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Book Review 2

Polakow, V. (2007). *Who cares for our children?: The child care crisis in the other America*. New York: Teachers College Press.

The book “Who Cares for Our Children”, written by Valarie Polakow is comprised of eight chapters with 227 pages. Valarie Polakow, a childcare advocate and professor of educational psychology and early childhood at Eastern Michigan University, does a great job advocating for single mothers and the childcare crisis in the United States of America. She tells of the real life situations of families struggling and juggling school, work and childcare, revealing the unfortunate situations these women face on a daily basis.

Polakow opens her book writing about the inadequate childcare that women have to face and how in the United States the women are not seen as caregiver-citizens. The writer states, “mothers are seen neither as caregiver-citizens deserving benefits and services for child rearing and caring for their children”. The U.S.A. constructs its social

welfare rights using the FDR's Second Bill of Rights for social economic rights for families who live below the minimum threshold. These rights include the right to social security, remunerative employment, adequate food, shelter and clothing, a decent living, medical care, unemployment insurance, and a good education. Unfortunately, childcare is not included nor seen as a right in the USA. In other countries families receive social provisions and public childcare, these countries follow the International Covenant and International law, which include: The Convention of the Right of the Child, (CRC), The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW), and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Although the FDR's Bill in the USA presents a structure that is inadequate, it leaves out the poorest of its citizens by not providing for such fundamental need: childcare.

Additionally, in the book she writes about how it is hard for a two-parent family to make it with both earning low-wages. They can't find childcare they can afford. After paying for the necessities, they have little or no money left for childcare. Furthermore, she writes about the children who are labeled as disruptive because of their perceived unmanageable behavior, which also causes their mothers to lose their

jobs because the mothers have to leave work early or miss work to watch their child. On a positive side of childcare the book mentions where childcare is successful due to the fact that there is educational support available and accessible. Therefore the women in the last stories are very successful in finding quality childcare for their children, by working and going to school. The main audience she writes for are Academics, policy makers, and childcare workers.

A strong point Polakow discusses in her book is exposing the childcare crisis. The need for adequate childcare is necessary for a child to grow healthy. It also gets the message across that childcare should be viewed as a human right. The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, (CRC), was adopted by 194 countries but United States still has not adopted it. Had the US adopted the CRC it would ensue that children of working parents have the right to benefit from childcare services. An additional strong point is how the writer points the way to solutions of the childcare crisis in the USA. If the United States would fund and support the 21 Century programs in all public schools instead of localizing it to the community schools there would be quality childcare. It provides an afterschool program where the children may go for enrichment it is a safe, positive place for children. Using the

model developed by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) would serve as a high quality pre-school program. The Helburn and Bergman Proposal for affordable care and improved quality for childcare would be a place to start for quality childcare. Helburn and Bergman propose a system of government subsidies that will focus of affordability, safety, and quality childcare.

A point Polakow fails to address is lack of attention to single fathers. Single fathers constantly need to prove their ability as parents, educating society how men are capable of portraying a family setting. Another point I would have liked to hear more about is how society views single fathers and childcare. Although women are the common caretakers for children, a father can also take the role of the common caretaker. At last, I would have liked the writer to elaborate on how important childcare is in the early stages of childhood development. These are the stages a child goes through to get to the point where they feel safe, secure, and loved. These important factors in childhood demonstrate how a childcare center can provide a setting and help in getting the child ready and be successful for school.

Polakow is writes about low-income families going through struggles to get quality childcare. Highlighting not only the struggles

but also offering solutions. If there are more people who are willing to help with childcare this crisis would cease to exist. Advocating for childcare, either by pushing for the US to adopt the CRC model or opening more facilities for low-income families are two ways to achieve this goal. Further, qualified teachers and administrators ensure our children are getting education to break this cycle. I believe, State and community policy makers as well as the teachers and parents in the community should read this book. Overall this book was interesting and depressing, reading of single parents obstacles and struggles for independence, to read the outcome of the positive side of single parents and childcare was enlightening.