

theorist, readers with even a passing knowledge of contemporary gay culture will come away wanting a lot more in this regard as well. For one thing, the groups Hennen studies are almost exclusively white—a fact he attributes in part to the racial semiotics of the Fairie and the Bear, as if racial (and class) segregation were somehow a surprise in already marginalized communities. He assembles no empirical data on this point, however, leaving the reader to wonder about the ways effeminacy, masculinity, and sexual desire are experienced in different racial and class contexts. To be sure, a white sociologist might have found it more challenging to situate himself as a participant-observer in one or another African-American, Latino, or Asian peer groups. The introduction of any actual data in this regard, however, would have strengthened Hennen's theoretical position and made this a far more useful contribution to the field.

Men on a Mission: Valuing Youth Work in Our Communities. By William Marsiglio. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. Pp. xi+394. \$60.00 (cloth); \$30.00 (paper).

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Based on 55 semistructured life history interviews, *Men on a Mission* provides a detailed and insightful analysis of the challenges and rewards experienced by men who work with children and youths in American society. Through his rich descriptive use of interview data and supporting ethnographic observations, Marsiglio captures the unique and important contributions these men make not only to the children and youths they work with, but to families, communities, and the nation as a whole. Perhaps more important, Marsiglio convincingly captures the obstacles these men face in their work, from gender stereotypes to the more insidious suspicions of sexual abuse or exploitation of children.

The book is made up of an introduction and conclusion, 10 substantive chapters, an excellent appendix on methodology, and an appendix presenting personal characteristics and the social background of the respondents. The substantive chapters are in line with patterns in the interview data that relate to the men's motives for working with children and youths, how they relate to and manage kids, and how they feel they make a difference. Other chapters focus on mentoring, how the men blend or separate their public and private lives, and how they experience personal growth. Another chapter reviews the different youth-work domains, and here we get a more detailed exploration of the diversity of the sample in terms of the type of work the men do—be it in their occupations (child care workers, elementary school teachers, criminal justice officers, clergy,

etc.) or in volunteer work (e.g., coaches or counselors in sports or recreational settings).

The book is primarily descriptive, but it utilizes a multivariied theoretical lens that includes social constructivism, symbolic interactionism, life course, and gender theory. Some chapters speak to all of these perspectives, especially the superb chapters on mentoring and public and private lives. Here Marsiglio reviews and integrates relevant theoretical and empirical literature (including his earlier work on fathering) and provides new insights that are aptly supported by interview quotes.

The book raises a number of theoretically interesting tensions and oppositions regarding the value and need for men to be involved in working with and caring for children and youths. First, at a time when there is great concern about father-absent families and an increasing number of kids at risk due to poverty, violence, and family isolation, men who want to work with children and youths must face gender stereotypes that theirs is women's work and not masculine. Further, given that work with young people has been dominated by women and that there is a high level of gender inequality in the United States, it is undervalued, low in status, and poorly paid. Such factors dissuade many middle-class men from seeing such work as affording a viable occupation, but at the same time working-class men often lack needed educational training and credentials.

A second tension revolves around the fact that while both children and men gain immensely both socially and emotionally from their interactions in caretaking work and volunteer activities, men face persistent fears of being falsely accused of child sexual abuse. Such fears are driven by sensational media coverage of child sexual abuse that dissuade men from working with children and youths (especially girls) or lead many of the men Marsiglio interviewed to be anxious and cautious. Several men referred to this problem. One respondent, Brandon, worked with children in a variety of contexts, including as teacher, coach, and camp counselor. He was afraid of even shaking hands with kids and would joke, "I don't know where your hands have been." Brandon explains his behavior: "You never know what's going to be misconstrued nowadays, whereas in the past. . . . You know, I remember teachers and everybody putting their arm around me, hugging me, and things like that. But now, you just can't do [that] because everybody is litigious" (p. 62). Other respondents noted that even though fearful of misinterpretation they still hugged kids, put their hands on their shoulders, and showed other types of physical and emotional support.

In the final chapter Marsiglio offers many innovative ideas for encouraging "men to share with women the responsibility for mentoring, teaching, nurturing, monitoring, and supporting kids of all kinds, their own and other people's" (p. 311). Among these are calls to break down gender stereotypes and to openly challenge what Marsiglio calls "our culture's increasingly pervasive 'stranger danger' discourse" (p. 316). *Men on a Mission* itself is a major step in doing both. Another important idea

is to develop programs that expose boys to situations that enable them to bond with younger kids. Age segregation is a major problem in American society, and programs that link both male and female youths to routine, supportive activities with younger children are a great way to begin to address this problem.

My few misgivings about the book are minor. Marsiglio could have organized the chapters around responses of men grouped in the types of work they did with children so that the reader could better identify with the respondents and their work. His table listing characteristics of the men in an appendix is unwieldy, making it hard to really get a grasp of the overall sample. Also, Marsiglio could have omitted numerous interview quotes—which merely made the same points in slightly different ways—and avoided a good deal of needless repetition. Despite, these minor problems Marsiglio gives voice to the enormous potential of male caregiving in the United States and around the world. As such, *Men on a Mission* is sobering, hopeful, and inspiring.

Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home. By Pamela Stone. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007.

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In late 2006, Lisa Belkin rediscovered the mommy wars in a *New York Times* magazine article entitled “The Opt-Out Revolution” (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/26/magazine/26WOMEN.html>). The article claimed that highly educated, successful women were returning to traditional roles: giving up or cutting back on their careers in order to spend more time with their families. Belkin described highly class-privileged women who had left careers for unpaid carework and offered a well-entrenched storyline: women *choose* unpaid carework over high-powered careers.

Feminist sociologists subsequently pointed out that most women must work in the paid labor force and that highly educated women, who might have the opportunity to “opt-out,” are more likely to be committed to full-time employment than other women. Moreover, labor statistics do not support Belkin’s conclusions. The labor force participation rates of married women with children ages 3–5 dropped from 67% in 1997 to 65.4% in 2005, and for those with children under age 3 the change was smaller: from 60.9% to 56.7% (Sharon R. Cohany and Emy Sok, “Trends in Labor Force Participation of Married Mothers of Infants,” *Monthly Labor Review* [February 2007]: 9–16). This was a decline, to be sure, but hardly a revolution. In fact, over time, women’s labor force patterns increasingly resemble men’s.