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# Review: The Making of Pro-life Activists by Ziad W. Munson

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phenomena. The tendency of the New Age to merge so successfully with business ventures is explored by Martin Ramstedt, who traces key New Age ideology back to the Human Potential Movement and the influence of Asian culture on the West. James R. Lewis considers the social authority of the natural sciences and New Age search for legitimacy in his piece, "Science and the New Age." The chapters go on to explore New Age roots in modern (not postmodern) Western ideology, the importance of symbols, and the stress upon experience within New Age spirituality in light of nature pilgrimages. These chapters work together successfully to combat common stereotypes about the New Age movement, and provide different perspectives that allow the reader to begin to sketch together what "New Age" might or might not be about.

New Age, Culture and Society prepares the reader for the fourth section of the handbook, Global Aspects of New Age. Global Aspects identifies ways in which New Age, as a transnational phenomenon, varies subtly across the globe. This is a particularly helpful section for readers interested in cultural nuance within New Age spirituality, and works as an excellent lead-in to the final section of the handbook, New Age and Worldviews, which treats various New Age ideologies and concerns as components of a connected holistic paradigm, and attempts to establish some of the ways this New Age worldview interacts with more traditional paradigms (science, occult, Christianity, and Paganism are the main points of discussion).

Overall, the *Handbook of New Age* is an important contribution to both New Age studies and research concerned with contemporary Western religions. The quality of chapters and expertise of authors compiled within the handbook's pages will ensure that this book remains a sturdy point of reference for years to come. The structure of the book is perfect for readers who are unfamiliar with New Age studies, and therefore no reader should feel overwhelmed or intimidated by the handbook, while scholars already well versed in this and similar fields will find deeply thoughtful dialogues that can shed light upon their own studies.

Shannon Trospen Schorey, University of Colorado, Boulder

*The Making of Pro-life Activists.* By Ziad W. Munson. University of Chicago Press, 2008. 248 pages. \$60.00 cloth, \$22.50 paper.

In *The Making of Pro-life Activists* Munson offers a theoretically sophisticated and empirically grounded account of how activists are "made." He aims to "question our conventional understanding of the relationship between ideas and action, and in doing so, build and refine what we already know about how people become involved in

all kinds of different social and political activities” (2). In my view, Munson successfully achieves this aim.

It is difficult to do justice to the fine way that Munson moves between sophisticated theorizing and his rich data (comprised of life histories and organizational records). One example is Munson’s response to stereotypic portrayals of the pro-life movement. Overdrawn portrayals abound, and one shared by scholarly and lay commentators alike is that the movement attracts and nurtures ideological fanaticism. Munson shows this is not the case. Recognizing that beliefs cannot be counted on to motivate political activism, Munson demonstrates that it is engagement with the movement that produces a set of beliefs about abortion, culminating in a pro-life political view. The activists interviewed by Munson are not fanatics and, at the time of their introduction to the movement, many did not even hold strong beliefs about abortion. Activists are made in a process that begins with an opportune encounter with the movement, and then their participation in movement activities shapes their beliefs about abortion (and about religion) in ways that result in new identities as activists in the pro-life movement.

Interestingly, Munson brings in *non-activists* and provides a rarely seen comparison that addresses the longstanding question: Who becomes an activist? His findings challenge current thinking on social movement mobilization in several ways. First, Munson finds that the pool of potential activists is not limited to those holding at least vaguely pro-life views; in fact, a large proportion of activists he interviewed began their involvement at a time when they held basically pro-choice views. Second, he finds that both share a similar “thinness” in their commitment to pro-life ideas. Lastly, Munson’s findings suggest that non-activists may simply be people who have not come in contact with the movement yet.

Those interested in the power of ideas will find useful insights in Munson’s discussion of “movement streams,” defined as “collections of organizations and activists that share an understanding of the best means to achieve the goal of ending abortion” (99). He finds four streams: politics, direct action, individual outreach, and public outreach. Each stream takes action in particular arenas, such as the legislative and legal. In each stream, activists engage particular ways of thinking about abortion and about activism that effectively embed them in a specific location within the movement. Additionally, each stream offers activists a set of emotional commitments, built around beliefs about action. These streams act as real barriers, as Munson’s data show that activists rarely cross over into another stream once tied to particular understandings of pro-life activism. The takeaway here, of a model of the role of beliefs in structuring a movement, should prove useful to students of other social movements, particularly right-wing movements where we especially lack nuanced studies of internal differentiation.

*The Making of Pro-life Activists* should hold broad appeal. Munson's narrative gift makes this book appropriate for advanced undergraduates. Audiences interested in the movement will appreciate the rich, in-depth life histories from four distinct regional settings. Social movement scholars will learn from his model of micromobilization processes, and we are likely soon to see studies of other movements following in Munson's path.

Gene Deerman, Eastern Illinois University

*Noise and Spirit: The Religious and Spiritual Sensibilities of Rap Music.* Edited by Anthony B. Pinn. New York University Press, 2003. 192 pages. \$22.00 paper.

As its title suggests, this collection considers rap music's implicit and explicit engagement with religious discourse. Its nine chapters are as much an introduction to the vibrant and messy connections between rap music and spiritual windows of the world, as it is an indictment of appropriations of Christianity and other forms of religious dialogue intent on evangelizing the earth with a single message or messenger. This is a cohesive project that expands such concepts as "preacher," "minister," and "theology." Each author draws into the discourse various musical artists—though often secondarily—enabling the subjects of each chapter to "set the rules for engagement and expression," to point readers to "unmediated truth that appears despite human attempts to 'reach' God" or to a reality that is located beyond the "reserved spaces of religious languages" (176, 178).

This work opens with Pinn's "Introduction," an astute historical exploration of the blues, spirituals, gospel music, jazz, and rap as musical forms that wrestled with the "often uneasy tension" between "ethical accountability" and "the rhythmic 'sway' by which many African Americans have walked through this world" (8, 10, 6). Here he identifies the inspiration for the collection's title, and establishes the work's distinction as one whose approach, attention to diverse religious orientations, and inclusion of non-institutional models separates it from other such projects. The following essays, organized around the themes, "Rap and Religious Traditions," "Rap and Issues of 'Spirit' and 'Spirituality,'" and "Rap and the Art of 'Theologizing,'" vividly demonstrate the significance of exploring questions of ultimate meaning in the form and content of secular and religious modes of expression. Three chapters are particularly noteworthy: In his adaptation of two of the ideological "angles" of religious historian Charles Long—opacity as a reality of oppressed peoples and oppugnancy as their creative force against institutional oppression—Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher clearly journeys along a rarely traveled path. When Mark Lewis Taylor dares readers to consider rap as a