

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Reorganized Violence

Stuart Schrader, *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing* (University of California Press, 2019)

Micol Seigel, *Violence Work: State Power and the Limits of Police* (Duke University Press, 2018)

Brendan McQuade, *Pacifying the Homeland: Intelligence Fusion and Mass Supervision* (University of California Press, 2019)

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THE UPRISINGS AGAINST POLICE VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES IN the summer of 2020, in their scope and persistence, have succeeded in training huge amounts of critical attention onto fundamental questions of police funding. Calls to defund police budgets outright quickly crowded out classic budget-enhancing reforms like body cameras and sensitivity trainings in conversations on the Left and even among many liberals. Meanwhile, as with the quip calling Harvard “a hedge fund with an education side business attached,” even a quick glance at municipal operating budgets as a whole has led many to similar conclusions that “fiscally speaking, American cities are basically all a police department with a few underfunded community initiatives attached” (@flglmn tweet, June 10th 2020). The sheer scale of the share of social wealth poured into furnishing and executing “organized violence” (Gilmore & Gilmore 2016) has not only dumbfounded many, but has also pushed organizers, new and old, toward a hunger for understanding concretely how those resources can be reassembled into something else entirely. Luckily, in the period since the wave of Black liberation struggle sparked in Ferguson in 2015, there has been a renewed blossoming of critical research into the changing organization of state violence within and beyond the

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United States. Three leading-edge books in this conversation are Stuart Schrader's *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing*, Micol Seigel's *Violence Work: State Power and the Limits of Police*, and Brendan McQuade's *Pacifying the Homeland: Intelligence Fusion and Mass Supervision*. Interrogating the "organized" in "organized violence," these books take different tacks at tracing how change has happened in the structures and relationships that limit, direct, and mobilize the organized capacities for violence, and so build the strategic awareness required to guard against the reworking of anti-violence demands into defenses of a barely-touched status quo.

Each book takes the contingencies of developments in the organization of violence seriously, keeping broad structural constraints and trends in mind while likewise avoiding the eerie sense of all-encompassing doom that can stifle strategy as much as it feels like it provides political clarity. The forms of change they describe span widely, as the books examine the reorganization of police labor processes; drift and restructuring among violence-dealing occupations; tug-of-wars over capital intensity; clashing visions for the most effective balance of coercion and consent; attempts to modulate practices, technologies, and paradigms developed in one context for application in another; and the evolution, dissolution, convergence, and competition of the institutions involved. But each author shows not a shapeless flood of details or hair-splitting of complexity for complexity's sake, but a map of the terrain of change over time of the organization and use of what Seigel calls "violence work." Training readers in methods, theory, and even strategy, each of these books takes on the analytic and strategic question abolitionist geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore insists that we ask, but that radical explanations so often overlook: "Why does the racial capitalist state ever change?" (Gilmore & Gilmore 2016, 187).

Stuart Schrader, *Badges Without Borders*

Stuart Schrader's *Badges Without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing* may from its title seem to many radical criminologists a now familiar story: the establishment of the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in 1968 was the vehicle for the propagation of military equipment, professionalized command-and-control structures, and "winning hearts and minds" proto-community policing rhetoric—*The Iron Fist and the Velvet Glove*—from imperial ventures to local police departments across the United States. But Schrader's assembly

of evidence from this well-worn story, and the sharp way he mobilizes that evidence into an integrated argument, casts the light of a new perspective on what we may have felt we already knew. The book's central focus tracks the key actors and conflicts responsible for the formation and evolution of the Office of Public Safety (OPS), a 1962–1974 USAID outfit that trained police forces in forty-nine countries around the world, and the influence of OPS-developed thinking and practitioners on the emergent domestic War on Crime. Rather than reciting each scandalous violation of the supposedly sacrosanct boundary between military and civilian coercion by both personnel and equipment, however, Schrader drills deeply into what these boundary crossings really tell us, probing how they happened, how they were and weren't contested, and how the supposed boundary itself was constructed by actors learning and doing on both sides of the divide.

Schrader adds archival detail to the analyses of anti-policing and anti-imperialist organizers of the period, like the Black Panthers' Bobby Seale, who aimed to link struggles against American police departments with those against American military and proxy police "abroad." Benefiting from the wealth of declassified documents and previous research on the OPS and its forebears, Schrader convincingly tracks actors, plans, debates, and rationales across "foreign" and "domestic" archives often kept separate. At the heart of the book's lengthy explanation is a belief that understanding these developments together in their details can lead to a sharper and more effective opposition.

The book proceeds across a broad historical-geographical field, spanning from the 1954 founding of OPS's predecessor up to its dismantling in 1974. The first chapter places the linked co-development of official ideas about race, crime, and communism in the context of the Cold War, and it is followed by three chapters featuring the impressive, situated biographies of key actors in putting domestic counterinsurgency in practice: Byron Engle, the globetrotting, Kansas City-bred police reformer who became OPS's director, whose vast subterranean influence is confirmed and belied by his absence on Wikipedia; Robert Komer, National Security Council advisor and director of the US Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support counterinsurgency program in Vietnam, who helped bring Engle's project into USAID; and Arnold Sagalyn, the key link between the Johnson administration's Office of Law Enforcement Coordination and OPS, who helped translate the mix of pacifying economic development and tough-on-crime attacks on perceived disorder into the vision that shaped the War on Poverty, the LEAA, and the War on Crime.

These biographies are followed by a chapter on the development of this unified counterinsurgency model, detailing the on-the-ground experiments in police professionalization, expanded discretionary power, organizational devolution alongside command-and-control, and tactics like the forerunners to stop-and-frisk, all hammered out in the many countries OPS took as its sandboxes. Three subsequent chapters study the international co-development of professionalized “minimum-force” riot control, CS “tear” gas, and the LAPD’s famed pioneer SWAT team, noting how often untrue assertions about the non-military nature of such capacities served as a legitimating alibi for their deployment by police and military forces alike. A final chapter builds on examples throughout regarding social-scientific models of economic development, institutional modernization, and political behavior, demonstrating how these ways of seeing social reality helped formulate the implementation of policing and practical anticommunism—and the self-conscious relationship between fears of general “disorder” and organized revolution. The final conclusion draws the insights into the Black Lives Matter conjuncture, asking organizers and critics what we can do with this meticulous understanding of how racialized ideas about order and disorder have been built into policing apparatuses in the US and abroad, and how to think these twinned projects, their legitimation as well as their opposition, together.

In short, the book does the difficult work of actually *operationalizing* the “boomerang thesis” that imperial techniques of coercion developed in colonies eventually “come home” for application on domestic populations. Rather than descriptively invoking this phenomenon as a law of racist physics, or marveling at the lurid nastiness of it, Schrader takes the theory seriously enough to apply and test its hypotheses against the record of the actual activity that made it possible. The simple identification of replicated terms or frameworks—“winning hearts and minds”—that have structured counterinsurgency thinking from Saigon to Oakland can, when properly interrogated, tell us a great deal more than the undeniable truism that US domestic police have often seen the Black, Brown, and Indigenous populations they police as restive colonial subjects.

Schrader’s method pries open these resonances to ask and answer a series of concrete questions. How were governing paradigms and strategies developed, contested, and implemented? What were the conflicts between agencies over the management of the Vietnam war, and how did the conflicting lessons actors felt they had learned become policy in dealing with differently racialized debates around urban uprisings sweeping the country

in the 1960s? What does it actually tell us that a single individual (1) worked as a trainer of domestic Midwestern police forces, guiding them through a crisis in which the political machine system buckled under the intensifying contradictions of enforcing segregation in growing cities, (2) assisted in the postwar civilian reorganization of Japanese Imperial police as a decentralized communist-fighting force, and (3) directed the training of trainers of police for Latin American and Asian regimes, many of which were fresh from formal decolonization, and actively courted by the Soviet Union? Why were many of the same people tasked with translating doctrine and best practices across these divides, and how were political elites convinced that the consciousness and practices they had formed in one context could be modulated to deal with potentially cognate problems in another? Schrader's use of biography is not retelling a great man (or bad man) history of a conspiracy of smooth operators or racist masterminds. Rather, he uses the conflicts among personalities and their viewpoints as proxies for broader conflicts within agencies of the expanded US police state—over how to understand “the problem” of disorder and what can and should be done about it—in a setting where those agencies are undergoing profound crises and reorganizations.

Scholars interested in thinking concretely about American imperialism (i.e. why does the *neo* in neocolonialism matter?) stand to gain a great deal from Schrader's detailed analysis of how OPS-style training self-consciously sought to enable legitimacy-enhancing forms of devolution, allowing capitalist development (and the effective suppression of crime and communism) to occur largely at arm's length, by police officers and administrations from the country itself. As Schrader highlights, the technicians of US empire sought to learn from the experiences of past empires—best practices and common mistakes—and maintain well-disciplined forces at a certain remove, as a means of managing costs and shoring up legitimacy in the eyes of some of the policed. OPS's police training academy, located in the Panama Canal Zone just like its notorious military counterpart, the School of the Americas, further shows how this project fits into a broader view of ensuring the flow of capital in a US-led world order. Schrader's striking parallel of such formations with the importance of relative autonomy within US federalism, setting the bounds as it does for legitimacy of federal aid for local policing—training, equipment, and technology—is likewise fodder for serious reflection in thinking through interstate and intrastate relations in the organization of officially domestic coercion.

Others interested in thinking materially about the connection between liberal sociology, economic theory, and police-military strategy—so baldly embodied in *Non-Communist Manifesto* economist Walt Rostow’s intimate advising on Vietnam war strategy—will likewise find a great deal of fruitful material and interpretations here. In a memorable passage, Schrader shows counterinsurgency theorists actively arguing over their evaluations of the popular Maoist analogy of the relationship of insurgents to the general population (“The people are the sea in which the guerrilla swims”): was it true, and if so, what was to be done? Was it better to bomb the water, they wondered, or to gently divert it away from the fish? Passages like these remind us that the panic over the political potential of disorderly populations, and those very populations’ own ways of understanding the effects of enforced market dependency on their social structures, actively shaped the theory that guided imperial practice. As Schrader’s argument demonstrates, Wilson and Kelling’s famous article credited with defining the path for the “broken windows” variation on community policing, in the *Atlantic*—what Rachel Herzing witheringly reminds us amounted to “nine pages of opinions by two social scientists in a magazine of cultural and literary commentary” (Herzing 2015, 265)—was in fact the culmination, and not the beginning, of this line of police thought and practice.

As uprisings and movements against police violence move into new phases of struggle, and a variety of forms of devolution emerge as ostensible solutions—“community control” redux—the kind of detailed attention Schrader models will no doubt come in handy. *Badges Without Borders* is not a story of the inevitable spread of repression, but one of contingencies, clashes of views, agencies, and blocs within and beyond the state—a story from which organizers and engaged researchers can build a great deal of our own practice-guiding consciousness.

Micol Seigel, *Violence Work*

Micol Seigel’s study, *Violence Work: State Power and the Limits of Police*, picks up historically in the period where Schrader leaves off, as a mounting legitimacy crisis of the US security state forced the formal dismantling of the OPS in 1974. Seigel’s book traces the varied careers of former OPS functionaries around the world as they continued the agency’s work training the organizers of the use of force, whether in the service of private security contractors, extractive firms themselves, or other states, building government departments and a federally-funded university discipline along the way.

Seigel opens *Violence Work* with an impressive theoretical chapter, situating her intervention in the post-Ferguson 2015 conjuncture, in the hopes that organizing informed by police reforms past can prevent a repetition of the Redemption counterrevolution of the late 1870s and the massification of incarceration following the 1970s. In this context, she asks those seeking change to consider straight-on “one of the least theorized, most neglected concepts in the lexicon of reformers and activists today”: what exactly is it that police are and do? (4). Recapitulating the bizarre sense in which police officer time is mostly spent on activities that have nothing to do with actually criminalized activity, and how nevertheless many badgeless people are formally or informally deputized to coerce, Seigel uses her central concept, “violence work,” to isolate and scrutinize the operation and organization of the use of force—not as a narrowly reviewed “policy,” but as a dispersed and complexly organized set of vocations.

Astutely guiding readers through the analytic developments of mainstream and critical approaches to police studies, Seigel troubles both the arid technical world of traditional police science in criminology and the everywhere-but-nowhere approach inspired by some interpretations of Foucault. Building on work in critical prison studies and Marxist cultural studies, Seigel places violence work squarely at the heart of sophisticated debates in state theory and state-market relations, providing a useful analysis, even for those with more optimistic takes on what can be done with the state.

Emphasizing the practical (as much as conceptual) cloudiness of the military/civilian, public/private, and local/federal/international borders that sanction police work in official mythology, Seigel threads the needle in picking apart categories without contentedly gazing at the kaleidoscope of deconstruction. She models instead a kind of clear-headed realism when pointing out these inconsistencies, allowing us to understand the work of officially shoring up these boundaries as key tasks of maintaining the legitimacy that makes violence work easier to do. In seeing how managerial violence workers have always crossed these divides in the course of their work, we can see, as with Schrader, how much we miss when we take these abstract divisions for granted.

The six empirical chapters of Seigel’s book trace the consequences of the dismantling of the OPS formation following US public reaction to its role in unconscionable regimes’ suppression of movements for justice, and the resulting scattering of OPS operatives into other fields. Drawing on extensive interviews and an in-depth review of an OPS alumni newsletter, Seigel asks what the post-OPS career trajectories can tell us about the

varied trade of violence work. Each chapter spotlights specific cases that clearly demonstrate the practical permeability of the borders that supposedly define the legitimate realm of “policing” in liberal political thought: the organization of both civilian police and death squads as anticommunist foreign aid; the securitization of pipelines crossing Alaska against a bizarre fantasy condensation of Indigenous–Weather Underground–hippie–Soviet–San Francisco–eco–terrorists; a key episode in the United States’ special relationship with Saudi Arabia through establishing Aramco’s in-house security force; the development of criminal justice as a federally funded field of study, as a complementary means of police professionalization at home and abroad; and the civil-society movement OPS alumni built to sponsor as refugees their Southeast Asian police “counterparts,” organized around a shared “structure of feeling” of having been abandoned by the very states they served as enforcers.

Seigel’s methods of presentation and theoretical arsenals vary between chapters, but her procedure is consistent. She greets the wealth of evidence of hypocrisy and dissimulation with a steady analytic resolve rather than shock, while likewise avoiding the repetitive gesture of a smug radical knowingness. These cases of agents and agencies crossing these boundaries over and over again allow the reader to think beyond the scandal of the lie to see how these ideologically separated capacities were in fact built together.

One particular standout is the chapter on OPS alumni transferring to a Wackenhut division providing security in pipeline-construction boomtowns remote from the effective reach of the Alaskan state. Seigel adeptly situates this story within a broader reframing of the private–public divide in security. Private-security boosters, she shows, adeptly renovated and exploited racialized frontier myths and general moral panics about terrorism in order to secure large-scale buy-in by corporate directors to rely on them, rather than state police, to keep their investments on the right hands. This late-twentieth century colonial venture illustrates how lumpily and messily the work of building the capacity to enforce specific capitalist property relations often is in practice, weaving together actors across a public–private boundary that functions more as an interface than a fence. Rejecting the presentist story of a secular trend toward the privatization of the sacrosanct public monopoly on violence, Seigel notes the co-constitutive evolution of institutional capacities for violence work under state and non-state agencies, from British colonial company militias to today. She particularly turns our attention to the 1909 establishment of the FBI having absorbed capacities

and records from private detective firms like Burns and Pinkerton, which themselves had been the only effective national policing agencies up to that point—themselves regularly contracted by the federal government to do the work up to that point (74–75). The complex and contested process Seigel depicts in this chapter, showing how diverse modes of organizing coercion and its matériel across intricate public-private relationships have been the rule, rather than the exception, is much closer to the intended expansive analysis intended by the concept of the prison-industrial complex than either its uncharitable critics (Wacquant 2009, 84) or its narrower zealots who misconstrue it into the hyperinflation of private prisons firms' role in the expansion of pretexts for incarceration in the US (see Gilmore & Gilmore 2007). By witnessing these OPS operatives readapting their work through “whatever Wackenhut became and became and became” as one of Seigel's OPS interviewees put it (86), readers can better understand how legitimacy and capacity for violence work has been built across the board, often developing legalistic workarounds when institutional barriers, like the Anti-Pinkerton Act, erected limits to development on one side or the other.

As there has recently emerged a peculiar objection to defunding police that it will result in a blossoming of privatized security firms (Lancaster 2020), asking these questions about the relationship between state-organized and for-profit ways of organizing violence work is crucial, particularly as we can see that the ballooning of funding for public police seems not to have crowded out private security in the slightest: as Seigel points out, public and private security workforces have expanded *jointly* since the 1970s. It is important, then, to train our ability to attend concretely to their interpenetration in terms of technique, legal jurisdiction, personnel, and parallel legitimation, both in the eyes of the public and in the eyes of key representatives of big capital.

While the empirical chapters may not provide what some readers may expect based on the introduction—a comprehensive inventory of the full spectrum of violence workers today—careful reading of the specific historical cases cumulatively helps to make readers more adept at productively grasping the full variety of paid coercive activities often kept separate in thought, study, and strategy. Readers with different priorities will find specific chapters more helpful than others, but doubtless will come away with a renewed sense of perspective of the scope of relationships required to organize the work of violence across such expansive scales, and thus what it will take to reorganize them into something else entirely.

Brendan McQuade, *Pacifying the Homeland*

Brendan McQuade's *Pacifying the Homeland* brings together several windows into the more recent development of what he calls "mass supervision" through reorganization of procedures both at law enforcement agencies themselves and in the relationships between them. Tracing the twenty-first-century development of so-called Intelligence Fusion Centers, which seek to make the various records held on people by multiple government agencies interoperable and rapidly accessible, McQuade seeks to outline the possibilities and constraints such institutional reorganizations enable and encounter, and what those institutional reformations tell us about reorientations in social pacification by the "workfare–carceral state" (17). Rather than an inevitable outcome of post-9/11 anti-terrorism security-state building, McQuade situates the rise of these fusion centers in New York and New Jersey within a longer process of the contested expansion of less apparently exceptional criminal justice capacities—particularly as the availability of federal funds unleashed under the guise of the War on Terror incentivized local and state-wide police departments facing fiscal and legitimation crises to scramble for those dollars by framing their own work as "intelligence-led"—and thus potentially anti-terror—policing

Covering a period of change much more recent, much less studied, and much less declassified than those examined by Schrader and Seigel, McQuade nevertheless points importantly to some key questions about the processes of police reform and broader surveillance reorganization that have led us to the current conjuncture. McQuade's guiding question is a counterfactual that may seem odd at first glance: why isn't mass surveillance better? Why is its reach not more comprehensive, and what can movements learn from this? Reminiscent of Gilmore's critical question, "Why aren't there more people in prison?" (cited in Stein 2017), this provocative approach takes seriously that the attempts to build interoperability between the records of various services stems from the existence of a set of structures, approaches, and domains that have had to develop with varying degrees of autonomy. In McQuade's telling, levels of local autonomy within US policing have mattered significantly; indeed, some visions of neoliberal state-building precisely use frameworks of inter-institutional competition to incentivize cost-cutting, experimentation, and innovation. Whether these institutional mismatches are due to inertial failure or deliberate stonewalling, the results remind us regularly that policing, surveillance, and incarceration are *work*,

and that complex operations crossing lines of authority open up many contradictory sites for potential intervention.

The book traces the phenomenon through several vignette-like episodes. The first chapter delivers a critique of the terms of popular liberal debates on fusion centers, so often limited to their “failures” to prevent high-profile terrorist attacks while nonetheless violating rights to privacy, while the book’s second chapter proposes a synthesis of theoretical work on the workfare state and the carceral state, within a broader Marxist framework on the creation of “security” in the midst of racialized dispossession and immiseration. Remaining chapters trace the transition from CompStat through 9/11 to intelligence-led policing in the overlapping institutions surveilling the NYC metro area, the rise of surveillance-led punitive forms of decarceration, the possible effectiveness of decentralized post-COINTELPRO political policing, and the centrality of intelligence-led day-to-day policing in disciplining informal markets in drugs and pawn shops in mid-sized cities. An appendix on research methods when dealing in official secrets is likewise enlightening, particularly for early-stage researchers in the field. While thinking the cases together may require a bit more work from the readers than in Schrader’s case, and the theoretical work may be a bit less supplely integrated into shaping the exposition, the empirical detail and analysis is instructive and rewarding.

In one of the more provocative chapters, McQuade challenges the popular activist belief that the near-simultaneous raids on Occupy encampments by many local police departments across the US in 2011 were evidence of COINTELPRO-style national coordination via the emergent DHS-recognized National Network of Fusion Centers. Perhaps, McQuade contends, the very decentralization allows for more on-the-ground adaptability, particularly as it enables certain levels of plausible deniability as workarounds for “human-rights-compliant” policing. Further, McQuade’s chapter on punitive decarceration via mass supervision is a helpful contribution to understanding the many tendencies and counter-tendencies that make up the slight and uneven decline in the US incarcerated population since 2008. The retrenchment of both prisons and incarcerated populations in New York and New Jersey over this period, he shows, was complementary to the expansion of capital-intensive intelligence-led policing. Turning attention to the much broader net of people with legal statuses like conditions related to bail, probation, and parole, McQuade argues that practices like warrant sweeps, compliance checks, chronic-offender initiatives, and increasingly quick-reference record databases all combine to render par-

ticular racial-regional unemployed populations vulnerable to ongoing forms of extrajudicial punishment—all while allowing for reductions in carceral budgets and nominal freedom for many. This encourages readers to consider whether this quantitative expansion in the legal arsenal of release conditions and the practical capacity to detect violations is tipping into a qualitative one, where the nature of ostensible release changes entirely. The shifts in labor-process provided by ILP are vital to understanding how the workfare-carceral state is changing in the present, and in understanding how to ensure that defunding police and other carceral institutions will truly mean expanding the realm of freedom.

Crucially, the book is framed in the prologue and conclusion by a consideration of Camden, NJ's now famous "disbanding" of its municipal police force, and its replacement with a leaner, more capital-intensive, intelligence-led county police force—in part in response to a crisis of legitimacy, and in part as a creative budgetary end-run around police union contracts. The prologue's introduction of intelligence fusion as one key portion of this story, as the police workforce shrank while the budget consistently grew, and the conclusion's key reflection on community organizers' awareness that community policing has vastly expanded community surveillance, all serve as productive complications for shaping demands for police defunding. The final pages, where he explicitly contrasts the Camden experience with the explicitly abolitionist currents that were consolidating in parts of the Black freedom movement since Ferguson, serve as a crucial and uncanny reminder of the decades and decades of abolitionist organizing that laid the infrastructure for today's upsurge of targeted campaigns to defund police, invest in life-sustaining supports, and move toward the horizon of abolition. Abolitionist Mariame Kaba's recommendation of the book to organizers, reiterated during a recent Critical Resistance teach-in on putting abolitionist reforms into practice, is thus spot on.

All three of these books foreground the intricacies of police forces and their connections to broader political-economic processes, allowing us to grasp at once the structural pressures, the possibilities for change, and the inevitability of contingency. For those thinking through meaningful, liberatory, non-reformist or abolitionist reforms, these examinations are not simply cautionary tales (though they are that too), but also guides to the contested and moving terrain of the organization of organized violence. As the current legitimacy crisis of policing and punishment grows—spreading, like US police science, well beyond the lands formally claimed by the US—activists and engaged researchers would do well to learn from the processes these

authors have followed: tales of contending actors who exploited moments just like these to dismantle, expand, and redirect the institutional capacities for executing and organizing the work of violence that serves as racial capitalism's front and back line of defense. As these actors struggle to reproduce their work on this basis, the terms of their reorganization are very much up in the air. All the more reason to read and prepare.

