement and a relationship with God, rather than ritualized chanting at Him. Brian Biederman’s interview particularly noted the difference in CCM worship compared to traditional styles of older congregations. There is a “vibe” within contemporary churches that appeals to a younger community. This suggests the
importance of keeping Christianity relevant to youth culture, and music is an important marker of age-set identity that can accomplish this. Younger generations are the future of congregational communities, and rather than separating sacred and secular identities, it becomes important to incorporate the two to ensure their participation. The adoption of popular worship forms in traditional churches such as Southern Hills UMC and St. Augustine Catholic Church exemplify how CCM has been used to achieve this aim, thus transforming the Christian religious landscape. The Catholic Church particularly represents the transformation of Christian practice in its acceptance of modern worship music. As Erica Scarano exemplified, this trend is not specific to Brazilian culture, but has permeated Catholic practice in the United States as well. The similarities in the function and development of Christian experience within both regions depict the use of Christian rock music as a phenomenon, taking place on a very large scale.

In terms of the worship experience, CCM fosters a participatory experience that appeals to younger audiences. JesusU worship services and Night of Joy and Hillsong concerts depict the significance of this type of worship. Adam Vodicka’s interview suggests that young adults who grew up in a traditional church environment desire such physical expression, which older generations fear. This expression is most evident in the numerous examples of lifting hands during worship, and this act has been interpreted in numerous ways. From something that is highly emotional and spiritual, to something that is just a natural response to joy, the act of lifting hands is evident across several contexts. Nancy A. Schaefer provides a good overall description of CCM’s function and encompasses many of the themes discussed in this study:
Music is perceived as effective bait to attract unbelievers, and using available musical styles is seen as a legitimate means to an end: ‘Why should the devil have all the good music?’, they ask. From their perspective of faith, music and singing transcend boundaries to unite an audience, express religious beliefs and turn hearts and minds Heavenward. . . . In this sense music’s essential value lies in its provision of a transcendent experience . . . one that is ultimately indescribable in secular terms.”

The idea that the music is a unifying tool that transcends social and religious boundaries supports this notion that it fosters an ecumenical Christian experience. The music is not for any one denomination, but is meant to bring people at differing degrees of faith together. Schaefer notes that CCM is used to express religious beliefs, and the notion that it “turns hearts and minds Heavenward” is a significant aspect of CCM. The music also evokes a “transcendent experience,” which she emphasizes is of high value for participants. As communities gather to engage in the music and physically express worship through song and physical response, they often times experience the Holy Spirit in a way that is “indescribable.” This shared experience, in which CCM is central, serves to construct a common identity that thus cultivates a new Christian identity.

Contemporary Christian Music is perhaps the clearest representation of how Christianity is infused within everyday aspects of life. Christian imagery, messages, and Biblical verses generally comprise the lyrics of CCM, and they are joined with instrumentation that affects how this style of rock music is interpreted and used. Christian faith is inserted into music, which then permeates culture in the form of entertainment events and religious organizations in both sacred and secular spaces. The music is an important aspect around which a larger Christian culture has

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developed. The integration of faith into “the everyday” puts God at the center of daily life, emphasizing the belief that Christ is not just a facet of life, but is life. This sentiment is highlighted in Corinthians 9:22, in which the apostle Paul declares the mission of spreading the Gospel through all things as imperative. It is evident that CCM functions to achieve this aim, promoting a faith that favors a “relationship” over a “religion.” As a result, Contemporary Christian Music is increasingly successful in reaching younger generations today, and it continues to significantly transform how Christians experience their faith and identity across denominational lines.

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2 Corinthians 9:22 (NIV). The apostle Paul states, “I have become all things to all people for the sake of the gospel.”
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Brittany Chase received her Master of Music degree from the University of Florida in the spring of 2013, with goals of becoming a college professor of American popular music. She is interested in the American rock and roll tradition and served as the teaching assistant for the American Popular Music online course at University of Florida for two years.

Chase has a passion for music and began playing flute and saxophone at an early age. As a high school student, she was a member of the wind symphony, marching band, pit orchestra, and jazz band, which fostered her interest in various musical genres. Though not concentrating on music in college, Chase took several secular music courses, thus developing her musical interests and inspiring her current career ambitions.

Chase holds a bachelor’s degree in American studies and a minor in corporate strategy from Vanderbilt University. She was a member of the Spirit of Gold Marching Band and its service organization, Tau Beta Sigma, for four years. During the final year of her undergraduate career, she had the opportunity to present an original paper, “Little Richard and Gender Performance in 1950s America,” at the 2011 Southeast and Caribbean Chapter of the Society of Ethnomusicology conference in Nashville, TN. In addition, Chase served as the teaching assistant for the History of Rock and Roll course at Vanderbilt for two semesters.

While Chase has always been interested in popular music, her research at University of Florida focuses on contemporary Christian rock music and the
transformation of the Christian religious experience through the modern church. More recently, she presented a conference paper based on this thesis at the University of Florida and the 2013 SEMSEC conference in Atlanta, GA. In addition to teaching at the college level, Chase has goals of writing and/or editing for a Christian music magazine or publication.