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*The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-based Activism and the Public Role  
of Mainline Protestantism.* Robert Wunthrow & John Evans.

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systems and strategies and relational climates including teacher-student trust.

Moving to the larger school context, Weinstein details challenges associated with implementing an intervention designed to de-track a rigidly differentiated public high school. This is contrasted with a 'best practices' example of a private elementary school which, by design, resists tendencies to sort students through offering multiple opportunities for achievement across a variety of domains. Finally, she compares university climates which alternatively select faculty stars versus those who develop faculty talent and potential. The thrust of the evidence presented suggest the embeddedness of ability-related practices and beliefs and the ways in which isomorphic processes that accentuate their impact occur across and within educational institutions.

The contribution of this text lies in its breadth and depth. Weinstein integrates knowledge ranging from developmental psychology, the sociology of education and political processes in urban school reform. In short, we see not only the potential power of educational expectancies as they are enacted within and across varying contexts over the life course, but, perhaps more importantly, the book reveals the value of applying a contextualist perspective to study the individually-based behaviors and beliefs of both teachers and students.

Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans, *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002. \$60 hardcover, \$24.95 paper cover.

The publication of *The Quiet Hand of God* reflects growing interest (and concern) in the political and social role of religious institutions. As the federal government attempts to devolve responsibility onto church-sponsored social service organizations and as local, national, and international religious political groups become more powerful and sophisticated in their influence, academics have tried to increase knowledge of how religious organizations and their social and political activities function and succeed. This book parallels other work in the study of contemporary religion, regardless of the discipline, in that the focus is empirical and not theoretical. The kind of theoretical work that

harks back to the questions of Weber or Durkheim seems more today the domain of comparative literature (Anidjar), continental philosophy (Derrida, Agamben), or medieval studies (Boyarin). This is not to negate the value of *The Quiet Hand of God*, which offers an impressive, unique collection of articles on one of the more significant forms of religious organization in the United States today. In fact, the book may serve as an important reference and model for further research and publications on religious practice and social and political influence.

The book brings together different methodological approaches and disciplinary interests, producing a nuanced, complex, and ultimately fascinating portrait of mainline Protestant churches and their adherents. The chapters range from the historical research of Peter Thuesen into the institutional model of social activism propagated by mainline Protestant churches to the quantitative sociological analyses conducted by Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks on the political participation (and suggested potential influence) of mainline Protestants. Part I of the book concentrates on historical background and the organization of church political and social activities, while Part II takes a more current look at involvement in public issues. In a sense, the information and analyses provided in Part II are more well-known to the lay reader, although the historical research and the intricacies of the debates on issues like homosexuality and environmentalism are not.

From one perspective, the strength of this collection lies in its range, timeliness, and new research. From another perspective, its weakness lies precisely in this range, which remains broad and rather unfocused except for the common theme of mainline Protestantism. The majority of authors are sociologists, with the exception of a historian, political scientist, and few scholars of religion. Rather than bring the collection together intellectually, the common disciplinary and methodological terrain excludes the kind of experiential insight provided by ethnography or the conceptual framework offered by more theoretical work. Both would have benefitted the collection, in that they would have offered more depth and purpose to the intellectual endeavor. Perhaps theory represents the next stage for the sociology of religion, after the notable collection of empirical research presented here.