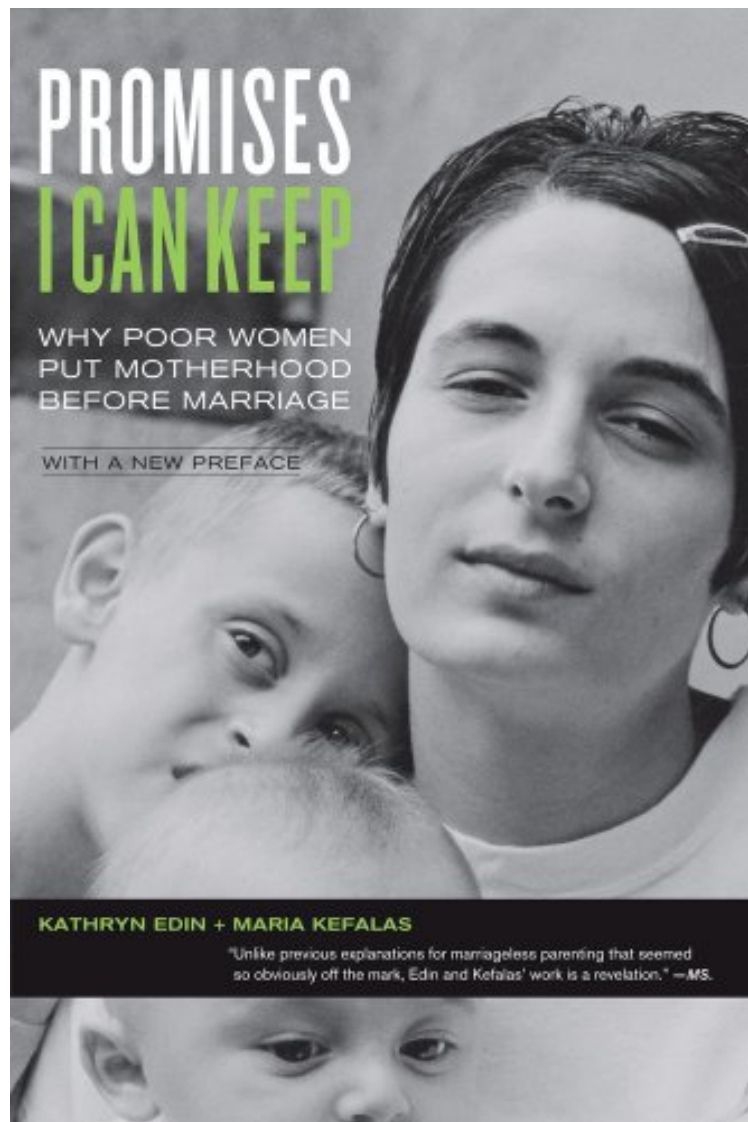


[Library ebook] Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage, with a New Preface

## Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage, with a New Preface

*Kathryn Edin, Maria J. Kefalas*  
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**Kathryn Edin, Maria J. Kefalas : Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage, with a New Preface** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage, with a New Preface:

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people found the following review helpful. Not as insightful as I'd hoped. I am not as impressed with this book as I'd hoped. I guess it is a good anthropological study on the women in these Philadelphia neighborhoods, but I was hoping for more insight. Perhaps it is not the fault of the book, though. Perhaps I was hoping that the women themselves would have more insight. 58 of 63 people found the following review helpful. Keep the baby, screw up generations and communities, who cares? By Sarah Soda I couldn't put it down. The book was very well written. I found the book to be very objective primarily. The author is trying to make sense of why women in underprivileged communities choose to bear children but also choose for the most part to forgo marriage indefinitely. There are a few salient points she really drives home. 1. These women really love their children and would not be the women they are today without them (does that give them a right to screw up a future adult's life to save their own?) 2. The men that impregnate these women are not marriageable material (domestic violence, drugs, incarceration, etc.) in any sense of the word for the overwhelming majority (half of those children born to these women are those same men) and 3. They see marriage as something they aspire to someday when they have a house, a career, an education, and some material comfort. In the event the marriage doesn't work out they can kick the guy to the curb and still have their stuff in tact to care for the children. As with any good social science book, it begs more questions than answers. That is where I part ways with the soft brushstrokes of this book. My questions are ones that disturb me. A fifteen year old teenage girl wants nothing but to leave her home, strike out on her own, have independence, not be under anyone's rule. That is a typical teenager under the best of circumstances in any class in America. The big difference is these kids have no parental guidance at that point. The easiest thing in the world to do is be a bad parent. All you have to do is nothing. When a teenager becomes too hard to deal with by a person who was never allowed to fully mature herself, let her get pregnant and start a whole new life cycle. A fifteen year old female children playing grown up house at the cost of taxpayers is disturbing. Fifteen year old male children being held responsible for mistakes for 18 years when they were not given adequate parental supervision and guidance by a person who was never allowed to fully mature herself is disturbing. They are in a pressure cooker with no way out, no wonder they blow to drugs, alcohol and incarceration. The fact that these mothers and grandmothers encourage an eighteen year old who does not want to have a child and has no way to support a child to go through with the pregnancy because she may not get another chance is completely disturbing. I think that the question "Why have them out of wedlock?" is unimportant. I think the real question is "Why have them when you have no means whatsoever to support them?" and the answer is because the government will support them. If that option did not exist, as in the fifties; it would be a different scenario. I am not saying go back to the fifties, but I am saying we should ask the hard politically incorrect questions if we want real solutions.

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.

From the Inside Flap "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."—Sara McLanahan, author of *Growing Up with a Single Parent* "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*