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What We Know About Child Care. Alison Clarke-Steward and Virginia D. Allhusen.

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limited survey data that tells us very little about what will make marriage more likely for low-income single mothers. Through analysis of their extensive conversations with these women, the authors provide an illuminating discussion of why these women are waiting to marry while not similarly waiting to have children. Although Edin and Kefalas meet their goal of giving voice to the life experiences and perspectives of these low-income women, they fall short of fully addressing how this problem might be solved. Further, though the authors state that the life chances for these mothers may not have been improved had they waited to have children, given their early struggles with parents and peers, their depression, school failure, and alcohol and drug abuse, they state that early births to poor, unmarried mothers are detrimental to the life chances of their children. This point bears further discussion, for it would help to explain why programs and policies should be developed to improve the chances of these children and to prevent such early childbearing. Nevertheless, those interested in gaining a new and deeper understanding of these issues will find this book a rich and rewarding read.

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Alison Clarke-Stewart and Virginia D. Allhusen, *What We Know About Child Care*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005. \$45.00 hardcover.

During the last of century, the proportion of women engaged in regular wage employment in the industrial countries has increased exponentially. Although this does not mean, as feminist writers have pointed out, that women were previously economically inactive, it has imposed far greater pressures on women, and particularly on mothers, who now have to cope with domestic as well as employment demands. One of these pressures concerns childcare. It was previously expected that middle-class women would assume responsibility for childcare, and that men would fulfill cultural expectations

as breadwinners but the rapid increase in women's participation in wage employment has challenged many families. Single mothers and those on low incomes face particular difficulties. Few can afford the services of commercial childcare providers and many struggle to meet the often conflicting demands of employers and the needs of their children.

As the authors of this engaging book contend, childcare remains a major challenge for many families. Even though most reasonable people would agree that government has a critically important role to play in ensuring that young children are adequately cared for while their parents fulfill the work expectations imposed on them by modern societies, it is, as the authors point out, a challenge that policy makers have failed to address in a coherent fashion. The book is wide-ranging, covering a number of topics related to childcare services in the United States today. These include an interesting history of the evolution of childcare and a thorough analysis of the country's current childcare provisions. Although these provisions include informal childcare arrangements as well as formal day care services, most of the book focuses on the formal sector and on its funding and statutory regulation. A major part of book is concerned with research into childcare. The authors review a large number of studies on the effects of childcare on young children and on the factors that constitute quality care. The book concludes with a discussion of the need for a more systematic policy approach to childcare and for improved access to quality childcare for low-income families. Proposals for more effective research into day care issues are also provided.

This is a readable and useful book which contains a wealth of helpful information not only for academics and professionals concerned with childcare issues but for parents as well. Indeed, at times the book reads like a manual for parents wishing to have more information on the topic but it also contains solid statistical data on childcare services in the United States as well as a thoughtful analysis of the issues. It has obvious implications for social policy and social work and will be a major resource for social workers, administrators and social policy makers concerned with child and family welfare issues today.