

# What a Mess: Chaos and Creativity

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## *The Huffington Post:*

One of the most influential ideas about crime prevention to come out in recent years is something called the “broken windows theory.” According to this theory, small acts of deviance — littering, graffiti, broken windows — will, if ignored, escalate into more serious crime. In practice, this theory leads to zero tolerance of public disorder and petty crime. Both theory and practice have been embraced by some big city mayors, most notably Rudy Giuliani, who credited the strategy with significantly cutting serious crime in 1990s New York City.

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This was the point of departure for psychological scientist Kathleen Vohs and her colleagues at the University of Minnesota. Vohs wondered if perhaps environmental order and disorder are both functional, activating different, but equally valuable, mindsets. Maybe what we disparage as messiness — maybe this physical state contributes to a varied world, and perhaps it’s variety that’s most important in shaping human thinking and action. She and her colleagues ran a couple experiments to test this provocative idea.

Read the whole story: [The Huffington Post](#)

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