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median family income increased by 104 percent to \$19,800. Mortgage payments consumed 19 percent of family income in 1980, up modestly from 17 percent in 1970. Renters fared less well. Average rents jumped 125 percent, consuming 27 percent of tenant income in 1980 as opposed to 20 percent in 1970. And renters' family incomes in 1980 were only 67 percent of the U.S. average, while those of homeowners grew to 125 percent, widening a gap that first appeared during the 1940s.

More than half of all American blacks and Hispanics today are renters. While the younger middle-class families who failed to profit from the housing boom of the 1970s may feel some regrets, the authors suggest, the poor were the real losers.

### *Where the Police Went Wrong*

"'To Serve and Protect': Learning from Police History" by Mark H. Moore and George L. Kelling, in *The Public Interest* (Winter 1983), 10 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Big-city police forces have tried everything from high technology to improved classroom training to make policemen more effective crime-fighters. Yet nothing seems to work. Moore and Kelling, both Harvard criminologists, suggest that excessive "professionalization" of police work itself is part of the problem.

The first public city police forces in America were created during the 1840s to fight rising street crime. The police patrolled the streets and performed a variety of mundane "constabular" chores, locating lost children, corralling drunks, discouraging rowdyism. Investigations were carried out by individuals or private detective agencies, who called in the police only to make arrests.

Beginning in the 1870s, however, Progressive reformers condemned big-city police departments for their ties to local politicians and for various abuses of power. In response, the authors say, police chiefs pulled back from maintenance of public order and morals and launched a "professional" war against crime. To avoid charges of unfairness, street cops often ignored certain misdeeds—violations of Prohibition, "victimless" crimes, disorderly conduct. Patrol cars, radios, and other technology grew in importance after World War II. The "cop on the corner" gradually lost touch with the people he served.

Ironically, note Moore and Kelling, "seeing a cop on the beat, allowing one's children to play unsupervised in the park, not being offered drugs on the street" make people feel safer in their neighborhoods than does a drop in the crime statistics. (Indeed, one reason that 80 percent of all violent crimes between strangers go unsolved today is that witnesses are reluctant to cooperate with impersonal police departments.)

The authors argue that police chiefs today should heed the past. Private watchdog groups, such as New York's Guardian Angels, should be encouraged, not simply dismissed as "vigilantes." And putting more

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*The Pinkerton's late 19th-century logo. Private police forces are actually far more numerous today.*

police on the sidewalks rather than in patrol cars, allowing precinct commanders more leeway in dealing with local complaints about police policies, and cracking down on disorder and vandalism might not lower crime rates, but would surely make citizens feel safer.

### *Debating How Children Learn*

"What Does Piaget's Theory Describe?"  
by Kieran Egan, in *Teachers College Record* (Winter 1982), Columbia Univ., 525  
West 120th St., New York, N.Y. 10027.

American educators have been strongly influenced by the child development theories of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980). Yet Egan, professor of education at Canada's Simon Fraser University, contends that Piaget's evidence is seriously flawed.

Piaget held that children pass through four fixed stages of "logico-mathematical" development. Using a battery of assorted tests, it is possible to determine at what age children reach particular stages, and therefore what they are capable of learning.

In one classic Piagetian test, children are shown a bunch of, say, four red and two white flowers and asked if it contains "more red flowers or more flowers." "Preoperational" children under age six normally say there are more red flowers. Egan believes the question itself is misleadingly phrased. Piaget's defenders reply that language comprehension also develops in stages. But even adults become confused by the question, Egan notes. And if the choice is clarified so the children know that they are being asked to distinguish between the *whole* group of flowers and part of it, nearly half answer correctly.