

Abstract

The purpose of my research is to look at how members of the public experience the social regulatory activities of the police and the courts. In particular, I am concerned about the experiences of the members of two minority groups—African-Americans and Hispanics. My goal is to explore the implications of my findings for models of policing and court administration. These models focus on finding effective ways to regulate social behaviour.

My argument is that we have a lot to gain by reframing the way we think about the general approach to social regulation that has dominated legal scholarship for several decades. I propose and defend empirically the value of a *proactive model of social regulation* that is based upon encouraging and maintaining public trust in the character and motives of legal authorities. The public trust in the police and courts central to this model is sustained by *process based policing* and *process oriented problem solving by the courts*. Process is the key issue in each case because public trust in these legal authorities is encouraged when they make their decisions through procedures that members of the public view as fair.