

The University of San Francisco

## USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center

---

Doctoral Dissertations

All Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and  
Projects

---

1-2023

### **MOVING BETWEEN ENTITLEMENT AND CO-CONSPIRACY: A STUDY OF HOW SUPPORT, SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY CAN ADVANCE ANTI-RACISM EFFORTS OF WHITE PARENTS**

Karin Marianne Cotterman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/diss>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

The University of San Francisco

MOVING BETWEEN ENTITLEMENT AND CO-CONSPIRACY:  
A STUDY OF HOW SUPPORT, SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY CAN ADVANCE  
ANTI-RACISM EFFORTS OF WHITE PARENTS

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Educations  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctorate of Education

By Karin M. Cotterman

San Francisco

May 2023

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
Dissertation Abstract

Moving Between Entitlement and Co-Conspiracy: A Study of How Support, Skills, and  
Community Can Advance Anti-Racism Efforts of White Parents

Many white parents of white children (WPWC) do not know how to engage in conversations about race and racism with their children. Simultaneously, the lived realities of white identity are embodied and enacted in material and cultural terms in the lives of all white-identified folk who continue to be re-socialized into our dominant culture of white supremacy. As such, racism and white supremacy are taught through socialization via media, schooling, familial relationships and other social interactions (Harro, 2000). And as a result, whiteness and white supremacy are pervasive and endemic (Bell 2016; Delgado, & Stefanick, 2012; Ladson-Billings 2013, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and color-evasive<sup>1</sup> ideology is a common phenomenon among white parents, especially those who believe that talking about race is racist (Annamma, 2017; Bonilla Silva, 2017; Underhill, 2018).

In order to address race and racism, WPWC need to make a conscious choice to talk with our white children about race. White parents need to see one's own children and the lives of children of color as connected. Scholar Zeus Leonardo quotes the words of McLaren and Torres, "whiteness is not a hopeless disease and may be rehabilitated" (McLaren & Torres, as cited in Leonardo, 2009, p. 98). This requires moving away from the "consumption" of diversity that maintains a body habitus via "happy talk" that celebrates diversity while avoiding social action, while simultaneously uncoupling from the individualistic narrative of success that pervades the

---

<sup>1</sup> I use color-evasive (Annamma, et al. 2017), rather than color-blind (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) in an effort to highlight the concept of willfully ignoring issues of race while not adopting language that promotes ableism.

United States and embracing a vision of collective liberation (Burke, 2017; Taylor, 2016, Crass, 2013).

The purpose of this critical phenomenological qualitative study was to use in-depth interviews with White Parents of White Children (WPWC) to explore what they need in order to engage in conversations and actions to support increasing their racial literacy and anti-racist moves. Four main findings emerged from this study: The subtle pervasiveness of racism & how it gets perpetuated in family life; how different definitions of “racist” inform kinkeeping and what I have named the “Racial Justice Sandwich Generation”; there are varied yet concrete pathways of learning and support for parents, and that conceptualizing conversations about race and racism through a lens of love and collective liberation is a fundamental shift that allows WPWC to engage in ongoing dialogues about race.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

---

Candidate

---

Date

Dissertation Committee

---

Chairperson

---

---

---

---