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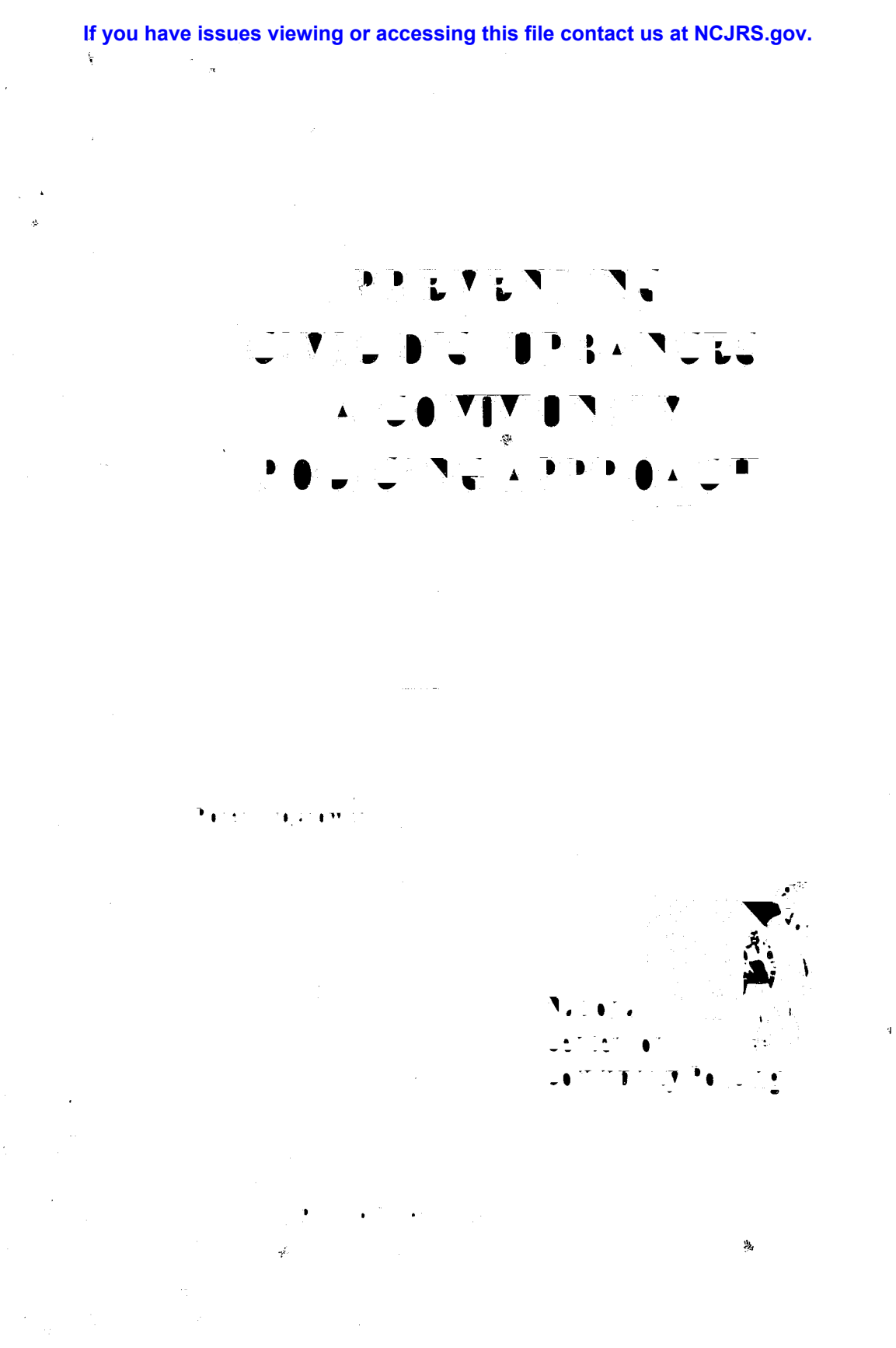

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PREVENTING CIVIL DISTURBANCES: A COMMUNITY POLICING APPROACH

NCJRS
MAR 15 1990
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This publication was made possible by a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to the School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University. The information contained herein represents the views and conclusions of the author and not necessarily those of the Mott Foundation, its trustees, or officers.

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Perhaps no one has written more astutely about how our perceptions color our thinking than social commentator Chandler Davidson, who has examined the factors involved in what used to be called the "culture of poverty," now referred to as the Underclass.

The following is a paraphrased case history that Davidson compiled on a woman he called Willie Mae to protect her identity, because her troubled life story has much to teach us.

Willie Mae came from what Davidson calls a "highly disorganized family milieu." Her father was a pathologically unsound drinker, womanizer, and gambler who ended up going broke during the Depression. He was bailed out by his father-in-law, on the condition he straighten up, but the marriage to Willie Mae's mother eventually ruptured.

After working briefly, Willie Mae married a philanderer much like her father, whose primary advice to his daughter had been that she learn how to play "hard to get." Her first husband came from a large family with a history of violence and tragedy—three of his siblings had died violently, one was mentally retarded, and one had married a woman with psychiatric problems and later implicated in the death of a young woman companion. Willie Mae conceived five children, only two of whom lived. These children were largely raised by others.

The marriage lasted 10 years, dominated by fights over Willie Mae's compulsive spending habits. The marriage ended abruptly when her husband was gunned down in the streets by a man widely rumored to be deranged.

Willie Mae then married an older, divorced man who had previously had a relationship with her sister. They often partied together until dawn, much to the apparent distress of the man's daughter from his previous marriage. After he died of a lingering illness, Willie Mae returned to work, saying, "The first one (job) had been fun, but toward the end, I got tired. It taught me not to expect too much and not to take things for granted."

Davidson has been chronicling the life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. The point, of course, is that discussing civil disturbances, a euphemism we employ when we mean race riots, is a sensitive topic. But it is a sign of how inflamed racial tensions are that we find it difficult to discuss the issue of race openly. As Davidson demonstrates, we must not succumb to the temptation to make assumptions about links between behavior and race or class where none exist.

Yet people of goodwill must find ways to talk about such issues, because silence will only lead to further misunderstanding, mistrust, and miscommunication—all of which have contributed to the racial tension we see in this

society. We must try to reach out to each other across the racial, ethnic, religious, political, social, and economic barriers that separate us, so that we can focus our collective energies on reducing the threat. We must abandon the temptation to point fingers, apportion blame, and debate responsibility for the problems that face us, so that we can begin to pull together into one colorblind society instead of fracturing into two.

To do that, we must allow each other to make mistakes. We must talk about both facts and perceptions, without fear that offense will be taken where none is intended. But we must not hesitate to look at the problems that continue to plague segments of the black community, so that we never again suffer the kind of Long, Hot Summer that ripped this country apart 20 years ago.

Part of this paper will forecast, scanning the horizon for signs of any heavy weather ahead. But another important purpose of the paper will be to explore how a Community Policing approach to law enforcement appears to offer us a unique opportunity to dial down the temperature in the violent hot spots that dot our major cities, so that we never experience what author James Baldwin warned would be *The Fire Next Time.*

Racial tensions are rising, and the problem of drugs and violence in our cities threatens to spiral out of control. These ominous signs point to what can be called the possibility of a "runaway social greenhouse effect." Just as the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere may pose a serious threat to our physical environment, the escalating hostility, violence, and instability in the crime- and drug-infested areas of our cities may signal an equally grave danger to the social environment of this country.

Some say this flies in the face of statistics that show a welcome decline in our overall rates of serious crime. Yet a closer look shows that these rates have not shown the dramatic drop we might have expected as the tail end of the Baby Boom generation grows out of its most crime-prone years. These heartening but relatively modest gains have come at a high price. There are now roughly twice as many people behind bars as there were a decade ago, and almost half of the offenders serving time in state prisons are black.

Of concern as well is that our rates of violent crime remain far beyond what other industrialized Western nations endure. Our murder rate alone is roughly four times that of Europe. Instead of domestic tranquility nationwide, we see a society where people, particularly people of different races, are afraid of each other. And nowhere is this fear worse than in those drug- and violence-riddled areas of our cities, where the people who live there often have the least to lose.

Perhaps we would all feel more secure if most of us were not old enough to have vivid memories of the race riots of the late sixties and early seventies that serve as a reminder that it can indeed happen here. Other than the work of a few, namely William Tafoya, there has been little scientific mapping of our communities to identify and monitor the level of the threat. The feedback the author of this paper receives comes primarily from some of the 300 Community Policing sites around the country. Community Policing provides superior intelligence, but we do not have a mechanism in place to analyze the level of threat in detail in the way that meteorologists map data on the greenhouse effect. So the best that we can do today in developing a picture of where we stand requires looking back at yesterday, to begin to learn the lessons of history, in the hope that we can find ways to avoid repeating our mistakes.

The Slot Machine as a Model for Violence

No doubt we have all shared the experience of reading a newspaper account of a murder, rape, or assault that made us pause and wonder what provokes people to commit such horrible acts. How can a person become so irrational? Admittedly, we do not have all the answers to explain why one person lashes out and another does not. But then think of how we all laugh at the shock of recognition when we see a scene on TV where someone who has faced a series of mounting frustrations finally loses control entirely and kicks the offending lawnmower or car that won't start—even if it means breaking a toe. At a certain point, anger overwhelms rationality, so that we no longer respond to internal or external appeals for restraint. The model that I use to help explain why some people reach the point where their anger becomes criminal violence is a slot machine.

When we pull the handle on a slot machine, there's no payoff—unless the same symbols appear in all three windows, an interactive process where all three windows interrelate. Applying this model to social confrontations, three windows that improve the odds the payoff will be violent can be labelled: "Past History," "Current Stress," and "Precipitating Event."

In the case of criminally violent individuals, when we look at the obvious examples of a Charles Manson or John Hinckley, it's apparent that their past history provided clues about their future behavior. In these bizarre cases, there is often a past history of serious mental illness, coupled many times with abuse and neglect, substance abuse, or childhood trauma. Even Ted Bundy serves as the exception that proves the rule, because experts continue to sift his

childhood for evidence that something in his past background will help explain why he became a monster.

Yet it's equally obvious there are many people with troubled past histories who never commit violence. The second window shows that the odds improve if the person is undergoing current stress. The stress might be loss of a job, a personal rejection, problems in a relationship, or some situation that threatens the person's self-esteem.

Manson had apparently been obsessed with being rebuffed by the record producer he may have thought was still living in the house occupied by Sharon Tate. John Hinckley reportedly felt rejected by actress Jodie Foster. Again, the actual facts do not matter as much as how the person perceives those facts. What might appear to be a minor nuisance to one person is a traumatic stress to another. In the case of individuals, personality is an important filter through which the person perceives reality.

Ironically perhaps, the third window that must match for violence to occur may seem relatively trivial compared to the other two. We all know of cases where a seemingly meaningless dispute about a card game or fender bender escalated into murder. In Detroit last year, a young man was shot to death on a bus, reputedly because hostility escalated after another young man was angered because the victim stared at him too long.

That same slot machine also serves as a useful model to explore violence in communities. Looking back at the 1967 riot in Detroit, we clearly see how past history, current stress, and a precipitating event culminated in the week-long race riot that cost 43 people their lives.

Concerning past history, the Kerner Commission identified a long list of problems that blacks have faced in this country. It also noted that Detroit had already suffered a major race riot in 1943. But for our purposes, we will limit our analysis primarily to the relationship between the Detroit police and the black community, to show what a potent role past history played in filling the first of the three windows of our slot machine.

According to the Kerner Commission, tensions between the black community and the police had long been a "recurrent theme." Two years before the 1967 riot, Judge George Edwards, a former commissioner of the Detroit Police Department, wrote:

> It is clear that, in 1965, no one will make excuses for any city's inability to foresee the possibility of racial trouble. Although local police forces generally regard themselves as public servants with the responsibility of

maintaining law and order, they tend to minimize this attitude when they are patrolling areas that are heavily populated with Negro citizens. There, they tend to view each person on the streets as a potential criminal or enemy, and all too often that attitude is reciprocated. It has been a major cause of all recent race riots.

The 12th Street neighborhood where the 1967 riot occurred was also under severe current stress. Roughly a month earlier, a prostitute from the area had been killed—police investigators said a pimp had done it, but the rumor on the street was that she had been killed by a Vice Squad officer. At about the same time, a young black Army veteran was killed by a gang of white youths. The city's newspapers thought they were helping to reduce tensions by intentionally downplaying the story, yet this was widely perceived by the black community as further evidence that the media cared less about black victims than white victims. In the case of communities, experience is filtered through the prism of shared culture and identity.

Adding to the stress, crowded apartment houses nearby packed people together at a density rate of 21,000 per square mile, twice the Detroit average. Only 18% were homeowners, and many were relatively new residents displaced from the "Black Bottom" slum that had been cleared by urban renewal. This influx changed the overall character of the community from an integrated neighborhood to one almost exclusively black, except for white merchants. One of every four homes in the area was deemed substandard, and another one in five had some major deficiency. The area was also known for its high rates of crime and vice.

Again, the spark that appeared in that third window seems far too small to have ignited the flames that consumed an estimated $500 million worth of property during that one week. All it took was for the police to raid the "blind pig" on the corner of 12th Street, one of five such raids that night. That same after-hours club had been raided twice before in the recent past, but what the police did not know was that on Saturday night, July 22, the establishment was hosting a party for several veterans, including two servicemen recently back from Vietnam. This meant that it took the police far longer than anticipated, about two hours, to remove the 82 patrons with what some people on the street viewed as excessive force.

The raid started at 3 a.m. At about 5 a.m., someone threw a bottle through the window of a patrol car; then, like a scene in the Spike Lee movie about a race riot, someone threw a litter basket through a store window. At some

point, a young man in a shirt with green sleeves galvanized the crowd by shouting, "We're going to have a riot," and within an hour, thousands of people had spilled into the street. By the end of the week, the police and the National Guard had picked up 7,200 people.

Riots in Slow Motion

Perhaps the most frightening message is that the riot in Detroit is still going on, but today it's what a *Detroit Free Press* writer has called a "riot in slow motion." Comparing the tally of violent acts in 1967 with annual figures for last year shows that the incidence of violence has increased and is far worse today. The 43 people killed during the 1967 riot does not even equal the total of 54 young people sixteen years old or younger who were killed by gunfire in 1988 in Detroit. If we project today's rates 20 years into the future, two decades from now the total number of people murdered and the kids killed or maimed by guns would fill Detroit's Joe Louis Arena.

These ominous figures suggest that the overall climate of violence in urban hot spots has not cooled off, but rather has been ratcheted up a notch closer to the boiling point, especially now that drive-by shootings are becoming increasingly commonplace in many of our communities. People in groups often behave differently than they might as individuals. The so-called "wilding" incident in Central Park, where a group of young men savagely gang raped and almost murdered a female jogger, may be an example that shows how group dynamics can push individuals to do things beyond what they would be likely to do alone. Overall, as well, it appears that there is great truth in the adage that violence begets violence, because people who see violence around them begin to see this as a valid way of settling problems, just as children who are abused often become the next generation of abusers. To understand the level of threat today, we need to look at the three windows of the slot machine through the prism of the black community that lives in those violent urban hot spots.

Window One—Past History

By definition, the primary issues underlying race riots are race and racism. The difficulty in discussing both issues is that many people confuse them as if they are the same thing. There is great temptation for whites to limit their remarks to denouncing racism, because everyone can find common ground in denouncing its evils. But problems can arise when anyone, but particularly someone white, attempts to explore the problems that beset elements of the

black community, because doing so risks being branded a racist. Even citing statistics about black-on-black crime, the violence associated with crack in black neighborhoods, or the matrix of social ills associated with what is today called the Underclass is perceived by some in the black community as evidence of bad faith—an indulgence in blaming the victim.

But without becoming involved in the debate between liberals and conservatives about how these problems should be solved, we must look at the past history of overt and subtle forms of racism along with the current stresses on many black neighborhoods in our cities that put them at risk. We need to examine the picture of what life on the streets in these urban hot spots is like today, compared to 20 years ago, to understand the level of threat.

Again, this underscores how our perceptions about the issue of race make it extremely difficult for blacks and whites to communicate about race relations. The facts show that there has been tremendous progress toward equal opportunity for blacks in the decades since the civil rights amendment was passed and since those Long, Hot Summers. But the facts also show that many blacks have been left behind and that the gap in income between blacks and whites again appears to be growing wider. For every statistic that shows good news, we can cite another that shows bad news. How we perceive the facts often relates to race as well, as verified by a study done by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund released in early 1989. It continued to confirm that, for the most part, whites look at the glass and say it's half-full, while blacks look at the same glass and call it half-empty.

Self-interest also plays an obvious role, for example, in the way the recent Supreme Court decisions scaling back affirmative action and the amount of damages that can be assessed for racial harassment are perceived. Whites have reason to view these rulings as progress for them, since they help remove what they perceive as barriers to their hiring and promotion opportunities and because it puts white business owners at less economic risk if they are sued. Blacks, however, have reason to view these rulings as setbacks, taking away benefits they previously enjoyed. Many also insist there can be no such thing as reverse racism, since only the powerful majority has the ability to oppress the less powerful minority.

Even when this author looks at the Michigan State University campus, which is in many ways a mirror of middle-class society, most white students do not view racism as a burning issue for them, in the way many did 20 years ago during the explosion of social activism on campus. Campus life has returned to normal, which means that most students put their studies first,

partying second. Yet even this differs from the past, because students are much more worried about their career opportunities than ever before. Many talk openly about their fears that they will never be able to afford to buy the kind of homes they grew up in.

Reflecting the larger society, when white students think about civil rights, they worry about what affirmative action and so-called quotas might mean to them. Middle-class black students instead reflect what Juan Williams of the *Washington Post* said about the black middle class in general, which is that it is "still a really insecure group of people. They do not feel secure in their economic status, in their class status, so that even when you break it down as a class versus race issue, these people still feel that, at any moment, they could be snapped back into that Underclass, and they are fighting to protect their position in life."

Overt racism may be on the rise. At MSU this spring, black student activists occupied the Administration Building, the kind of protest we have not seen on campus in 20 years. The protest stemmed from their perception that the university's new plan to reduce racism on campus did not go far enough, fast enough.

But what we saw 20 years ago was that similar protests at least initially generated tremendous support and participation from white students. Over time, the Black Power movement increasingly excluded whites from direct participation, though it still sought their financial help. But today it appears that most white students do not see this as their issue, except in the case of extremists who vocally oppose such actions. This raises the concern about what will happen if the mainstream decides to "sit this one out," leaving it to the extremes on both ends of the spectrum to fight it out.

The problem for blacks is that white indifference to the issue of racism may encourage a climate in which overt racism can make a resurgence. A study by the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence showed that one of four minority students said they had suffered an incident of harassment. In a recent *Newsweek* essay, the institute's chairman, former senator Birch Bayh, cited figures from the New York City Police Department that recorded 550 incidents motivated by race, religion, ethnic background, or sexual orientation in 1988, a 100% increase in two years. About those, Bayh wrote, some are "the result of hostile, organized group activity, and some the result of the latent bigotry which lies in the souls of all too many human beings."

Upping the ante as well is the new breed of white supremacist whose ranks include many who are far too young to remember the struggles of Martin

Luther King. Though brutal and undeniably murderous, yesterday's Ku Klux Klan seem like beer-bellied good-old-boys compared to the clear-eyed, well-disciplined, well-funded, and well-armed zealots who make up the White Aryan Resistance (WAR), the Posse Comitatus, and the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord. Their ranks swell even further with the cultist followers of Lyndon LaRouche and the bizarre Skinheads who have demonstrated a penchant for launching brutal attacks when they are sure they dramatically outnumber their victims.

While the number of such extremists thankfully remains small—and their appeal limited—even more troubling perhaps is that an avowed racist like David Dukes can win election to the Louisiana legislature. To many whites, Dukes' election seems like a fluke, while blacks tend to view such incidents with far greater alarm. As the NAACP survey confirmed, past history, such as slavery and lynchings, are indeed past history for many whites, but they serve as grim reminders to many blacks of the sub-human status blacks have suffered in this country. Readers who saw Ted Koppel's recent extended *Nightline* titled "DC: Divided City" were no doubt struck by the depth of concern within the black community that they must remain vigilant to avoid a black Holocaust from happening there.

Window Two—Current Stress

Before we look at the various problems that beset many poor, black, inner-city neighborhoods, we need to remember that more whites than blacks use drugs, more whites than blacks are arrested, and more whites than blacks live in poverty. But what is also true is that blacks are overrepresented compared to their overall percentage of the population. However, the Willie Mae example demonstrates the danger of allowing erroneous assumptions to lead us to the wrong conclusions about what these figures mean. As Charles Silberman points out, we have only to look at the black-run nations of Africa, where the rates of violent crime, for example, are nowhere near ours, to see that the problem is not race, but the nature of the black experience in this country.

The facts are that the following problems constitute serious current stresses that help fill the second window of the slot machine model:

- **Violent Crime**—Blacks constitute only 12% of the population, but they account for 47% of those arrested for violent crime—and 38% of its victims. While other minorities tend to be overrepresented as well, two

studies show that Hispanics, for example, are arrested for violent crimes 2½ times more than their percentage of the population, yet the rate for blacks is four times higher than their relative numbers should allow. An analysis of the arrests in New York City also showed that poverty was not the underlying determinant, since Hispanics actually appeared to be poorer, as a group, than blacks.

- **Drugs**—The drug associated with so much urban violence today is crack cocaine. While any figures must be considered somewhat suspect, in Michigan the overall rate of cocaine use stood at 64 users for every 100,000 people in 1986, while the rate among minority males stood at an alarming 492 per 100,000—and is rising. The link between drugs and crime, though perhaps not directly cause and effect, was further verified when Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) data released in 1988 showed that a staggering 73% of male arrestees in New York City tested positive for cocaine in their urine, which meant that the drug had been ingested within the previous 48 hours.

- **The Underclass**—We now draw a distinction between poverty, which is often a temporary condition, and membership in the Underclass, which Richard Stengel defined in a *Time* magazine essay as:

> . . . the poor who are more than just temporarily down and out, the ones caught in a vicious cycle of poverty and despair. For the most part, they're black and live in the decayed heart of American cities. But the Underclass is defined less by income than by behavior. Members are prisoners of a ghetto pathology, the denizens of a self-perpetuating culture marked by teenage pregnancy, fatherless households, chronic unemployment, crime, drug use, and long-term dependency on welfare.

Raising concern for the future, the gap between rich and poor continues to grow wider, despite the historic economic boom we have enjoyed. Since 1977, the inflation-adjusted income of the poorest 10% of American families has fallen more than 10%.

Ominous as well is that the problems of the black family have continued to escalate. Daniel Patrick Moynihan touched off a firestorm two decades ago when he first wrote about this controversial topic, yet the problems since then have grown worse, and now half of all black infants today are born out of wedlock, a figure that rises to 90% in the inner city. The issue is not morality

but economics. Nearly half of all black females are pregnant by age 20, and studies show that teen mothers earn roughly half as much as women who wait until they are at least 20 years old to have their first child.

Life in a War Zone

With the caveat of the story about Willie Mae in mind, it is still fair to say that many of the urban hot spots that are likely sites for race riots are those black neighborhoods that are on the verge of collapse from the weight of the problems associated with Underclass life. As the history of the riots in Detroit, Watts, Newark, and the 20 other cities studied by the Kerner Commission attest, black communities with serious economic and social problems are at obvious risk, and the greater the problems, real or perceived, the greater the probable risk.

At the expense of being branded an alarmist, even a cursory comparison of the conditions of the black ghetto that set the stage for the riots 20 years ago and the problems in today's urban hot spots show why we all feel a heightened sense of urgency. Twenty years ago, the police were most alarmed about Black Power separatists, such as the Black Panthers. As Joe Klein recently wrote in a cover story on race issues in *New York* magazine, a number of white liberals, including affluent celebrities, were seduced into blurring the line between criminality and politics by the rhetoric of the Black Panthers. As Klein notes, the response when Eldridge Cleaver argued in *Soul on Ice* that his previous rapes of white women were tantamount to political acts should have been to dismiss it as dangerous hogwash. Instead, such protestations were given serious consideration by whites who felt guilty about the history of racism in this country.

The Panthers had a long and bloody history, replete with allegations of shakedowns to raise money and ties to drug dealing, but they at least projected an identity based on social activism toward the goal of racial equality. Today, in their place, we see gangs like the Crips, the Bloods, the Chambers Brothers, and the Jamaican Shower Posses. These gangs may try to cloak their crack-dealing in political rhetoric, but no one doubts they put profits far ahead of politics. As my colleague at MSU, Carl-Spencer Taylor (who has studied these gangs personally for almost a decade) says, these gangs not only do not put anything back into the community, their dealing and the user crime it spawns picks clean areas that already had little left worth taking.

Twenty years ago, the hard drug of choice in the ghetto was heroin, a mind-numbing opiate that left waves of stuporous and passive addicts nod-

ding in its wake. Today instead we see an explosion in the use of crack, second only to PCP in producing wildly erratic and bizarre behavior, as the paranoia that results from continued use sets in.

The difference as well is that the gangs that control today's wholesale and retail distribution of crack almost make us nostalgic for the "old-fashioned" gangsters who ran heroin, because their code of honor—or their fear of attracting undue attention from the police—at least kept them from corrupting and exploiting juveniles. Crack dealers today show no such reluctance. In fact, the relative protection from harsh punishment that the juvenile justice system provides young people, in the hope they can recover from early mistakes, is what makes them such an attractive labor pool from which crack dealers can select the best and the brightest.

What this means is that within the span of two decades, the troubling vision of Black Panthers with their bandoliers has been replaced by what can be called the Other Yuppie—the Young Urban Predator. The Other Yuppie may borrow his rhetoric from Malcolm X, but he has far more in common with Ivan Boesky, since he is a smart, shrewd, and ruthless manipulator who doesn't let the law impede his greed. Symbolized by gold chains and Uzi's, sitting behind the wheel of a Mercedes, BMW, or a Suzuki Samurai, the Other Yuppie can be Detroit's White Boy Rick Wershe, but he's more commonly a young black man like Maserati Rick Carter. Carter was immortalized after he was gunned down in his hospital room and buried in a coffin fashioned to look like a Mercedes.

New York columnist Jimmy Breslin may be the only person in the United States to see good news in the fact that crack dealing has now allowed blacks to own their own crime. He says that is a rite of passage that all other minorities have gone through on their way to securing their share of the American dream. What Breslin ignores, however, is that the black experience has been uniquely different, dating from the days when blacks came here against their will as slaves, while other immigrants chose to come here. The vision of the Other Yuppie, opening fire on anyone in their path, is a nightmare, one that racists can exploit. And the money and violence of crack dealing not only demoralizes but corrupts.

Who of us can even conceive of living in a neighborhood ruled by rich, heavily armed teenagers who have no remorse about opening fire on anyone in their way? Imagine the futility of trying to raise children properly in such an environment. A CBS reporter for the TV show *48 Hours* recently did a segment during which he interviewed a 14-year-old dealing crack on the street

at night in the District of Columbia. The reporter asked the dealer what he earned. The young man admitted he had only been dealing part time for a couple months, but that he averaged $800 a night. What argument other than the law do we have potent enough to lure him away from his $200,000-a-year job? How can we prevent seeing entire families corrupted by such temptation?

There are poverty-stricken households where the three generations who live there together range from a grandmother who has not yet turned 30 years old, to the daughter's newborn whose characteristic quiver bears witness to the mother's use of cocaine during pregnancy. These are households where the children are already at risk of future problems, because no one in the family for generations has ever completed high school or held a job.

The Third Window

As noted above, if the first two windows line up on the slot machine, it often doesn't take much to fill that third window. In more than half the riots studied by the Kerner Commission, some police action triggered the ensuing riot. Yet a closer look shows that strained relations between the police and the black community often appear in all three windows—past history, current stress, *and* precipitating event:

> Virtually every major episode of urban violence in the summer of 1967 was foreshadowed by an accumulation of unresolved grievances by ghetto residents against local authorities (often, but not always, the police). So high was the resulting underlying tension that routine and random events, tolerated or ignored under most circumstances (such as the raid on the "blind pig" in Detroit and the arrest of the cab driver in Newark) became the triggers of sudden violence.

So we find ourselves faced with a dangerous dilemma where we have an obvious need to rely on aggressive police action to shut down the Other Yuppie's crack dealing, yet there is a just-as-obvious concern that even a relatively trivial incident could trigger a riot. Many police professionals are encouraged by the support they are receiving from law-abiding people who live in areas plagued by open dealing. They insist that the people who live in those areas are so fed up that they often exhort the police to crack down harder.

In those communities that enjoy good police/community relations, in particular those that have already adopted a true Community Policing approach, this support may be broad enough and deep enough that problems will not

occur. But there is grave danger that the police departments who do not have a Community Policing program in place may be lulled into a false sense of security, especially if the feedback is coming from community leaders or older residents.

As the Kerner Commission report showed, the rioters were made up primarily of young men. A study done following the Detroit riot showed more than half of those arrested were between 15 and 24 years old—eight of 10 were between 15 and 35. A self-reporting survey of people in the community showed that an even greater percentage of the rioters were young, while, in contrast, less than 40% of those people in the area who did not participate were younger than 35.

We must also remember that crack dealing, for the most part, is a young man's game. Unlike 20 years ago, there is now a firmly entrenched, new, businesslike empire run by young, ruthless blacks who have the resources to protect their lucrative markets and who have demonstrated no reluctance to use violence against anyone who opposes them.

What is also vastly different about the drug business is that these are merchants who have no reason to worry about protecting property. Blacks who own factories, businesses, and stores have an obvious stake in stability. But what we see today in many urban spots is that these communities are already in chaos because there is little if any of this kind of economic glue to bind people together so that they feel they have something to protect. What we see instead are drug dealers operating on the street or selling drugs from abandoned buildings or apartments where they may not even pay the rent. The cruel irony is that it may well be in their vested interest to promote chaos, since neighborhood decay allows them to shield their business from scrutiny even more.

This underscores that we are left with more questions than answers. When we look at a troubled urban hot spot plagued by open dealing, will the community support more aggressive police or military action? How far will dealers go in protecting their turf? Will they exploit racial frustrations and manipulate the community into battling the system for them? Will the young people in the community help the police, stand and watch, or will they throw a rock, fling a bottle, or pull a gun?

Should trouble start, are there enough adult authority figures with sufficient clout—and motivation—to help bring the situation under control? Will they act? Will they succeed? How widespread is the corruption of drug

profits that can undermine support? Will the chaos be confined? How far will it spread? Will other cities follow?

What are the consequences if the black community perceives the response as excessive? What will today's new breed of activists like the Reverend Al Sharpton urge people to do? Will the crack dealers' stake in protecting their profits persuade them to fund a succeeding reign of urban terrorism unlike anything we have seen before? Are we in danger of seeing widespread strikes against police, prosecutors, and judges such as those being perpetrated by the Medellin Cartel in Colombia?

New as well (compared to 20 years ago) is the growing friction among minorities. The Super Bowl riot last winter in Miami reportedly had its roots in growing tensions between blacks and Hispanics from Central America, since blacks perceive them as a competitive threat. And while Asian immigrants have made great strides in this country overall, there is growing evidence that some members of that community are moving into the drug trade. What will the increasingly complex relationship among minorities mean in these dynamics?

We also do not know what the divisions within the black community would mean in terms of soliciting help from black leaders outside the immediate area to help quell disturbances before they rage out of control. We know that 20 years ago some black leaders were able to communicate directly with people on the street, though some, especially the young, dismissed them as "Uncle Toms."

We do not know the full extent of what appears to be a growing division within the black community based on class. But even on campus we have seen what can happen when two classes within the same race clash. MSU has become a vacation spot for those Detroit drug dealers who seem to view dating black MSU women as the ultimate status symbol. This is reminiscent of the "cleansing experience" that Mafia bosses engaged in when they took their mothers to church.

After a black fraternity/sorority party on campus last year, we had two drive-by shootings within hours that appear related to this clash of cultures. Recently a student asked two Detroit men to move their Suzuki Samurai, only to find himself staring down the barrel of a 9 mm gun. The police discovered that *both* men had 9 mm weapons, and one was wearing a flak vest as well.

These concerns remind us how complex a world we face today and how much we need to know to do a better job of addressing the threat. Gathering

information is only the first step in fashioning a workable and reasonable response.

What We Must Do

While these questions demonstrate the importance of knowing in advance what to do if a riot starts, they also underscore the importance of doing all we can *now* to prevent them. The fact is that once a riot starts, the options narrow quickly, and all the choices are ugly. While restraint plays a crucial part in avoiding any action that fans the flames, the fact remains that it is the government's responsibility to restore order as quickly as possible—to save lives, to protect property, and to prevent the riot from spreading. We must also ensure that white extremists are not permitted to come in and exploit the situation for their purposes.

Yet we have only to think of recent events in Beijing to understand why we do not want to see tanks rolling into our cities and why we shudder at the thought of troops opening fire on our own people. Yet humane alternatives are also controversial. Do we borrow from the Koreans and use tear gas and clubs? Do we follow the example of northern Ireland and issue rubber bullets? Do we imitate the Israelis and ask troops to break bones instead of shoot? If stability requires a continued police or military presence, can we avoid the problems that an occupying army faces with corruption and abuse of authority?

Those chilling questions persuade the author that our best option is prevention, and that Community Policing offers help in four basic ways:

1. Community Policing provides a means of gathering superior intelligence that allows us to identify areas at risk, the level of threat in those areas, and weaknesses and strengths within the community.

2. Community Policing provides the police with a way to address those weaknesses, which often include crime, violence, drugs, fear of crime, disorder, neighborhood decay, and juveniles at risk.

3. Community Policing reaches out to law-abiding people in the community and involves them in the police process, serving as the vital link required to enlist their help in actively promoting order and stability.

4. By improving the relations between the police and the black community, Community Policing reduces the overall risk.

A useful thumbnail description of the Community Policing philosophy is that it broadens the police mandate from a narrow focus on crime to one that addresses solving community problems including crime, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and neighborhood decay. It rests on the belief that reducing and controlling serious crime requires the police to pay renewed attention to the entire matrix of problems that allows serious crime to occur.

The Community Policing philosophy is expressed through an organizational strategy that requires freeing some police officers from the isolation of the patrol car, so that they can work directly with people in the community and enlist them as partners in the process of policing themselves. These Community Policing Officers, or CPOs, are each given their own beat and the freedom to become the mini-chief of their own areas. As the department's outreach specialists, they have the opportunity, through their continuous presence, to involve themselves deeply in the life of the community and to develop the rapport and trust that allows them to become effective community problem-solvers.

A CPO is a full-fledged law enforcement officer who makes arrests, but the challenge in the job is also to find new ways to address old problems. The CPO's direct, daily contact with average citizens in the community means that together they can prioritize local needs and develop creative community-based, police-supervised initiatives aimed at providing short- and long-term improvement in the overall quality of life.

Many efforts focus on juveniles, in the hope of intervening in the lives of the kids at greatest risk, so that they grow up to be law-abiding citizens. Community Policing renews the police role in nipping problems in the bud, by re-emphasizing that the police take property crime and so-called petty crime seriously.

CPOs also act as community advocates, jogging local government to provide service promptly (services such as repairing potholes in the street, tearing down abandoned buildings, making sure the trash is picked up on time). CPOs also act as the community's liaison to public and private agencies that offer help. This can mean linking troubled families to affordable counseling for problems of child abuse and neglect or substance abuse. It can mean linking the homeless to shelter, helping the unemployed find jobs, or tapping local businesses to provide donated supplies for projects to beautify the area. The initiatives are bounded only by the collective imagination of the CPO and the people in the community and their local needs.

By providing CPOs the autonomy to function as true professionals, they have been able to build bridges to the community in ways that no other effort can. The Community Policing approach has already shown remarkable success in attacking local drug problems. Not only does it often provide more and better information than dangerous and expensive undercover operations, it provides healthy, alternative role models in the community to counter the pernicious image of drug dealers and pimps. Community Policing can help in reducing and controlling retail-level drug sales, where supply and demand meet, in ways that involve the community in driving drugs from their neighborhoods.

Community Policing has the virtue of building order and stability from within, rather than attempting to impose order from the outside. It also harnesses the energies of the law-abiding people in the community in ways that do not promote vigilantism. The Blackstone Rangers in Chicago were hailed by many people as a way to bring order from chaos in the ghetto without involving the police. But without police involvement, the gang was transformed over time into the infamous El Rukyns, whose leaders were charged with a variety of offenses, including negotiating with Libya to conduct terrorist raids here.

Community Policing also helps provide families, including single-parent families, the direct support they need in keeping their youngsters out of trouble. Passing laws to penalize parents who don't try to keep their children from joining drug gangs is only half the equation, unless we involve the police directly in providing concerned parents the support they need. To cite just one example, a black female foot patrol officer in Flint persuaded the youngsters in her beat area to provide a list of their peers who were at greatest risk of drug using or drug dealing. She followed up by visiting each youngster's home, not just to warn the youngster and the parents that she would be keeping an eye on them, but to offer help.

One initiative was to have parents set a curfew; those youngsters whose parents verified that they made curfew every night for a month got a treat. One popular reward was her Discover Flint tour, where she would load the kids into a bus and take them around the city on a Saturday afternoon. And she talks about how moving it was to see these kids visit an art museum for the first time in their lives. Many of them had never been more than a block from home and had no vision of what the American dream offers to those who stay in school and work to get ahead.

Does It Work?

Does Community Policing help reduce the threat of urban race riots? We have no way to measure riots that don't occur, but what happened in Flint during the time of the foot patrol experiments is an indication of its success.

The Flint Neighborhood Foot Patrol program was, in many ways, a response to the riots that occurred in the late sixties, and it was also an early forerunner of what today we call "Community Policing." The Flint Police Department had experienced three unfortunate incidents that each had racial overtones, and many people were concerned about the escalating tensions between the Flint police and the black community. The foot patrol program was an experiment to see whether a more personalized form of policing could make a positive contribution.

The incident that illustrated how Community Policing can reduce the risk of a race riot began when both white and black motor patrol officers responded to a call about a double homicide at a discotheque in a black neighborhood on the north side of town. The officers soon found themselves facing a threatening situation as the residents of the area began to congregate around the patrol cars, challenging what they perceived as an unwarranted influx of heavily armed officers into their midst.

Tensions continued to mount until several foot patrol officers arrived on the scene. They recognized people in the crowd and started moving through the area, explaining to the people that they knew about the homicides that had occurred and encouraging them to "cool it." The people trusted the foot officers, not only because they knew them, but because daily face-to-face contact had made them uniquely accountable. They knew the foot officers would not dare mislead them, because those officers would be back in their neighborhoods the next day—and every day after that—where people could confront them if they hadn't told the truth.

As has already been pointed out, we have no reliable way to count riots that do not occur. But the author believes that Flint might have erupted into widespread violence that night had there not been a foot patrol program that was able to bridge the gap between the police and the community. It is of vital importance to note that the race of the officers was not an issue. Some of the motor patrol officers who felt menaced were black, and some of the foot officers who made the greatest impact on the crowd were white.

While the experience in Flint showed that this kind of approach significantly reduced racial tensions between the police and the community, we also found evidence of true colorblindness. In one instance, black residents

demanded that the department get rid of a black foot officer who they perceived as ineffective, while in another case, the black community held a picnic to celebrate the promotion of a white foot officer to sergeant that was attended by 300 people.

A Community Policing approach does not mean that the department designates a few officers to act as the good cops, while other officers are the bad cops who do the real dirty work of policing. Instead it means that every police officer adopts a problem-solving approach to the job, and that the CPOs simply have the time, opportunity, and freedom to explore intensive, long-term approaches at the grass-roots level.

Community Policing reduces the potential for riots beyond reducing racial tension between the police and the black community. Mirroring what we have discovered about the dynamics of crime, it follows that social and physical disorder play a crucial role in riots as well. Just as a neighborhood in decline acts as a magnet for crime, it seems reasonable to suppose that areas that already look like they have been hit by a riot are at greater risk. Community Policing allows the police to help reduce this social and physical disorder and neighborhood decay.

As detailed in their ground-breaking articles, "Broken Windows" and "Making Neighborhoods Safer," James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling talk about how problems cluster where we see drug addicts, prostitutes, and panhandlers on the street, and in those places where abandoned cars and dilapidated buildings compete with litter, trash, and graffiti to mar the visual landscape. There is growing evidence that Community Policing makes areas more crime-resistant, and we have reason to hope that it can also help make them more drug- and riot-resistant as well.

Just to show how one small Community Policing project can address many goals, let's look at one program in Windsor, Canada, where CPOs are stationed in what's called a Cooperation Station, a facility in a public housing complex that also houses social service agencies. In this particular program, non-violent juvenile offenders are automatically assigned to a diversion program that is now supervised by the CPOs at the station. The officers work with the kids on projects designed to beautify the area—painting, mowing the lawn, planting flowers.

This kind of initiative holds the promise of turning the community around over time by making the area less inviting to predators. It also allows the police face-to-face contact with kids at risk, so that they know the officers can recognize them. At the same time, it allows the youngsters the opportunity to

experience the self-esteem that comes from working hard on something that benefits others.

Community Policing also provides the police with the legitimacy within the community that is required for effective, aggressive action. There are dangers involved in stepping up aggressive action against retail-drug dealing in areas where there is no Community Policing effort in place, because of the risk of lack of communication and misunderstanding. The risk may be even greater if the escalating drug crisis leads to using some branch of the military to attack open dealing. Before we find ourselves reduced to such alternatives, it seems far safer to explore first all that Community Policing can do. The incident outside the disco in Flint illustrates that a Community Policing approach improves the environment for the police to do their job at less risk of inflaming tensions that could explode.

To summarize some of the important ways in which Community Policing already helps reduce the risk of urban race riots:

- Community Policing reduces tensions between the police and minorities.
- Community Policing allows the police to gather more and better information about the level of risk in target neighborhoods.
- Community Policing provides the police with a mechanism to track incidents with racial overtones. (In the case of graffiti, for example, it makes a difference whether racial, ethnic, or religious slurs are involved, but many departments have no way to monitor patterns and trends.)
- Community Policing provides the departments with an early-warning mechanism to spot any activity by white supremacists.
- Community Policing provides an important new way to address retail-drug dealing, as it provides legitimacy for aggressive anti-drug initiatives by other members of the department.
- Community Policing targets juveniles for special attention, the group at greatest risk of rioting.
- Community Policing directly addresses the problems of social and physical disorder and neighborhood decay that plague communities at greater risk.
- Community Policing involves residents in the police process, which improves the communication that can help defuse threatening situations.

- Community Policing allows the police to develop proactive initiatives that offer the promise of enhancing the safety and overall quality of life in the community over time.
- Community Policing involves average citizens in community-based, police-supervised initiatives that reduce the likelihood of vigilantism (and vigilantism has the potential to trigger riots).

Many people look at Community Policing and like what it can do, but they ask, "Why the police?" The response is, "Who better?" We need to have people in troubled communities who have the full force of the law behind them when they act, because arrest is a potent tool that we need to solve contemporary crime problems. But the police must also have a way to develop rapport with the law-abiding people in the community whose support—and participation—is essential in making urban hot spots more crime-, drug- and riot-resistant.

Research in Flint confirmed that the officers on foot felt far safer than their motor patrol counterparts. That may seem shocking, since it would seem that the patrol car would not only provide the officers greater protection, but easy access to escape any threat. But what this proves is that most people obey the law most of the time, and people who live in Underclass neighborhoods have good reason to want to help the police protect them from victimization. As the department's community outreach specialists, CPOs can tap into that goodwill in ways other approaches cannot.

How We Can Do More

If we accept the importance of the need to do more to prevent riots, we can use the information gathered by departments that have some form of Community Policing in place to assess the level of risk. We can also work with departments on exploring community problem-solving approaches that address the underlying dynamics to reduce the level of risk. A coordinated approach would also allow us to monitor progress and share information with other departments on what works, what doesn't, and why.

Community Policing is not a panacea. It should not be expected to provide all the answers. Community Policing provides short- *and* long-term relief. It not only provides us a way to "take the beach" in our quest to reduce the crime and violence in the inner city, it provides us a way to "hold the beach," an even bigger challenge. And because arrest is not the only tool the approach relies on, it does not always engage the rest of the expensive criminal justice system.

Some departments say they cannot afford Community Policing, but many times, it is a question of managing resources properly rather than securing new funding. The National Center for Community Policing can provide information and suggestions for additional funding sources. We must encourage more departments to begin to adopt this approach, so that we can develop an increasingly more accurate picture of what is happening in cities nationwide.

To reduce the threat of a runaway social greenhouse effect, the Community Policing approach may be a part of the answer. Seeing its potential demonstrated in various Community Policing efforts nationwide persuaded the author to shift from being an objective researcher to a committed supporter.

A recent survey that we conducted at the Center last year showed that more than 300 departments nationwide have adopted some form of Community Policing. Even more impressive is that this number includes the trendsetting departments in major cities such as New York and Los Angeles, as well as those in cities and towns of every description.

Yet there are 15,000 police agencies in this country. History shows that many programs that have done the most to improve conditions for blacks overall did not have equal opportunity as their primary goal—the G.I. Bill and Social Security are two obvious examples. Everyone in the United States deserves to live in a safe and stable community, free of the scourge of drugs and violence. Community Policing addresses that need, with the welcome by-product of reducing the threat of riots. Community Policing reminds us that until we are all safe, no one is safe.

In closing, we return to the Kerner Commission report, because it talked about what the police should do to reduce the threat:

> The Commission believes that police cannot, and should not, resist becoming involved in community service matters. There will be benefits for law enforcement no less than for public order.
>
> First, police, because of their "front line position" in dealing with ghetto problems, will be better able to identify problems in the community that may lead to disorder. Second, they will be better able to handle incidents requiring police intervention...Third, willing performance of such work can gain police the respect and support of the community. Finally, development of non-adversary contacts can provide the police with a vital source of information and intelligence concerning the communities they serve.

Just like the slot machine and the interaction of its three windows, Community Policing requires the positive interaction of citizens and the police to prevent civil disturbances.

References and sources cited in this publication are available upon request from the National Center for Community Policing, 560 Baker Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48826-1118.

For an expansion of the discussion of Community Policing presented here, see *Community Policing: A Contemporary Perspective,* by Robert Trojanowicz and Bonnie Bucqueroux, Anderson Publishing, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1990.

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