

## Good Policing: Trust, Legitimacy and Authority

By Mike Hough

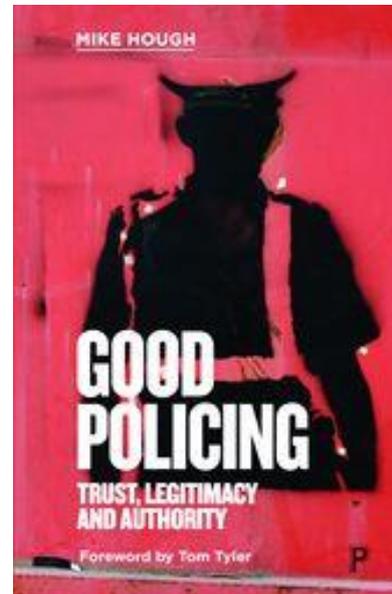
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Reviewed by Russell Dippy

Mike Hough's book delves into international research into policing, focussing on what he labels a 'procedural justice theory'. The book explores ideas of police legitimacy, trust, and compliance with the law. Hough takes readers along an exploratory path while providing commentary and discussion on each theory. He first provides an overview of the history of modern UK policing, with some international comparisons. He subsequently presents his 'procedural justice theory', comprising three claims; first, police authority is built on trust; second, trust underpins legitimacy; third, when legitimacy is conferred, compliance with the law and cooperation with officials occurs.



Having thus set the stage, Hough then examines the notions of 'authority' and 'legitimacy', which in turn provides context to his discussion of "good policing" as an approach based on "*striking the best possible balance between hard and soft policing, in ways that maximise police legitimacy*" (p. 28). This definition forms the basis of Hough's analysis within the rest of the book

Particularly relevant to the topic of 'good policing' is Chapter three, centred round the British context but also with insights from Europe, America and Australia. The resulting position supports legitimacy as central to effective policing and highlights the need to continually assess how policy and practice may affect legitimacy. Through some case studies, the chapter further explores the role of fairness in promoting the application of legitimacy. Fair treatment is characterised as one key instrument to ensure compliance, however the author further notes that inducements, rewards, and punishments, if applied, can work equally well to that end.

Hough further explores issues that can arise with policing minority groups, and the impacts these may have on police legitimacy and community's trust. He uses the term "visible ethnic minority groups" to refer to visual cues exposing these groups to labels and inconsistent police responses. The policing of 'visible ethnic minority groups' is explored against the background of the concept of "hard power traps", i.e., the use of coercion and the threat of coercive force (for example unnecessary aggression in interactions). Such 'traps' may further negatively impact community's trust in the police hence, in turn, police legitimacy.

Hough discusses ways to embed procedural justice within policing practices at the institutional level. Noting that culture change requires understanding of existing culture, he provides some commentary on police culture and the concept of fair outcomes versus fair processes within policing organisations. The discussion turns to training and the British move toward professionalism, with an agenda for police officers to undertake degree-level education prior to joining the force.

In later chapters, Hugh focuses on ethics and justice, specifically on how to implement these concepts within police agencies that attempt to adopt procedural justice theory. The use of ‘low-visibility techniques of persuasion’ by both police officers and institutions to achieve compliance is discussed. The author concludes that, whilst procedural justice theory, combined with low visibility techniques of persuasion, can support legal compliance, the implementation of the ethical and just framework paired with procedural justice theory should be the aim of all democratic policing agencies.

In the Postscript, Hough provides some thoughts about the application of the UK emergency powers enacted for the initial response to Covid-19. With reference to his account of procedural justice theory, Hough notes some variance in the initial lockdown compliance activities, where varying amounts of coercive power were applied to achieve lockdown outcomes. He notes this occurred for relatively short periods (at the time of his writing) and that the coercive activity may have arisen due to the speed of implementation of the legislation and inconsistency of the accompanying public information provided by government. Hence, the author points out that many of those policies, for example public movement restrictions, were loosely worded, hence the supporting guidelines led to confusion between police and the public as to what was allowed. This inconsistency and confusion led to a focus on enforcement rather than on building public understanding – thus affecting the trust and legitimacy at the basis of procedural justice theory. Similar conclusions may arise from a review of the Australian response to COVID, as analogous concerns have been raised about the role of police in a health-based emergency.

#### **About the Reviewer**

Russell Dippy is a Doctor of Public Safety Student at Charles Sturt University. His studies are examining the Human Capacities of Emergency Managers in Australia.