2009

**Review of *Men on a Mission: Valuing Youth Work in our Communities.* William Mardiglio. Reviewed by Will Rainford.**

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**Recommended Citation**

Available at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol36/iss4/15

In the late 20th century, men in American society were, to some significant extent, marginalized in their role as mentors, teachers, and caregivers. All too often in popular media, as well as academic discourse, men have been collectively depicted as aggressive, violent, and disconnected from family roles. This negative perspective of males in society is to be expected, due largely to widespread media attention to the exploitation of children by male pedophiles (who are frequently in a mentoring role with the child), the rising rate of children who are unsupported financially or emotionally by fathers, and the increase in female providers of traditionally male-leadership roles in the lives of children, especially for children-at-risk.

*Men on a Mission* serves to provide a starkly different perspective of the very important role that men play in the lives of children. All across the United States, in urban and rural cities and towns, men coach, teach, and guide children, both formally as professional child-workers in various careers, as well as informally as volunteers seeking to give children the love, support, education, and moral guidance they need to become healthy, productive adults. Through the ethnographic study of men who work and volunteer with children, as well as from two decades of research conducted on fatherhood, Mardiglio provides compelling evidence that men are extensively involved in the lives of children, belying the growing myth of the uninvolved, dispassionate male. His work provides rich understanding of the motivations and experiences of men conducting youth work in the community. Mardiglio’s also argues that the potential of men who could and should become involved in youth-work is under-realized, leaving a gap in the care giving network in society. If men are expected to be involved in the lives of youth, and if they are re-cast in the role as caregiver and teacher, men will fulfill the role.

This book is a well-written account of the sociological phenomenon of men’s youth-work, drawing on strong ethnographic methodology. His work is timely and important, bringing to light the experiences of men in an area of male societal
roles that has received little academic attention. The book is in-
formative and useful to academics and their students engaged
in the study and formation of family theory and social policy,
as well as for youth agencies seeking to increase support for
the children they serve.

Will Rainford, Boise State University

Martín Sánchez-Jankowski, *Cracks in the Pavement: Social
Change and Resilience in Poor Neighborhoods*. Berkeley, CA:

Since its early years in the 19th-century, the social work
profession has had a strong commitment to addressing the
problems of poor, urban communities and it has historically
drawn on the insights of sociologists to provide theoretical
frameworks to inform and inspire community interventions.
The work of the Chicago school of urban sociologists, ethno-
graphic studies of urban ethnic neighborhoods, analyses of
community networks and more recently the notion of social
capital have all informed community practice. However, as is
well-known, much community practice has been based on a
deficit model which emphasizes the problems and challenges
facing urban communities. This is reflected the historical dom-
inance of a pathology-focused social disorganization approach
in urban sociology which has only recently been challenged
by a strengths-based model that recognizes the resilience and
capabilities of low income communities.

Sanchez-Jankowski's book makes a major contribution
towards understanding the strengths of poor communities
and particularly ethnic minority communities in the United
States. It will be welcomed by social workers and community
practitioners who are increasingly persuaded that the deficit
approach fails to capture the complexity of community rela-
tionships and the potential of poor people to cooperate and
work for the benefit of their localities. The book is based on
a series of in-depth ethnographic studies of poor commu-
nities in Los Angeles and New York over a ten year period.
Unlike many other community ethnographic studies, which
have usually been based on household interviews, the author