

Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing. By Bernard Harcourt. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Pp. x+294. \$18.95 (paper).

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Ethics require complete reviewer disclosure about possible conflicts of interest. Michael Aronson, the editor for this volume at Harvard University Press, sold me at a most reasonable price his tan 1967 Volkswagon “Bug” in the mid-1970s. It ran flawlessly for about 40,000 miles until the body and chassis started going their separate ways around curves, and I sold it. Other than that I have no connection to this project.

Bernard Harcourt’s volume is part of an arc that started in the mid-1970s with James Q. Wilson (*Thinking about Crime* [Basic Books, 1975]), rocketed to attention in the early 1980s with Wilson and Kelling’s *Atlantic Monthly* (“Broken Windows” [March 1982]) piece about broken windows policing, and received a substantial boost with Skogan’s *Disorder and Decline* (Free Press, 1990). The last provided empirical support for the idea that physical deterioration in a neighborhood, along with rowdy social behavior on the streets, might make neighborhoods less safe. Notwithstanding the recent and current popularity of ideas about broken windows policing and zero tolerance policing, which may or may not be related to broken windows policing (R. B. Taylor, “Incivilities Reduction Policing, Zero Tolerance, and the Retreat from Coproduction: Weak Foundations and Strong Pressures,” in *Innovations in Policing*, edited by D. Weisburd and A. Braga [Cambridge University Press, 2005]), the theoretical arc of the broken windows or incivilities thesis has at the least flattened out and may be in decline. Harcourt’s volume, appearing the same year as my multidecade empirical investigation (*Breaking Away from Broken Windows: Evidence from Baltimore Neighborhoods and the Nationwide Fight against Crime, Grime, Fear and Decline* [Westview, 2001]) and expanding on his earlier law review piece (“Reflecting on the Subject: A Critique of the Social Influence Conception of Deterrence, the Broken Windows Theory, and Order-Maintenance Policing New York Style,” *Michigan Law Review* 97:291–389 [1998]) is part of the reason. The main contributions of this volume include its incisive analysis of the uses and abuses of the concepts of incivilities and disorder, its placement of the order-maintenance rhetoric within the broader economic and political discussions of the New Progressives, and its close attention to the legal and societal impacts of the rise to fame of this theoretical perspective. Harcourt’s book represents a sincere, thoughtful, and multidisciplinary effort to demythologize the incivilities thesis. Its points are well taken.

To orient the reader, chapter 1 provides a roadmap clarifying why the New Progressives, including Banfield, Wilson, and others emphasize “the norm of orderliness” (p. 15). They believe, according to Harcourt, that

punitive policies sanctioning departures from orderliness will reduce crime by creating broader cultural shifts. The categories created by these policies, drawing bright lines between orderly and disorderly persons, and orderly and disorderly behaviors, make order-maintenance policing seem natural and necessary. The rub—and this is one of Harcourt’s main contributions to the debate about the incivilities thesis and associated policing strategies—is that “the meaning of order and disorder may not be as stable or as fixed as the order maintenance approach suggests” (p. 18). Wilson and Kelling themselves acknowledged as much in their 1982 piece where they pointed out that norms about problematic, disorderly behavior would vary across neighborhoods. But those eager to implement related policies have overlooked this point, and Harcourt’s caution is well taken.

Harcourt expands on this last point in chapter 2 where he describes in more detail how order and disorder are theoretically delineated and linked in Wilson and Kelling’s work. He then links Wilson and Kelling’s disorder to Banfield’s ideas about lower-income individuals: “[According to Banfield] the lower-class person has a lot in common with his environment” (p. 29). According to Harcourt, Banfield sees crime and poverty, urban decay, and lower-class cultural norms as building on one another. He argues that Wilson (1975) was similarly biased against lower-class culture, as are Kahan and Meares who advocate antigang loitering ordinances and order-maintenance policing. All these proponents, Harcourt argues, are unaware that their key constructs are socially constructed, and thus more fragile than admitted, and carry divisive social impacts. Unfavorable comments about other related policy initiatives such as Giuliani’s “quality-of-life initiative” and youth curfews close the chapter.

Turning from policy to empiricism, chapter 3 reanalyzes Skogan’s data set with a slightly different index and more attention to different cities. Harcourt reaches different conclusions. His reanalysis finds “no statistically significant relationships between disorder and purse snatching, physical assault, burglary or rape when other explanatory variables are held constant” (p. 78). He also critiques other studies by other authors. The detailed reanalyses are probably only of interest to multivariate aficionados in part because these data are cross-sectional, and the thesis is longitudinal (Taylor 2001).

Chapter 4 reports further data forays as Harcourt tries to bring data to bear on quality-of-life policing initiatives in different cities. Why and how much crime dropped in various cities in the last few years is a topic sure to elude and outlive the current generation of scholars. There are simply no systematic data from different cities about changes in policing practices over a long enough period of time and at a detailed enough geographic unit of analysis. Harcourt, however, thinks the deeper problem is with the dependent variable here, not the independent ones. He suggests crime is a mediating variable, not the outcome. The problem is that there is no information about norm shifts: “Once we have taken the ‘social

meaning turn’—as I believe we must—quantitative correlations between enforcement and crime will no longer be sufficient” (p. 110).

We emerge from the data concerns of chapter 4 to pursue a serious theoretical critique of the very concepts of “order,” “disorder,” and “disorderly behavior” in chapter 5. The essence of his critique is that “the category of disorderly is so unstable” (p. 132). He sees Durkheimian overtones here and turns to Foucault’s functional analysis of Durkheim. The main point here is that order maintenance results in creating a subject, the disorderly, who are as bad as criminals. “Disorder becomes a degree of crime” (p. 149). Chapter 6 explores further the impacts of “subject creation,” processes that “shape, in part, the way we think, desire, and judge others [and] . . . the way in which practices and institutions define and categorize people” (p. 161)—the disorderly. To put the main points simply, these processes empower the punishers, legitimate order-maintenance or zero tolerance initiatives, make the punished seem unworthy, and deepen societal divisions.

Given how nefarious these policies are, as seen by Harcourt, why are they so popular? In chapter 7 he tells us that these models “collapse” the “harm principle”—what was once a “nuisance” is now “threatening.” “By appropriating harm, the order maintenance approach has disarmed the traditional liberal response” (p. 186). Thus, following Garland (*The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* [University of Chicago Press, 2002]), those championing the culture of control can take over. Chapters 8 and 9 follow with alternative visions, thinking about alternate methodologies and strategies, and encourage us to think more carefully about subject creation when examining a wide array of social control strategies. “In assessing policing strategies, it is simply not enough to focus on the social meaning of prostitution, gang membership, or juvenile gun possession. We must also ask, first, how our strategies of policing and the mechanisms of punishment transform the subject; second how this influences our assessment . . . and third, how these effects relate to the goal of reducing crime” (pp. 218–19). In short, he calls for a thoughtful, deliberative, wide-angle lens when debating these policies. How, he asks, do these policies fundamentally alter how each of us thinks about different segments of society?

Harcourt’s analyses and insights are valuable. Of greatest utility are his legal, sociological, and philosophical critiques of the incivilities thesis. We might disagree on how he traces the lineage of the thesis and whether he is being completely fair to Wilson, Kelling, and Banfield and other supporters of related policies. We might question the feasibility of the alternative research strategies he proposes. We might find his explanation of the popularity of these ideas incomplete and prefer Garland’s more detailed argument. Nonetheless, his notion that these ideas and strategies have shifted how many of us think about what is harm and who is harmful is insightful, has far-reaching consequences, and is, I think, essentially correct. Because he is correct, however, should we then completely discard

the incivilities thesis which does have some degree of empirical support (Taylor 2001)? That is the question confronting theorists and, more urgently, policy makers, as we watch the arc and allure of the incivilities or broken windows thesis flatten and perhaps fade.

The volume is appropriate for graduate students in criminal justice, criminology, political science, and sociology. I have used it in a communities and crime graduate course with good results.

Class Reunion: The Remaking of the American White Working Class. By Lois Weiss. New York: Routledge, 2004. Pp. xvi+216.

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Class Reunion is an ethnographic sequel to *Working Class without Work: High School Students in a Deindustrializing Economy* (1990). In 1985 Lois Weiss interviewed 20 white working-class males and 20 females during their third year of high school. Fifteen years later Weiss returned to interview these same subjects when they were 30 years old. In this longitudinal ethnography Weiss provides an analysis of the struggles of white members of the class of 1987 at two different points in their lives. Weiss provides a theoretically rich longitudinal analysis that challenges key findings in earlier studies of the white working class.

Weiss's central argument is that "the sons and daughters of the white industrial proletariat are engaged in an ongoing process of reshaping a new white working class as a *distinct class* fraction, one distanced in key ways from other parts of what might be considered a broader working class" (p. 6). In her words "the re-making of the American white working class can be understood only in relation to gendered constructions within itself, the construction of relevant "others" as uncovered ethnographically—in this case African-Americans and Yemenites ("Arabians")—as well as deep shifts in large social formations, most particularly the global economy" (p. 3). Weiss draws upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus to theorize the realignment of the new white working class. Drawing upon Bourdieu enables her to examine the family and high schools as central sites through which these new working-class identities emerge.

The book is divided into two sections. Part 1 draws on the participant observation and interviews conducted in 1985 with high school students. Weiss argues that, in 1985, white working-class identity was forged along three primary axes: (1) an emerging contradictory code of respect toward school knowledge and culture, (2) a set of patriarchal expectations of home/family life with women as subordinate, and (3) racist beliefs about blacks and Yemenites (Arabians). I found the second half of the book to be the most theoretically rich. In chapters 3–7 Weiss presents her analysis of her 2000 interview data.