



Motherhood in the Media: Infanticide, Journalism, and the Digital Age (Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies)

Barbara Barnett

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This book examines contemporary media stories about women who kill their children. By analyzing media texts, motherhood blogs, and journalistic interviews, the book seeks to understand better maternal violence and the factors that lead women to harm their children. The central thesis of this book is that media practices have changed dramatically during the past 50 years, as has society's views on "appropriate" feminine behavior, yet definitions of characteristics of good mothers remain largely defined by 1950s sit coms, Victorian ideals, and Christian theology.

The book contends that in spite of media saturation in American society, and the media's increased opportunities to tell complex and nuanced stories, news media narratives continue to situate maternal violence as rare, unfathomable, and unpredictable. The news media's shift in focus—from public service to profit-making industry—has encouraged superficial coverage of maternal violence as reporters look for stories that sell, not stories that explain. Motherhood blogs, in contrast, offer an opportunity for women to tell their own stories about motherhood, based on experience. Interviews with journalists offer insights into how the structure of their jobs dictates media coverage of this intimate form of violence.

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