



# Through My Own Eyes: Single Mothers and the Cultures of Poverty

*Susan Holloway*

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Shirl is a single mother who urges her son's baby-sitter to swat him when he misbehaves. Helena went back to work to get off welfare, then quit to be with her small daughter. Kathy was making good money but got into cocaine and had to give up her two-year-old son during her rehabilitation. Pundits, politicians, and social critics have plenty to say about such women and their behavior. But in this book, for the first time, we hear what these women have to say for themselves. An eye-opening--and heart-rending--account from the front lines of poverty, *Through My Own Eyes* offers a firsthand look at how single mothers with the slimmest of resources manage from day to day. We witness their struggles to balance work and motherhood and watch as they negotiate a bewildering maze of child-care and social agencies.

For three years the authors followed the lives of fourteen women from poor Boston neighborhoods, all of whom had young children and had been receiving welfare intermittently. We learn how these women keep their families on firm footing and try--frequently in vain--to gain ground. We hear how they find child-care and what they expect from it, as well as what the childcare providers have to say about serving low-income families. Holloway and Fuller view these lives in the context of family policy issues touching on the disintegration of inner cities, welfare reform, early childhood and "pro-choice" poverty programs.

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