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Vicedo, M. (2021). *Intelligent Love: The story of Clara Park, her autistic daughter, and the myth of the refrigerator mother*. Beacon Press: Boston. ISBN 978-0-8070-2562-8

Abigail Lavers, BA.
Master's Student, Disability Studies, Liverpool Hope University.
19008974 [at] hope [dot] ac [dot] uk

Intelligent Love: The story of Clara Park, her autistic daughter, and the myth of the refrigerator mother by Marga Vicedo, is a carefully constructed account of the history of Autism in the United States and the experiences of Clara and Jessica Park. Vicedo skilfully blends an in-depth social-intellectual history of psychiatry and Autism with Clara Park's perspective and advocacy for her autistic daughter. Within the book, Vicedo offers a captivating account of the scientific perspective on Autism throughout history, through focusing on the idea that 'mothers who were distracted by intellectual preconceptions would undermine their children's emotional development' (p.129). The book suggests that many child psychologists and psychiatrists believed that 'intellectual mothers were cold, refrigerator mothers who were unable to love their children with natural warmth as decreed by a woman's maternal instinct' (p.129). Whereas Clara challenged the view that she had caused her child's Autism, via defending the value of intelligent love. In doing so, she targeted the central assumption in Autism literature that blamed mothers.

The book has a total of eight chapters which cover an introduction; the history of Autism; the childhood of Jessica and the opinions of doctors. Vicedo begins with a short introduction of Clara and Jessica Park and their labels of 'intellectual mother' and 'autistic' respectively. This is followed by the history of Autism, where Vicedo suggests that although we may associate Autism with Hans Asperger and Leo Kanner, it is significantly more complicated, as the label of Autism is the result of various views and practices that were proposed; tested; debated and adjusted from the 1910's up to the present day. The chapters that follow alternate between texts on Clara's and Jessica's lives and conversations regarding therapeutic, institutional, and aetiological debates within the United States. Vicedo begins by

exploring Clara's life, spanning from childhood through to marriage, culminating in Jessica's birth in 1958 and her initial appointments at the Boston City Hospital in 1961. She highlights the environment in which Clara grew up, resulting in her discontent with the conception of motherhood and the marginalisation of women. Following this, Vicedo analyses the links made between children's behaviours and Autism and the transition witnessed in child psychological sciences post-World War 2. Moreover, Vicedo illustrates Clara's and fellow parents of autistic children fight against the psychoanalytic practice of mother-blaming. This included Bernard Rimland, who encouraged parents to publish and highlight their own experiences, whilst emerging as the central focal point of the parent advocate movement of the 1960's and who assisted the National Society for Autistic Children in 1965. The book ends with a brief catch-up of Clara and Jessica's life and where they are in 2021 illustrating how they have continued as activists and changed the lives of countless autistic people and their families.

Navigating the intricacies of Autism, *Intelligent Love* illustrates a depth of intellectual engagement that is both compelling and enlightening. Showcasing an excellent source of academic information, with the complex history of Autism laid out neatly and in chronological order. Vicedo's delivery of a thorough and in-depth exploration of Autism enriches the reader's understanding and knowledge of the topic at hand. By examining various aspects, undertones, and perspectives related to Autism, the author offers readers an exhaustive view that goes beyond surface-level understanding. Through detailed analysis, insightful interpretations and a comprehensive coverage of relevant opinions, themes and perspectives, Vicedo ensures the reader gains a holistic understanding of Autism and the experience of being called a 'refrigerator mother'. This detailed exploration not only educates readers but also encourages critical engagement with the information. The book allows readers to explore a variety of complexities, consider differing viewpoints and develop an

intricate perspective on the topic. Overall, Vicedo's commitment to providing a deep examination of the topic enhances the book's value and establishes its relevance to students, scholars and enthusiasts seeking a deeper understanding of Autism in general.

The author also shows how Autism has developed from being seen as a condition that needed to be cured through treatments such as Applied Behaviour Analysis, the controversial use of shock treatment, and all the way through to today's idea of Autism. Thus, the book's provision of insightful analysis and interpretation of complex theory significantly enriches the reading experience and offers valuable insights for the reader. Whilst introducing the reader to complex historical events which adds meaningful value to the reader. Moreover, including anecdotes from Clara Park's activism can be used as a source of information and inspiration for autistic people and parents of autistic children. Through the use of Clara and Jessica's story, it humanises the subject matter, and provides real-life examples and narratives that readers can relate to on a personal level. It made the book more engaging and memorable, thus fostering a deeper comprehension of the material presented. Furthermore, at the beginning of the book Vicedo introduces a number of terms and suggests which ones are now being used within society and which are preferred by autistic people. Therefore, illustrating that initially regarded as a symptom of mental illness, Autism evolved over time to be classified as a psychopathy, then as a developmental condition, and currently as a form of disability or neurodiversity. These shifts were influenced by both research advancements and evolving societal perspectives. Vicedo's meticulous approach to research greatly enhanced the credibility and value of the book. Additionally, the presence of references throughout the book serves to strengthen Vicedo's arguments and claims, providing readers with sources to support the ideas presented. This approach infuses confidence in the accuracy and reliability of the information provided. Thus, readers can trust that the conclusions presented by the author are based on solid evidence, ensuring the book is a valuable resource

for academics, students, and practitioners alike. Finally, the accessibility of the writing, despite its academic grounding, is a significant asset of the book, as it ensures a wider engagement and comprehension amongst a diverse audience. Through presenting complex concepts in an understandable and clear manner, the author removes barriers for readers who may not have a specialised background in Autism, and may be reading for fun or interest, rather than just academic interest. As the information is complex, the accessible writing results in readers being able to grapple with complex information without feeling overwhelmed by overly academic jargon or technical language.

Although interesting, the book has several limitations, including the potential alienation of non-academic readers. The book contains a large number of historical dates and facts, with each new theory of Autism being discussed deeply and thoroughly. Although helpful, it disrupts the flow of the book and disrupts the balance the book aims to achieve, that is, emotional and factual whilst outlining Clara and Jessica's story, without being a dry lesson on the history of Autism. Continuing with this idea, the book title mentions 'Clara Park and her autistic daughter', therefore there is an assumption that the book will only be about their story. Although, Vicedo does draw on interviews conducted with the members of the Park family; the personal archives of Bernard Rimland and Clara; communication between Clara and leading psychologists and a network of parents, and Clara's notebooks and materials she created to support Jessica, however the book did not include as much detail as there could have been. In such, there was a missed opportunity to counteract some of the claims made in the book with views from Jessica herself or the other autistic children mentioned in the book. This may have produced a wider range of viewpoints and introduced a personal and relatable side to the information. Furthermore, as the author does not have lived experiences of Autism or disability in general (as far as I could perceive based on the information provided), and instead comes from medical and psychological background, the

potential for missing aspects of autistic people's voices is prominent. Although Vicedo presents the book from a factual point of view rather than a medical one, such positive objectivism is well-received although a more appropriate contrast through the utilisation of the social model perspective would have been more relevant. For example, Vicedo goes into detail about the label of Autism and how it came about, however it does not discuss the impact of receiving a label and the implications labelling can bring. It would be interesting to know if those children who were given the label of Autism were then institutionalised as a result or if it had impacted them in a positive way, through better services, resources, or education/ schooling. Finally, there was an aspect of missing a broader contemplation on the prevalence of mother-blaming during this period and the controversial practices of aversive conditioning and applied behaviour analysis and the use of shock treatment (electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) – check this in book). Additionally, there was a lack of variety in the way that Autism was talked about, Clara was from a middle/ upper class family, who would have had the resources to travel to these different psychologists and psychiatrists. It may have improved the book, if there was a variety of parents and children included, especially from those who may have been classed as a refrigerator mother but did not have the resources to rebut it.

In conclusion, Vicedo's 'Intelligent Love: The story of Clara Park, her autistic daughter, and the myth of the refrigerator mother, offers a compelling exploration of Autism and the lives of activist Clara Park and her autistic daughter Jessica Park. Throughout the review, it was shown that Vicedo's account of the history of Autism was thorough and detailed, outlined with the views on Autism from key psychologists, psychiatrists, and medical professionals. Clara and Jessica were also included in the book, resulting in a personal aspect being interweaved. Vicedo's meticulous research and expository narrative style makes this book an invaluable contribution to the history of Autism, and potentially

Disability Studies and/or psychology. While it excels in providing academic information through the chronological order of the complex history of Autism, there are moments where this academic information disrupts the flow of the book and takes over Clara and Jessica's story. Nevertheless, the book's impact and information are undeniable, shedding light on the intricate narrative of Autism's history and those who were labelled autistic or with childhood schizophrenia. Overall, I highly recommend *Intelligent Love: The story of Clara Park, her autistic daughter, and the myth of the refrigerator mother* to academics or students working within disability studies, social science, medical fields or psychology as well as autistic people and their families, for its comprehensive coverage, Vicedo's rigorous research and its accessibility. It is a thought-provoking read that will enhance the reader's knowledge of Autism.