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Article

'The Talk': Risk, Racism and Family Relationships

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Abstract

Parents employ a wide range of anticipatory strategies to prepare their children for, and protect them against, risks of racism. This article argues that, while black children need to be equipped with the skills and understanding to navigate racist societies, these practices are also the site of a significant injustice for minority families. Specifically, the imperative to take strategic steps to protect children against threats of racism creates unfair barriers to the enjoyment of some valuable relationship-based goods. In advancing this argument, the article brings recent philosophical work on the family into dialogue with a rapidly developing body of empirical research on racial and ethnic socialization. I show that Brighouse and Swift's 'familial relationship goods' framework generates a valuable new perspective on some contested empirical terrain. But I also highlight, and seek to begin to redress, a problematic silence on race within contemporary philosophy of the family.

Keywords

family, parenting, relationship goods, racial discrimination, the talk

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> *I let him know, 'Listen, you're a big boy, when you go into stores, understand that somebody's watching, okay every move, by the very fact that you are a Black person . . . Sometimes, they will assume that you're walking in there to steal or they will assume that you might have stolen something even if they didn't see you' . . . . that extends to just walking through the streets and so forth. I just want him to really, really get it in his head that he has to be careful about how he moves, you know?*
>
> DiAquoi (2018: 46).

Difficult conversations and decisions take place regularly in ethnic minority households, through which parents strive to prepare their children for, and protect them against, threats of racial discrimination. For example, many black children grow up hearing that they must be twice as good as their white peers if they want to succeed. Some are warned to be

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wary in their interactions with authorities, or told they are likely to be unfairly suspected of wrongdoing. These parenting practices have come to increased prominence in the United States under shorthand of 'the talk', which often involves careful coaching of African American children in how to behave in potential encounters with armed police (Anderson et al., 2021). But the steps parents take to ward off risks of racism go beyond the conversations they have with their children, to include decisions about where they live, the objects they keep in their home, the activities they engage in and the people they spend time with. And, depending on context, they respond to a wide range of risks associated with racism: threats to children's physical safety, psychological well-being, relationships, educational attainment and economic prospects.

This article explores the moral significance of these defensive parenting strategies. I argue that, while it is essential black children are equipped with the skills and understanding to navigate racist societies, these practices are also the site of a significant injustice for minority families. Specifically, the imperative to take strategic steps to protect children against threats of racism creates unfair barriers to the enjoyment of some valuable family relationship goods. Thus, anticipatory parenting practices are more than a stark reminder of the persistent injustices of racism.[1] They are also the locus of a specific secondary injustice; an injustice that resides in the unfair distribution of the non-material goods of parent–child relationships.

I develop this argument by bringing recent philosophical writing on the family into dialogue with a rapidly developing body of empirical research on 'racial and ethnic socialization' (for reviews, see Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Umaña-Taylor and Hill, 2020; for a meta-analysis, see Wang et al., 2020). I argue that Brighouse and Swift's (2014) 'familial relationship goods' framework offers a productive new lens on family racial socialization. Specifically, it cuts through some contested empirical questions about the impact of racial socialization on children's educational attainment, behaviour and psychological well-being, to reveal an injustice bound up with the practices themselves. However, the article also carries a more critical message for contemporary philosophy of the family. While focussing valuable attention on the character, and special goods, of parent–child relationships, this work has largely ignored the role of racism as a crucial factor structuring intra-family dynamics. Thus, a broader aim of the article is to begin to redress the invisibility of race and racism in current normative theorizing about the family.

I begin with a brief review of empirical evidence on the effects of racial socialization practices. Next, I advance my core argument, by delineating two types of relational costs that minority families bear in efforts to protect their children against risks of racism. The article then addresses two potential objections. First, is anticipatory parenting really so burdensome in relational terms? Could these practices even bring relational benefits? Second, taking costly anticipatory action to ward off risks against one's children is a central component of parenting within all families. If anticipatory parenting is ubiquitous, then my argument threatens to prove too much. In response to this second worry, I outline four conditions under which the burdens of anticipatory parenting raise concerns at the bar of justice. Finally, the article identifies three potential policy strategies for mitigating the unjust burdens of anticipatory parenting in contexts of persistent racism. I thereby show that this form of injustice gives rise to distinctive secondary duties; duties to negate the anticipatory harms that stem from the breach of our primary duties to combat racism (on the primary/secondary duty distinction, see Tadros, 2020).

Parenting Against the Threat of Racial Discrimination: Empirical Evidence

In addition to the work that all parents must do, those raising minority children are tasked with readying their young people for, and shielding them against, racial prejudice and discrimination. Qualitative studies document the wide range of strategies that parents deploy in discharging this risk-management role:

> A mother closely monitors the racial composition of her son's school and extra-curricular classes. She takes steps to ensure he is never the only black child in a group (Lareau, 2003: 212).[2]

> A father takes his young black son around the local shops and makes him visible to the staff. These accompanied shopping trips form 'part of a campaign to control the way that others see his son' (Diaquoi, 2017: 528).

> A mother warns her black child 'you're going to be watched more often, more frequently and with more intensity than the next [white] kid' (Reynolds, 2010: 154).

Data from the United States suggest that these kinds of anticipatory practices are widespread, with most minority families engaging in at least some 'proactive and protective parenting techniques . . . to prepare children to live in a racist world' (Manning, 2019: 11; on the prevalence of racial socialization practices, see Hughes et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor and Hill, 2020). These strategies encompass steps to reduce the *probability* of children encountering discrimination (e.g. choosing a more diverse, but otherwise less desirable school where the risk of racism is judged to be lower) and efforts to reduce the likely *impact* when it does occur (e.g. emphasizing racial pride in an effort to prevent children internalizing messages of inferiority). They also cut across the distinction between strategies of accommodation and resistance. For example, children may be instructed to follow police orders without question to protect themselves. But they might also be taught how to safely challenge unfair treatment, for example, by taking an officer's badge number or refusing to speak without their parents present. Here I use the term 'anticipatory parenting' to refer to the diverse set of practices intended to protect children against risks of racism: strategic choices about schooling, housing, leisure activities and social interactions, as well as explicit conversations about race and racial discrimination. It might be objected that it is misleading to frame these practices as anticipatory responses to *risk*, since racism is an inevitability, rather than a possibility, for minority children. However, when discrimination will arise, in what form, and with what impact are all areas of uncertainty for parents. Thus raising minority children is experienced by many as a practice of risk management, involving 'an alertness to the untoward, to the ever present possibility of racism' (Ball et al., 2013: 285).

Sociological and psychological research on family ethnic-racial socialization (ERS) has sought both to establish a typology of parenting practices that convey information about race and ethnicity, and to assess how these different approaches shape child outcomes, including psychological well-being, educational attainment and resilience in the face of experiences of discrimination. Particularly influential is Hughes et al.'s (2006) four-part framework, which distinguishes between cultural socialization (teaching about cultural heritage, traditions and inculcating cultural and racial pride); preparation for bias (raising awareness of discrimination and teaching coping strategies); promotion of

mistrust (teaching wariness or encouraging distance from other ethnic-racial groups) and egalitarianism (messages about the basic equality of all persons).[3] Quantitative studies consistently report modest positive associations between cultural socialization and improved child outcomes, for example, higher self-esteem (Constantine and Blackmon, 2002), better mental health (Reynolds and Gonzalez-Backen, 2017) and fewer behavioural problems (Caughy et al., 2002). Cultural socialization seems to facilitate a stronger and more positive ethnic-racial identity, which may, in turn, have psychological, behavioural and learning benefits (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Evidence on the implications of 'preparation for bias' is more mixed. Some research finds better outcomes among children who receive higher levels of bias preparation (e.g. D'hondt et al., 2016; Murry et al., 2009), as well as buffering effects against the harms of experiences of discrimination (Burt et al., 2012). However, null results and negative associations are also frequently reported (e.g. Hughes et al., 2009; Liu and Lau, 2013; van Bergen et al., 2016). Research on promotion of mistrust and egalitarianism is limited, but several studies find that the former approach is predictive of poorer outcomes (e.g. Liu and Lau, 2013; Zapolski et al., 2016).

Increasingly researchers emphasize that the effects of racial socialization are likely to depend, in complex ways that are not yet well understood, on the specific combination of messages that children receive, on family and neighbourhood context, and perhaps on the child's age and gender (e.g. Caughy et al., 2011; Lambert et al., 2015). Current evidence is also limited by the preponderance of cross-sectional data and the reliance on parent and/or child self-reports of racial socialization practices, which make causal relationships difficult to establish. Moreover, the quantitative literature is predominantly US-based and, until recently, has focussed primarily on African American families, raising questions about the extent to which findings apply in other contexts.

There is, then, significant remaining uncertainty about the impact of ERS on child outcomes. However, the normative import of anticipatory parenting does not rest entirely on resolving these complex empirical questions. There are also morally relevant burdens bound up with the parenting practices themselves, some of which fall on children, and some on parents as the anticipating agents. For example, qualitative studies document the additional parental labour expended in efforts to ward off risks of discrimination. In the context of schooling, this might involve intensively monitoring a child's progress and experiences, to detect signs of racism; or leveraging class privilege in interactions with teachers in an effort to ward off racial prejudice. It might even involve giving up paid work in favour of home schooling, in an effort to instil a positive black identity (Rollock et al., 2015: 131). While some of these practices carry economic penalties, much of this extra work must be measured in non-material terms, including time, emotional labour, and additional decision-making burdens.

Several wider bodies of literature have documented the varied costs that come along with anticipating, and preparing for, everyday experiences of interpersonal discrimination, through practices of identity-management and avoidance (e.g. Scully, 2010; Yoshino, 2006). In particular, my concern with anticipatory parenting partially overlaps with debates about the price of black 'respectability politics': restrictive self-presentation strategies that are intended to pre-empt and to counter racial stereotypes (Higginbotham, 1993). However, I focus here on a specific set of costs that arise when *parents* engage in risk-mitigation strategies on behalf of their *children*, within the distinctive context of the parent–child relationship.

Anticipatory Parenting: The Relationship Goods Perspective

My argument is grounded in the broad claim that access to personal relationships is a matter of distributive justice; fairness extends to goods such as love, care, intimacy and emotional support that are only available within certain kinds of close relationships, and that partly constitute those relationships (Gheaus, 2018b). More specifically, I draw on the view, most influentially developed by Brighouse and Swift, that there are special goods bound up with parent–child relationships. Brighouse and Swift argue that being raised by a small number of adults, in an intimate but authoritative relationship, uniquely serves children's developmental and non-developmental interests. More controversially, they also maintain that being a parent, and discharging duties of care to one's children, fulfils a distinctive set of interests for many adults; interests that are not realizable through other kinds of relationships:

> The [parents' fiduciary] role enables them to exercise and develop capacities the development and exercise of which are for many crucial to their living fully flourishing lives. Through exercising these capacities in the specific context of the intimately loving parent–child relationship, a parent comes to learn more about herself, she comes to develop as a person, and she derives satisfaction that otherwise would be unavailable (Brighouse and Swift, 2006: 95).

This account directs us to look inside the family, to the character and value of parent–child interactions, as a key input into a theory of parental rights. For example, the legitimacy of parental behaviour that confers unfair advantage on one's own children depends, on this view, on whether that action is bound up with the realization of familial relationship goods.

My interest here is in a normative agenda that is secondary in Brighouse and Swift's work, concerning the factors that create inter-family unfairness in access to the goods of family relationships. In other words, from the perspective of distributive justice, family relationships are not to be viewed simply as potential barriers to equality of opportunity between children. They are also the locus of goods, the distribution of which is a concern of justice (Brighouse and Swift, 2008: 147). While it may not be possible, or desirable, to redistribute family relationship goods directly, we can identify and potentially ameliorate the conditions that impede fair access. For example, the requirement for parents to work very long hours to meet the family's basic needs is, for many, a significant barrier to the enjoyment of relationship-based goods.

How anticipatory parenting bears on the issue of fair access to family relationship goods may depend, in part, on where precisely we locate the distinctive value of parent–child relationships. Central to Brighouse and Swift's (2014: 93) account is the fiduciary relation, exercised in the specific context of an intimate and loving connection between parent and child: 'a relationship in which the adult offers love and authority, a complex and emotionally challenging combination of openness and restraint, of spontaneity and self-monitoring, of sharing and withholding'. This account relegates parental value-shaping to an instrumental role: it is important that parents have space within which to share commitments with their children to the extent that this is necessary for the formation and maintenance of this kind of intimate relationship. On a rival account, the transmission of identity, culture or values from parent to child is partly constitutive of the value of the relationship itself (e.g. Reshef, 2013). From the perspective of parental value-shaping, anticipatory

parenting is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, these practices often involve building shared identity, for example, by instilling cultural pride and belonging as a buffer against the damaging effects of racism. On the other hand, the transmission of values and beliefs is constrained, because the practices are defensive, rather than expressive of parents' fundamental commitments.[4] Rather than seeking to adjudicate further between competing accounts of the value of parent–child relationships, the next sections show how anticipatory parenting stands in tension with two features that, I suggest, should be incorporated into any plausible such view: the relationship should be centred in part on the goods of childhood; and it should involve a significant amount of spontaneity.

The Goods of Childhood

On the most convincing account of the role of parents, the job is twofold. We have a responsibility to bring our children safely to the threshold of autonomous adulthood. But we also have a duty to facilitate their access to the non-developmental goods of childhood; those goods whose value does not depend on their role in preparing the child for a successful adult life (Brennan, 2014: 29; see also Brighouse and Swift, 2014: 64–65; Gheaus, 2015a). For example, while imaginative play is crucial for children's healthy development, play is also valuable as an element of children's well-being during childhood. On this view, childhood is more than a 'way station to adulthood' (Brennan, 2014: 36) and we should give significant weight to children's well-being qua children. Some of the non-developmental goods of childhood are also *special* to childhood, in at least one of three senses: they are less accessible to adults; they are unattainable by adults; or they lose their value when displayed in the context of adult lives (for this three-part distinction, see Hannan, 2018: 13). I think that there are special goods of childhood that fall into each of these categories, but my argument does not rest on adjudicating between them. I will use the term 'childhood goods' here to refer to goods that both have non-developmental value and are special to childhood, in any of these three senses. Plausible candidates include being carefree and feeling complete trust and security; having a sense of an open future, containing limitless possibilities; extensive experimentation and creativity; and unconstrained physical movement.

The content of some of the preparatory messages that parents of minority children convey is in stark conflict with the promotion of childhood goods. For example, the mother quoted in the opening passage of this article describes how she has begun to teach her young black son that he is likely to be the subject of unfair suspicion. Further qualitative studies, as well as numerous personal testimonies, document similar exchanges in which parents raise awareness of the threat of discrimination, to prepare and protect their children. For example, Anderson et al. (2021) recorded parent–child dyads discussing a vignette in which an African American boy is approached by a police officer and challenged for 'hanging out' in the street. One young girl explains that, in a similar situation, she would question the officer's comments and make clear that she was not causing trouble. She looks 'utterly shocked and confused' when her mother quickly responds, 'See, but in real life the police won't believe that, especially when it's coming from you. A little African American little girl, he wouldn't believe that' (Anderson et al., 2021: 14).

In conversations like this, the parent brings the reality of racial discrimination to the fore in her child's life, revealing to him his stigmatized social identity. Such discussions work against the valuable sense of complete trust that can only be enjoyed in childhood, and sometimes implicate parents in undermining their own position, as a source of

absolute security for their child.[5] Anticipatory parenting can also involve inculcating in children the belief that even seemingly small decisions they might make could have significant negative repercussions; in a way that detracts from the valuable component of childhood freedom that consists in *not* having to make decisions with long-term consequences (Franklin-Hall, 2013: 246). For example, minority children are sometimes warned that if they make mistakes, they will not enjoy second chances in the same way as their white peers. Rather than being 'allowed to try different ways of being on without any stakes being attached to the exercise' (Weinstock, 2018: 54), such messages amplify children's sense of what is at stake in their choices, and sometimes also encourage them to take responsibility for the behaviour of adults around them. What is regrettable here is arguably not only the loss of a sense of trust and freedom concomitant with the revelation of the child's status as a potential victim of injustice, but also the way in which such conversations begin prematurely to fix the child's sense of self. There is an imperative to inform minority children about their racialized identity, in order that they can orient themselves in a world structured by race. However, such messages also strike against a valuable feature of childhood experience, which resides in children's *lack* of a stable sense of self and their ability to experiment with alternative identities (Gheaus, 2018a: 69).

I have suggested that some anticipatory parenting messages – particularly those that involve 'preparation for bias' and 'promotion of mistrust' – are in direct tension with the childhood goods of trust, freedom and openness. A second important dynamic concerns the placing of tight restrictions on children's physical movements, or demands for children to regulate their own movement (see Coates, 2015). Again, this is captured in the testimony with which I began the article, when the mother observes that she is teaching her son 'how to move'. Parents of black children also describe instructing their offspring not to run in the street, or to avoid making any sudden movements in potentially racially charged encounters (e.g. DiAquoi, 2017: 529). Such strategies are intended both to ward off immediate threats of racism, and to inculcate levels of self-control necessary to thrive in a racially hostile environment. But they are inimical to children's interests, qua children, in extensive freedom of physical movement and expression. The result has been described, in the US context, as an 'impossible dance', of 'raising empowered children with healthy self-esteem who are free to express themselves and explore the world around them, while simultaneously keeping a noose-like rein on their movements, attitudes, and behaviors' (Whitaker and Snell, 2016: 305).

Psychologists and philosophers of childhood have warned against a tendency to view children simply as 'unfinished adults' and thereby to lose sight of the value of childhood itself, independent of its role as a training ground, or waiting area, for adult life (Gheaus, 2015b; see also Engel, 2005). I find these arguments convincing. There is an imbalance in how, in many contemporary societies, we implicitly weigh the well-being of our children as they are now against that of the adults they will become (Brennan, 2014: 29). This imbalance sometimes leads to a general under provision of the goods of childhood. However, there are also important concerns of distributive justice between families that attach to childhood goods. Specifically, anticipatory parenting makes minority children's lives more adult-like, in ways that parents themselves sometimes find deeply troubling. The problem here then is not a general devaluing of childhood qua childhood, but rather the distinctive context of insecurity these parents face, which induces them to trade-off some of the goods of childhood in favour of their children's developmental interests.

Thus far my account appears to highlight a cost that is borne by minority children, whose access to certain childhood goods is unfairly restricted by some anticipatory

parenting practices.[6] But the point is not only that children's enjoyment of the goods of childhood is diminished, but also that these goods are prematurely crowded out of the parent–child relationship. In other words, there is ethical significance to the intra-family status of childhood goods: it is valuable for children to enjoy these goods in the context of the parent–child relationship, and for parents to share in their child's experience of the special goods of childhood. Both parties lose out when parents are incentivized to compromise these goods to ward off other threats to their children's well-being.

Parents are also burdened by the requirement to negotiate a sharp trade-off between two competing duties towards their children: the developmental responsibility to prepare them for future experiences of racism; and the duty to secure their access to the goods of childhood. I noted that some parents express distress or anxiety about managing this tension. But we can think about the morally relevant burden in a way that goes beyond the associated psychological pain. This situation embodies a kind of double bind; 'a genuinely normative conflict . . . involving competing and significant goods that often feel incomparable' (Srinivasan, 2018: 133). If, as Brighouse and Swift emphasize, the value of the parent–child relationship for parents is constituted in large part by the discharging of duties towards one's children, then this normative conflict again represents a set-back to parents' relationship-based interests.

Spontaneity

Anticipatory parenting also threatens the quality of spontaneity that is a key ingredient of the value of parent–child relationships. As Brighouse and Swift (2014: 99, Original emphasis) argue, it is important that not all of our interactions with our children are consciously governed by our sense of what is good for them, because there is a valuable aspect of the relationship that lies in unreflective sharing:

> A parent who never said or did anything to or with his child without first asking himself whether it would be in his child's interests would not be spontaneously sharing himself with his child, there would be a lack of genuine intimacy, and he would thus be failing to provide the kind of relationship that *was* in his child's interests.

Brighouse and Swift (2014: 99, Emphasis added) suggest that '[p]arents must *allow* themselves some space, free of self-monitoring, to experience and express to the child their authentic emotions and attitudes'. But the ease with which parents can be spontaneous is importantly influenced by wider social structures. In particular, for some minority families the threat of racism is a mediating presence in the parent–child relationship; persistently structuring how parents relate to their children, and sometimes preventing them from acting more spontaneously on their own or their child's feelings and preferences. The deliberate and watchful character of anticipatory parenting emerges powerfully from Rollock et al.'s (2015) research with middle-class black British parents, in which many participants convey a picture of parenting involving extensive monitoring and strategizing: to spot dangers of racism and take pre-emptive steps to ward it off. An invidious feature of these dynamics is how they can permeate even the most private of interactions, such as which stories to read, or the child's body language at home:

> The talking, the preparation, the vigilance is endless . . . as I try to fight off anything that might smuggle a notion of inferiority into my black child's mind. I have to investigate the racial representation in the latest animated movie and try to decode any of its subtle biases against

people of color. I try to find children's books that don't feature black kids only in supporting roles or in the ghetto . . . I absolutely will not buy him toy guns or let him play with them, even if the neon color of the plastic practically glows. I won't even let him fix his fingers into the shape of a gun (Tisby, 2018).

Unlike the childhood goods concern, the spontaneity argument does not turn on the specific substance of the preparatory conversations or defensive behavioural strategies that parents employ. It is the sustained vigilance in the face of threats of discrimination that is itself in tension with the good of spontaneity. Of course, anticipatory parenting is unlikely to crowd out spontaneity everywhere, and all parent–child relationships must involve some balance between spontaneous and reflective behaviour. But, in contexts in which there are already significant pressures towards more strategic models of parenting, minority families face additional barriers against the realization of an important good; the good of 'familial relationships in which parents can do things to, with, and for their children without undue reflection or deliberation' (Brighouse and Swift, 2014: 155).

Implications

Starting from Brighouse and Swift's claim that both parents and children have a weighty interest in a particular kind of intimate relationship, I have argued that the imperative to ward off threats of racial discrimination creates unfairness in access to some important relationship-based goods. I have highlighted two dynamics in particular – the displacement of childhood goods and the crowding out of spontaneity – that are closely bound up with the practices of anticipatory parenting. Importantly, it does not seem possible adequately to compensate for these kinds of relational costs through the provision of non-relational goods (Gheaus, 2018b). Thus, even affluent minority families, who may be unjustly advantaged in material terms, are unfairly burdened by the anticipatory parenting imperative. However, it is crucial to emphasize that my intention here is not to advocate race-blind parenting, nor is it to criticize parents who deploy such defensive strategies. Without this preparation, minority children may be ill-equipped to deal with subsequent experiences of discrimination, less likely to recognize discriminatory treatment for what it is, and more likely to suffer harms to their self-worth and confidence as a result (Rivas-Drake and Umaña-Taylor, 2019: 80). While quantitative evidence on the effects of bias preparation remains unsettled, personal testimonies highlight the bewilderment and struggle that children may experience when they start to encounter discrimination without prior warning (e.g. Rollock et al., 2015: 123–124).

My argument then does not amount to an all things considered case against anticipatory parenting. Nor have I offered an exhaustive account of the injustices faced by minority families, which go beyond the anticipatory burdens highlighted here. What then do we learn specifically by foregrounding anticipatory parenting practices? In contexts in which discrimination is often convert, and denied under the guise of colour-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), showing how threats of racism continue powerfully to shape the everyday dynamics of minority family life is a useful tool to raise awareness of the persistence of racial injustice. But my claim about the justice-relevance of anticipatory parenting strategies goes beyond this signalling role: I argue that the injustice of the conditions of risk lies, in part, in their tendency to lead to certain kinds of costly anticipatory responses on the part of parents. Thus, anticipatory parenting is not merely epiphenomenal when it comes to the injustice of the threat of racism. It is the site of a specific secondary injustice for minority families.

This argument rests on the foundational claim that access to relationship goods is a concern of distributive justice. While I have not directly defended this assumption, my account generates some indirect support for treating family relationship goods as distribuenda. Specifically, it shows how this approach accounts for the intuition that there is something troubling in parent–child interactions such as those involved in 'the talk'. By viewing these dynamics through the familial relationship goods lens, we can also begin to make better sense of the mixed tone of discussions of racial socialization in the empirical literature and in public debate. On the one hand, these defensive parenting strategies are often strongly affirmed as a valuable set of adaptive practices for black families, practices that teach children 'how to survive with dignity and pride in a racist world' (Stevenson et al., 2001: 46). On the other hand, concerns are raised about how the drive to protect against the risk of discrimination positions parents in relation to their children; 'as the agent of the oppressor' (Whitaker and Snell, 2016: 306) who brings injustice to the fore in the child's life, and undermines his sense of trust and security. We can go some way towards reconciling these perspectives, by recognizing that our normative concerns about anticipatory parenting should not be limited to the kinds of child developmental outcomes that have been the focus of quantitative research. The imperative to ward off the threat of racism reaches deep into the parent–child relationship itself, and the familial relationship goods account illuminates why this is normatively significant, for both parents and children. This framework also suggests reason to be cautious about proposals for interventions to promote intra-family racial socialization (e.g. Anderson et al., 2018). Not only does the empirical evidence suggest that any such measures must be very carefully designed to avoid potential negative side effects for children, they also risk amplifying the relational burdens that are borne by minority families.

The growing literature on the family in ethics and political philosophy has had little to say about the intersection between parenting and racial injustice. It is therefore near silent on a central aspect of the dynamics of minority family life. I have sought to show that the 'familial relationship goods' approach can fruitfully be extended to anticipatory parenting practices, to generate a new perspective on an established area of empirical enquiry. But this exercise also casts critical light back on recent philosophical writing on the value of family relationships. While this work has rightly urged us to think about the metric of distributive justice beyond economic goods, it has continued to characterize the conditions that structure our access to those goods solely in economic terms. For example, Gheaus (2015a: 50) highlights how a competitive market economy can work to crowd out childhood goods from the parent–child relationship. Similarly, Brighouse and Swift (2008: 140) emphasize poverty and long working hours as the relevant 'social arrangements [that] currently make it much harder for some than for others to realise family values in their lives'. Here I have sought to show that there is also an important non-economic component to the factors that shape our opportunities for family relationship goods. Taking proper account of relationship-based goods within a metric of distributive justice calls for sensitivity to the complex anticipatory dynamics through which racial insecurity structures our relationships.

Objections

Is Anticipatory Parenting Really so Costly?

I have argued that anticipatory parenting hampers the realization of two important goods of parent–child relationships; goods that may not be compensable in non-relational terms.

However, family relationships are made up of a complex web of interactions, and the threat of racism is unlikely to pervade them all. Thus, we might still ask whether parents can counterbalance the relational effects of anticipatory practices through other kinds of interactions with their children. For example, I suggested that one way in which anticipatory parenting crowds out the goods of childhood is through the premature fixing of children's social identity. But perhaps parents can inform children that race is central to how they will be perceived, while emphasizing that they can still be many things of their own choosing. Indeed, this is the route many parents carefully tread: teaching children about their position, and identity, in a society structured by racial hierarchy, while also conveying messages of openness and possibility. More strongly, it seems plausible that anticipatory parenting will sometimes generate important relationship goods. For example, parent–child bonds might be strengthened in the process of sharing messages of racial pride or strategies for coping with discrimination.

Is my account of the relational costs of anticipatory parenting then too pessimistic, either in overestimating the extent to which the threat of racism pervades family relationships, in underestimating parents' ability to employ countervailing strategies, or in ignoring the relational *benefits* of anticipatory parenting? Four points are relevant here. First, efforts to counteract bias preparation practices might themselves prove costly, if children experience tension between the different messages they receive (on potential harm from incongruent racial socialization messages, see Brega and Coleman, 1999: 227, 237–238; Pachter and Dumont-Mathieu, 2004: 92–93). Second, insofar as these corrective strategies are deliberately planned and executed, there is a further loss of spontaneity. Parents must strategize not only about how to ward off threats of discrimination, but also about how to mitigate the unwanted side effects of their protective strategies. Third, an injustice remains even if many parents successfully negotiate this complex task. At a minimum, minority families must overcome a distinctive set of obstacles to enjoy some goods of parent–child relationships that are more readily available to their white counterparts. Finally, while there is some force to the point that anticipatory parenting can be a source of relationship goods, this seems a more contingent matter. For some, the steps taken to mitigate risks of racism may result in a strengthening of parent–child bonds. But in other cases, the converse may be true. For example, a parent might direct her child towards a narrow set of highly-respected professions, as a bulwark against the risks of racist misrecognition and racially-based economic disadvantage; but with a potential loss of intimacy, if the parent pushes away the child's particular interests or motivations in pursuit of her protective goals. Further empirical work is needed to explore the significance of these alternative dynamics (on the relationship between preparation for bias and positive mother-child relationships, see Frabutt et al., 2002). Moreover, any gains in intimacy would not directly undo the specific problems of the crowding out of childhood goods and spontaneity. Just as the loss of relationship goods is not properly compensable in non-relational terms, some distinct relationship goods are not directly substitutable.

Is Anticipatory Parenting Ubiquitous?

A second possible critical response to my argument is that taking costly anticipatory steps to ward off risks against one's children is a pervasive component of *all* parenting. If so, it is implausible to identify these practices as a site of injustice. To address this objection, it is necessary to identify a set of features that jointly mark out anticipatory parenting practices from the wider set of parental risk mitigation strategies. In other words, we need an

account of when anticipatory parenting is not only burdensome, but unjustly so. I suggest four such conditions. First, the anticipatory costs are unequally distributed across ethnic minority and white families. Recent studies of racial socialization within white families show that most parents ignore racial inequality, or discuss it only in response to direct questions from their children. Where they do have explicit conversations about race, white parents tend to emphasize colour-blind messages. These predominantly silent, reactive and colour-blind approaches reflect the fact that

> As members of the dominant racial group, whites do not have to think about race when reflecting on their children's physical or psychological well-being . . . [whereas parents of black children] are incentivized to speak with their children about racial discrimination, violence, and police brutality so as to protect their child from the threat of physical or psychological harm (Underhill, 2018: 1948; see also Hagerman, 2018).

Second, parents face significant potential costs whether they pursue, or eschew, defensive racial socialization strategies. While I have emphasized the relational burdens of parenting practices that seek to mitigate threats of racism, I have also noted that the price of race-blind parenting may be to leave children more exposed to discrimination, and less well prepared to cope with it. Thus, the answer cannot simply be for parents to stop engaging in costly risk-mitigation behaviour. Here my argument diverges from a high-profile set of narratives about 'paranoid parenting' (Furedi, 2008: 4) according to which parents' irrational fears for their children's safety or future success are leading to more intensive and controlling modes of parenting. These accounts highlight widespread *excessive* parental anxiety; anxiety that leads to reactions that are clearly disproportionate relative to the risks that children actually face. But for many minority families, restrictive or hyper-vigilant parenting practices represent instead quite reasonable adaptive responses to the particular contexts of insecurity they inhabit.

Third, the link between the anticipatory response and the aversion of future harm is socially contingent. It is the social construction of race, and of racist norms and practices, that means that some parents are incentivized to engage in anticipatory parenting practices in an effort to secure their child's healthy development and future success.[7] Think instead about a case in which the parent of a physically disabled child takes costly anticipatory steps to protect him against risks associated with his disability. Insofar as these strategies respond to threats that stem from disability discrimination, there are parallels with defensive racial socialization practices. For example, the parent may make concerted efforts to ensure that her child is always immaculately presented, in an effort to ward off prejudice (e.g. McKeever and Miller, 2004: 1187–1188). But perhaps other practices anticipate risks of the physical condition itself: for example, intensively monitoring a child with breathing difficulties to detect early signs of distress; or limiting some physical activities to prevent injury. While there may be other kinds of unfairness here, the latter practices do not involve the type of anticipatory injustice I am concerned with, since there is a non-contingent connection between the potential harm to be averted and the costly anticipatory steps that the parent is incentivized to take.

Fourth, the threat of discrimination shapes parents' choices over time and across multiple domains of life. For example, an African American mother describes how she deliberated over whether to invite her children's white friends to a party, fearing that they might refuse because she lives in predominantly black neighbourhood, and she would be forced to have a difficult conversation with her children about racism as a result (Ward, 1991). Viewed in isolation, this decision about who to ask to a child's birthday might

appear trivial. But, as the mother makes clear ('it's always those sorts of things') this incident is emblematic of a systematic set of dynamics that run through family life. It is the ongoing and pervasive character of the risk management problem that persistently structures the character of family relationships, and means that anticipatory parenting should be taken seriously as a site of injustice.

Mitigating the Burdens of Anticipatory Parenting

The primary goal of the discussion thus far has been diagnostic: to identify, and sketch out the contours of, a specific injustice faced by minority families in virtue of the imperative to take strategic action to protect their children against threats of racism. In this final section, I suggest that bringing this unfairness to the surface also yields distinctive normative implications. There is a clear primary duty – both individual and collective – to tackle the background conditions of racial injustice that generate the defensive parenting strategies. But it seems unlikely that this duty will be fully discharged in the short or medium term. Moreover, even if societies did go a long way towards tackling ongoing racial discrimination, this may be insufficient to relieve the anticipatory burdens that minority families face, given the cultural embeddedness of some of these parenting practices, and the long histories of racism to which they respond. For both reasons, the unfairness bound up with anticipatory parenting gives rise to distinctive secondary duties: duties we incur when we fail to discharge the primary duties that apply to us. Specifically, in breaching the duty to eliminate racial discrimination, we have left minority families facing the imperative to protect their children against risk, and thereby inflicted on them a distinct set of relational (and other) burdens. In doing so, we have incurred duties to remediate these costs. There are complex questions about the nature of these secondary duties that lie beyond the scope of this article. For example, are the secondary duties wholly institutional, or do they also apply to individuals? Is there a risk that taking steps to discharge our secondary duties might detract further from the fulfilment of the primary duty to combat racism? Below I simply sketch out three broad kinds of potential strategies, at the policy level, for mitigating the burdens of anticipatory parenting in contexts of persistent racism.

Evidence Generation

First, we might collectively invest in generating and sharing better evidence about the impact of specific anticipatory parenting strategies. For example, are efforts to raise a black child's awareness of racial discrimination likely to bolster his educational attainment, by helping him correctly to attribute subsequent discriminatory experiences to bias, rather than to his own lack of ability? Do these messages risk hindering his learning, by making him more vulnerable to stereotype threat? Are there likely to be negative psychological effects that outweigh any educational benefits? We have seen that quantitative research has not yet delivered clear answers to these kinds of questions about the developmental impact of preparation for bias. Moreover, qualitative research shows that many parents are acutely *aware* of walking 'a tightrope' (Dow, 2016, 175): between teaching children that discrimination is out there waiting for them, in order that they can understand and process it when it does happen, while not intruding this brutal reality too much into their childhoods. Further research, particularly better longitudinal data, would help to alleviate these decision-making burdens, and to mitigate the further chains of risk that stem from parental efforts to reduce the threat of discrimination.

Accommodation

Given what we *do* already know, public policies and services could be tailored to accommodate the fact of anticipatory parenting practices, in ways that reduce any harmful side-effects. For example, there is growing evidence that the potential negative psychological and educational impact of 'preparation for bias' is mitigated when these strategies are combined with messages about cultural identity and pride (Dunbar et al., 2015; Neblett et al., 2008). These findings suggest a distinctive reason for providers of children's services to engage in efforts to convey the value of minority cultures: to try to create an environment that buffers potential harms of the bias preparation that some children experience at home.

Collective Anticipation

Third, collective anticipation measures could be implemented, to reduce the imperative for costly individual efforts to mitigate risk. Here my account of the relational burdens of anticipatory parenting suggests a prima facie case for outsourcing some of the work of protecting minority children against threats of racism. If schools, or other youth organizations, visibly engage in efforts to raise awareness of racial discrimination, and to teach coping strategies, perhaps parents might feel enabled to step back from some of this work.[8] All things considered policy judgements in this area rest on complex empirical and normative issues that must remain unaddressed here. For example, should bias preparation work be carried out by adults who share the child's ethnic-racial identity? Is there a danger that, in teaching coping strategies, schools would appear to acquiesce in the persistence of racism? But, insofar as the overall benefits of anticipatory parenting outweigh the costs for children, my argument suggests it would be better, in some respects, if someone other than parents could do it.

Brighouse and Swift (2014: 135) point to the distinctive value of receiving goods from one's parents; even when those goods are of a kind that could be provided by anyone, it can be valuable to have our well-being promoted by someone with whom we stand in that kind of intimate relationship. This article suggests that the converse is also true: there can be a distinctive *disvalue* in having some aspects of our well-being promoted by those with whom we enjoy familial relationships; a disvalue that can also be cached out in terms of the relationship-based goods to which Brighouse and Swift draw our attention. Specifically, minority children have an interest in being properly prepared for, and protected against, threats of racism. But they, and their parents, have relationship-based interests that speak against that aspect of their well-being being secured within the family.

Conclusion

Parents employ a complex set of risk-management strategies to mitigate or ward off threats of racism against their children. These practices provoke divergent intuitions. On the one hand, they are celebrated as powerful tools or cultural assets for minority families, as they prepare their children to cope, and to thrive, in racist societies. On the other hand, they impose a distinct set of additional burdens on families; and parents themselves often express unease at some of the steps they take to protect their children. This article has shown that we can cast new light on the moral significance of anticipatory parenting by

viewing these practices through the lens of familial relationship goods. Specifically, I have traced how the imperative to ward off risks of racism creates unfair barriers to the enjoyment of two important goods of parent–child relationships. This account shows that anticipatory parenting is not only a symptom of the persistent injustices of racism. It is also the site of a specific secondary injustice, which in turn generates distinct secondary duties. In developing this argument, the article has also sought to contribute to the wider task of bringing race and racism into view in contemporary philosophical work on the family.

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Notes

1. I seek to remain as neutral as possible here on the question of the nature of racial injustice more generally. For significant contributions on this wider issue, see Lebron, 2013, Mills, 1997, Shelby, 2016.
2. Lareau famously argues that class is more powerful than race in shaping overall approaches to parenting. But, as this example illustrates, she does not deny that some parenting practices are driven by the distinct threats facing minority children. For critical discussion of the treatment of race in Lareau's work, see Manning, 2019.
3. 'Racial and ethnic socialization' is broader than my concept of 'anticipatory parenting', both in encompassing unintentional transmission of messages about race, and in including intentional practices that are not directed towards mitigating risks of racism. However, much of the empirical literature is focussed on the subset of racial socialization practices (intentional and defensive) that fall under my category of anticipatory parenting. As Hughes et al.'s typology suggests, parental ERS strategies are varied. In particular, some parents deemphasize racial discrimination and racial solidarity, in favour of messages about equality. However, even those who convey the latter messages sometimes do so strategically, in an effort to avoid their children being subject to negative racial stereotypes.
4. Of course, cultural socialization is often also undertaken with the intention of passing on parents' own comprehensive commitments. Here I am interested in the element of cultural socialization that is driven by a concern to defend children against the threat of racism. As Rollock et al. (2015: 18) emphasize, '[t]he thought and proactive planning around developing a strong Black identity . . . is, in part, about serving as protection from and readying for White society'. There is an important role here for parental value-shaping in minority families that is underrecognized in the philosophical literature on parenting.
5. Hannan (2018: 16) suggests that being trusting and carefree is good for children only to the extent that these 'dispositions match reality'. Since they do not, then it is not. Hannan's account yields a counterintuitive

judgement in the anticipatory parenting case, since it denies the loss involved in revealing the reality of racism to minority children, even if there is an all things considered gain.

6.   There are other candidate childhood goods that are not directly implicated in my argument – cf. Gheaus's (2015b) emphasis on children's special facility for scientific, philosophical and creative pursuits.

7.   For related discussion of social contingency in relation to harmful social norms, see Chambers, 2008.

8.   Of course, a huge amount of unintended racial socialization already happens outside of the family, especially in schools. My focus here is on whether extra-family organizations should intentionally take over more of the strategic parental labour. For discussion of a number of programmes involving 'conscious engagement' with ethnic-racial identity and injustices, see Rivas-Drake and Umaña-Taylor (2019: 124–144). In some contexts, members of the extended family may also take on partial responsibility for ERS.

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