

finding courage, but about me finding mine. She taught me that I had to find my-self, before he walked out to embrace his. Piccinini showed me that in letting go of my own children's lives, I could actually take control of my life. After the last page, I set her book down, walked past my son's now-outdated junior picture on the mantle, and glanced in the hallway mirror. As I looked at the image before me, I realize I don't have wrinkles, made with worry and fear, I have wisdom lines, lines that have been etched into my face and taught me my life is just starting anew.

Motherload: Making It All Better in Insecure Times

Ana Villalobos

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How do women's fears and insecurities about raising their children in a world of economic instability, terrorism and child abductions influence their motherload and mother/child relationships? In *Motherload: Making It All Better in Insecure Times* Ana Villalobos examines how American mothers navigate the precarious times revealing their parenting strategies to protect their child/ren from societal risks, both real and amplified. Providing a sociological perspective, Villalobos sheds light on how the forces of neoliberalism have shifted the public risks of raising children from society at large to individual families, privatizing the risks associated with maintaining children's security as women's "naturalized" responsibility (15-16). She identifies how the social amplification of a risk framework in the 1980s contributed to symbolic societal scapegoats, such as pedophile pre-schoolteachers, pre-teen mass murders, and homicidal au pairs that deflected contemporary society's attention from the material insecurities, such as work insecurity for younger cohorts, rising national child poverty rate, increased divorce, and the decline in community support. Referencing key works such as Hays' intensive motherhood and Bowlby's attachment theory, Villalobos concludes it is not intensive parenting, but the heavy motherload of expectations about the mother-child relationship that sustains women's fears and insecurities when raising their children.

In this qualitative research, Villalobos conducts a longitudinal study following thirty-four pregnant mothers through the first three years of their parenting, a crucial time when women generally begin to bear the brunt of increased domestic and child labour necessitating changes in women's marital

and work lives. Drawing from multiple interviews and observations, this early motherhood research offers richly intimate insights into different parenting strategies used by mothers to keep their child safe from societal risks. For example, in chapter two, so-called helicopter mothers carry a heavy motherload evidenced by shielding and antidote parenting strategies. Shielding strategies are akin to the classic over-protective parenting, where a mother acts as a barrier between her child and physical threats of a risky society; while the antidote strategy involves filling the child with love in hopes the child will be secure from emotional dangers such as terrorism and child abductions. In chapter three, mothers who see their mother-child connection as their own ultimate source of security, also carry a heavy motherload based on “self-sacrificing” parenting to compensate for the insecurities a woman feels in her marriage and work life. Their parenting strategies include guarding the parenting terrain from the husband/partner to ensure the baby is bonded to mother. Contrast these connection-oriented mothers, with the “love without saving” mothers in chapter four, who carry lighter motherloads. Approaching their parenting with less anxiety that often entails disregarding the parenting experts’ advice, these mothers see their child as resilient and their partners as an integral part of the parenting experience.

While Villalobos provides enlightening insights about the different motherloads and mother/child relationships of single and married mothers, stay-at-home moms, and moms juggling childcare with careers, she acknowledges the under-analysis of class, race, and ethnicity in her research. The middle-class bias identified by Villalobos in the recruitment process is evident in the last research chapter where light-motherload independence, as portrayed by the parenting experiences of two privileged women, problematically shores up the “ideal” two-parent, middle-class family. Unlike many mothers’ realities, these women who perform “mothering without the ordeal” have the financial security of stable well-paying careers, supportive partners/families and social networks, and high-quality child care options, allowing for anxiety-reduced choices in their parenting and home/work lives. Villalobos does provide some important race/ethnicity insights but as she explains, the small number of racially similar informants in her sample group limited her analysis. With such pressing societal risks as increasing racialized poverty, U.S police violence against black youth and intensified anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant sentiment reproduced in a post 9/11 terrorist discourse, more attention to the marginalized contexts of racialized and low-income parenting is critical.

Motherload: Making It All Better in Insecure Times is an important contribution to parenting literature and a valuable resource for mothering/motherhood researchers and scholars. At the end of the manuscript, Villalobos