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Workforce Development Networks: Community Based Organizations and Regional Alliances. Bennett Harrison and Marcus Weiss.

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Bennett Harrison and Marcus Weiss, *Workforce Development Networks: Community Organizations and Regional Alliances*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998. \$ 21.00 papercover.

The profound changes that have taken place in the American economy over the last two decades have significantly altered the nation's labor markets. De-industrialization, corporate acquisitions and mergers, and the challenges of globalization have permanently modified conventional patterns of work. While many workers could previously expect a lifetime of employment in skilled or semi-skilled jobs, the trend towards short term employment in smaller businesses or even in self-employment is clear. Similarly, the levels of education and skills that employers now require far exceeds previous norms. While the demand for low skilled workers remains bouyant, those in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations earn incomes far below those with higher levels of formal education.

While it is now recognized that formal educational skills, continual educational upgrading and an ability to adapt to a rapidly changing economy is a pre-requisite for success, the authors of this important book contend that education is not enough. Sizable numbers of young people do not acquire the formal education qualifications they need and, in adulthood, face a lifetime of disadvantage. Adult education can, to some extent, cater to their needs by even here, there is a need to link adult education with workforce development programs, particularly in low income urban communities where the problems of unemployment and poverty are all to visible. These programs have a vital role to play in addressing the needs of these communities, and in offering new opportunities for effective participation in the productive economy.

The book examines ten workforce development projects in cities such as San Jose, Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York and San Antonio. These projects are not only concerned with job training but with recruitment, job placement, workforce orientation, mentoring, support, and other services that ensure effective, long term labor force participation. The projects are classified and their activities are documented in some detail. In addition, the book describes the way they create and sustain community networks

that facilitate labor force participation both locally and at the regional level.

This is a useful book which provides a concise summary of a complex field. It demonstrates that community based workforce development activities can make a real difference. As more community groups organize not only to address local social needs but to enhance local economic development, the role of organizations that are specifically committed to workforce development deserve serious academic scrutiny. While the authors recognize that their case studies do not comprise a formal or systematic evaluation or workforce development programs, the book shows that community groups, planners, political leaders and even social workers have much to learn from these efforts. Since employment now dominates current welfare policy, the book is particularly relevant to social workers and others engaged in the human services.

David G. Gil, *Confronting Injustice and Oppression: Concepts and Strategies for Social Workers*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. \$ 49.50 hardcover, \$ 22.50 papercover.

Although most social workers are committed to a therapeutic role which advocates the treatment of personal and social problems through direct practice, a minority argue that the profession ought to be committed to the eradication and injustice and oppression. Although this position is not actively endorsed by many rank and file practitioners, it had been adopted by mainstream professional organizations such as the National Association of Social Workers, the International Federation of Social Workers and the Council on Social Work Education. These and other organizations have all stressed the profession's role in combating injustice and oppression.

Although this has created a paradoxical situation in which an official commitment to progressive social change is not widely supported, David Gill believes that it is possible to inspire all social workers to accept the need to confront injustice and oppression in their daily practice. It is necessary, he suggests, to demonstrate that many of the problems they deal with can be attributed to wider societal inequalities. Illustrating this argument with reference to his previous studies of child abuse, Gil points out