



Discretionary Justice: Looking Inside a Juvenile Drug Court (Critical Issues in Crime and Society)

Leslie Paik

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Juvenile drug courts are on the rise in the United States, as a result of a favorable political climate and justice officials' endorsement of the therapeutic jurisprudence movement--the concept of combining therapeutic care with correctional discipline. The goal is to divert nonviolent youth drug offenders into addiction treatment instead of long-term incarceration. *Discretionary Justice* overviews the system, taking readers behind the scenes of the juvenile drug court. Based on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews at a California court, Leslie Paik explores the staff's decision-making practices in assessing the youths' cases, concentrating on the way accountability and noncompliance are assessed. Using the concept of "workability," Paik demonstrates how compliance, and what is seen by staff as "noncompliance," are the constructed results of staff decisions, fluctuating budgets, and sometimes questionable drug test results.

While these courts largely focus on holding youths responsible for their actions, this book underscores the social factors that shape how staff members view progress in the court. Paik also emphasizes the perspectives of children and parents. Given the growing emphasis on individual responsibility in other settings, such as schools and public welfare agencies, Paik's findings are relevant outside the juvenile justice system.

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