

Anthony Doob and Carla Cesaroni.
Responding to Youth Crime in Canada.

University of Toronto Press, 2004, 290 pp.

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Judging by the number of textbooks on young offenders that have landed on my desk from Canadian publishers in recent years, interest in the study of youth crime in Canadian universities must be booming. *Responding to Youth Crime in Canada*, by Anthony Doob and Carla Cesaroni will not only add to the growing number of books in this area, but it will also serve as a well written and important corrective to the myths that surround youth crime and youth justice in Canada today. The book, however, does more than simply dispel myths (i.e., youth crime is on the increase; females are becoming more violent; short, sharp shocks, such as boot camps, are an effective means to reduce recidivism; and that the gang problem is out of control in Canada). Doob and Cesaroni present a systematic overview and discussion of many important policy-related issues pertaining to youth crime and youth justice, including the recently implemented Youth Criminal Justice Act.

While much of the material was written specifically for this volume, a substantial amount of content has appeared elsewhere in the form of chapters, reports and articles that the authors have authored or coauthored. So, for those familiar with the work of Tony Doob, a fair amount of the material in the book will be recognizable. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the book does a skillful job presenting research-based evidence that questions the commonly held belief that changes in the criminal justice system will solve the youth crime problem. In fact Doob and Cesaroni argue that the level of youth crime, and the severity of official measures that are directed at controlling it, are quite independent from each other.

For those interested in issues that relate to trends in youth crime, policing, sentencing, custody and recidivism, this book will serve as a valuable reference. *Responding to Youth Crime in Canada* also does a fine job placing youth crime in Canada within an international context. For instance, before assessing changes in youth crime rates in Canada — and the controversies that emerge from these data — Doob and Cesaroni review trends in youth crime from the USA, Japan and Sweden. Finally, the conclusion offers a thoughtful and timely discussion of progressive interventions that are intended to prevent and respond intelligently to youthful offending. In it the authors argue that effective programs that deal with youth crime are most likely to reside outside of the correctional system, and not in the drill halls of boot camps, for example.

The major strength of the book lies in its presentation about what is empirically known about youth crime and the operation of the criminal justice system. However, for those who are interested in a book that is focused on weighty theoretical controversies surrounding youth crime and youth justice, this volume may not be what you are looking for. To Doob's and Cesaroni's credit, they do state at the outset that the book is not primarily concerned with theory on the causes of youth crime. Nevertheless, there was one important theoretical matter that was raised in the book, but not fully attended to. This has to do with the view that pressures that bear upon governments to amend youth justice legislation are far more likely to be politically motivated than they are to be based on

empirical research. While I fully agree with this point, I would have been interested in knowing more about why the authors deem this is to be the case and, perhaps more importantly, what can be done about it? What role do Doob and Cesaroni believe the research community could play so that good quality research would be more effective in terms of not only informing policy makers, but also influencing public and criminal justice policy? In my mind this is an important issue that not only deserved more attention in this book, but also is a question that needs to be more effectively explored by the Canadian criminological community in general.

This point aside, the book will appeal to scholars in the field who are looking for an up to date volume on youth crime that contains a strong empirical and policy perspective. Moreover, it would be perfectly appropriate as an assigned text in an undergraduate course on young offenders or youth justice.

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