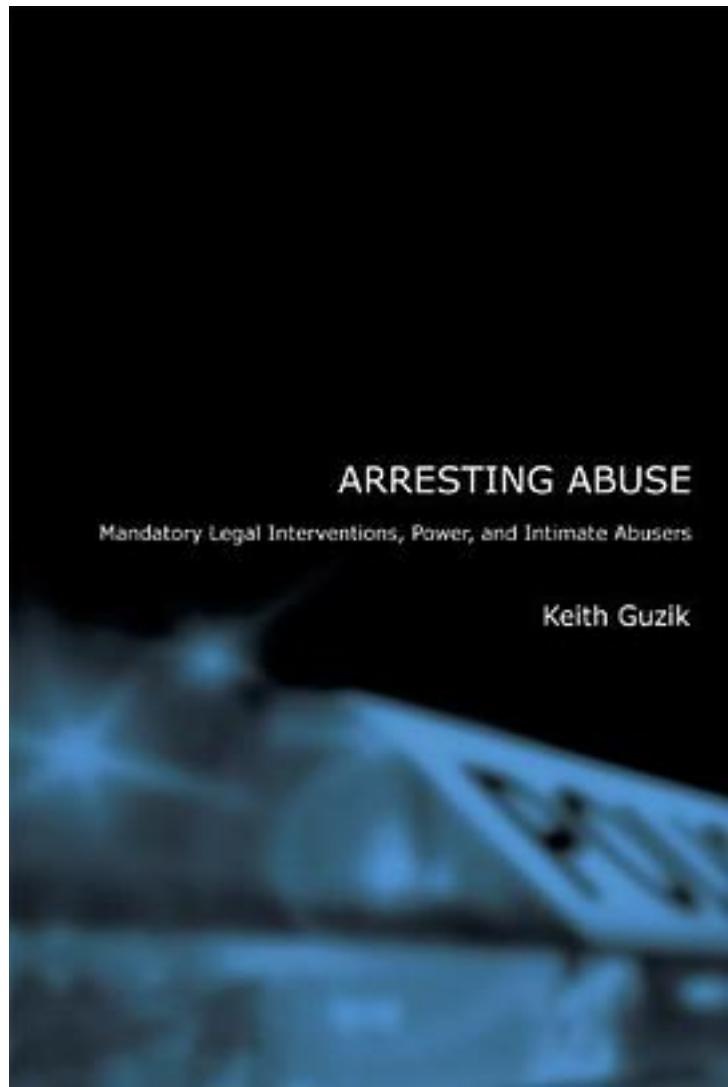


Arresting Abuse



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出版者:

出版时间:2009-6

装帧:

isbn:9780875804033

This book offers a critical study of the effects of mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution on offenders. Over the last decade, police departments and state's attorney's offices across the country have adopted mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution policies to handle cases of intimate abuse. In addition to protecting victims from future violence, these policies are intended to change abusers by punishing them for their behavior. Emerging at a time when various dimensions of U.S. society are being 'governed through crime,' mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution have proven controversial. While critics charge that the policies disempower women by removing decision making from them and aggravate the negative consequences of criminal justice interventions in poor and minority communities, proponents maintain that the measures are needed to protect battered women and provide them the same legal protections afforded to other victims of violent crime. Somewhat overlooked in this debate has been how mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution affect abusers, a critical question for understanding the power of criminal punishment to combat intimate partner abuse. In "Arresting Abuse", Keith Guzik answers this question. Drawing from both first-hand observations of a police department and criminal court following mandatory policies and extensive interviews with 30 offenders arrested and prosecuted for domestic violence, "Arresting Abuse" provides a critical assessment. While mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution allow the state to extend formal legal supervision over an increasing number of violent men and women, thus seemingly increasing its power over them, offenders prove resistant to change. They see themselves as victims of injustice, continue to view their violence as justified, and devise new strategies to preserve their definition and enactment of self. The reasons for these outcomes rest in the nature of power itself - in the state tactics, structures of social inequality, and modes of individual agency through which mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution are realized. A key contribution to domestic violence literature as well as to socio-legal scholarship on the power of the law as a force for social change, "Arresting Abuse" argues that the promise for defeating intimate partner abuse lies in better matching the tactics of state power to the goals of victim empowerment and offender responsibility and to exercise such force through mechanisms that do not exacerbate social inequality.

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