

From State Warfare to State Welfare: Family Values in Leonard Freed's *Police Work* (1980)

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This article examines Leonard Freed's 1980 *Police Work*, a photobook that documents the activities of the New York City Police Department from 1973 to 1979. It contextualizes the photobook within this liminal decade after the fullness of the civil rights movement and before the rise of austerity politics. The photobook, I argue, produces a visual repertoire of policing that resolves the crisis of legitimacy faced by the NYPD during this decade, remaking the meaning of the police in the public imaginary from an agent of state warfare into an institution of state welfare. Far from simply creating photographs of policing as community care, *Police Work* engages in a process by which police violence is visually recoded as police benevolence. The visual politics of the family are central to this process by which we are made not to see police brutality, even when it is placed vividly on display. Ultimately, I show how, even as the camera moves between public and private, *Police Work* produces an ideology of separate spheres in which the expansion of policing can find its rationalization. Ultimately, this article reveals *Police Work* as a site through which to examine the intimate, yet often disavowed, entanglements between the domestic and the carceral.

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of Leonard Freed's 1980 photobook *Police Work*, after many sobering images of police officers making arrests and inspecting gruesome crime scenes, there appears a strikingly benign photograph (Figure 1).¹ The image, which takes up nearly the full-page spread, depicts two police officers playing in the street with a gaggle of neighbourhood kids. While one officer's back is turned towards the camera, the other is captured in a moment of joyful candour – her expressive smile is easily accessible to the

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¹ Leonard Freed, *Police Work* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980).



Figure 1. “A policewoman plays games with community children. Shortly afterward, the officer became pregnant and was assigned a desk job for the period of her pregnancy.” Photograph courtesy Magnum Photos.

camera’s lens and, through it, the reader. The photograph seamlessly weaves the police into a horizontal tableau of urban street life, framing the police not as a regulatory force of social control, but as a harmless, even positive, intervention into everyday life. By capitalizing on the perceived harmlessness of white femininity, the photograph constructs a sentimental view of the institution as protective and maternal, suggesting that the role of the police is to protect a neighbourhood’s most vulnerable residents and to ensure their vitality into an unknown future. The police officer stands in for the parents who are absent from the photographic frame: she momentarily completes the image of the nuclear family, belying the ways in which the police make absent the actual and varied kinship structure of urban communities.

This photograph exemplifies the sympathetic portrait of the NYPD that unfolds across the pages of *Police Work*. It allows us to see how the photobook’s remaking of the police into a positive force within city life is invariably entangled with the visual politics of the family. *Police Work* was borne out of Freed’s almost decade-long journey following police officers as they patrolled the city streets, liaised with community members, made arrests, investigated crime scenes, and went about the many mundane, quotidian activities that comprised everyday work within the institution. Replete with photographs of enormous litter piles, burned-out tenement buildings, and drunk and homeless New Yorkers, the photobook both registers and reproduces the profound

anxiety over the viability of traditional, industrialized cities that permeated broader public consciousness. The mass exodus of white, middle-class urban residents to the suburbs, coupled with the New York City budget's imminent financial collapse, meant that, in the mid-1970s, the city was on the verge of bankruptcy. Following a plea for federal aid, the city and its fiscal crisis were thrust into the national spotlight after President Gerald Ford told New York to "drop dead."² In response, Mayor Abraham Beame's administration oversaw massive cuts to municipal programmes, devastating the public services and infrastructure on which the city's poorest residents relied. While firefighters and sanitation workers were the first afflicted by harsh austerity measures, the NYPD was not invulnerable. In 1975, over five thousand officers were laid off.³

In response to the threat posed by austerity, police and fire unions launched the now infamous Fear City campaign. Institutionally unified into the Council for Public Safety, the unions distributed pamphlets at the city's major transportation hubs – LaGuardia Airport, Grand Central Station, and the Port Authority, among others – to stir up panic over New York's supposedly spiralling crime rates. "Welcome to Fear City," the cover read, "A Survival Guide for Visitors to the City of New York." The hollow face of the grim reaper stared back at readers. Largely targeted at tourists who knew little about the realities of the urban environment, the campaign capitalized on the geographic chasm that separated those who actually experienced the daily rhythm of city life and those who consumed it from a safe distance as spectacle, encapsulating the way in which the visual discourse of urban decay mediated a vast divide between disparate social realities. The Fear City pamphlets drummed up anxiety about crime not only by targeting the Beame administration and its dramatic cuts to public services, but also by eliding the distinction between violent and property crime. While the campaign only briefly touched upon the former, the latter was a fixture of the unions' guidelines for visitors to the city: "Protect your property." The instructions urged, "Safeguard your handbag ... Even a moment's inattention can result in a serious loss."⁴

While crime rates were far from unparalleled, significant alarm over urban decay pervaded the American political imaginary. This disconnect suggests that

² On 30 October 1975 the *New York Daily News* ran the headline "Ford to City: Drop Dead" on its front page. Although it is unclear whether President Ford ever uttered these words, the headline pithily immortalized his response to the city's plea for federal aid.

³ A history of the rise of austerity politics in New York City can be found in Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity* (New York: Macmillan Books, 2017).

⁴ New York City Police Department, *Welcome to Fear City: A Survival Guide for Visitors to the City of New York* (New York: New York City Council for Public Safety, 1975), 3.

the televisual landscape played a key role in amplifying fears of city life. Popular discourse of all media – from mass-produced pulp fiction such as Mickey Spillane’s Hammer novellas to Hollywood films such as *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and *Taxi Driver* (1972) – capitalized on and perpetuated the sense that crime and disorder were endemic to New York City. This cultural climate typifies what has been termed a “phenomenology of fear,” in which the perception of one’s vulnerability to crime is overwhelmingly disproportionate to risk.⁵ Much of the mass media suggested that, in light of the diminished efficacy of the police, lone-wolf vigilantes who acted outside the law were the only way to stave off these inexorable forces of barbarism.⁶ At the same time, however, the police faced widespread criticism over how they had dealt with the challenges of the civil rights era – iconic photographs of police officers brutalizing black protestors, such as those taken by Charles Moore in Birmingham and reproduced by *Life* magazine, had been seared into the collective American consciousness. Reports on endemic corruption, such as those published in the wake of the 1972 Knapp commission, also cast serious doubt over the virtuousness of “New York’s finest.”⁷ Stripped of resources and personnel, the NYPD was trapped in what seemed to be a political and rhetorical double bind: on the one hand the institution was facing demands to sufficiently respond to collective hysteria over urban crime, and on the other to address the fallout of widespread public criticism.

Numerous scholars have sought to account for the ways in which the police continually reinvent themselves after periods of public scrutiny. For example, in their long histories of policing in the United States, both Robert Fogelson and Samuel Walker have denaturalized the seeming inevitability of the police in American life, historicizing major shifts in policing from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1960s and 1970s.⁸ In turning more specifically to New York City and its transformations during the 1970s and 1980s, Neil Smith and Samuel Delaney have enriched our understanding of the ways in which the expansion of police power at this juncture is invariably entangled with the remaking of urban space.⁹ At the same time, the writings

⁵ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *The Truth about Crime: Sovereignty, Knowledge, Social Order* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), xiii–xii. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 76–77.

⁷ *Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption* (New York: George Braziller, 1972). The events were later dramatized in a glossy Hollywood retelling of Serpico’s story and his attempts to root out corruption in the NYPD. See *Serpico*, dir. Sidney Lumet (1973).

⁸ Robert M. Fogelson, *Big-City Police* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Samuel Walker, *The Police in America: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992).

⁹ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996); Samuel Delaney, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

of Allan Sekula and John Tagg have allowed us to see the critical links between the calcification of photography's visual languages and the rise of penology in the nineteenth century.¹⁰ The photographic image was not simply a transparent record of the criminal body, but, as Jonathan Finn has written, an "inscription device" that "facilitated the production of new forms of knowledge."¹¹ Leonard Freed's *Police Work* offers a critical site through which to renew these concerns from within the geographical and temporal context evaluated by Smith and Delaney, among many others. The photobook reaffirms these scholars' conclusion that photography is not simply a reflection of shifts in police rhetoric and tactics, but is a key mechanism through which incipient, often more invasive, forms of policing are articulated and legitimated. This article suggests that, in order to reckon with the ways in which policing was remade at this juncture, it must be understood photographically.

To this end, this article will analyse the ways in which *Police Work* rhetorically resolves the conflicting demands that weighed upon police in the 1970s, producing a visual repertoire of policing that justifies the necessity of the NYPD in the face of austerity politics. More specifically, I trace the ways in which the family and the home are mobilized throughout the book in order to transform the ideological meaning of the police from an instrument of state warfare into an institution of state welfare. First, I turn to Freed's use of family photography and its well-worn conventions. These photographs, I argue, suture visual forms to social norms, harnessing coherence with the photographic codes of white, bourgeois domesticity to suggest officers' adherence to moral standards. Private lives are made to rationalize public roles. Then, I turn to another photographic code that is deployed throughout *Police Work*: the tabloid. I not only attend to the spatial dynamics of the tabloid, but also situate its particular genre of photographic visibility against the remaking of New York's built environment and its mediatization. I show how, despite their formal differences, the tabloid image and the family photograph both turn on the movement of the camera from public to private. When juxtaposed within the photographic book, these seemingly opposing photographic codes, I argue, work together to mask police violence as the defence of the home. Ultimately, I show how Freed's remaking of the visual rhetoric of policing involved not an erasure of photographic evidence of police brutality, but rather a complex process through which the invocation of the family recodes police harm as care.

¹⁰ Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October*, 39 (Winter 1986), 3–64; John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

¹¹ Jonathan Finn, *Capturing the Criminal Image: From Mug Shot to Surveillance Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 29.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

In 1973, Magnum photographer Leonard Freed approached the police officers at his local West Village precinct with the aim of documenting their lives and work for the London *Sunday Times Magazine*. In a short “Author’s Note” at the beginning of the photobook, Freed explains his motivations. He wanted to find out “who they really are – not just ‘cops’ or ‘pigs,’ ‘law enforcement,’ or ‘boys in blue’...I was fascinated and challenged by how little people knew about the police, despite the fact that we see them all day in reality and in a fictionalised version at night on TV.”¹² Freed identifies a contradiction in the popular discourse of policing, arguing that the hyper-visibility of the police within American visual culture has paradoxically blinded the public to the complex realities of their day-to-day lives. *Police Work*, Freed suggests, will serve as a critical corrective, presenting insight into the daily labour of policing that has been obscured through hackneyed visual types. To deliver on this promise, *Police Work* features a wide range of photographs, depicting police officers as they patrol the streets, address the concerns of urban residents, inspect gruesome crime scenes, and go about mundane clerical work. Far from simply offering the reader a position from which to observe the police from the outside, the photobook promises an intimate “ride along” with the NYPD, allowing the reader to become embedded within the institution, if only through Freed’s photo-textual mediations.

Freed’s interest in documenting the police can be seen in light of his best-known photobook, *Black in White America*. Often described as “the signature work of his career,” the 1968 photobook chronicles the daily lives of black Americans under both *de jure* segregation in the South and its *de facto* equivalent in the North.¹³ *Black in White America* is typically understood as a classical “civil rights photo-essay.”¹⁴ Reflecting the rise of New Journalism, Freed repudiates the conventions of journalistic neutrality, offering a meditation on the nation’s deeply racist past and present. The book is a diaristic collage of photographs and text, presenting both a personal glimpse into Freed’s own shifting political consciousness and an urgent call for social change. Rather than simply reproduce dominant narratives of civil rights photography, Freed’s photobook broadens the visual record of the movement that had been generated by the popular press. Instead, *Black in White America* expands the acceptable frames through which both racial discrimination and the freedom struggle could be seen and understood. By turning his lens on the quotidian rhythms of black schools, churches, and neighbourhoods, Freed reveals how racism and resistance

¹² Freed, “Author’s Note,” *Police Work*, n.p.

¹³ Brett Abbott, *Engaged Observers: Documentary since the Sixties* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2010), 38.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

are not just on display in exceptional, highly mediatized events, but also operate through the ordinary or the mundane.

But although the photobook certainly departs from mainstream representations of the civil rights movement, *Black in White America* also contains many photographs of police officers enforcing and defending the dominant racial order – ones that rhyme with more familiar photographs from the era. For instance, one double-page spread is devoted to photographs of a civil protest. One photograph, featured in the bottom-left corner, depicts a police officer grabbing a demonstrator by the throat. The photograph tightly frames the man's face, inviting a close view of his anguished expression as he desperately attempts to free himself from the chokehold. The accompanying text explicates the page spread in its entirety: "Civil rights demonstrations in the North and South for jobs, equality, housing, schools, and civil rights." The words read, "The law says demonstrators obstructing traffic will be jailed."¹⁵ Although the text does not overtly critique the brutal tactics used to suppress protestors, it subtly denaturalizes the fiction of the law as a neutral, even-handed arbiter of criminal behaviour. Alternatively, Freed's page spread shows how, while the law sanctions the actions of the police officer, it simultaneously recasts even the most peaceful attempts to overturn the dominant racial order as criminal. For Freed, the law cannot make us unsee what is so clearly evidenced on the page: wanton police brutality.

So although *Black in White America* offers an alternative photographic record of the movement, dwelling in the daily moments of injustice and resistance that characterize black American life, photographs of the police recur. These images and, in particular, their critical framing of the police echo mainstream televisual coverage of the civil rights protests, which similarly made racial antagonisms legible through images of police violence. As Martin Berger has demonstrated in his analysis of mainstream civil rights photography, liberal media outlets in the northern states continually published photographs that "reduced the complex social dynamics of the civil rights movement to easily digestible narratives, prominent among them white-on-black violence."¹⁶ The police were continually at the centre of these stories, allowing broader reactionary backlash and structural mechanisms of white supremacy to condense into a legible figural form. By interweaving images of police brutality with photographs of everyday life, *Black in White America* demonstrates that policing is not at the margins, but rather at the very centre of how the dominant racial order is reproduced. These resonances between *Black in*

¹⁵ Leonard Freed, *Black in White America* (New York: Grossman Books, 1968), 135.

¹⁶ Martin A. Berger, *Seeing through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 4.

White America and mainstream civil rights photography should not be understood as a failure to adequately contest the dominant narratives of the movement. Rather, these echoes suggest that, if a full confrontation with America's racial order was to be staged photographically, then images of police violence were both necessary and unavoidable.

Given his contributions to the unflattering visual record of the police that dominated the 1960s, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that Leonard Freed produced such a sympathetic portrait of the NYPD in the 1970s. And yet Freed's seemingly paradoxical view of policing was far from exceptional. Rather, it both registered and reproduced the contradictions of what Naomi Murakawa has termed "post-war racial liberalism."¹⁷ While this governing political rationale may have overseen the extension of legal rights to black Americans and other minorities, it also gave birth to new forms of racism that were obscured through ostensibly colour-blind law-and-order rhetoric and the expansion of state paternalism. "Liberal law-and-order," Murakawa explains, "set a lens for seeing racial violence as correctable with reformed carceral machinery. In this sense, liberal law-and-order anchored the pro-rights 'left' in a conversation that assumed the fundamental institutional structure of criminalizing, policing, and incarcerating."¹⁸ When grounded in this context, Freed's support for civil rights can be understood as fully compatible with his sympathy for policing; in fact, his work offers a window onto the ways in which the contradictions of this position were rhetorically attenuated and resolved. *Police Work* suggests that, arguably more so than any other facet of American life, it was the ideology of the family that functioned to smooth over the disjuncture between welfare and warfare, concern and control.

Throughout *Police Work*, Freed features many images of officers "off the clock." Perhaps nowhere is this more overt than in a collection of seven photographs in which police officers are depicted enjoying moments of leisure with wives and children or celebrating significant occasions, such as weddings or holidays. Although these photographs may contest the standard discursive boundaries of police photography, they are far from unconventional. Rather, these images exemplify the visual codes through which the bourgeois family has gained its legibility. In highlighting exceptional moments of familial cohesion, Freed's photographs produce the family as a harmonious unit devoid of antagonism. They create carefully edited fantasies of family life – ones that obscure its reality as site of domestic labour and emotional turmoil. As many feminist critics have noted, these elisions are particularly consequential for women, who disproportionately endure physical and emotional

¹⁷ Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

exploitation within the home.¹⁹ In Freed's photographs, just as in the home, wives are put to work. They function, along with their children, to soften the image of the overly masculine police officer, mitigating the public association of the police with physical brutality. Police officers' private lives are thereby constructed as an antidote to their public roles.

In one particular page spread, two photographs feature policemen at home with their families during Christmas. The photograph on the left-hand side of the page spread depicts a police officer with his wife and children in front of a Christmas tree. The family coordinates their poses for the photographic moment: all five figures lie on their stomachs and prop their elbows up on the carpet to lift their smiling faces for the camera. Their matching poses emphasize the cohesion of the family unit, making the strength of their kinship ties and shared genetic material visually accessible to the camera. On the right, another Christmas photograph is displayed, tightly framing a police officer with his wife who also sits in front of an elaborately decorated tree. The couple place their arms around one another and smile for the camera (Figure 2). The officer's wedding ring, an outward sign of enduring commitment to the monogamous couple form, can be seen in the foreground. The composition is dominated by a staggering number of Christmas presents. A cornucopia of wrapped boxes surround the couple, tumbling out from under the tree, across their laps, and out of the photographic frame. The photograph constructs the police officer's private life as plentiful and satisfying, displaying both his contentment with the nuclear family structure and his participation in the modes of consumption that have become synonymous with American Christmastime rituals.

By working over this familiar photographic language, these images reciprocate the expectations and norms that structure family photography and, through it, the bourgeois family itself. Like all family snaps, these Christmas photographs work through the repetition of certain visual tropes, such as pose and composition, affirming the exalted ordinariness of their subjects through their conformity with a particular photographic language. Coherence with visual norms is produced as evidence of adherence to social norms. Common motifs recur in both photographs, grounding them in a shared visual lexicon. Both taken inside the home, these images harness the Christmas tree in order to situate the photograph in a scene that is at once an exceptional moment of familial togetherness and an entirely common annual retreat into the private domain. In both photographs, the pose is

¹⁹ For more on the ideological meaning of family photography and feminist criticisms of its visual conventions see Jo Spence and Patricia Hollands, eds., *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991).



Figure 2. “Christmas. An officer and his wife at home.” Photograph courtesy Magnum Photos.

used to indicate the unity of the family and to display its roots in the married, heterosexual couple form. These photographs, therefore, rely on their intelligibility not only to assure readers that police officers are invested in the maintenance of the bourgeois home, but also to enhance the moral credibility of NYPD officers. The private lives of police officers are mediated in order to

confer legitimacy on their public actions – ones that, particularly since the 1960s, had been closely entangled with a photographic repertoire of violence and brutality.

Freed's invocation of the bourgeois home as evidence of police officers' moral standing is consistent with a much broader preoccupation in public discourse with the private family as a measure of public virtuousness. In a 1965 speech, delivered to the graduating class at Howard University, President Lyndon Johnson reflected on the limits of Great Society liberalism to fully ameliorate enduring black disadvantage. Instead, he argued that the greatest barrier to racial equality was "the breakdown of the Negro family structure."²⁰ The speech was co-drafted by political adviser Daniel Patrick Moynihan and reflected the contents of Moynihan's report *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. In the study, Moynihan traced the high rates of unemployment, welfare assistance, and crime that afflicted urban communities to the supposedly inherent dysfunction of black nuclear families and their incapacity to cohere with traditional family structures.²¹ Rather than clarify persistent structural inequities, the report trafficked in racial stereotypes about absent black fathers and promiscuous black mothers, framing poverty as a cultural pathology. As Daniel Geary has argued, the Moynihan report was easily used to fuel an assault on Great Society programmes that disproportionately benefited black families, as well as to justify the racialized practices of policing and mass incarceration that developed in tandem.²² If black Americans could not succeed even after being given full legal equality and access to the male breadwinner wage, then, the argument goes, they must be to blame for their own failings.

Alongside the use of family photography and its well-worn visual codes, *Police Work* also produces an inverse, yet complementary, portrait of familial dysfunction – one that lends Moynihan's theories a photo-textual language. In one photograph, for instance, Freed closely captures two policemen forcefully pinning a man down on the hood of a car (Figure 3). One officer, who has lost his cap in the struggle, has his forearm clamped down across the man's neck in a chokehold. The splayed figure is turned towards the camera, giving Freed and, through him, the reader, a full view of his strained expression. His body is still and eyes are closed, rendering his aliveness indeterminate.

²⁰ President Lyndon B. Johnson, "To Fulfill These Rights" (Commencement Speech at Howard University, 4 June 1965), at www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.com/speeches-hom/650604.asp.

²¹ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor (March 1965).

²² Daniel Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights: The Moynihan Report and Its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).



Figure 3. “A family argument. When the man went for the woman, the police jumped him.” Photograph courtesy Magnum Photos.

Rather than produce a new repertoire of police photography, the image strongly evokes mainstream photographs from the civil rights movement. It rhymes with the widely reproduced images from Birmingham, Selma, and Freed’s own *Black in White America*, that had, less than a decade earlier, given police brutality a legible visual form. These now iconic photographs distilled the racial tensions of the civil rights movement into violent clashes between white officers and black protestors, undermining the legitimacy of the police in the collective American imaginary. However, despite the intelligibility that Freed’s photograph gains through its resonance with these well-known images, the photograph’s caption, affixed to the left-hand side of the page spread, alters its meaning: “A family argument. When the man went for the woman, the police jumped him.”²³ This, too, Freed suggests, is a family photograph.

By claiming that the police acted to protect a more vulnerable woman from domestic abuse, the text recodes photographic evidence of state violence into a document of state benevolence. Through this invocation of familial dysfunction, the extension of the police into the domestic lives of racialized urban residents is quickly justified. This juxtaposition of photograph and text exemplifies the processes through which *Police Work* naturalizes the police as a positive,

²³ Freed, *Police Work*, 34.

necessary feature of urban life. While in some cases this involves the replacement of negative photographs with positive ones, *Police Work* demonstrates how this can entail a careful negotiation of photographic meaning in which vivid displays of state power are recoded and reread. Although the photograph with which this article opened may be as benign as this image is violent, both harness the perceived instability of the racialized nuclear family in order to recode the NYPD into an agent of community safety. When violence is made over into compassion it becomes very difficult to see that same violence. Perhaps this is why, in his Author's Note, Freed is able to reflect,

When asked if I saw brutality and corruption I have to answer, of course not. But of course there is corruption and brutality, cruelty and callousness. If there were not, then everyone would see the police as angels of mercy and order. What I saw were average people doing a sometimes boring, sometimes corrupting, sometimes dangerous and ugly and unhealthy job.²⁴

If Freed failed to see brutality and corruption, this is not because he failed to document it; rather, it is because brutality and corruption are documented in *Police Work* as concern and care.

Police Work offers a critical site through which to consider the fundamental indeterminacy and historical contingency of photographic meaning. Even seemingly ossified or iconic photographic codes, the book suggests, are not immune to dramatic reversals in their rhetorical value or discursive meaning. *Police Work* allows us to see how, as opposed to simply mirroring the comparative virtuousness of families and homes, representation is the very terrain on which the validity of private life is both constructed and contested. Good and bad families, in other words, cannot be understood apart from their mediations. Far from passively reflecting the relative legitimacy of the home, photographic codes actively confer moral standing and private rights onto kinship structures, unevenly distributing this status on the basis of their coherence with social norms. At stake, therefore, in these representations of the family and the home is not simply the frames through which police officers and their humanity can be seen and understood. Rather, at stake is the production of an ideology of separate spheres through which the intensification of the carceral state can find its thinly veiled rationalization. In its preoccupation with family life, *Police Work* evidences the close intermingling of the domestic and the carceral: just as the police work for the home, so too does the home work for the police. When seen in this light, there is perhaps no visual language that better encapsulates the work of the police than the family snap.

²⁴ Ibid., n.p.

TABLOID DOMESTICITY

Although family photographs certainly comprise a meaningful portion of *Police Work*, this is not the only photographic code included in *Police Work* whose logic turns upon the movement of the camera from public to private. A significant body of Freed's photographs makes use of another photographic genre that transgresses this sacred division: the tabloid. As Ryan Linkof has observed, the enduring appeal of the tabloid typically pivots around a sensational act of revelation in which the private domain is thrust into the public spotlight.²⁵ It is from this sudden violation of bourgeois privacy that the tabloid gains its perceived authenticity and photojournalistic value. The tabloid can therefore be understood in sharp contrast with the contrived staginess of the family photograph. While, in the family photograph, the camera is invited into and choreographed around the home, the tabloid involves the imposition of a camera without consent, offering, we are told, an uncensored glimpse into scenes and situations normally hidden from public view. The tabloid shows us the very thing it claims we are being denied, trading off veiled mysteries of the private realm, while simultaneously placing them on display. Whether a snapshot of an unsuspecting celebrity or a photograph of a lurid crime scene, the tabloid offers the promise of proximity through mediation, foreshortening both the spatial and temporal chasm that separates the photograph's taking from its viewing. It is a visual language that, through its coded meanings, appears viscerally real and powerfully unmediated.

In fact, the origins of *Police Work* are bound up with tabloid visual culture. Freed's photographs were initially commissioned by and published in a March 1973 issue of the London *Sunday Times Magazine*. Freed's photographs are featured inside the British magazine, as well as on the cover under the dramatic headline "Thugs, Mugs, Drugs: City in Terror."²⁶ The cover photograph is divided in two: on the left-hand side of the image, a cop faces the camera and returns its look, while, on the right, beyond an open doorway, a man lies on his back, silent and unmoving, under a dirty sheet in a tiny, darkened room. The use of the flashbulb dramatizes the revelatory capacity of the camera, emphasizing its ability to transform New York City's shadowy recesses of urban crime and vice into a source of public knowledge. Animated by a strong interplay of light and shadow, the photograph brings the details of the inert body and his squalid surroundings sharply into view. While the

²⁵ Ryan Linkof, *Public Images: Celebrity, Photojournalism, and the Making of the Tabloid Press* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2018), 3.

²⁶ "Thugs, Mugs, Drugs: City in Terror," *Sunday Times Magazine* (London), 4 March 1973, front cover.

headline frames the image as evidence of a city in precipitous moral decline, the caption compounds this slippage between poverty and lawlessness: “Violence in New York is routine. How has it happened? Is the city really falling apart?”²⁷ The tabloid pivots around a central contradiction: while, on the one hand, the paper recodes everyday poverty as violent crime, it suggests that, on the other, disorder is a banal and irrevocable fact of quotidian urban life. Crime is figured as both a sudden rupture and an everyday affair.

The photograph featured on the cover of the *Sunday Times Magazine* mobilizes the visual language normally associated with the tabloid, dramatizing the penetration of the camera into spaces that are normally hidden from the roving eye of the public. This transgression of the private is the source of the tabloid’s supposed salaciousness and voyeurism – it allows us to see what normally happens behind closed doors, when the regulatory strictures of public life are supposedly suspended. Throughout the history of photography, these dynamics of visibility have often been exaggerated through the use of the flashbulb, which has allowed the camera to penetrate impoverished urban spaces, such as crowded tenements and windowless factories, that were typically shrouded in darkness and unavailable to the camera’s lens. Blake Stimson has identified these dynamics at work in the foundational social documentary of Jacob Riis who, Stimson argues, conceived of *How the Other Half Lives* in spatial terms. Riis’s work, Stimson claims, “was drawn from two communities conceived as one – from Riis’ half looking on from the comforts of its salons and from the other half in its dark, airless taverns, shelters, and tenement bedrooms.”²⁸ Riis dramatized these acts of spatial revelation using early technologies of illumination, often startling tenement residents with the use of fast-burning flash powder. He would cast the substance into their faces and surroundings without invitation or consent, bringing the hidden details of their dirty tenements into visibility and denying his subjects any opportunity to orient themselves for the camera.²⁹

Freed draws on these established visual codes, remaking Riis’s characteristic photographic language almost a century later on the very same New York City streets. Freed’s photograph bundles multiple layers of revelation into a single image, capitalizing many times over on the exciting possibilities afforded by photographic visibility. The photograph is not just the product of the camera’s transgression of the border between street and tenement. It goes

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 54.

²⁹ Ibid., 200–1. Stimson writes in a footnote, “Surprise visits, often late at night, startling his subjects with instant ‘flash’ illumination, and a quick retreat before the brickbats came flying, thus provided the core elements of Riis’ methodology.”

even further, choreographing the violation of an even deeper boundary between the interstitial hallway and private room for the camera. In the photograph, a policeman is pictured standing to one side of the open doorway. He faces the camera and tilts his flashlight to the floor, facilitating the lens's unimpeded access to the sordid scene that lies beyond the threshold. On the other side of the doorway, an unmoving figure is illuminated. His dilapidated surroundings and unkempt possessions can be discerned in the background. They are brought into view by the use of the camera's flashbulb, which simultaneously casts the police officer's face in a garish glow. The flash not only ensures that the darkest recesses of the tenement are available for public viewing, but also heightens the sensationalism of their display, trading off the privileged epistemological link between vision and knowledge.

In order to further collapse the geographic chasm that separated New York City's apparent decline from readers in the United Kingdom, the *Sunday Times Magazine* issue is carefully rendered in the aesthetic mould of the *New York Daily News*, a tabloid that was instrumental in amplifying fears of city life in the American context. "Daily News: New York's Picture Newspaper" is stamped across the top of the paper, displacing the usual *Sunday Times* logo, which is instead wrapped, red and ribbon-like, across Freed's photograph. The typeface and formatting are exact replicas of those used by the *Daily News* and even the correct price, listed in American cents, is accurately fixed in the top-right corner. But although the *Sunday Times* may appear to reproduce an already existing cover, this is, in fact, a copy without an original. There is no *New York Daily News* cover; there never was.³⁰ Instead, the British tabloid performs a calculated mimetic gesture – an act of replication that knowingly trades off its manufactured, counterfeit status. This facsimile serves an important function; that is, to thrust British readers into closer proximity with the spectacle of New York City's decline, allowing readers to dabble in a faraway urban dramaturgy without confronting it directly. The article inside further blurs this boundary between foreign and domestic, arguing that, if New York is slated for inevitable collapse, "the outlook is grim indeed for big cities around the world."³¹ As Stuart Hall has written, the article employs the "parallel prophecy" that animates media coverage of the American context in Great Britain – the idea, in other words, that Britain "generally follows the United States but later, more slowly."³²

³⁰ This is quickly revealed through a routine search into the *Sunday Times* digital archives.

³¹ "Thugs, Mugs, Drugs: City in Terror."

³² Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 27–28.

The *Sunday Times* article, therefore, takes the spatial dynamics of the tabloid to their extreme, at once amplifying and collapsing the chasm that separated its unwilling subjects from its intended readers. While, in his opening Author's Note, Freed claims that he aimed in *Police Work* to depart from the sensationalist visual discourse of policing and to reframe the NYPD as "ordinary workers," the photobook reinscribes, rather than unsettles, the theatre of visibility that characterizes the tabloid.³³ In many cases, the movement from magazine page to photobook serves to further dramatize the display of New York's "other half." The photographs' sequencing, for instance, offers a steady journey into the city's seedy underbelly: the book begins on the street, before steadily taking the viewers into the claustrophobic jails, basement crime scenes, and filthy tenements that are normally hidden from public view. *Police Work* tracks the progression of law enforcement from the public arena into private space. First, the book depicts NYPD officers removing the city's drunk and homeless from concrete sidewalks, showing the NYPD attending to the many city residents who, incapacitated by drugs and alcohol, have no access to private space or social services. As the reader turns the pages, they are allowed to penetrate more deeply into urban spaces that are typically concealed from public visibility. Photographs of shadowy jail cells, burned-out tenements, and domestic crime scenes make New York's underbelly gradually available to the reader's eye.

Not all photographic treatments of 1970s New York City, however, offered readers such unrestrained perceptual freedom. A 1971 issue of *Life* magazine, for instance, featured a dire report on urban crime, profiling Upper East Side residents who are forced to defend themselves against an increasingly professionalized criminal class. Entitled "Fortress on 78th Street," the article relates the extreme measures taken by residents to secure their property from unwanted intruders.³⁴ While some tenants put bars on their windows and affixed multiple locks to their front doors, others chained bicycles to heavy refrigerators and arm themselves with handguns. Despite these increasingly drastic efforts, the article claims, burglaries continue – the two sides are locked in a seemingly endless cycle of prevention and circumvention: "The man in 4A, himself burglarized once, ran to a neighbor's aid with a steel bar, and on another occasion chased away lock pickers with a butcher knife.

³³ Another crucial reference point for these photographs is the work of Arthur "Weegee" Fellig, who developed a photographic language of tabloid visuality in New York City during the postwar period. Unlike Freed, who embedded himself within the NYPD, Weegee had his own police band radio in order to circumvent these institutional constraints. As a result, he often arrived at crime scenes before police officers themselves. See Brian Wallis, *Weegee: Murder Is My Business* (New York: Prestel, 2013).

³⁴ "Cities Lock Up: Fortress on 78th Street," *Life* magazine, 19 Nov. 1971, 32–38.

Once he had a German shepherd for protection. Someone stole it.”³⁵ One photograph of a dark apartment interior closely frames a round table illuminated by a low-hanging pendant lamp. Although there are two windows opposite, they offer neither an indication as to what lies outside nor an opportunity for light to penetrate the shadowy room. The sombre, monochrome image draws on the tropes of Hollywood detective dramas, manufacturing the vague sense of a past or future criminal act, despite the absence of crime itself from the photograph.

The article suggests that, while upstanding residents are cruelly trapped within the reinforced walls of the apartment building, criminals freely stalk the city streets before gradually moving into private property through fire escapes, roofs, and unprotected windows. The article begins, “Street crime moves indoors – shoving into hallways, up fire escapes, over rooftops, chiseling away at doors and windows. In every large American city and in the suburbs as well, burglars and robbers wage their guerrilla warfare against homes and apartments.” According to one resident, “You can’t walk down the street anymore.”³⁶ This framing suggests that a reversal has occurred in the supposedly natural ordering of urban space: it is violent criminals who enjoy freedom of movement and access to public space, while middle-class urbanites are confined to the private, domestic spaces they yearn to protect. Accompanying photographs offer tightly framed shots of apartment interiors and coveted property, such as bicycles and televisions, giving visual expression to residents’ paranoid feelings of claustrophobia. Apartment windows are photographed with metal grates affixed for protection, suggesting that these urban citizens are wrongly imprisoned within their own homes as a result of rampant urban crime. So although these photographs may make internal, domestic scenery available to the eye of the public, they are far from tabloid exploits in spatial revelation or expressions of unrestrained visibility; rather, these photographs are portraits of perceptual and spatial confinement.

One particular image is taken as if through a spy hole – the small, round opening in a front door through which one can surveil the terrain just outside a property boundary. Aligned with the perspective of the property owner, the reader can glimpse, through the blurred vignette of the glass, an anonymous figure standing in the doorway. The image portrays how the residents’ imprisonment has been inflicted at the level of perception: everyday New Yorkers are forced into “scopic vigilance” behind closed doors, while criminals gradually transgress the boundary between public and private.³⁷ By effectively divorcing crime from its anchor in any material or spatial reality, the article stokes a climate of paranoia and fear in which those least likely

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁷ Comaroff and Comaroff, xix.

to be affected by urban crime perceive themselves to be most highly at risk. The article shows how the perception of disordered urban space is inextricable from its mediation as a constrained visual experience. This framing implies that, in order to reassert the rights of white, middle-class citizens to the urban environment, their visual mastery over the cityscape must be reinstated. It is only through this reversal, the story goes, that the rightful spatial order of the city and the social hierarchy it preserved can be reinstalled. Police work can, in this context, masquerade as a restoration project – one that provides legitimating cover for what is in actual fact the extension and protection of bourgeois property relations.

Police Work and its photographic codes must be understood within this topsy-turvy world in which the bourgeois home, a sentimental combination of family and property, was considered under threat and, as a result, had to be protected at all costs. The consequences of this supposed spatial inversion for the discursive meaning of the tabloid were profound. In this context, the tabloid's interplay of infiltration and revelation can be framed as a corrective to the visual and spatial upheaval that, the story goes, has been unfairly inflicted on upstanding city residents. Through the tabloid, readers are able to regain scopic autonomy and perceptual dominance over the cityscape, repossessing their visual freedom through the technics and tactics of mediation. So although Freed's photographs may document the brutal extension of the police into the domestic spaces of poor, racialized urban residents, through the invocation of the home, this violence can be re-coded as defense. The scale and scope of the police, therefore, can once again find justification in the ideology of separate spheres, even or especially as this division is being continually violated elsewhere. By bringing the family snap and the tabloid photograph together, *Police Work* allows us to see how these two seemingly divergent modes of representation function as dialectically linked halves, welding, to echo the words of Allan Sekula, both the "honorific and repressive functions" of photography together in defence of the bourgeois home.³⁸

One sequence, positioned approximately halfway through the photobook, clarifies how these tabloid codes work with the grain of police violence, legitimating their steady movement through urban space. In this sequence of nine photographs, laid out across eight double-pane spreads, Freed documents the police raid of a "shooting gallery." Aping the dramatic language of tabloid journalism, Freed's caption explains that the decaying building is a place where "drug addicts go to buy dreams or die." The sequence exemplifies the way in which the spatial dynamics of the tabloid are reinscribed through the form of the photobook: it allows the viewer first to enter the shattered

³⁸ Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 10.

ground-floor window of a neglected tenement building, then to climb the rickety staircase and move into an apartment, and finally to infiltrate a closet – the place where the skeletal secrets of familial life are proverbially kept. In the final three photographs, a police officer is depicted reaching into the closet and yanking a drug addict out by his hair. The officer thrusts the figure in front of the camera’s lens, as if to offer him up as evidence of a crime. The spatial progression of these photographs is exaggerated by the structure of the photobook, which maps the police’s gradual penetration of the derelict building onto the progressive page turns. In this way, the dramatic unveiling of this murky corner of crime and vice is amplified, redoubling the theatre of visibility that undergirds the tabloid and its continual allure.

However, while *Police Work* may reinscribe the spatial dynamics of the tabloid, the photobook simultaneously illustrates the way in which alternative readings can nevertheless emerge in the shift from the magazine page to the photographic book. Although the flashbulb certainly emphasizes the camera’s revelatory capacity, it simultaneously highlights the drug addict’s sickly pallor and unkempt hair, reaffirming Freed’s description of the man as “crouched and terrified.” These details unsettle the attempt to recast the addict as criminal, calling into question the usefulness of the police and their brutal tactics in this context. *Police Work* also casts doubt upon the broader function of these drug busts, interrogating the efficacy of the police in dealing with offences of these types. In one caption, Freed offers a quote from one police officer who questions the usefulness of their operations: “All we do is inconvenience them, destroy some drugs. Nothing changes.” Confirming this assessment, Freed observes, “Through the window I could see the pushers watching and waiting for the police to leave.”³⁹ Freed suggests that, if it fails to intervene in any broader, structural mechanisms that produce the need for drug production and consumption, the police raid stops short of success. So although *Police Work* broadly functions with the grain of police violence, the book occasionally offers slipping glimpses of what is lost when the withdrawal of state welfare is accounted for through the expansion of state warfare.

In addition to the more sensationalist photographs of police officers making arrests or charging up staircases, the sequence includes several images of dirty sinks and toilets, filled with used needles and other drug paraphernalia. These photographs make use of the camera’s flashbulb to bring these normally obscured surfaces of urban decay into visibility. Property, we are shown, is not being looked after properly. These photographs sharply contrast with Freed’s family photographs, which often juxtapose paternal figures against

³⁹ Freed, *Police Work*, n.p.

suburban homes, outdoor pools, and motorboats, yoking the stability of the nuclear family to pride in property ownership. Through these photographs, property value becomes family values and vice versa. In one photograph, a family of four is staged on top of a fishing boat, which sits attached to a car in the driveway of their home. The wife and daughter smile, while the father stands assertively with his elbow resting on the boat's awning. He wears a traditional skipper cap, signalling his status as captain of both family and boat. The photograph affirms the role of the patriarch not just as the dominant place within the nuclear family structure, but also as the owner of property. The family photograph blurs the boundary between the commanding father figure and the responsible property owner: to be a good dad is to be a good homeowner; to attend to property is to tend to children.

So although the family snap and the tabloid photograph both hinge upon the movement of the camera from public to private, they diverge dramatically in their treatment of the private sphere. Whereas the family photograph is a choreographed celebration of bourgeois domesticity, the tabloid image is a haphazard transgression of private space. While the former shores up the legitimacy of the family as both a social entity and an economic unit, the latter codes the urban underclass as out of place, and therefore in need of displacement by the police. By bringing together these formally distinct photographic codes, *Police Work* allows us to see how they work together, not in spite of their formal divergences, but because of them. Through these differences, these seemingly opposing photographic languages collude with one another, rationalizing the police's dispersal of urban undesirables as a necessary and justified defence of the home. *Police Work* illustrates how the preservation of the home always depends on its violations elsewhere – access to privacy and property is therefore best understood not as a universal right, but as a good distributed unevenly along the lines of race and class. This uneven distribution can and must be understood through mediation. In this way, we can see how, far from invoking and transgressing the separate-sphere binary in order to bring about its collapse, the continual traffic of the camera across this divide ultimately facilitates its emphatic recovery.

CONCLUSION

By deploying disparate photographic languages, *Police Work* places images of a family life in opposition to photographs of seedy urban space. This produces an extreme model of separate spheres in which the carceral and the domestic are visually and ideologically segregated, obscuring how the former serves to rationalize and to re-code the violence of the latter. However, by placing the family snap and the tabloid photograph in conversation, *Police Work* offers a critical site through which to examine their intimacies and, in particular,



Figure 4. “An officer once said to me that he always worried about his family at home. Who, he wondered, protected them when he worked nights? It made him diligent.” Photograph courtesy Magnum photos.

the ways in which they collaborate in veiling the police as necessary agents of urban social order. And yet, occasionally, the entanglements between the carceral and the domestic are made explicit: what is often quietly mobilized throughout the photobook as a mechanism through which to mask police brutality as police care is overtly expressed. One particular photograph, for instance, offers the reader a bird’s-eye view of the entryway to a tenement building (Figure 4). At the bottom of the stairwell, a police officer

is captured with his gun pointed at a shadowy figure who is mostly obscured from the camera's lens. On the left-hand side of the page spread, Freed's caption relates a conversation between himself and the officer depicted: "An officer once said to me that he always worried about his family at home. Who, he wondered, protected them while he worked nights? It made him diligent."

Here, the familial home of the police officer, encapsulated in Freed's family snaps, is explicitly named as the guiding rationale behind his enactment of violence in the homes of others. By raising the spectre of a family in crisis, action is reread as protection; violence is re-coded as defence. The self-sustaining logic of policing is thus made readable. According to the caption, the departure of the paternal figure from the private sphere and into public service imperils an idealized domesticity – one that, as a result of this vulnerability, is therefore in need of protection through policing elsewhere. The domestic and the carceral are therefore locked in an endless ideological feedback loop in which the very existence of the police both instantiates the crisis of the family and offers the promise of its resolution. While the safety of the bourgeois family, we are told, can be secured through the expansion of the police, the security of the home is perpetually deferred. This, however, is precisely the point: to resolve the crisis of the family would be to eliminate the very condition of possibility of the police. So although the single-family home or the suburban driveway may appear at an extreme remove from the shooting gallery or the city sidewalk, *Police Work* discloses how these differing geographies are inextricably linked in both material and ideological ways. Far from providing a neat alternative or outside to the visual language of police brutality, the family photograph offers a view right into its dynamic centre.

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