

to come by that capture their intent and drive. Policing practice has been inherently difficult to study; policing as an embodied practice no doubt is even more difficult. The ethnography, such as that undertaken by Westmarland, has a great role to play in developing this area of study.

Last year I had to explain to a marketing officer at our university as to why a male police officer standing 'at ease' with his hands seemingly clutching his crotch was an inappropriate image for brochures 'selling' degrees in justice studies. Westmarland's work is an important contribution to the criminological critique of the many unexamined aspects of police practice that still have many investing in the 'clutched crotch' version of policing.

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ILLUSION OF ORDER: THE FALSE PROMISE OF BROKEN WINDOWS POLICING. By BERNARD E. HARCOURT  
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, 289 pp. £23.95 hb)

The recent resurgence of British political and media interest in 'New York style' policing makes this excellent book particularly timely for UK criminologists. Concern about growing levels of street crime has led some UK politicians to gaze, not for the first time, across the Atlantic for inspiration. As in the late-1990s, the dramatic crime drops in New York City have again become the focus of political attention. Some politicians have called for the introduction of police strategies similar to those adopted in New York, and variously described as 'Quality of Life', 'Order Maintenance' or (the politicians' favourite) 'Zero Tolerance' policing.

Although broad labels can be misleading, perhaps 'Broken Windows' (BW) best sums up the general policing approaches suggested by the famous *Atlantic Monthly* paper (Wilson and Kelling 1982). The article focused upon the relationship between 'disorders' (graffiti, public drunkenness, prostitution, vandalism, begging etc.) and the growth of more serious crimes. The original paper contained a number of important arguments, but the one that has become central to subsequent debate is the contention that serious crimes and neighbourhood disorder are linked in a 'kind of developmental sequence'. On this view, neighbourhood disorder provides an important signal that nobody cares. Disorder, left unchallenged, may result in reduced use of public spaces by residents, and also signal to potential law breakers that community controls and surveillance are weak. The authors argued that it was important for the police to deal firmly with disorderly behaviour in local areas in order to have an impact on serious crime.

Bernard Harcourt argues that the BW hypothesis has had an enormous impact on policing in the United States and further afield. This, he contends, is despite serious doubts about both the empirical validity and theoretical foundations of BW approaches. He undertakes a three-pronged attack on BW policing, the book being divided into empirical, theoretical, and finally, rhetorical critiques. The first part of the book examines the empirical evidence about links between physical and social disorder in neighbourhoods and more serious forms of crime. Harcourt's review concludes that 'the order maintenance approach lacks an evidentiary foundation' (p. 123). This argument draws heavily upon a number of major studies of the crime-disorder nexus that have questioned the validity of the BW hypothesis. It also includes a vigorous critique of a study often quoted in support of BW—Skogan (1990)—and a detailed re-analysis of Skogan's data to undermine this support.

Harcourt further argues that even if there *was* evidence of correlation between neighbourhood disorders and crime, we would still be none the wiser about the causal mechanisms involved. The BW hypothesis proposed a clear causal sequence, working via the transformation of social norms about disorder within neighbourhoods. He restates some of the now-familiar criticisms of the claims made in favour of BW policing in New York City in particular, listing a range of possible other factors that may have contributed to the crime drop. These include demographic factors, changes in drugs markets, organizational reforms within the police department, falling unemployment, and increased incarceration. Harcourt accepts that policing strategies in New York City probably did have some impact on levels of serious crime. However, he argues that this most likely arose from the increased surveillance that the policing methods offered (i.e. providing a basis for increased detection rates of those stopped or arrested for quality of life offences), rather than in changing social norms and preventing criminal behaviour. Harcourt concludes this wide-ranging empirical critique with a call for studies that combine quantitative analyses of the relationship between crime and disorder, with qualitative explorations of the social meanings of disorder in local neighbourhoods.

In the second part of the book, Harcourt provides a sophisticated theoretical critique of the BW approach. In particular, he focuses upon some of its defining dichotomies (e.g. 'order/disorder', 'law abiding/criminal'). Although supporters of BW policing discuss these categories as if their meanings are self-evident, they are, of course, constructed and contested concepts. There is a range of different types of behaviours, other than the usual suspects, that might be reasonably described as disorderly. These could include police brutality, tax evasion, fraud or health and safety violations. Yet these forms of behaviour rarely if ever appear in discussions about the need to tackle disorder. Even within the limited range of behaviour that BW designates as disorderly, Harcourt points out that a range of social meanings might be attached to them, other than that 'nobody cares'. At this point, he draws interesting parallels between BW and Durkheimian notions of social solidarity, and in particular the role of punishment in maintaining social bonds and community cohesion. He highlights the problems inherent in an approach that takes certain distinctions as preordained and natural.

Harcourt then turns to the work of Foucault to further illustrate some of the theoretical shortcomings of the Broken Windows approach. Foucault argued that the very processes of punishment that purport to address deviant behaviour work to create and maintain the category of 'delinquent'. In a similar way, Harcourt sees BW policing as playing a key role in subject creation. In particular, these policing strategies play a hidden political role in terms of defining and categorizing certain groups of people as disorderly and dangerous. They also work to shape the ways in which citizens think about and judge others, and are therefore essentially self-justifying. The concept of disorder, and its link to more dangerous and harmful forms of behaviour, becomes natural and unquestioned. BW policing cannot therefore be seen simply as a strategy to deal with an existing problem, but is part of the very definition of the problem itself.

The third part of the book explores the way in which, despite empirical and theoretical problems, BW ideas became so influential. Harcourt's rhetorical critique highlights the way in which BW arguments dovetailed with an important trend within legal-philosophical debate during the latter part of the twentieth century. He argues that over the last 30 years or so, there has been a significant 'turn to harm' in legal philosophy. During the 1950s and 1960s, liberal theorists successfully argued that proper domain of legal regulation concerned harmful actions, rather than immoral or offensive behaviour. However, the harm principle subsequently underwent an ideological shift from its liberal-progressive origins. Feminist attacks upon prostitution and pornography utilized the harm principle to justify more rigorous legal intervention. Similar

developments can be traced in debates about regulation of sexuality and drug use, with what Harcourt describes as a proliferation of harm arguments. Increasingly, behaviour that was once seen as offensive/immoral has been redefined as dangerous. BW approaches have followed a similar trajectory, seeking to recast a range of quality of life issues as seriously harmful behaviours. Thus, Harcourt argues, the harm principle is no longer a *limiting* principle on legal regulation, but is used as a justification for a more intensive regulation of social life. Debates no longer focus upon the supposed existence or non-existence of harms, but instead concern the different types, and the total amounts, of harm. Whilst this explains the inherent attractiveness of BW rhetoric in the current political and legal climate, Harcourt points out that such rhetoric is selective in its focus upon specific harms. He accepts that quality of life offences can be harmful, but argues that these harms need to be balanced against the range of other harms that arise from attempts to control and regulate such behaviours. This argument extends to the final part of the book, in which Harcourt outlines an alternative vision for punishment and justice, and calls for research that explores in more detail the social meanings of disorderly behaviour. In particular, he suggests a range of interventions that might be more effective (and less harmful) than vigorous order-maintenance policing in reducing the problems caused both by disorder and by serious crime.

This book is impressive on a number of levels. It combines sophisticated theoretical insights with astute empirical analysis and methodological prescription. It draws upon major thinkers in sociological and legal theory, but at the same time provides practical suggestions for policy makers and researchers. It is very accessibly written and clearly argued throughout, and many will find Harcourt's central conclusions convincing. One slight criticism is that the author may overstate the practical (as opposed to rhetorical) impact of BW-type strategies, particularly outside the USA. In the UK, most senior police officers remain sceptical about the benefits of New York-style policing, and apart from a few isolated initiatives, there has been little visible in terms of changed policing practices. Even within the United States, as Harcourt's bibliography testifies, there has been a vigorous (and sometimes acrimonious) debate about BW policing. The approach has been the subject of strong criticism, not only from academic writers but also from senior US police officers and influential journalists (see Kelling 2001). This aside though, Harcourt has undoubtedly provided a major contribution to the debate about BW policing. The book is a wonderful read, and contains a host of empirical, theoretical and policy-related insights. It should be read by all those interested in the future of policing in democratic societies.

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