



When Children Kill Children: Penal Populism and Political Culture (Clarendon Studies in Criminology)

David A. Green

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This title examines the role of political culture and penal populism in the response to the emotive subject of child-on-child homicide.

Green explores the reasons underlying the vastly differing responses of the English and Norwegian criminal justice systems to the cases of James Bulger and Silje Redergard respectively. Whereas James Bulger's killers were subject to extreme press and public hostility, and held in secure detention for nine months before being tried in an adversarial court, and served eight years in custody, a Redergard's killers were shielded from public antagonism and carefully reintegrated into the local community. This book argues that English adversarial political culture creates far more incentives to politicize high-profile crimes than Norwegian consensus political culture. Drawing on a wealth of empirical research, Green suggests that the tendency for politicians to justify punitive responses to crime by invoking harsh political attitudes is based upon a flawed understanding of public opinion.

In a compelling study, Green proposes a more deliberative response to crime is possible by making English culture less adversarial and by making informed public judgment more assessable.

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