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Discretion in Criminal Justice: The Tension between Individualization and Uniformity. Lloyd E. Ohlin and Frank J. Remmington.

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BOOK NOTES

Lloyd E. Ohlin and Frank J. Remington (Eds.). *Discretion in Criminal Justice: The Tension between Individualization and Uniformity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993. \$65.50 hardcover. \$21.95 papercover.

Although the United States spends more on crime and corrections, and has more incarcerated felons than most other Western industrial nations, its crime problem continues to grow and there appears to be no solution to the problem. While academic research into crime and related social problems has also increased, there is little evidence that this research has made a significant contribution to addressing the problem. Despite the existence of numerous academic departments and specialized research institutes concerned with criminal justice issues, the crime trend and the numbers of offenders committed to prison, continues its inexorable rise.

One explanation for this apparent paradox is the deliberate politicization of crime issues by political leaders who ignore research findings that contradict popular beliefs about punishment and retribution. While serious academic research has conclusively demonstrated the futility of incarceration as a rehabilitative mechanism, politicians continue to garner public support by calling for longer and harsher prison sentences.

Ohlin and Remington's edited collection deals with the issue of discretion versus mandatory approaches in the criminal justice system within the context of a major national study of crime and criminal justice in America. The findings of the study, which was commissioned by the American Bar Association in the 1950s, have previously been released in the form of reports and monographs. However, this is the first comprehensive analysis to be published in book form. Although the survey dates back to the 1950s, its findings, the editors, suggest, have direct relevance to the issue of discretion today. With the current clamor for mandatory prison sentences and particularly for the "three strikes and you'r out" approach, it is to be hoped that this book will persuade at least some political leaders of the pointlessness of using incarceration as a primary means of addressing the nation's most critical social problems.