

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions
***“Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing
Crime in Our Communities.”***

Free Press, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020. 305 pp. \$25.00

Authors: *George L. Kelling and Catherine M. Coles*

Dialing 911 to summon police in an emergency has come to seem almost as natural as turning on a car’s windshield wipers when it rains. But 911 policing is the product of a failed conception of police work, contend Kelling, a criminologist at Rutgers University, in Newark, New Jersey, and Coles, a lawyer and anthropologist.

That conception has its deepest roots in the professionalization of police work in the early 20th century. No longer were the police adjuncts of political machines; they were “professional crime fighters,” focusing on serious crime. Police work was centralized and organized along Taylorist lines. By midcentury, police had largely abandoned foot patrols for radio-equipped cars that could be centrally dispatched to deal with reported crimes.

After the advent of computers in the 1960s, this rationalization of police work was carried even further with the installation of 911 systems. The management of police departments was completely revamped to focus on the efficient and rapid response to calls. At first, 911 was supposed to be used not just in emergencies but for all crime-related calls—and rapid response was promised. But police in most cities were soon overwhelmed with calls, as people persisted in calling about “minor” neighborhood problems. The public did not accept the idea that police work should be limited to “professional crime fighting.”

Moreover, crime fighting was not much enhanced by the 911 approach. A study of rapid response in Kansas City during the mid-1970s found that it led to an arrest for only three percent of the serious crimes reported. The main reason, Kelling and Coles say: people usually wait 20 to 40 minutes before reporting a crime. (Some go into shock; others are reluctant to turn in a friend or family member; some frightened people want to be sure that the criminal is gone.) Studies of rapid response in four other cities confirmed the Kansas City finding.

Starting in the late 1970s, police departments reacted to these problems by limiting 911 to emergency calls and responding imme-

diately only to the more serious ones. Even so, despite some dramatic exceptions, it appears that the change made little difference.

Police leaders now widely acknowledge the failure of the “reform” strategy, Kelling and Coles say. It “ignored a broadly based demand for the restoration of order, a demand growing louder in the face of increasingly outrageous street behavior by the mentally ill, chronic drug and alcohol abusers, prostitutes, and many youths.” As Kelling and political scientist James Q. Wilson argued in their well-known “broken windows” thesis in the early 1980s, even relatively trivial signs that conditions are out of control, such as graffiti, are disturbing to the law-abiding, and inviting to those bent on crime. This, the authors observe, may explain why, even in places where the incidence of serious crime levels off or declines, people’s fear of crime does not.

The reactive 911 style of policing, the authors say, keeps officers from getting out of their cars and taking time to “connect” with citizens and their neighborhoods. Such “community policing” is essential to creating an ordered environment and preventing crime.

Drawing on the “broken windows” thesis during the 1990s, William Bratton, first as head of the New York transit police and then as police commissioner (until last April), had remarkable success. Felonies in the subways declined 75 percent between 1990 and ‘94; robberies, 64 percent. New Yorkers were less likely to be victims of violent crime in 1995 than at any time since 1970.

Kelling and Coles also describe less dramatic achievements (and some setbacks) in restoring order in public places in San Francisco, Baltimore, and Seattle. Such efforts are frequently challenged in the courts by civil liberties groups or advocates for the homeless—often with success. For example, most courts, to date, have ruled that begging is protected by the First Amendment, even though aggressive panhandling can rapidly undermine a community’s sense of security. Ultimately, the issue will have to be resolved by the Supreme Court.

“Learning to Work: The Case for Reintegrating Job Training and Education.”

Russell Sage Foundation, 112 E. 64th St., New York, N.Y. 10021. 152 pp. \$29.95

Author: W. Norton Grubb

Government job-training programs have a tortuous bureaucratic history. Inaugurated with the Manpower Development Training Act of 1962, they were consolidated in the Comprehensive Training and Employment Act (CETA) of 1973, which was succeeded a decade later by the still extant Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). There also have been various welfare-to-work initiatives, the largest being the 1988 Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program. And there are many other federal job-training programs, for veterans, refugees, and others. In all, by one reckoning, the government spent \$20.4 billion last year on 163 different programs.

Reviewing numerous studies, Grubb, a professor of education at the University of California, Berkeley, concludes that participants in many of these programs have enjoyed

very small gains in employment and earnings—not nearly enough to lift them out of poverty or free them from welfare.

The Job Training Partnership Act, which eliminated public sector jobs, was supposed to be an advance over CETA, which was widely criticized for being ineffective and subject to abuse by local politicians. But a 1994 study of 16 local JTPA programs found that 30 months after leaving the program, adult women were earning an average of \$13,417 a year, only \$1,176 more than those in a control group, while adult men were earning \$19,474, only \$978 more. Young people fared even worse.

Grubb finds such results, after three decades of experimentation, “very discouraging.” He urges that job training be integrated into broader educational programs, at community colleges and elsewhere.

“From Massacres to Genocide: The Media, Public Policy, and Humanitarian Crises.”

Brookings Institution, 1755 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-2188; World Peace Foundation, One Eliot Square, Cambridge, Mass. 02138-4952. 203 pp. \$26.95

Editors: Robert I. Rotberg and Thomas G. Weiss

The world was riveted during the 1990s by the dreadful spectacle of starvation in Somalia and then mass slaughter in Rwanda. Yet, strangely, there was little interest in the terrible suffering nearby, in Sudan. There, years of civil war, drought, and famine had taken an awful toll. As 1994 began, some 1.5 million people were at risk of starvation, four million had been forced to flee their homes, and nearly 400,000 refugees had left the country. But the fickle news media barely noticed.

Why not? asks Steven Livingston, a professor of political communication and international affairs at George Washington University and one of 11 contributors to this book. The long-simmering crisis in Sudan was, logistically, much harder for journalists to cover, he argues, and the story did not lend itself to the neat packaging possible in Somalia (“the first totally ‘failed’ state”), or Rwanda (genocidal slaughter).

However, the U.S. government’s provision of strictly humanitarian aid is usually not much influenced by the so-called CNN factor, contends Andrew Natsios, a former U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) official. It is

when the response to disaster fails and people start dying en masse that the news media, particularly TV with its appetite for graphic images, may show up. The CNN factor may then come into play. AID launched a large-scale relief effort in Somalia in January 1992—six months before the media focused on the crisis, and almost a year before President George Bush sent 28,000 U.S. soldiers there.

Natsios and other contributors favor a more aggressive U.S. response to misfortunes overseas. The news media, they believe, cannot be relied on to cover humanitarian crises consistently, fully, and accurately, or to evoke an effective response from the United States and other nations. Rotberg, of Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, and Weiss, of Brown University’s Watson Institute for International Studies, say that kind of response will reliably happen only if the U.S. national interest is redefined: “We should accept the premise that the political values, moral stature, and domestic tranquillity of the United States are genuinely threatened by instability and strife wherever in the world they occur.”