

Reich, J.A. *Calling the Shots: Why Parents Reject Vaccines*. New York: New York University Press. 2016. 328pp £20.99 (hbk) ISBN: 9781479812790

In *Calling the Shots: Why parents reject vaccines*, Jennifer Reich uses her extensive experience in examining how families navigate state policy, as well as having to navigate vaccines in her personal life, to present in-depth perspectives of vaccination. Views from a wide range of participants are presented, including those from parents (who accepted either none or only some vaccines for their children, or accepted vaccination on a schedule of their own design); healthcare providers; researchers; attorneys; policy makers; and advocates. Various methods were used to collect data over seven years and included in-depth interviews; ethnographic observation; and content analysis. Reich is a Sociologist with extensive clinical knowledge about vaccines and the diseases they prevent. She is honest and clear about her position as pro-vaccination, having vaccinated her own children, but balances this by acknowledging that vaccines do have side effects (giving voice to those who say they have experienced ~~them~~perceived vaccine side effects) and having an empathetic and understanding approach to the wide ranges of views and concerns she encounters. Despite occasionally repetitive arguments, this book is filled with fascinating insights gained through participant narratives, aimed to fill the middle ground between opposing views by providing a better understanding of how different people approach vaccines. Reich also offers suggestions for how policy-makers and healthcare professionals can work with, rather than against those with vaccine concerns.

Reich takes a novel approach to discussing vaccine refusal. She humanisesinginvites us to empathisewith vaccine-refusers by including parent narratives that strongly bring the emotion of vaccine decision-making to life, without the 'othering' and perceptions of ignorance often employed by the wider pro-vaccine community. This book analyses cultural, historical and social contexts of vaccine anxieties, as well as the structural factors which keep them in place. It thus turns the mainstream discourse – that anti-vaccinators are ignorant, ill-informed and selfish - on its head, arguing the need to acknowledge parental expertise as well as orthodox science. It explains the communication and perception gulfs between parents and experts and how these exacerbate and sometimes even cause vaccine anxieties.

After a comprehensive but accessible overview of the history of vaccines and public trust in vaccination, Reich comes to one of her main arguments, that the responsibility to avoid health risks is now placed on the individual, while at the same time, vaccination benefits are described in terms of 'the herd'. This contradictory rhetoric, espoused by public health institutions, reminds patients (who in some contexts, see themselves as consumers), that they, and not their physicians or vaccine researchers, are the experts on their own children and undermines the collective nature of vaccine policy.

Reich analyses the various reasons for vaccine concerns, including worries that vaccines are 'unnatural', contrasting with the idea of the 'pure' and 'un-touched' new-born. It is explained how some vaccines, such as varicella, are sometimes seen as unnecessary due to the social location of white, middle class parents - both geographical, and in terms of race and class - which supports their view that they are low risk and exempt from the assumptions of public health policy.

The next chapter links the fear of the unnatural, to parents' distrust of Big Pharma and the perceived lack of disclosure by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). There is an interesting gender dynamic linked to this fear: mothers must continually conduct additional work to ensure the

well-being of their children, exercising “precautionary consumption” (page 124) with regards to possible chemical containing products.

Reich ~~'s main thesis is then crystallised:~~explores to what extent healthcare providers support parents' insistence that they are experts on their children, and how institutional structures of medical practice respond to parents significantly shapes their vaccine decisions. Reich uses GP narratives to compare the different ways they discuss vaccines with patients, illustrating that there are many challenges faced by paediatricians in balancing competing priorities, namely promoting a ~~an~~ important public? health technology that they consider important, while respecting the wishes of their patients.

Vaccine anxiety has existed since vaccine introduction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, tensions between the vulnerability of one child and the rights of parents to choose whether or not to vaccinate have been the focus of recent debate, especially since the emergence of various vaccine-preventable disease epidemics such as the measles outbreak in Disneyland in 2014. Reich has succeeded in the difficult task of critiquing the institutions that develop, deliver and recommend vaccines, while at the same time advocating for vaccination.

The research conducted for this book is US based, with interviews taking place in Colorado, rendering some arguments and applications limited in other settings. However, the socio-economic context in which Reich's participants are situated is analysed in depth. This effectively captures the cannot be done on a large scale across countries, and social worlds context in which these participants' vaccine anxieties are situated and thus enables an understanding of how their particular concerns arose. here is important.

This thought-provoking book makes the point that vaccination is not an exact science or only a medical science; it is also a social science. This begs questions about how to create greater transparency in vaccine policy, address profit incentives, and stop marketing vaccines as only for individual benefit. Reich recommends that vaccine conversations with parents should be adapted to balance efforts to promote population health, while supporting the concepts of consent, bodily integrity, and individual choice in healthcare.