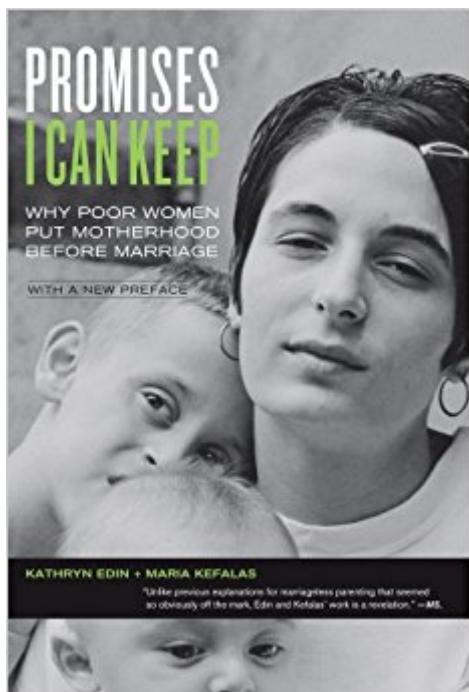


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# Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage, With A New Preface



## **Synopsis**

Millie Acevedo bore her first child before the age of 16 and dropped out of high school to care for her newborn. Now 27, she is the unmarried mother of three and is raising her kids in one of Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods. Would she and her children be better off if she had waited to have them and had married their father first? Why do so many poor American youth like Millie continue to have children before they can afford to take care of them? Over a span of five years, sociologists Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas talked in-depth with 162 low-income single moms like Millie to learn how they think about marriage and family. *Promises I Can Keep* offers an intimate look at what marriage and motherhood mean to these women and provides the most extensive on-the-ground study to date of why they put children before marriage despite the daunting challenges they know lie ahead.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"This is the most important study ever written on motherhood and marriage among low-income urban women. Edin and Kefalas's timely, engaging, and well-written book is a careful ethnographic study that paints an indelible portrait of family life in poor communities and, in the process, provides incredible insights on the explosion of mother-only families within these communities." William Julius Wilson, author of *The Bridge over the Racial Divide* "This book provides the most insightful and comprehensive account I have read of the reasons why many low-income women postpone marriage but don't postpone childbearing. Edin and Kefalas do an excellent job of illuminating the

changing meaning of marriage in American society."; Andrew Cherlin, author of *Public and Private Families*; Edin and Kefalas provide an original and convincing argument for why low-income women continue to embrace motherhood while postponing and raising the bar on marriage. This book is a must read for students of the family as well as for policy makers and practitioners who hope to rebuild marriage in low-income communities. "Promises I Can Keep is the best kind of exploration: honest, incisive and ever-so-original. It'll make you squirm, and that's a good thing, especially since Edin and Kefalas try to make sense of the biggest demographic shift in the last half century. This is a must read for anyone interested in the tangled intersection of family and public policy."; Alex Kotlowitz, author of *There Are No Children Here*

Kathryn Edin is Associate Professor of Public Policy at Harvard University and coauthor of *Making Ends Meet* (1997). Maria Kefalas is Professor of Sociology at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. She is the author of *Working-Class Heroes* (California, 2003).

I originally picked up this book because I really wanted to know why women were deciding to have kids before they had sufficient resources to raise them. I also live in Philadelphia, so I thought that would help me understand. I had all the usual middle-class ideas about why, but I was wrong... and this book really helped me understand where these women were coming from and how they see their world.

So insightful, so powerful. This helped me gain insight into the families my school serves and how my students are being influenced by their family and community dynamics.

Had to purchase this for a Sociology course, but enjoyed reading it outside of assigned chapters

What an eye-opener. I grew up in a middle class neighborhood and have never understood what these women are thinking. I have to say this book is well-written and it has given me a very different perspective on these "welfare moms". It does not mean that I agree with their thinking, I now understand it. Whether you are a Republican or Democrat, this book is a must read. If you think these women are crazy and lazy, read it to understand why they do it...it is NOT what you think. If you are a Democrat and feel that society must help these women, read it...we are throwing money away in social programs that do NOT address the problem.

it really captures how marriage is changing and how it does not culturally apply to some poor families in the US.

Such a great book! LIKE NEW!

I admire the amount of research and effort that this book draws on. I feel that the authors answer the question in the title.

Any eye opener.

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