# Reading *Typologies of Whiteness*: The Cop-Father and White Civil Society

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*This paper acts as an extended artist statement and explicates the primary themes that run through my series of films* Typologies of Whiteness *(2016–ongoing), with a particular focus on the film* Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy *(2020). I explore how the series gathers and* détourns *cultural materials to index three common discursive themes at play in police propaganda: liberal paternalism, conservative law and order, and normative pedagogy. Drawing connections between these themes, I theorize the construction of the Cop-Father who acts as a surrogate for the trope of the missing Black father. I argue that* care *and* violence *are bound in the single figure of the Cop-Father, who cares for his kin by wielding the capacity for violence toward the Other. The Cop-Father embeds himself in the anti-Black visual discourses of multiculturalism, civilizing and disciplining those on the margins of White civil society.*

KEYWORDS: Whiteness, police propaganda, visual culture, video

This paper explicates some of the primary themes that run through my project *Typologies of Whiteness* (2016–ongoing) with a particular focus on the single film *Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy* (Schultz, 2020) in order to theorize the figure of the Cop-Father. The series, currently comprising six videos, utilizes an intensive gathering and *détourning* of cultural materials to stage ideological juxtapositions and index discursive formations of whiteness.[1] The project orients whiteness as a structural position that requires violence (Rodríguez, 2021; Wilderson, 2010) and is an integral component of anti-Black social organization that cloaks itself in the visual culture of a so-called post-racial or multiculturalist society (Melamed, 2011).

The series aligns itself politically and intellectually with activist and scholar Dylan Rodríguez's (2006) theorization of White supremacy as a *logic of social organization* that "produces regimented, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized 'human' difference" (p. 11). For Rodríguez, White supremacy is a historical discourse of power that enforces the universalization and reproduction of the Human through discourses of race and the disciplining (e.g., racial terror, carcerality) of racialized non-Humans. This racial difference is expressed through a "fundamental contrapuntality" wherein White life and mobility can only ascend with the simultaneous immobilization and death of Black, Brown, and Indigenous persons. It is this immobilization/death that coheres White civil society (Rodríguez, 2006, p. 14).

*Typologies of Whiteness* argues that anti-Black social organization necessitates tethering whiteness and police/ing, which is part and parcel of *generalized whiteness*—an ascendant anti-Black and spectacular form of life.[2] Whiteness *as* policing is convincingly theorized by Afropessimist Frank Wilderson (2020), who writes: "Blacks are not Human subjects but instead structurally inert props" (p. 15) that must be "genocided and regenerated" (p. 225) for the perpetuation of civil society.[3] As a result, generalized whiteness is deputized against Blacks, as its conceptual coherence relies upon this genocide and regeneration. Policing Blackness "is what keeps everyone else sane"; it is not discrimination, but "a form of psychic health and well-being for the rest of the world" (Wilderson, 2018, p. 47). This is why Wilderson (2003) argues that White people are not only "protected" by the police; *they are the police* (p. 20). Agreeing with Wilderson, I draw no distinction in this paper between whiteness and a more conventional understanding of police, but rather explore the conceptual and material fluidity between them. Working as a filmmaker, I see my task as explicating how visual culture mediates generalized whiteness and concretizes its logic. The praxis of *détournement* in this context might be understood as the parsing, interrogation, and attempted negation of the spectacular whiteness of accumulated police propaganda—materials that legitimate and reproduce whiteness, however surreptitiously, as a categorically violent mode of being that requires police/ing to sustain itself.

## Reading *Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy*

*Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy* (henceforth, *Call Me Daddy*) interrogates a call for law and order as a White supremacist paternal instinct. The video appropriates and intertwines video sources from various contexts to weave together multiple narratives: former Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Fox News

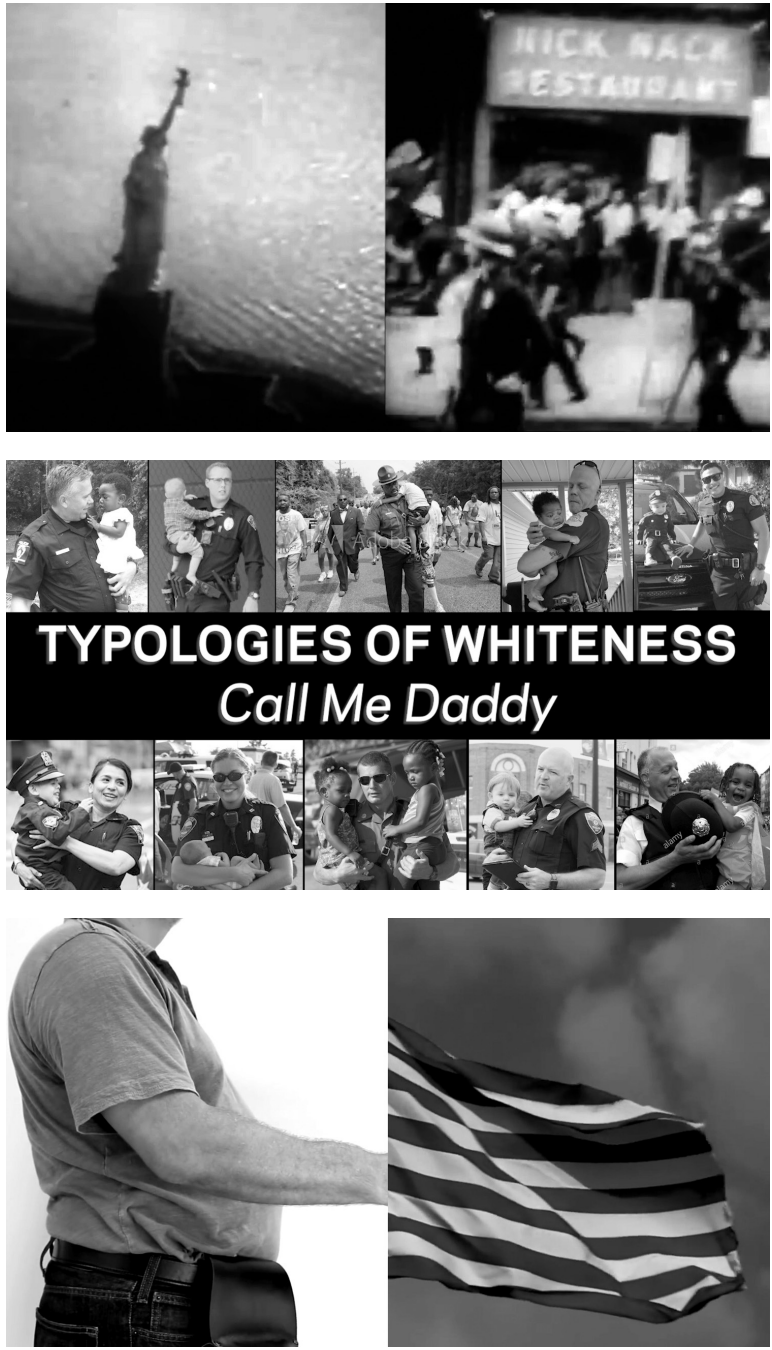
commentator Bill O'Reilly speak on the missing Black father, liberal propaganda features clips of police tying neckties for young men, and Barry Goldwater uses the reactionary campaign film *Choice* to support his 1964 presidential bid. Below, I will identify three central discourses identified in the video, followed by some brief notes on the deputization of whiteness.

## Conservative Law-and-Order and the (Re)Production of Whiteness

The first prominent discourse observed in *Call Me Daddy* is one of conservative law and order. The film opens with an edited clip of Goldwater's campaign film *Choice* (1964) with a baritone masculine voiceover that confidently states: "*Two* Americas! And you, *you alone*, stand between them" (emphasis added). I have edited two images from *Choice* into a diptych: on the left, the Statue of Liberty is filmed from a helicopter, and on the right, cops respond to apparent social unrest (Figure 1). This is followed by a clip featuring a group of White onlookers, also excerpted from *Choice*, who appear to be listening to the voice-over and contemplating its ambiguous provocation. The clip quickly transitions to a title sequence in which a grid of 10 contemporary images of police carrying young children populate the screen—insisting on a clear and explicit parallel between police and paternalism—to the rhythm of Lamar Morris's mid-tempo campaign song for George Wallace's 1968 presidential run: "There's rioting and looting and the cities are being burned / Take time to look around you at the problems that we face / You'll see that the great society has been a great disgrace / Stand up for America" (Figure 2). The title, *Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy*, emerges behind two animated "thin blue lines" that run between the top and bottom row of five smiling cops carrying children.

By combining seemingly contradictory political images—the implicitly threatening voice-over against the kindhearted cops carrying children—the scene encompasses the breadth of popular discourse on policing. From a law and order perspective, the universal *you* conscripts a racialized White listener into society's security force. From the liberal perspective, cops carrying children deterritorializes kin's normative signification (i.e., family by blood contained within the home) by injecting the police into the home as a surrogate father. The surrogate Cop-Father appropriates, normalizes, and spatializes the domestic into a patriarchal national[ist] land, re-territorializing it as a microcosm of civil society. The now-restored *home* becomes civil society, while *blood* defines a racialized national body, reinforcing concepts such as "Citizens" (Lowe, 1996; Olson, 2004) or the "white brotherhood" (Burley, 2017).

The music abruptly stops and the image cuts to a new diptych: on the left, a man pulls a gun out of his concealed holster and points it off frame; it aligns



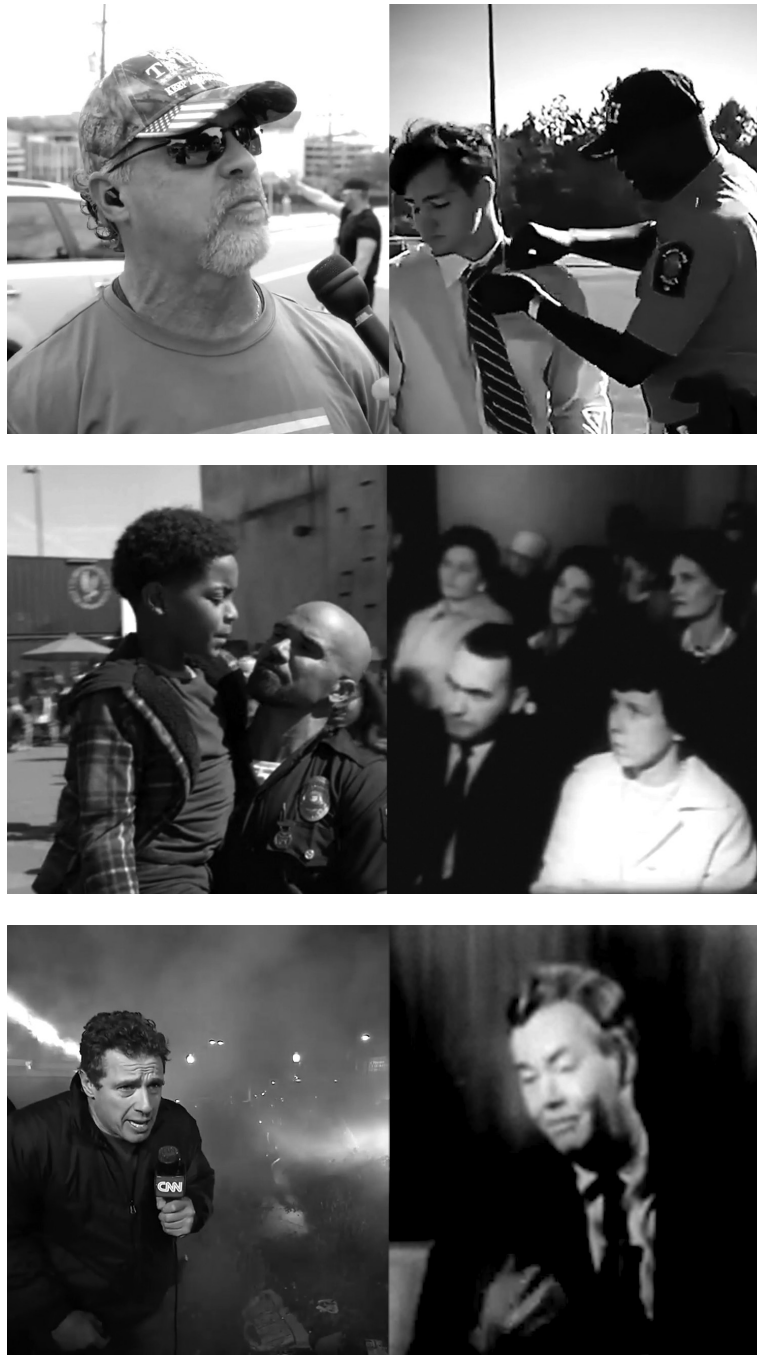

Figures 1–3. Heath Schultz, 2020, Stills from *Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy*. Left to right: 1. Goldwater's *Choice*; 2. Officers carrying children; 3. Concealed holster advertisement with waving flag. Courtesy of the artist.

with the image on the right, a waving American flag (Figure 3). The voice-over of the gun holster advertisement declares for both images: "You did not ask for this fight. In an unspeakable crisis, you and your family are empowered to be the first responder." The voiceover conflates *fight* and *crisis*, which subsequently allows for the conflation of varied connotations of first responders. With "you are empowered to be the first responder," the caring signification of EMTs and firefighters, figures who offer help in a crisis, is welded to the violent significations of policing, a practice understood to protect citizens from a threat by exterminating that threat. The universal *you* again interpellates the White paternal figure as defender against an "unspeakable crisis" or an unwanted fight. With the waving American flag and the oral provocation of "Stand up for America," the diptych formally spatializes the imminent fight. The voice-over both deputizes whiteness and forcefully alchemizes *care of kin* and *violence toward the Other* into the unified duty of the policing Father in a white-to-blue space. Here, generalized whiteness signals its fundamentally patriarchal *and* anti-Black form in the racialized figure of the policing father who cares for his kin by wielding the capacity for violence toward the Other. This figure is who I theorize as the *Cop-Father*.

## Liberal (Cop)Paternalism and the (Re)Production of Whiteness

The second prominent discourse observed in *Call Me Daddy* is one of liberal paternalism, first connoted by police officers holding children, which suggests that the officer is the literal and figurative surrogate for the missing [Black] father (Figure 2). As described above, I theorize Cop-Father as encompassing *both* liberal and conservative political conceptions of paternalism; however, they typically appear distinct for important reasons. This conservative/liberal split is best described by a Trump supporter who, later in *Call Me Daddy*, speaks of Jesus as "the perfect meld of a father and a mother. . . . Jesus combines both gentleness and discipline. Trump is more of a father. It's what we need" (Figure 4). This formation reflects the heteropatriarchal dynamics of the politico-paternal imaginary, where Jesus's apparent maternal side corresponds to the oft-feminized politics of liberalism (e.g., "bleeding hearts," "cucks," "snowflakes"), and the paternal corresponds to the masculinist disciplinary politics of law-and-order conservatism.

Not to be outdone, liberalism swells the signification of police to include gentleness and care, filling the gap left by the excessively masculinist imagery of law and order. When the Cop-Father presents a *caring* liberal alternative to the callous and revanchist law-and-order paradigm, he creates space for normative political discourse to embrace policing as a *civilizing* force with the capacity to rescue those who seek refuge in civil society—a White man's burden. Of course, this discursive construction of the Cop-Father is also a direct response to Daniel Patrick




Figures 4–6. Heath Schultz, 2020, Stills from *Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy*. Left to right: 4. Trump supporter and officer tying boy's tie #1; 5. Officer carrying boy from Watts and Goldwater's *Choice*; 6. News anchor at Ferguson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Courtesy of the artist.

Moynihan's 1965 study, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, a.k.a. *The Moynihan Report*. The report has become a canonical sociological study of the African American family, arguing that the fundamental impediment to progress is the missing Black father (U.S. Department of Labor & Moynihan, 1965); in other words, the problem is the "Black Matriarch" (King, 2018).[4] Theorist Tiffany Lethabo King (King, 2018) argues that Moynihan constructs Black households as rebellious, and in particular the Black Matriarch, in opposition to White normativity. In *The Moynihan Report*, the Black Matriarch signals a threat to White civil society due to her association with the urban uprisings in Harlem (1964) and Watts (1965). The state used this threat as justification to subject Black domestic space to continued surveillance and state intervention (King, 2018, pp. 74–82). Relatedly, critic Roderick Ferguson (2004) clarifies that *The Moynihan Report* pinpoints "nonheteronormative relations" as *the* impediment to racial progress (p. 119). King and Ferguson help us to see that the figure of the Cop-Father further links police and whiteness through its investment in racialized heteropatriarchy.

Immediately after the sequence described above, a clip from a police television drama shows a Black boy, approximately 10 years old, eagerly running to jump into a police helicopter at a police-sponsored community event held at SWAT headquarters in Los Angeles (Figure 5). A Black officer playfully scolds him: "Hey, little man! You know you're not supposed to do that without adult supervision!" The boy hops down, and his young Black mother enters the frame. We learn that the single mother and son are from Watts, infamous as a site of social illness and an imminent threat to White civil society (King, 2018). The cop picks up the child and, holding him on his hip, tells him the best thing about being a cop is "seeing people who are hurting and doing something to make them feel better." Now, with mom out of the frame, the boy responds: "Whenever I see bad things, I wish I could make them stop." The scene is shown in a diptych alongside the same White audience from Goldwater's *Choice*, who now observe the paternal display across time and space. The cop "helping people who are hurting" rehearses the liberal rhetoric of policing, while the boy longing for assistance to "stop bad things"—which might easily be translated as stopping racialized activity such as Black-on-Black crime, drug usage, or gang violence—evokes the conservative rhetoric of policing. Here, it is not law-and-order conservatives calling for more police but the young, Black, fatherless child of Watts. Again, we see that care of kin (helping people who are hurting) and violence toward the Other (stopping bad things) is bundled into the swollen signifier of the Cop-Father, this time centering liberal sentimentalism rather than conservative alarmism. This scene is also notable in that it would appear to occur within the Black community, between Black subjects; however, spectacular whiteness is still the dictating logic. The scene bifurcates Watts into the same racialized zones present in Goldwater's *Choice*;

there are those who do bad things and those who are worthy of being protected and saved from bad things. It is important that the boy is not physically in Watts but at the SWAT headquarters, a civilized space, allowing for an uncivilized Watts to remain off-screen and allowing the film to position the boy as seeking support outside of his racially coded and uncivilized neighborhood.[5] In this schematic, the *we* interpellated by the Cop-Father is the same *we* in Goldwater's *Choice*, but with one distinction. The *we* in Goldwater's *Choice* signifies an [imagined] native White citizen, while this scene with the Black Cop-Father presents the Black cop who can access White civil society should he be willing to police the Other. In each instance, the *we* is the police and demarcates a generalized whiteness in a "white-to-blue space" (Mirzoeff, 2020).

Later in *Call Me Daddy*, the ideological basis for this necessary paternalism is revealed with a split screen of a White CNN reporter on the left half of the screen nervously reporting on the uprisings in Ferguson, as tear gas, bean bags, and various projectiles are fired into the night (Figure 6). The dramatized chaos makes reporting almost impossible, and the reporter's fear of the apparent riotousness is evident, with the pops of shooting tear gas canisters audible in the background and smoke creeping into the frame. On the right half of this diptych, Daniel Patrick Moynihan is being interviewed about the uprising in Watts. The host asks Moynihan why the "Negro family is collapsing," and Moynihan responds with a rhetorical question: "How'd you learn how to behave? From your father. Well, what if there is no father? What do you end up with? You end up with a cycle reproducing itself." This cycle is responsible for what Moynihan will refer to as a "tangle of pathologies" in the Black community (as cited in Ferguson, 2004, p. 22), which he simplifies and infantilizes in this clip by implying that those involved in an uprising were simply misbehaving due to the lack of guidance from a father, as opposed to resisting forms of White supremacist violence. Moynihan's commentary is connected to both the liberal civilizing mission of the police and the disciplinary law-and-order crusade. When the civilizing mission fails or cannot take place, misbehavior requires action from the disciplining state, in place of the father, using police violence. In this clip, which holds together the civilizing paternal politics of Moynihan with the uncivilized riotousness in the streets of Ferguson (which are, again, just out of frame), the interplay between *care for kin* and *violence toward the Other*, both embodied in the Cop-Father, allows for adaptability in various political contexts.

## Normative Pedagogy and the (Re)Production of Whiteness

The third important discourse observed by *Call Me Daddy*, as is implicitly suggested by the Cop-Father, is that spectacular whiteness weaponizes pedagogy as

part of its policing practice. This pedagogy can be broken down in two ways. The first is a liberal pedagogy of normativity and civility cloaked in apparent caring acts or gestures of kindness undertaken by the Cop-Father. This pedagogy acts as a civilizing counterinsurgency mission in a multiculturalist White civil society (Melamed, 2011; Rodríguez, 2021). The second is a conservative duty to instruct children and citizens how to restore, secure, and protect White civil society (Martinot & Sexton, 2003). In my video, the liberal counterinsurgent pedagogy is best illustrated by six distinct viral videos of police tying teenage boys' neckties (Figures 7–9). Tellingly, three of these "spontaneous" viral videos center around teen boys getting ready for a high school dance, several of which are reported by secondary news agencies as feel-good human-interest stories, with a subtext of preparing these young men to meet young women. In each instance, the boys reportedly seek out an officer to help them with this essential life skill. This performative and symbolic paternal routine, and its circulation on social media, serves to highlight the generalized availability of the Cop-Father to replace the absent [Black] father for required pedagogical lessons in masculinity in particular, as well as in proper behavior more generally, within White civil society.

Unsurprisingly, the police in these videos, and those who circulate them, proceed without acknowledgment of the visual proximity of the Windsor knot and the slip knot. This visual and conceptual relation—the tie as representative of civil society and the noose as representative of those expendable to it—also serves an additional pedagogical function, reminding the Other of the Human's capacity for violence (Wilderson, 2010, pp. 15–18). Mirroring this duality, the Cop-Father who cares for his kin in the first pedagogical approach by wielding the capacity to perform violence toward the Other, also demonstrates the second pedagogical strategy by teaching children and citizens how to restore, secure, and protect White civil society in the event that liberal anti-racism's civilizing mission fails.

This dual pedagogical orientation is perhaps best described by a sequence in *Call Me Daddy* that begins with a scene from the Hollywood film *Death Wish* (1974), starring Charles Bronson as Paul Kersey, a White, middle-class man whose family is murdered by riffraff in a robbery gone awry, who is now on a quest for vengeance in a disintegrating New York City in the 1970s. After the New York Police Department (NYPD) tells Kersey there is nothing they can do, Kersey takes matters into his own hands. The trailer, which I have excerpted in my video, says it clearly in a blood-and-thunder voiceover: "This is the story of a man who decided to clean up the most violent town in the world. *He begins where all the super-cops leave off*" [emphasis added]. Kersey is then accosted on a subway platform by two Black men demanding his wallet, and he responds by daring them to "come and take it." As they lunge toward him, Kersey shoots them both with the concealed gun in his pocket. One man squirms on the tiled floor while the other


Figures 7–9. Heath Schultz, 2020, Stills from *Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy*. Left to right: 7. Officer tying boy's tie #2; 8. Waving flag with officer tying boy's tie #3; 9. Officer tying boy's tie #4. Courtesy of the artist.


Figures 10–12. Heath Schultz, 2020. Stills from *Typologies of Whiteness: Call Me Daddy*. Left to right: 10. Charles Bronson as Paul Kersey in *Death Wish*; 11. Girl with her AR-15; 12. Trump supporter with "silent majority" sign. Courtesy of the artist.

heads for the exit, slinking away from Kersey. In a methodical and deliberate manner, Kersey shoots the man on the ground point-blank for a second time, turns calmly, takes aim, and pulls the trigger on the second man trying to escape (Figure 10). Kersey is an autodidact Cop-Father who, acting in excess of the NYPD, avenges his murdered family (and then some) by exterminating a small army of the uncivilized throughout the film.

Cut to the next clip in my film, which shows a White man, presumably a father, teaching a young girl how to shoot an assault rifle (Figure 11). The father's head is out of frame, but we can see his wedding ring as he braces her shoulders for the kickback. She pulls the trigger once. He coaches her to empty the magazine: "Let's see it again." Both *Death Wish* and the footage of the young girl learning to shoot embody the dual premise of the Cop-Father. Kersey cares for his dead kin through vengeance, while the [Cop-]Father cares for his daughter by teaching her how to protect her kin. What Kersey and the young girl's father demonstrate are the mechanics within generalized whiteness for legitimating its *potential* for violence, and a preparedness to use it, should the thresholds of law and order/White civil society be breached (Martinot & Sexton, 2003; Seigel, 2018).

## Conclusion: The Deputization of Whiteness

The discourses described above demonstrate how the formation of generalized whiteness is an open and iterative process that reproduces Humans and relies upon racialized violence or the threat of it (Wilderson, 2010, pp. 18–23). By elaborating upon three themes that *Call Me Daddy* indexes—law and order, liberal paternalism, and normative pedagogy—I have aimed to theorize an expansive production of whiteness *as* policing through my analysis of the Cop-Father, who restores a generalized White kinship by either civilizing or destroying the non-human. In each instance, police propaganda labors to conflate White citizenry with the police and/or policing. For example, Goldwater's 1964 campaign film *Choice* seeks consent from and deputizes the "silent majority" for an implementation of violence that would snuff out the uncivilized (Figure 12). What is new about this moment is not the Othering of the non-Human, nor the deputization of whiteness, a practice foundational to the U.S. project, but how mid-sixties law and order laid the groundwork for our contemporary moment, saturated as it is in post-racial regimes of carcerality and violence (Camp, 2016; Murakawa, 2014). As Dylan Rodríguez (2006) notes that "Goldwater elaborated a white populist conception of liberty and security defined through military containment—and ultimate liquidation—of the lurking urban/mob/jungle threat" (p. 20). This deputization is bequeathed to the White citizen in each of the voice-overs described above: "*You* alone stand between them." "*You* did not ask for this fight." "*We* need

law and order." But, as we have seen, the conscription of whiteness is generalized and coheres both law-and-order conservatism and liberal sentimentalism.

Steve Martinot and Jared Sexton (2003) write in their indispensable essay on "the avant-garde of White supremacy": "Official discourse seeks to accustom us to thinking about state violence as a warranted part of the social order. For them, the security of belonging accompanies the re-racialization of whiteness as the intensification of anti-blackness" (p. 176). In such an environment, police procedures, which we might restate as the praxis of generalized whiteness, "become pure form because they are at once both self-denied and subordinated to the implicit prerogatives of this political culture" (p. 176). The work of police propaganda (White supremacist/anti-Black propaganda) and police pedagogy (White supremacist/anti-Black pedagogy) not only labors as a defense of the police, but additionally as part of the re-racialization and regeneration of whiteness itself. This re-racialization occurs through an always-already capaciousness for police violence and the disavowal of discursive conditions that render much of police violence invisible. For Sexton and Martinot, this White supremacist praxis is so expansive that White supremacy becomes unrepresentable due to its excessive repetition. In this saturated environment of generalized whiteness, The Invisible Committee's theorization of destitution is useful, understood as the destabilizing of the foundations that hold together a situation, bringing it back down to earth (Invisible Committee, 2014, p. 76). As method, *détournement* is at home in this excess of fetishized spectacular whiteness, working to destitute discourses of anti-Blackness congealed in the image (Debord, 1967/1995, pp. 26, 144; Invisible Committee, 2014, pp. 75–76). The discourses discussed in this text and the theorization of the Cop-Father aim not to replace or replicate the work of the film, but rather to coordinate the respective laboring of text and image as in support of a multidisciplinary critical theory of generalized whiteness. What I have tried to show, if only through implication, is that for one to be against the police, one must also be against whiteness *as* police, omnipresent in every repetition of police propaganda.

## Notes

1. I view *détournement* as a practice of critical theory that emerges within a unified theory of the spectacle, understanding communication to be confined to the logic of capitalism, and, in this case, White civil society. Within the spectacle, communication (and art) is impossible; we can only use spectacular language against itself (Debord, 1967/1995).
2. I am experimenting with *détourning* Debord's theorization of spectacle with an Afropessimist inflection, understood as a social relationship mediated by images. In Debord's *oeuvre*, the concept of spectacle allows an analysis of the circulation of images as an expression of use-value transformed into exchange-value. In this schema, we might understand police propaganda as exchangeable images of the living values of a generalized whiteness projected into the social realm and their corresponding social, legal, libidinal, and political infrastructures. The spectacle is not a distortion of the world but rather a

worldview concretized; any apparent autonomy of the image is subordinate to its driving logic (Debord, 1967/1995; Rodríguez, 2006; Wilderson, 2010).

3. Afropessimism is too complex to adequately address here, but for our purposes, Wilderson (2010) writes: "Afro-pessimists are theorists of Black positionality who share Fanon's insistence that, though Blacks are indeed sentient beings, the structure of the entire world's semantic field . . . is sutured by anti-Black solidarity" (p. 58). This anti-Black solidarity is the cohering logic among a "formation of contemporaries"—Humans that share a capacity to resolve conflict and a forum for redress.
4. Several Black feminist scholars have critiqued *The Moynihan Report*, notably, Hortense Spillers (1987); Patricia Hill Collins (1989); and Tiffany Lethabo King (2018).
5. SWAT (special weapons and tactics team) was founded by the LAPD in the wake of the Watts uprising and was first deployed in 1969 in the infamous raid on the Los Angeles chapter of the Black Panther Party, which became a 4-hour standoff and shootout when the Panthers defended their headquarters against police attack (Balko, 2013). From this perspective, the civilizing force of the police is also a capitalist civilizing mission against Cold War fanaticism on the one hand, and a racist and revanchist response to the rise of Black power on the other (Camp, 2016; Melamed, 2011).

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