

Law, Drugs and the Politics of Childhood - From Protection to Punishment

Simon Flacks

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Concerns with *protecting* children are often interlinked with strategies and policies that *problematise* children and families, with existing strategies in the United Kingdom stressing the links between drug use, family problems, and criminal justice. We do not have to look much further than the use of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) with children and young peoples' in the United Kingdom, to witness the dangers in misidentification and misconflation of *vulnerability* and *risk*. Simon Flacks' *Law, Drugs and The Politics of Childhood – From Protection to Punishment* offers a fascinating insight into the origins of the associations between childhood and drugs.

Flacks' book draws on Foucauldian methodologies to discuss the genealogical approach to the modern preoccupation with drugs and childhood. It provides a thoughtful examination of policy briefs, legislation, parliamentary debates, historical literature, and law reform. Flacks does not solely focus on examining policy, history, and reform, but delves into issues associated with exploitation and the categorisation of children as *the deserving* victim and *the problematic* exploiter - an area so complex that it requires a deeper examination. The *vulnerability* of youth, often interwoven with *innocence*, features heavily in Flacks' exploration of the *abject dealer* with exploration of policy and strategies in the United Kingdom and United States that acknowledge childhood whilst tackling the problems associated with drugs.

An exploration of drugs and childhood would not be complete without reflection on issues associated with parental drug use and, in particular, the gendered focus of parental drug use. The *problematization* of drug use in women (more so than men) raises an interesting sidebar on the culture of blame associated with women and mothers. Flacks' book is focused on the modern preoccupation with drugs and childhood, so a detailed exploration of blame culture is not expected here but it is important to note that there are far-reaching implications of this issue regarding girls and young women. Associations between drugs and childhood go beyond the criminal justice system, with Flacks offering a considerate evaluation of school

approaches to drugs. It outlines the challenges faced by schools in balancing dual roles – the institution of learning and enrichment versus the institution of discipline and control.

The book forms part the *New Advances in Crime and Social Harm* series that offers original contributions to criminology, criminal justice, and penology. Simon Frack's long-held interest in the regulation of drugs and childhood features strongly in the book. It presents a worthwhile exploration of the associations between childhood and drugs, including a thoughtful debate on law reform, exploitation, family justice, and school discipline. This book does, as Frack promises, offer a certain insight into the world of childhood and drugs that would benefit professionals supporting children and young people, policymakers, and researchers.

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