

STUDY ON THE THEORY OF BROKEN WINDOWS

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ABSTRACT

According to the broken windows theory, any apparent indicators of crime and civil disorder, such as loitering, public drinking, and evading transportation fare, create an urban atmosphere that promotes even more crime and disorder. Examples of such indicators include broken windows, loitering, and public drinking. This theory has a distinct benefit over many of its criminological predecessors in the sense that, rather than relying on social policy, it allows criminal justice policy efforts to affect change. This is the clear advantage of this theory. The broken windows theory had a considerable impact on police policy throughout the 1990s and has continued to have relevance into the twenty-first century. This can be seen in both the United States and the United Kingdom. This theory has been subjected to a number of criticisms, one of the most prevalent of which is the assertion that, because it establishes a causal connection between disorder and criminal activity, it incorrectly interprets the nature of the connection between the two. Due to the problematic nature of broken windows policing, it is not actively used as a method of managing crime in the majority of the main cities in the world in the modern era. Despite this, there are still pieces of this hypothesis that can be unearthed. The idea of shattered windows proposes a strategy for reducing violations and preserving social order. Although controlling crime is a challenging endeavour, this strategy offers a potential solution.

Keywords: *Study, Theory of Broken Windows, crime, environment, social disorder, neighborhood, policing, community, crime prevention, urban decay.*

INTRODUCTION

In the 1800s, researchers began focusing their attention on the varying rates of criminal behaviour in various neighbourhoods and asking concerns regarding the imbalance in the incidence of criminal activity between wealthy and impoverished neighbourhoods. There were a lot of different hypotheses proposed, and one of them was called the Broken Windows Theory. Before the development of this theory, most of the attention paid by politicians and academics was directed toward dealing with more serious offences, such as robbery, murder, or rape. However, two members of the academic community, criminologist George Kelling and James Q. Wilson, believed that significant crimes were the result of a series of preceding incidents. They held the belief that widespread disorder was the root cause of criminal behaviour and that if disorder was addressed, serious crimes would cease to be committed as well.

In 1982, Wilson and Kelling presented a theory in which they hypothesised a connection between the degree of disorder in a community and the incidence of criminal behaviour. Because it use broken windows as an analogy for chaos within a community, it is famously known as the Broken Window Theory. Fear is generated in the minds of the populace as a result of the frequency of disorder and misbehaviour in their community, the theory said. This was done in order to explain the directly proportionate relationship that exists between disorder and crime.

They begin to have the mindset that their location is not trustworthy and secure, which leads to a reduction in their level of involvement within their community. Because there is less involvement from members of the community, criminal activities, which were formerly kept in check by social control, are now being encouraged. Disorder and lawlessness breed one another in a vicious cycle that can never be broken; lawlessness begets disorder, and disorder begets even greater lawlessness.

In a magazine article published in 1982, James Wilson and George Kelling first used the phrase "Broken Windows Effect," also abbreviated as "BWE." Broken windows is a catch-all term for disorder and incivility within a community such as graffiti, vandalism, littering, etc., and they believed that it can lead to greater disorder and rises in criminal behaviour. This is because broken windows is a catch-all term. Their argument originated from their experiences with the police practises in Lucknow, and they also made reference to a "experiment" conducted by a psychologist at Stanford named Zimbardo (Zimbardo 1973). In this "experiment," Zimbardo abandoned cars in a variety of neighbourhoods, each in a different state of disrepair, in order to research the subsequent vandalism that occurred.

According to Kelling and Wilson (1982), shattered windows transmit a signal of indifference and lack of enforcement, which results in heightened fear of crime and a weakening of social controls, so opening the way for more serious violations of the law. The authors suggested that it is essential for the police to get involved in the prevention of unrest as well as the policing of smaller offences such as panhandling in order to stop processes like these from happening.

OBJECTIVE

1. To conduct research based on the Broken Windows Theory
2. In order to do research on Broken Windows and Collective Efficacy

The Broken Windows Theory

Up until this point, the broken window idea has not been utilised in India. Despite the large population and high prevalence of criminal activity, they have not taken any steps to curb the deviant conduct that people exhibit. According to this thesis, the social dysfunction that exists in India can be easily avoided. To put a halt to a more serious crime, it is necessary, initially, to deal with the less serious offences that are more obvious. Yet, in order to put this theory into practise in India, a significant amount of labour is required. Our nation is home to a diverse collection of peoples and cultures. It is important to raise people's social awareness in order to bring the crime rate under control.

An investigation that was carried out by Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg (2008) revealed that disorder alters people's patterns of behaviour. In this study, a total of six different experiments were carried out, and the findings of these experiments led the researchers to the following conclusion: "signs of inappropriate behaviour such as graffiti or broken windows lead to other inappropriate behaviour (e.g., littering or stealing), which in turn results in the inhibition of other norms (that is, a general weakening of the goal to act appropriately)." (Keizer, Lindenberg, & Steg, 2008). This investigation seeks to answer the following question: Does chaos in neighbourhoods also lead to an increase in criminal activity? The Broken Windows Theory is an explanation that can be provided for this predicament (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

According to the Broken Windows Theory, seemingly insignificant acts of public disorder, such as shattered windows, can be a precursor to more serious criminal activity and a deteriorating urban environment. According to Wilson and Kelling (1982), "untended behaviour leads to the breakdown of communal controls." For instance, when trash is not picked up and loiterers are not requested to move on, this paves the way for further waste to be dumped on the ground, as well as for additional people to assemble and loiter. The residents receive a signal that the situation is getting worse and that the social control in their neighbourhood is breaking down as the level of disorder in the area increases. This message is communicated to them as the disorder increases. The idea that people have a tendency to ignore disorder in their surroundings is essential to this hypothesis (Weisburd, Hinkle, Famega, & Ready, 2010).

The residents will be led to believe that there is an increase in crime because of the appearance of disorder, and as a result, their behaviour will change. These residents will utilise the streets less regularly, and they will be less inclined to interfere against disruptive persons. In some instances, this may result in the departure of "decent" residents, who will find it less appealing to stay in the area. This results in a reduction of informal social control, which has the potential to lead to an increase in disorder and criminal activity since individuals observe that in these locations they are able to get away with such behaviour without being punished. In time, lawbreakers would view such a neighbourhood as a haven where they can commit crimes without fear of repercussions.

Fear of crime is an additional essential component of the hypothesis. Since of the apparent disarray, individuals are staying inside their homes because they believe it to be unsafe to be out on the streets. Doran and Lees (2005) conducted research to determine whether or not there are spatiotemporal connections between disorder, criminal activity, and the fear of being a victim of criminal activity. It was shown that areas that people avoided in the evening were areas with higher degrees of disorder compared to areas that were not avoided by people. This was the case for both residential and commercial areas. According to the findings of this study, areas that people steer clear of have a greater propensity over time to have a rise in the concentration of criminal activity or disorder. This is because there is insufficient natural surveillance in these regions, which, in turn, makes it simpler for lawbreakers to carry out their activities and for disorderly behaviours to take place.

Places where disorder and criminality have the potential to break down the mechanisms of social control are the types of places that inspire terror and, as a result, are avoided. They are also withdrawing from their duty of mutual support with fellow citizens on the streets, and as a result, they are relinquishing the social controls of the neighbourhood which they formerly helped to maintain. As citizens withdraw or avoid places, they also withdraw from their duty of mutual support with fellow citizens on the streets. Crime and the fear of crime, in turn, cause inhabitants to withdraw into themselves, which in turn contributes to the erosion of trust and unity among their fellow community members (Xu, Fiedler, & Flaming, 2005). When people take the time to communicate with one another, the possibility of social cohesion disappears, and this holds true for their willingness to cooperate with one another in the social control of public spaces as well. Figure 1.1 is an attempt to provide a synopsis of the Broken Windows Theory.



Figure .1: The theory of the broken window (Weisburd et al., 2010)

According to the broken windows theory, any apparent indicators of crime and civil disorder, such as loitering, public drinking, and evading transportation fare, create an urban atmosphere that promotes even more crime and disorder. Examples of such indicators include broken windows, loitering, and public drinking (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

The goal of broken windows policing is to maintain order in low-level criminal activity so as to prevent more widespread anarchy. From a perspective that is more theoretical, the following elements are the most helpful in explaining why the state of the urban environment might affect the level of crime:

1. social conformance and established conventions
2. the existence or absence of routine monitoring;
2. the existence or absence of routine monitoring;

When these windows are repaired, unwanted people and behaviours are removed, which in turn makes the general population feel safer. Residents will avoid spending time in communal locations (parks, local stores, street blocks) to protect themselves from violent attacks from strangers, and they will no longer view their communities as close-knit and secure neighbourhoods if broken windows are allowed to remain unrepaired. This theory has a distinct benefit over many of its criminological predecessors in the sense that, rather than relying on social policy, it allows criminal justice policy efforts to affect change. This is the clear advantage of this theory. The earlier theories of social disorganisation and economic theories provided solutions that were not only expensive but also time-consuming and difficult to demonstrate effectively. Many people are of the opinion that the broken windows hypothesis can bring about change fast and at a low cost if all that is required is a modification to the way in which the police combat crime. The fight against disorder is a lot simpler than the fight against serious social ills like poverty and a lack of education.

In addition, the absence of a repair for broken windows is indicative of a lack of informal social control in the community. Behaviors such as complying to social standards and acting as a spectator while a crime is committed that is not governed by the law are examples of the types of actions that fall under the umbrella of informal social regulation.

"Prior to the election of Giuliani and the adoption of broken windows police, crime in India was starting to drop," recalls Harcourt, a law professor at Columbia University. "The Giuliani election and the adoption of broken windows policing." And of course, what we witnessed during that time period, basically beginning in 1991, was that crime in the country began to plummet, with a great drop in violent crime in our country. This

was something that we observed throughout that time period. The extent to which it was present in the world today is astonishing.

In the course of following up on the broken windows policing, George Kelling and a colleague came upon what they considered to be unmistakable evidence of the success of said policing. It appears that broken windows policing was successful in reducing the amount of crime that occurred in neighbourhoods where there was a high increase in the number of arrests for minor offences.

The Broken Window Hypothesis About India's Current Criminal Climate

The Broken Window Theory, despite its widespread acceptance among criminologists due to the ease with which it can be applied and its demonstrated efficacy, suffers from a significant methodological weakness in that it does not reliably establish a connection between the occurrence of crime and the prevalence of disorder that makes it possible for it to be committed. The argument being made here is that the theory is flawed since it draws its results from a limited number of test subjects, which is supposed to demonstrate that an increase in the crime rate is caused by a fear of civil unrest.

In addition, its indiscriminate application would result in a state of zero tolerance, which is an outcome that is highly likely to fail and lead to increased unrest among the general populace. However, despite its flaws, the Broken Window theory is a good fit for the study of the diverse demographics of Indian criminals. This is due to the fact that statistics provide sufficient and detailed information regarding offenders of specific crimes. Additionally, it is not as important to pinpoint when the criminal would commit an offence as it is to identify who is vulnerable enough to do something that could be harmful to another person.

Illustration: When even minor infractions are considered, India's roadside hygiene standards are among the worst in the world. People still urinate or spit on the walls of public as well as private property, despite the fact that there are posters and leaflets that discourage them from doing so. People would become more proactive in ensuring the protection of their property, which would lead to an increase in social control and a restoration of civil order if effective methods were introduced for recognising wrongdoers and strict penalties were imposed upon them. This would automatically lead to a reduction in the number of people engaging in such acts.

Up until this point, the shattered window hypothesis has only been applied to the road safety problems that India is experiencing. This is due to the fact that, according to the figures for 2019, India had over four lakh road accidents with a fatality ratio of 25 percent. Despite having only one percent of the world's automobile population, the country is responsible for six percent of all road accidents. In 2019, there was a minor decline in the number of accidents when compared to 2016, however the rate of fatalities stayed the same.

Because of consistent background checks and mandatory correctional regulations, petty criminals who had the resources to commit larger crimes were nicked even before they could call the big shots, which is the reason why experts are urging lawmakers to apply this principle for relatively straightforward issues. A case study in New York City showed how apprehending small-time offenders helped decrease larger crimes. Law and industry professionals agree that the punishment for relatively less severe offences should not be excessively harsh; yet, a visible crackdown and authorities demonstrating their interest in such an endeavour would aid the achievement of calmer traffic management.

It is not meaningful to compare careless drivers to those who commit serious crimes; however, if the Broken Window theory is successful in addressing these issues, government agencies and regulatory bodies would be much more likely to implement it exponentially for the prevention of serious crimes as well. Why such experiments can be depended upon because issues related to road safety are much broader and herd-like in nature; crimes such as murder, robbery, sexual assault, and so on are much more limited in quantity and specific. In other words, if large-scale problems can be solved with the help of the broken window theory, then the authorities will have adequate material to appreciate the possible framing of the Broken Window theory in order to prevent individual crimes.

Broken Windows Theory: Disorder, Crime, and Discriminant Validity

They were not the first to bring out the negative impacts that disorder may have on communities, but Wilson and Kelling (2016) were the first to accuse disorder of actually producing crime. They postulated that even a single incident of disorder (the proverbial "broken window") may set off a chain reaction of the community's deterioration if it was not immediately addressed and resolved.

This approach applied to anything from vandalism to disruptive youngsters to aggressive people asking for money on the street. Wilson and Kelling were of the opinion that the failure to address these issues in a timely manner promoted a sense among the members of the community that all of the mechanisms of formal and informal social control had failed. Residents would gradually give up streets, parks, and other public spaces to criminals who viewed the lack of cohesiveness and control as an excellent opportunity to practise their skills.

These criminals regarded the absence of cohesiveness and control as a fantastic opportunity to practise their professions. The empirical research on broken windows hypothesis has produced mixed results, despite the fact that the idea itself has a compelling appeal. Some studies, such as Savolainen (2016), Skogan (2017), and Xu, Fiedler, and Flaming (2015), have offered their support for the hypothesis. Other studies, on the other hand, permit only the hypothesis's provisional conclusion, which is that some types of disorder may be related to some types of crimes in some locations using some measurement techniques, but not others. In addition, even when a connection is found between the two, it is not clear what the exact nature of that connection is. It is difficult to determine whether the overlap between disorder and crime is consistent with broken windows'

sequential, causal disorder-to-crime process or, alternatively, whether disorder and crime are both sub-components of larger conditions of concentrated sociostructurally disadvantage. While disorder and crime do frequently co-occur, it is difficult to determine whether this overlap is consistent with broken windows' sequential, causal disorder-to-crime process.

Evidence of Effectiveness and Theoretical Mechanisms

When it comes to the realm of broken windows, empirical studies can be separated into two categories: those that test the theoretical propositions and mechanisms of the theory, and those that test the crime-reducing impacts of broken windows-based policing tactics. Both of these categories are important to consider. In the following, we will begin by discussing the current empirical state of main theoretical tests, and then we will move on to discuss studies on broken windows-based policing.

The findings of some of the theoretical tests and the evaluations that were carried out in practise do not always align with one another. Skogan (2018) proposed a version of the thesis, whereby incidents of incivility begin a process that ultimately leads to the deterioration of entire neighbourhoods. This piece was published on The Atlantic many years after the famous essay first appeared in the publication. Skogan, in contrast to Wilson and Kelling (2016), supported his argument with data from five major American cities. These data showed that residents' perceptions of physical and social disorder were significantly associated with self-reported victimisation of robbery. Skogan's argument was more convincing than Wilson and Kelling's (2016). His ultimate conclusion was that "both directly and indirectly crime it [disorder] plays an essential role in neighbourhood decline," despite the fact that BWT is a longitudinal study and Skogan's data were cross-sectional. "Broken windows" do require immediate repair, as the phrase suggests.

Sampson and Raudenbush (2017) presented the most compelling version of the spurious criticism, which stated that crime and disorder, while indeed occurring together — are not causally associated. This version of the spurious critique was established by Sampson and Raudenbush (2017). They argue that both are the outcome of structural neighbourhood pressures and collective efficacy, which occurs when locals trust each other more and are prepared to intervene during instances of criminal activity or disturbance. After accounting for factors such as collective efficacy and other important neighborhood-level factors, Sampson and Raudenbush provide convincing evidence that there is no correlation between disorder and criminal activity. Despite this, there was still a substantial connection between the condition and the theft (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2017). They come to the conclusion that the disorder-crime relationship is generally fictitious because, if disorder and crime are largely unassociated after shared reasons are introduced, then the link between disorder and crime can be considered to be mostly fictitious.

According to the perceptual criticism, one of the most significant challenges in the study of disorder is the requirement for conceptual clarity on the character traits of incivility and disorder (Kubrin, 2018). The assumption that the perception of incivilities is an objective assessment of physical indicators of disorder has been called into question by a growing body of research that has investigated how perceptions of incivilities are formed per se. The findings of this research suggest that individuals have varying conceptions of what constitutes disorder. The results of this research strongly indicate that incidents of civil disobedience are not universally classified in the manner that BWT proposes. Instead, individuals's views of disorder are formed by a wide variety of environmental, demographic, and psychological factors, which results in a large amount of difference in perceptions among persons living in the same places. For instance, Link and colleagues (2017)

shown that perceptions of the likelihood of criminal activity are a better indicator of feelings of disorder than the reverse formulation proposed by BWT.

The Broken Windows Theory, Broken?: Acceptance and Critics

With the assistance of this theory, proper policies may be utilised to handle crimes, which is evidently one of the advantages of this theory. In addition, this theory serves as a guide for criminal policies. It is not necessary to rely on bringing about societal shifts in order to change people's behaviours and, as a result, avoid crime. The implementation of such systems requires a significant investment of both time and money. Broken windows, on the other hand, are a simple, low-cost, and efficient tool for effecting change. It is a task that is much more fruitful and understandable than the effort of eliminating societal problems such as poverty, which is a laborious and hard undertaking.

In spite of the fact that it is widely accepted in the realm of policymaking, the shattered windows theory is not without its detractors. There are many who argue that the available empirical data to support the claim that chaos does, in fact, contribute to crime is insufficient. It must be demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that fear is created as a direct result of disorder, that fear results in a weakening of social control, and that the upshot of this diminished social control is the incidence of criminal activity.

The existence of this sequence of happenings cannot be demonstrated with absolute certainty by the available empirical data. Ralph Taylor, an expert in the field of criminal justice, came to the conclusion, after conducting considerable research, that it was difficult to identify a clear and definitive link between the prevalence of disorder and the occurrence of crime. Broken windows have consequently given rise to widespread scepticism due to the absence of evidence.

Even though the 'Broken Windows' paper is one of the most referenced works in the field of criminology, Kelling argues that the theory is almost always implemented in the wrong way, which is one of the reasons why it is so popular. The implementation of a policy of 'zero tolerance' and related policing methods was the most significant negative consequence as a result of this. It should come as no surprise that members of minority communities were forced to bear the heaviest burden caused by the incorrect application of the principle.

It has been stated that the number of complaints regarding police misconduct has skyrocketed at the same time that there has been a rise in highly contentious policing methods such as "stop and frisk." It is claimed that the racial mix of a community is more essential for the broken windows theory than the number of broken windows themselves since minorities, particularly black men, were unfairly targeted. As a result, the number of broken windows is seen to be less important. As a result, the application of this theory has turned into a problematic practise, which may have produced more negative outcomes than positive ones.

CONCLUSION

Due to the problematic nature of broken windows policing, it is not actively used as a method of managing crime in the majority of the main cities in the world in the modern era. Despite this, there are still pieces of this hypothesis that can be unearthed. Cities such as Ferguson, Missouri, have a robust police presence, and the municipality issues hundreds of warrants each year for a variety of offences, ranging from parking fines to moving violations, including crimes such as damaging windows. And the racial and social biases that are

produced as a result of using such an approach to law enforcement have not disappeared. The idea of shattered windows proposes a strategy for reducing violations and preserving social order. Although controlling crime is a challenging endeavour, this strategy offers a potential solution.

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