**Broken Windows**

James Q. Wilson & George L. Kelling
*The Atlantic*, March 1982

Readings at www.petermoskos.com
Select “classes,” then scroll down to CRJ 793

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"Broken Windows" (1982) by George Kelling & James Q. Wilson

- An unfixed broken window leads to decay, disorder, and fear, which in turn leads to increased criminality.
- Put another way: take care of the little things and the big things will take care of themselves.

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Broken-Windows Policing in Action

- Broken Windows is not a silver-bullet. You don’t “do” Broken Windows. You act based on community input of disorder, fear, foot patrol, and police discretion.
- Broken Windows is problem-solving process of police action.
- Broken Windows asks how can police work with the community to reduce fear and create a less criminal environment?

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What is a “broken window”?

- Crime or quality-of-life issues that create fear or usurps public space.
- Recognizes the community as a collective victim.
- “Broken Windows” are not just literal broken windows, but disorder that causes fear and goes against community values.

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“Signal Crime” as a mechanism

- The presence of signal crimes [Broken Windows] is more likely to stimulate a decline in levels of social cohesion and collective efficacy by degrading levels of mutual trust and confidence. Signal crimes shape people’s risk perceptions, encouraging higher levels of fear and anxiety.

Policy Influence of Broken Window

- In 2006, Bill Bratton said the only criminological study that influenced him significantly was “Broken Windows.”


What Broken Windows is up against…

- Academics who stress “root causes” or hold a Marxist “critical” view related to police and class oppression.
- Those who discount the effectiveness of police and crime prevention.

The police] cannot control crime any more than they can alter the economic structure, the political system, the educational system, or fundamentally affect the birthrate or patterns of migration.


(see also Koenig 1991, Bayley 1994, Manning 1997)

No war against crime will ever be won…. If crime rates in America are to decline in the long term, the causes will lie in major changes in social policies toward job creation, income maintenance, medical care, housing, education, drugs, and firearms.


- Broken Windows says Root Causes matter. But as police, there’s little we can do about them.
- Broken Windows asks about personal agency (free will), crimes of opportunity, situational crime prevention, the urban environment, and, most importantly: The role of police in crime prevention.
What is a “Broken Window”?

1967 Presidential Police Task Force

• Called for car patrol to replace most foot patrol and radio dispatch to limit officer discretion.

• But recognized: “The most significant weakness in car patrol is the general lack of contact with citizens except when responded to a call. Most patrol officers have few opportunities to develop closer relationship with persons living in the district.”

  – Presidential Police Task Force 1967

Impact of Car Patrol

• The telephone, more than any policy decision by the community or by management, continues to dictate how police resources will be used. … It fosters the notion among operating personnel that policing consists simply of responding to incidents.


1967 Presidential Police Task Force

• Harlem survey in 1964: 39% considered “crime and criminals” as the biggest problem

• Harris poll: “most frequent complain of blacks is that of permissive law enforcement and police fail to provide adequate protection in black neighborhoods.

  – Presidential Police Task Force 1967

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**Crime and Police: A Traditional Model**

- Root Causes & Demographics
- Police
- Information
- Criminals
- Rapid response
- Arreets, citations
- Dispatcher
- Call 911

**Crime and Police: “Broken Windows”**

- Community
- Communication
- Police
- Heat
- Eyes on the street
- Community standards
- Urban Environment
- Order maintenance
- Foot patrol
- Discretion

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Professor Peter Moskos, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

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Broken Windows in Action

1) Accurate and Timely Intelligence (Compstat)
2) Rapid Deployment
3) Effective Tactics
4) Relentless Follow-up and Assessment
• Relies on neighborhood’s concepts of disorder, using foot patrol to maintain order and reduce public fear.

The Origin of Broken Windows

Robert Peel: Police patrol to prevent crime

From Peel’s 1829 “Principles of Policing”: The principal object to be attained is “the prevention of Crime.” To this great end every effort of the Police is to be directed.


The Origins of Broken Windows

• Jacobs, Jane. 1961. The Death and Life of Great American Cities: Urban life as crime prevention
• Goldstein, Herman. 1979. “A Problem-Oriented Approach”: “Means Over Ends Syndrome”

In the 1960s, Jane Jacobs described what makes neighborhood work (as opposed to how cities were failing): Density, mixed use, entertaining, eyes on the street.

Jane Jacobs (1961):
• The public peace of cities is not kept primarily by the police, but by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves.
• It does not take many incidents of violence to make people fear the streets. And as they fear them, they use them less, which makes the streets still more unsafe.

• — The Death of Life of Great American Cities (1961)
Broken Windows and Community Policing

Wes Skogan offers four principles of community policing:
- 1) decentralized
- 2) problem-oriented
- 3) responsive to citizens with respect to tactics employed and with priorities set
- 4) committed to joint solutions to neighborhood crime and order problems


The New York City Crime Drop

- From 1990 to 2000, four of the seven major felonies—homicide, robbery, burglary, and auto theft—dropped over 70 percent.
- Between 2000 and 2015, crimes fell another 40 percent.
- Crime fell across the country during this period, but in NYC it dropped at twice the national average (which was 40%, 1990-2009).

Broken Windows is not the whole story

- Comp Stat: Computerized Statistics
- Precinct-level responsibility
- Hot Spots (putting “cops on the dots”)
- Lead paint?
- Immigration
- De-carceration
• **Immigration:**
  1.2 million immigrants came to NYC in 1990s. 1 in 3 residents of NYC is foreign born.

• **De-carceration:**
  New York City reduced jail and prison population 11,000 (1990-2010) (Incarceration in the US increased 65%)


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**Bill Bratton**

• Boston cop.
• Read Broken Windows.
• Rose quickly through the ranks.
• 1990: NYC Transit Police Chief
• NYPD Chief in 1994.
• Crime dropped.

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**Broken Windows in the subway, 1991**

Pay your fare!

Citing turnstile jumpers allowed police to:

1) check for warrants
2) frisk for weapons
3) write a citation (which often led to an arrest)
4) send a message that the little things matter and that the police are in charge.

• Felony crime on the subways dropped immediately.

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**Bratton’s New York City, 1st term**

Homicide Rate

1990 NYC excludes 87 killed in Happy Land fire.
Rudy Giuliani Fired Bratton in 1996

- In 2002 Bratton took over LAPD. Murders declined (after 3 year increase from 654 to 312 (2002-2009).
- Bratton returned to NYC (2014-2016) under Mayor de Blasio.

NYC Homicides 2010 - 2015

Three main attacks on Broken Windows
1) Unfair to the poor and minorities.
2) The theory is wrong: disorder does not cause crime
3) Broken Windows is Zero Tolerance
Opposition to Broken Windows

1) Unfair to the poor and minorities?

Response: It’s not about race or poverty, but crime and community standards. All communities deserve good policing. (Besides, minorities and poor suffer the most from disorder and crime.)

2) Disorder does not cause crime (societal conditions provide mutual causation for disorder and crime)

Response: Studies support Broken Windows. (And isn’t a focus on fear and quality-of-life good for it’s own sake?)


Opposition to Broken Windows

1) Unfair to the poor and minorities?

*The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.*

—Anatole France (1894), *The Red Lily.*

3) Broken Windows ≠ Zero Tolerance

• Opponents of Broken Windows have tried – generally with success – to equate Broken Windows and “zero tolerance” policing.

Opposition to Broken Windows

1) Unfair to the poor and minorities?

“The idea that we can engage in policing that’s racially proportionate is absurd. Quality-of-life enforcement is driven primarily by citizen complaints. We go where the calls come from. We go where the victims are. If those numbers are racially disparate, or disproportionate, well, that’s the reality.” – Bill Bratton, October, 2014.

Broken Windows ≠ Zero Tolerance

- I consider the phrase “zero tolerance” not credible and smacking of zealotry. Linking order maintenance activities and “zero tolerance” for disorderly behavior goes beyond semantics. It is an equation that I have never made, find worrisome, and have argued against. – George Kelling, 1999.

“Broken Windows and Police Discretion.” NIJ.

Broken Windows ≠ Zero Tolerance

- All violations are not broken windows.
- Broken Windows supports police officer discretion and community collaboration. Zero Tolerance limits discretion, battles the community.

Broken Windows ≠ Zero Tolerance

- All violations are not broken windows.
- Broken Windows supports police officer discretion and community collaboration.

In NYC, Broken Windows morphed into Zero Tolerance

- The means became the ends. “Stats” (arrests and citations) become the goal rather than maintaining order, reducing fear, and less crime.

NYC Misdemeanor & Felony arrests (1990-2015)
In NYC, Broken Windows morphed into Zero Tolerance

- Between 2004 and 2010, misdemeanor arrests increased by one-third in NYC (190,000 to 251,000). Shootings constant.
- Between 2011-2014, stop, question, & frisks decreased from 686,000 to 50,000. Shootings down.

In NYC, Broken Windows morphed into Zero Tolerance

- 2015: Fewest arrests since 1997. 8% of all arrests (22,000) for misdemeanor marijuana possession. (Down from 25% of all arrests in 2011.)

Broken Windows in Action

- Examples: NYC Subway graffiti & turnstile jumping, NYC Crime Drop, Port Authority Bus Terminal, 42nd Street Partnership, other cities (Lowell, Mass).

Does the public narrative match public opinion?

- More blacks (38%) say they want a greater police presence in their local communities than do whites (18%) (10% blacks want less) (2015)
- “Great deal of respect for police” up 12% in 2016 to 80% of whites and 67% of nonwhites.


An Ideological Crime Divide

- Conservatives emphasize criminals and the need to control them.
- Liberals emphasize “root causes” (racism, poverty, jobs, schools, causing, addiction) and deemphasize police and crime control.

#BLM: “We can live in a world where police don’t kill people.”

- Can we?
- First demand of #BlackLivesMatter Campaign Zero is to “End Broken Windows policing.”
- End enforcement of public drinking, marijuana possession, disorderly conduct, trespassing, loitering, disturbing the peace (including loud music), spitting, jaywalking, biking on sidewalk.

http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#vision
Post-Ferguson, largest quickest increase in homicide in US history

- 2014-2015, 10.4% increase in murder.
- 2015-2016: 13.1% increase (predicted Brennan Center)
- There has never been a 25 percent two-year homicide increase.

The Legacy of Broken Windows

- 1) Broken Windows got police back in the crime prevention game with a police-centered approach to problem solving and crime reduction.
- 2) Renewed police focus on quality-of-life issues, public fear, reducing disorder, and police discretion.
- 3) “Gave police an excuse to do what the public wanted them to do.”

Broken Windows Case Study: Graffiti

1968: Julio began to write his tag “Julio 204.”
After tagging came “throw ups” and “top to bottoms.”