

## **Presentation of the 2021 BSC Outstanding Achievement Award to Professor Mike Hough**

It is a privilege to know Professor Mike Hough and I was delighted to have the opportunity to nominate him for the British Society of Criminology's 2021 Outstanding Achievement Award and to introduce him today.

Mike's career is unusual insofar as he has extensive experience of social research in different capacities: as a researcher, as a research manager, as a funder (when in the Home Office) and as a customer (when in a Home Office policy division).

Mike's research interests include: policing; procedural justice theory; public perceptions of crime and punishment; crime measurement and crime trends; crime prevention and community safety; legitimacy and trust in justice; drugs and drug related crime, and sentencing. He has around 300 publications and in the region of 18,000 citations for articles in scholarly journals....good citations, not negative vibrations (as Mike Levy once quipped). A citation study by Ellen Cohn and David Farrington published in the *British Journal of Criminology* in 2016 showed that he was the most cited European-based scholar in five international journals between 2006 and 2010, and the 11<sup>th</sup> most cited scholar internationally.

Mike was President of the British Society of Criminology from 2008 until 2011. The European Society of Criminology awarded him the 2021 European Society of Criminology Award in recognition of his lifetime contribution to European Criminology. Pre-eminent scholar and internationally renowned criminologist, friend, guide and mentor to many.

Mike was born in South Wales and studied first of all for a degree in Philosophy and Psychology at Oxford, followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Social and Cultural Studies at London University. His first post was as a Research Officer in the Home Office Research and Planning Unit – in the days when the Home was a leading light in terms of criminological research. He progressed through different roles from Senior Research Officer, through to Principal Research Officer and then to an even higher role in the civil service in the Home Office Probation Division, before being appointed as Deputy Director in the Home Office Research and Planning Unit, managing a staff of 20-30 researchers. After 20 years in the Home Office though there was increasing

discomfort and distaste for the nature and direction of politics and political decision-making in regard to crime and criminal justice related research, so he moved into the academic sector in 1994.

What it is important to say is that HORPU had for some time been intellectually independent and that Mike made significant contributions, especially to the shape and development of the British Crime Survey (now the Crime Survey, England and Wales). As colleagues may know, the first British Crime Survey was in 1982; it covered England, Wales and Scotland. Scotland now has its own survey (Scottish Crime & Justice Survey), as does Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Crime & Victimization Survey). The Crime Survey for England and Wales, previously the British Crime Survey (BCS), is one of the largest social research surveys conducted in England and Wales. It asks people resident in households about their experiences of crime in face-to-face interviews.

After the twenty-year stint in the Home Office, in 1994 Mike became Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research Unit at South Bank University, attracting other Home Office colleagues such as Carol Hedderman to join him. 2003 brought a move to King's College School of Law and the setting up of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research where he continued as director until 2010. Mike became co-director and then Associate director of the ICPR when it moved to the School of Law, Birkbeck, University of London. 2016 led to notional retirement...with emphasis very much on *notional*.

The ICPR, I want to add, is one of the major UK centres for academic policy research on criminal justice...now in existence for over 25 years. It has established itself, under Mike's direction, both as an academic research centre and as a highly productive provider of short- middle term policy research. Its policy reports are targeted first and foremost at politicians and their advisors, and at senior managers and practitioners within the criminal justice system and in related fields. I succeeded Mike as President of the British Society of Criminology in 2011 and was keen to follow in his steps by maintaining good relations with Home Office and Ministry of Justice civil service colleagues, organising an annual day conference with them on a topical crime and criminal justice issue. This was something which Mike introduced and which it seemed to me to be a very good thing for the British Society of Criminology to be doing.

When not writing academic articles, Mike has given evidence to several UK parliamentary committees, including the Home Affairs Select Committee, the Justice Select Committee, the Public Administration Select Committee and the All Party Penal Affairs Group. He has frequently contributed to radio and television programmes, including BBC News, the Today Programme, ITN and Channel 4 news, Start the Week, Law in Action, The World Tonight, the World this Weekend, and so much more. He has also served as Advisor to a number of people and offices, including the London, Regional Crime Reduction Director at the Government Office for London, and Southwark Council's statutory crime reduction partnership and Kensington and Chelsea's Drug Action Team. Trustee of a number of organisations too – including the Lambeth Crime Prevention Trust. He has also been the Radzinowicz Fellow at the Institute of Criminology in Cambridge in recent years, advising early career researchers in particular.

I want to mention some of Mike's *Key works*. It is hard to make a selection, but notably his work has become increasingly comparative and European as time has gone on, so first of all I have chosen some European work to exemplify Mike's brilliant scholarly work:

Firstly, the work on [\*Legitimacy, Trust and Compliance: An Empirical Test of Procedural Justice Theory using the European Social Survey\*](#). When we think of compliance we perhaps think of Tony Bottoms' four categories of explanation for compliance with authority in general and with the criminal law in particular. These are:

- prudential or self-interested calculations about the potential costs and benefits of punishment, which take into account the risks and costs of punishment;
- normative considerations about the 'rights and wrongs' of non-compliance;
- the impact of obstructive strategies, such as locking up offenders to prevent their reoffending, and locking up the targets of criminal attention, literally or metaphorically; and,
- habit.

Mike's work in this area, with colleagues Jon Jackson and Ben Bradford, has expanded our understanding of compliance enormously. With a focus on whether normative explanations for compliance – and in particular those that appeal to the legitimacy of institutions of justice are

fuller and more satisfactory than those that simply invoke rational calculations.

There is now a reasonable and rapidly growing body of evidence in support of procedural justice theory. This research has established the various linkages between trust in the police, police legitimacy and consent to the rule of law that are posited by the theory. In essence:

- If legal authorities such as the police are seen by the public to be unfair and disrespectful, this damages trust in them
- Low trust in legal authorities reduces their legitimacy in the eyes of the public
- The less that institutions of justice are seen as legitimate, the less the public will defer to their authority
- And this will reduce public commitment to the rule of law and preparedness to help the police and the courts.

What did Mike, Jon and Ben add to this knowledge? Empirical flesh on the bones of theory... The European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically-driven social survey designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. The ESS was established in 2001 and fieldwork for the fifth sweep was conducted in late 2010. A central coordinating team runs the survey, and is funded by the European Commission. Each participating country covers the costs of employing its own country coordinator, translating the questionnaire and commissioning fieldwork. Although not all countries achieve this, the aspiration is that countries should have probability samples of the adult (16+) population, with high response rates, interviewed face-to-face using CAPI (computer assisted personal interviewing). The survey is recognised currently to be one of the highest quality cross-European surveys. The questionnaire comprises an invariant core of questions asked of all respondents in each round, and a series of rotating modules which are included in only some rounds. Academics are invited to bid for space on the questionnaire in each round. Fieldwork for Round 5 of the ESS was done in 2010/11; 28 countries took part (some of which were 'European' in only quite a loose sense); and a dataset on 26 countries became available for academic analysis in early 2012, comprising 52,041 interviews.

The module on 'trust in justice' that they developed comprised 45 questions, which took around 20 minutes to administer. The dataset included other relevant questions on topics such as personal and

political trust, fear of crime, and victim experience, as well as demographics. They thus had access to a very significant resource for criminological research.

The work shows that trust in the police is an important factor in shaping people's sense of police legitimacy, and trust in police fairness is the crucial dimension across Europe. They established, convincingly, that there is strong empirical support for central aspects of 'procedural justice' theory. The findings presented show clear and strong relationships between dimensions of trust in the police, and dimensions of perceived police legitimacy. Of particular importance is the strong relationship between trust in fairness and dimensions of perceived legitimacy. The clear policy lesson here is that any strategies to build a sense of police legitimacy in the eyes of the public need to focus on procedural fairness. Fair and respectful treatment of the public by the police seems likely to be the fastest route to improved legitimacy, from the perspective of the policed.

[ As an aside, I might add that Mike's most recent book on [\*Good Policing. Trust, Legitimacy and Authority\*](#), published by Policy Press, is an excellent read. Contrasting hard and soft approaches to policing and punishment he offers a fresh perspective which stresses the importance of securing normative compliance – it can be described as a route-map for ethical policing.]

Regarding the European/International arena - we could also refer to Mike's work on the international Self-Report Delinquency Study or to his co-editorship of the European Handbook of Criminology (Routledge) to gain a sense of his strong European and comparative interests.

My second choice is the work produced between Mike and Julian Roberts on public attitudes towards sentencing – challenging media and public perceptions of crime and justice. Throughout the western world public opinion has played an important role in shaping criminal justice policy. At the same time opinion polls repeatedly demonstrate that the public know little about crime and justice, and hold negative views of the criminal justice system. Mike and Julian show clear differences between attitudes in the abstract (which may be harsh) and attitudes when shown referring to specific people and their life circumstances, when attitudes are much more understanding. This is hugely important and impactful work, some of which explores strategies for changing public opinion.

My third choice reveals Mike's methodological flexibility - interesting given that he was in the Home Office at the time when a hierarchy of methods was promoted, with RCTs (randomised control trials) being seen as the gold standard. An article in *Criminology and Criminal Justice* the BSC's own Sage journal: '[Gold standard or fool's gold?](#)' assesses some of the claims made for experimental research in the field of rehabilitation of offenders. He suggests that both policy officials and evaluators have tended to over-invest financially and intellectually in a technocratic model of reducing reoffending that emphasizes programmes for offenders, and to under-invest in models that see the process as a complex 'people changing' skill. He argues that the complexity of this process renders it hard to evaluate using experimental methods of evaluation such as randomized controlled trials (RCTs). RCTs provide strong internal validity, but in complex settings offer weak external validity, making it hard to generalize from the experimental setting to other settings. The article suggests that the proper role for evaluative research in this field should be seen as building and testing middle-level theories about how best to change offenders' behaviour. Every time I see an unthinking reference to RCTs as the gold standard in an undergraduate (or postgraduate essay for that matter) the students get a lecture from me...and a copy of Mike's article.

These are things to be proud of, and I think that in making this Award, the BSC is wanting to say that it is very proud of you, Mike, your scholarly contributions, your engagement with policy-makers, your willingness to talk to eminent politicians and to students *alike*, your faith that we need to keep chipping away at the negative side of politics through different kinds of engagement.

I'm going to mention one other achievement – mine this time. Many moons ago I succeeded in getting Mike onto the dance floor at a BSC conference ceilidh in Scotland. He tells me that he must have been very drunk, and that to attempt the Gay Gordons with me, he must have been *very, very* drunk. His scholarly work has been much more rewarding, and with this, I am sure that many will join me in thanking Mike for his outstanding achievements and commitment in the world of criminology.

**Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe**