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Lives On The Edge: Single Mothers And Their Children In The Other America

Lives on the Edge



**Single Mothers and their Children
in the Other America**

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Valerie Polakow



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Synopsis

One out of five children, and one out of two single mothers, lives in destitution in America today. The feminization and "infantilization" of poverty have made the United States one of the most dangerous democracies for poor mothers and their children to inhabit. Why then, Valerie Polakow asks, is poverty seen as a private issue, and how can public policy fail to take responsibility for the consequences of our politics of distribution? Written by a committed child advocate, *Lives on the Edge* draws on social, historical, feminist, and public policy perspectives to develop an informed, wide-ranging critique of American educational and social policy. Stark, penetrating, and unflinching in its first-hand portraits of single mothers in America today, this work challenges basic myths about justice and democracy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gracefully and forcefully written, this study charges that the male-dominated culture in the U.S. has always created myths that allow society to cast poor single mothers and their children into "otherness." The most prevalent myth, according to Polakow, who teaches educational psychology and early childhood studies at Eastern Michigan University, is that poor people got that way because of their own sociocultural or psychological pathology. Our "public policy of detachment," writes Polakow, stems from our historical attitudes about the nature of motherhood and childhood and about "normal families," contentions Polakow substantiates in her interviews with women who tell horrifying stories of how they fared under our welfare system when in need. Polakow calls for an

overhaul of this country's social policies to make health care, housing, child care allowances and parental leave mandatory entitlements for all provided by government. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The author of *The Erosion of Childhood* (Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1992) here takes an in-depth look at female-headed families enmeshed in poverty and the inept American welfare system, which she portrays as essentially hostile to single mothers. The book chronicles the history of poverty in the United States as it has affected women raising children alone, then examines the present-day lives of single mothers and their families, with particular attention to the children's experiences in school. Polakow (early childhood education, Eastern Michigan Univ.) offers example after depressing example to support her point that the welfare system traps women rather than helping them. Disturbing and often heartbreaking to read, this thought-provoking book is highly recommended for all libraries.- Jennifer Langlois, Missouri Western State Coll. Lib., St. Joseph Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a great book for teacher and parents.

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