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Color-Evasiveness and White Normativity: Examples Set by Parents in Parent–Child Interactions in the Netherlands

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Objectives: Parents can set examples of social norms about ethnic diversity and interethnic relations in interaction with their children. The present study examined whether and how parents set norms of color-evasiveness and White normativity when playing a social categorization game with their children. **Method:** In a sample of 141 White Dutch, 73 Turkish-Dutch, and 56 Black Dutch mothers of a 6- to 10-year-old child, behaviors reflecting color-evasiveness (avoiding skin color questions, asking about skin color late in the game, taking relatively long to formulate skin color questions) and White normativity (bias in ethnic–racial focus used) were observed. Two subsamples (mothers approximately 2 years later and fathers) were used to try to replicate results. **Results:** Color-evasiveness was most frequent among White Dutch mothers and during the version of the game including pictures of South West Asian/North African and Black adults, but did not depend on the ethnic–racial background of the researchers. All mothers who asked about skin color displayed patterns of ethnic–racial focus that reflect White normativity, by focusing on dark rather than light skin colors. This bias was irrespective of their own ethnic–racial background, ethnic–racial background of the researchers, and the version of the game. Patterns of color-evasiveness and White normativity were largely replicated in both subsamples. **Conclusions:** These results suggest that children might already learn societal norms that conflict with anti-racism in very basic parent–child interactions situations. Future research is needed to investigate how to foster more inclusive social norms such as color consciousness in the next generation and their parents.

Public Significance Statement

Parents can set examples of social norms about ethnic diversity and interethnic relations in interaction with their children. The present study shows that parents can and often do display behaviors that reflect norms conflicting with anti-racism (color-evasiveness and White normativity) while playing a social categorization game with their children.

Keywords: parent–child interactions, color-evasiveness, White normativity, social categorization

Supplemental materials: <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000638.supp>

Adults from a dominant ethnic–racial group (e.g., White Americans) are often reluctant to talk about race (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Norton et al., 2006), adhering to a color-evasive social norm. From approximately 10-year-old children, both White and of color, display similar color-evasive behavioral tendencies (Apfelbaum, Pauker, et al., 2008; Pauker et al., 2015). Given the negative effects of color-evasiveness on cognitive and psychosocial outcomes of individuals from underrepresented

ethnic–racial backgrounds (Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Plaut et al., 2009), and the racist nature of color-evasiveness (Kendy, 2019; Neville et al., 2013), it is important to understand how children pick up on this social norm. Parents are important social referents from whom children might learn social norms (Pauker et al., 2015). Parents' examples can inform children not only about the normativity of talking about ethnicity and race, but can also reflect messages about normativity of different ethnic–racial backgrounds.

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As such, discussions about ethnicity and race have the potential to reinforce or undermine White normativity (i.e., White race being the standard or norm; Morris, 2016). Social norms of color-evasiveness and White normativity are dominant in numerous European countries, including the Netherlands (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Weiner, 2014; Wekker, 2016). At the same time, norms in the Netherlands do seem to be shifting somewhat as institutional racism is being addressed more widely and publicly (Ghorashi, 2023) and might be differentially represented in households of families with different ethnic-racial backgrounds. This creates an interesting context for the present study: to explore the examples that Dutch parents of different ethnic-racial backgrounds set with regard to talking about skin color in interactions with their children.

Color-Evasiveness

Color-evasiveness¹ reflects an ideology of denying the significance of race and refusing to acknowledge race (Annamma et al., 2017; Neville et al., 2013). Race is a social construct that impacts people's lives (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Although color-evasive beliefs and accompanying behaviors can stem from intentions to not appear biased (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008), the approach of "not seeing" race, and relatedly denying racism, perpetuates current racial inequalities, reinforces systems of racism, oppression, and privilege, and is therefore described as racist in itself (Kendy, 2019; Neville et al., 2013). In addition, numerous studies have shown the harmful effects of color-evasive approaches. People of color, for example, perform worse on cognitive tasks after interacting with White people who had been exposed to color-evasive beliefs (Holoien & Shelton, 2012), and color-evasive beliefs of White coworkers relate to lower psychological engagement of people of color (Plaut et al., 2009). At the same time, White people who display color-evasive behaviors or have been exposed to color-evasive beliefs appear less friendly in interracial interactions (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Norton et al., 2006; Vorauer et al., 2009), and those who strongly endorse color-evasive beliefs are less sensitive to recognizing workplace microaggressions (Kim et al., 2019; Offermann et al., 2014). Exposure to color-evasive beliefs also impacts children: Children who are exposed to color-evasive beliefs at school are less likely to recognize racism (Apfelbaum et al., 2010).

Nonetheless, research using social categorization measures in which ethnic-racial background is relevant rather consistently demonstrates color-evasive behaviors (in the form of avoiding asking about skin color) among White American adults (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Norton et al., 2006). These studies asked participants to play games similar to the popular *Guess Who?* game, in which they have to guess pictures using as few questions as possible, and in which asking about ethnic-racial characteristics is relevant for winning the game. White participants particularly avoid questions about skin color (and thus show strategic color-evasiveness) when they play the game with a Black person (33%–36% vs. 7%–11% when playing with a White person), and when they are exposed to a norm that endorses color-evasiveness (73% vs. 9%–27% when exposed to a control or race-acknowledging message; Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Norton et al., 2006). Research using similar measures in a highly diverse, heterogeneous setting (i.e., Hawai'i) shows that White and Asian adults likewise particularly show strategic color-evasiveness

when they are exposed to color-evasive norms (Meyers et al., 2022). Color-evasive societal norms might therefore result in color-evasive behaviors among individuals of different ethnic-racial backgrounds.

Similar studies with White American children show that 8- and 9-year-olds mostly do not show strategic color-evasiveness (33% did not ask about skin color), whereas 10- and 11-year-olds overwhelmingly do (63% did not ask about skin color; Apfelbaum, Pauker, et al., 2008). American children of color (9- to 12-year-old) display color-evasive behavioral tendencies comparable to their White counterparts, although all children seem uncomfortable doing so (Pauker et al., 2015). These previous studies suggest that all children are sensitive to social norms, and start displaying behaviors in accordance with the social norms in late childhood, although children can simultaneously endorse a color-evasive narrative and be aware of racial inequalities (Moffitt et al., 2022; Rogers et al., 2021). Parents, alongside teachers, are important social referents for children, highlighting a potential route through which children might learn social norms and their approaches to race and ethnicity (Pauker et al., 2015). Thus, the examples that parents set through modeling can be important for the approaches to ethnicity and race of future generations. Children start to learn to understand ethnicity and race as being related to observable physical features, such as skin color (Quintana, 1998). Therefore, color-evasiveness in the form of avoiding mentioning skin color might lay a particularly relevant foundation for how children learn to deal with topics surrounding ethnicity, race, and racism later in life.

Parental ethnic-racial socialization refers to the transmission of information regarding race and ethnicity from parents to their children (Hughes et al., 2006). Ethnic-racial socialization practices of parents of color are often conceptualized as cultural socialization (teaching pride, traditions, and history about one's heritage), preparation for bias (raising awareness of and preparing children for discrimination), promotions of mistrust (encouraging cautiousness in interracial interactions), and egalitarianism (emphasizing similarities and commonalities between ethnic-racial groups; Priest et al., 2014). In families of color, these socialization practices are positively related to children's ethnic-racial identity (Huguley et al., 2019) and can also positively impact children's well-being (Wang et al., 2020). Research on parental ethnic-racial socialization shows that parents of color engage in ethnicity- or race-related talk more often than White parents (Priest et al., 2014; Sullivan et al., 2022). In White families, research shows that parents often avoid these ethnicity- or race-related discussions in general (Vittrup, 2018), and in response to racist events (Abaied & Perry, 2021; Zucker & Patterson, 2018). White parents' lack of engagement in discussing racism might stem from beliefs that children are too young, that racism is irrelevant in the lives of their children (Wu et al., 2022), or misjudgments of children's abilities to process race (Sullivan et al., 2021). Although color-evasiveness thus seems more prevalent in White families, it is not to say that parents of color do not adhere to this social norm at all. Research has for example, illustrated how in some samples of color (i.e., Latin American adults and Turkish-Dutch mothers) endorsement of color-evasive ideologies were similar to their White counterparts (de Bruijn et al., 2022;

¹ We use "color-evasive" here so that the term reflects active avoidance of race and is not linked to visual abilities, following the recommendations by Annamma et al. (2017), but the term reflects similar beliefs and behaviors as "colorblind."

Ryan et al., 2010). Whereas color-evasiveness among White parents might reflect a form of privilege (i.e., the privilege of not having to deal with racism), it might reflect a form of adherence to a social norm among parents of color.

Given that all children seem sensitive to color-evasive norms (Pauker et al., 2015), research on parental color-evasiveness across families with different ethnic–racial backgrounds is relevant. Specifically, research on parental strategic color-evasiveness while playing social categorization games with their children (in which ethnic–racial background is relevant to discuss) will add to this body of research in several ways. First, it will provide insight about a more basic form of color-evasiveness (i.e., the mere mention of skin color). This more basic form of color-evasiveness is highly relevant, as the ability to talk about skin color is a prerequisite for discussing the pressing issue of racism. Apart from examining whether parents talk about skin color, the game setting also provides opportunities to examine how long it takes them to do so. Asking about skin color late in the game can indicate that parents are reluctant and first try to avoid the topic, and taking long to formulate skin color questions can indicate discomfort (Fox Tree, 2002). Second, the social categorization game context is one in which children might be particularly aware of avoidance of the topic, given that asking about differences in appearance is essential to the game, and one aspect of appearance (skin color) that is clearly present is being ignored. Additionally, the game context provides a fairly natural setting for families, strengthening ecological validity. Third, the social categorization game allows for an exploration of behaviors reflecting other social norms that are relevant for interethnic and interracial relations, such as White normativity.

White Normativity

White normativity refers to a social norm constructing Whiteness as typical and the standard to which other ethnic–racial backgrounds are compared (McWhorter, 2005; Morris, 2016). White normativity centers White people as people, with dehumanizing consequences for people of color (Morris, 2016). Being White is often “unmarked,” given that it is the norm and thus does not need to be defined (Garner, 2007), automatically making the “other” abnormal. This is for example, reflected in the cultural misattribution bias in psychology research in the United States: The tendency to use cultural explanations for behavior of people from underrepresented ethnic–racial backgrounds, and psychological explanations for behavior of White people (Causadias et al., 2018). White normativity is recognized as a form of contemporary racism, with detrimental consequences for people of color (Bhandaru, 2013). Therefore, it is also important to understand whether and how White normativity is reinforced in families of color, as this could reflect a form of internalized racism, which can have negative consequences for one’s ethnic–racial identity and various mental as well as physical health outcomes (David et al., 2019).

Insight in whether and how White normativity is reinforced in White families will additionally be beneficial for understanding White children’s anti-racism development. Research on Whiteness has described how White Americans do not regard their race as part of their identity (Jackson & Heckman, 2002), although more complex processes of White identity management have been proposed since then (Knowles et al., 2014). White children are also less likely than children of color to consider race as an important

social identity (Rogers & Meltzoff, 2017; Turner & Brown, 2007). In order for White children to become anti-racist, however, identifying as White is theorized to be an important prerequisite in childhood, as is understanding White privilege in early adolescence (Hazelbaker et al., 2022). Although understanding Whiteness and White privilege encompasses much more than simply recognizing and acknowledging White skin color, White normativity hinders the development of this understanding of the self and society for White children. Therefore, apart from potentially setting a color-evasive norm based on *whether* parents mention ethnic–racial characteristics such as skin color, their specific approach to *what* skin colors are pointed out can at the same time reinforce or challenge White normativity.

The Present Study and Research Context

Although the Netherlands has had a reputation as a highly tolerant multicultural society for years, this reputation as well as the connotations of the definition of tolerance have been challenged by many (Brown, 2012; Schirmer et al., 2012; Weiner, 2015b). Nonetheless, interpersonal and institutionalized racism have for long hardly been acknowledged (Ghorashi, 2014; Weiner, 2014; Wekker, 2016). In fact, this denial of racism is identified as one of the characterizing features of Dutch racism (Essed & Hoving, 2014). As an extension, color-evasiveness in the form of denial and avoidance of race is a strong social norm in the Netherlands (Hondius, 2014; Weiner, 2014). This silence about race is a broader pattern in political and social discourse in continental Europe following World War II (Lentin, 2008). Therefore, explicit references to race are rare in the Netherlands, and other terms such as ethnicity, migration background, and national identity are more commonly used, although they are intertwined with race (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). White normativity similarly is present in Dutch society, as reflected in the standard image of being Dutch or European (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Wekker, 2016). Although explicitly talking about or defining Whiteness is taboo, it plays an important role in sense of belonging and representation of being European and being Dutch (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). This is illustrated in the use of other racialized terms to distinguish between groups of people used in the Dutch context, such as the formerly used “autochtoon” and “allochtoon,” the latter which formally included all people who were born elsewhere or have at least one parent born elsewhere, but was mostly used to refer to “nonwestern” ethnic groups (Essed & Trienekens, 2008). In 2016, “allochtoon” was replaced with “person with a migration background” (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, n.d.), a term which is similarly racialized in the European context (Moffitt & Juang, 2019; Moffitt et al., 2020), and used to avoid specifying racial or ethnic categories (Jugert et al., 2022; Vietze et al., 2023).

Dutch children are thus potentially exposed to these social norms of color-evasiveness and White normativity. Previous research has already demonstrated how these norms are conveyed in primary schools (Sijpenhof, 2020; Weiner, 2015a). More insight in the examples that children get at home are needed, given that parents are also important social referents. Moreover, recent societal developments include increased acknowledgement of racism in Dutch public space following the Black Lives Matter movement (Ghorashi, 2023), highlighting the timeliness of this research. The present study therefore aims to provide insight in the degree to

which parents in the Netherlands set examples of color-evasiveness and White normativity in interactions with their children, by examining how often, how quickly, and how parents mention skin color during a social categorization game with their children. It is expected that parents will ask about skin color less often and less quickly than about other characteristics equally relevant to the game, in line with color-evasive social norms. We expect that these basic forms of color-evasiveness are particularly frequent among White parents and in the presence of a Black researcher, and will explore whether the context of the game (ethnic–racial backgrounds represented in the pictures) plays a role. Furthermore, we expect the ethnic–racial focus of skin color questions (i.e., what group is named) to predominantly be on dark rather than light skin colors, reflecting patterns of White normativity. We explore whether this ethnic–racial focus differs based on ethnic–racial background of the parent, researcher present, or pictures in the game.

Method

Sample

Parents and their children participated in a three-wave study, with each wave approximately 1 year apart.² The sample size was thus determined by this larger three-wave research, and not separately for the present study. Families with different ethnic–racial backgrounds (White Dutch, Turkish-Dutch, and Black Dutch) were recruited in a variety of ways, including face-to-face recruitment at different events and locations targeted at children or specific ethnic–racial groups, social media advertisements, snow-balling, and the researchers' networks. Parents were informed that the study aimed to examine how children view diversity in society. Inclusion criteria specified that (a) the child was between 6 and 10 years old at the start of the study, (b) parents were the biological parents of the child and were living together, (c) parents did not suffer from severe physical or mental health problems, (d) children did not suffer from severe developmental disorders, and (e) the family lived in the urban Western region of the Netherlands. In addition, specific criteria were used for the different ethnic–racial groups involved in the study. For White Dutch families, it was specified that the parents and their own parents were born in the Netherlands or another northwestern European country. Exceptions were made if (grand)parents were born abroad during a temporary visit, did not identify with that specific national heritage, and had a White ethnic–racial appearance. For Turkish-Dutch families, it was specified that parents were born in Turkey, or in a northwestern European country if their own parents were born in Turkey. For Black Dutch families, it was specified that mother or one of her parents was born in Suriname (identifying as Afro-Surinamese), Aruba, the Dutch Antilles, Ghana, or Cape Verde. To be included in the study, participation was required for both mother and child, and optional for father.

Sample for Main Analyses: Mothers Wave 1

A total of 273 families participated in Wave 1, but the relevant task was done by 270 mothers (141 White Dutch, 73 Turkish-Dutch, 56 Black Dutch). Children (44% boys, 56% girls) were between 6 and 10 years old ($M = 7.52$, $SD = 0.97$). Most of the White Dutch (94%) and Black Dutch mothers (50%) were born in the Netherlands, whereas most of the Turkish-Dutch mothers (58%) were born in Turkey. Mothers were between 25 and 52 years old ($M = 38.87$,

$SD = 5.01$). Most of the mothers (86%) were living with a partner. Furthermore, 65% of the mothers were highly educated (i.e., bachelor's degree/higher vocational education or higher), and the majority of mothers (57%) reported to be religious.

Sample for Exploratory Analyses: Wave 3 and Fathers

Of the original 273 families participating in the study, 189 families participated again in Wave 3. Data from the relevant task were available for 187 mothers (111 White Dutch, 40 Turkish-Dutch, 36 Black Dutch). Children (43% boys, 57% girls) were between 7 and 13 years old ($M = 9.83$, $SD = 1.04$) during Wave 3. Little's missing completely at random test using background variables and strategic color-evasiveness scores from the relevant task showed that data were missing completely at random, $\chi(3) = 2.91$, $p = .406$, suggesting that there was no pattern characterizing mothers who chose not to participate in Wave 3. Given that some changes to data collection procedures had to be made during Wave 3 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see below), and sample sizes became smaller, the focus of our analyses is on data collected as initially intended during Wave 1. We will explore whether patterns are similar in data collected during Wave 3.

In a subsample of families, fathers also participated. Specifically, the relevant task was done by 111 fathers in families with complete data of mothers during Wave 1 (72 White Dutch, 27 Turkish-Dutch, and 12 Black Dutch). Most of the White Dutch fathers (92%) were born in the Netherlands, most of the Turkish-Dutch fathers (56%) were born in Turkey, and the Black Dutch fathers were most often born in the Netherlands, Suriname, or the Dutch Antilles. Fathers were between 32 and 57 years old ($M = 41.38$, $SD = 5.25$), most were highly educated (56%), and nonreligious (59%). Given that the sample sizes in the separate ethnic–racial groups turned out quite small, and that fathers in Black Dutch families had different ethnic–racial backgrounds themselves, the main focus of our analyses is on mothers. We will explore whether patterns are similar for fathers. Because only 59 fathers (41 White Dutch, 12 Turkish-Dutch, and six Black Dutch) completed the relevant task during Wave 3, exploratory analyses for fathers will focus on Wave 1 only.

Procedure

During Wave 1 (April 2018–January 2020), families were visited at home by two researchers or research assistants. The home visit consisted of several parent–child interaction tasks, standardized child tasks, computer tasks for both parents and children, and questionnaires for parents. The home visit lasted for 1.5 (if only mother participated) to 2 hr (if both parents participated), and participating parents gave their written consent for participation prior to the start of the visit. At the end of the visit, the child received a small gift. After the home visit, parents were asked to fill out additional questionnaires online, and received gift cards of 20 euros each when they completed the questionnaires. The home visits during Wave 1 were conducted by an ethnically/racially diverse group of researchers and research assistants.

During Wave 3 (November 2020–October 2021),³ data collection had been transferred online due to the COVID pandemic. Parents

² Waves 1 and 3 were part of longitudinal data collection. Wave 2 had a different set-up, and thus is not included in the present study.

³ Data collection for Wave 3 was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, the period between the first and third visit was 2 years and 3 months, ranging from 1 year and 6 months to 3 years.

and children therefore participated from home, using their own device. They and one researcher or research assistant used a digital platform with which they could see and hear each other. The digital visit was designed to mirror the face-to-face visits as closely as possible and lasted approximately the same time. Similar to Wave 1, the visit consisted of several parent–child interaction tasks, standardized child tasks, and computer tasks. Parents were now asked to complete all questionnaires digitally prior to the home visit, and received 20 euros per person and a small fee (2.50 euros) for their child via bank transfer after the visit. The visits during Wave 3 were predominantly conducted by White researchers or research assistants. The procedures were approved by the Ethics Committee of Education and Child Studies at Leiden University.

Measures

Parental Color-Evasiveness and Questions About Skin Color

As one of the parent–child interaction tasks, mothers and fathers separately played two versions of a modified Guess Who? game with their child, both during Wave 1 and Wave 3, inspired by work by Norton et al. (2006). In this game, the questioner sees multiple pictures simultaneously and has to ask yes/no questions in order to guess one of the pictures the answerer has selected. The goal of the game is to guess the answer using as few questions as possible. In this study, the parent was always assigned the role of questioner and the child was always assigned the role of answerer. Verbal and written instructions for the parents are included in the Supplemental Materials. During Wave 1 (face-to-face home visits), the parent received a board with sixteen pictures of adults, and the child received a separate card with the selected picture on it (the picture that the parent needed to guess). Parents could eliminate pictures on the board during the game, by closing little doors attached to the board that blocked each picture. During Wave 3 (online visits), the parent was instructed to look away while the child was shown the selected picture on the screen, but during the rounds both the parent and the child saw the 16 pictures (including the selected picture) on the screen. Parents told the researcher which pictures had to be eliminated during the game (based on the answers to the questions they asked), and the researcher removed them from the screen.

Parents played two different versions of the game. One version of the game included eight pictures of White adults and eight pictures of Black adults (Game A), whereas the other version of the game included eight pictures of Black adults and eight pictures of adults with a South West Asian/North African (SWANA) appearance (Game B). In addition, gender (male or female) and t-shirt color (dark blue or white) were balanced out evenly among the ethnic–racial groups. Therefore, skin color, gender, and t-shirt color were the most efficient questions to ask, because they were split 50–50 in both versions of the game. Each version was played for two rounds, resulting in four rounds in total. The order in which the rounds were played and which parent played the game first were counter-balanced. During each round, the parent was instructed to ask the child yes or no questions, to find out which picture the child was holding (e.g., “does the person have long hair?”). The interactions were videotaped and coded afterward.

Given that on average across all rounds, only 6% of mothers during Wave 1 needed seven questions or more to complete a round,

the first seven questions of each round were coded. Therefore, a maximum of 14 questions were coded for each version of the game (A and B). The questions asked by the parent were coded in categories: skin color, gender, t-shirt color, headscarf, hair style, hair color, eye color, ethnicity/nationality, other, or a combination of categories (e.g., “Does he have blue eyes and blond hair?”). In addition, the start time of each question (the time in the video at which parent and child were ready to start a round for the first question, or the time at which the parent was done eliminating pictures based on the answer to the previous question for the other questions) and the end time of each question (the time at which the parent was done formulating the question) were noted. The research team developed a reliability set of 24 (for Wave 1) and 30 videos (for Wave 3, including both Wave 1 and Wave 3 videos). A group of 16 (for Wave 1) and five (for Wave 3) coders were trained and also coded the reliability set. Inter-coder reliability on the question category and time variables were adequate (Cohen’s $\kappa > .82$ and intraclass correlation $> .84$), and thus the trained coders continued to code the rest of the videos individually. Furthermore, for all questions about skin color, the ethnic–racial focus of the question was coded as follows: 1 = referencing dark skin color, 2 = referencing light skin color, 3 = referencing both simultaneously, 4 = unclear. To code this ethnic–racial focus, a separate reliability set of 50 skin color questions was developed. Two coders reached inter-coder reliability for this variable (Cohen’s $\kappa > .92$), after which one continued to code the other skin color questions.

For the three 50–50 categories (skin color, gender, t-shirt color), the following variables were created: (a) a continuous variable reflecting the *relative frequency* of questions in that category (i.e., number of questions in that category divided by the total number of questions), and (b) a *duration score* in seconds reflecting the average time it took parents to formulate questions in that category (i.e., based on the difference between the start and end time of questions in that category). Furthermore, one dichotomous variable was created as a measure of parental *strategic color-evasiveness* with 0 = skin color not acknowledged, 1 = skin color acknowledged. In addition, for all skin color questions that were asked, a score reflecting the *timing of skin color questions* (1 = as question seven, 7 = as the first question in the round) was created. Last, the number of references to dark skin and light skin color was counted, and a difference score was calculated by subtracting the number of light references from the number of dark references, reflecting the *bias in ethnic–racial focus*. Prior to creating these variables,⁴ all questions coded in the category “combination” were checked and included in relevant variables. All variables were created separately for Game A and Game B (combining results across the two rounds within each version).

Situational Factors

Situational factors that were taken into account were the version of the game (i.e., including Black and White people—Game A, or including Black people and people with a SWANA appearance—Game B), and ethnic–racial background of the researchers (i.e., whether a Black researcher was present during the home visit). Researchers ($n = 27$) who were involved in the data collection during Wave 1 were mostly White Dutch (63%), Black Dutch

⁴ With the exception of duration scores, because formulating a question using a combination of categories might take longer than other questions.

(19%), or Turkish-Dutch (15%). Because our focus is on questions about skin color, we are particularly interested in the effect of the presence of a Black Dutch researcher. We could not repeat this analysis for Wave 3, because data collection for only one family was done by a Black Dutch researcher in this wave.

Analyses

The main analyses focused on data collected from mothers during Wave 1 and are conducted separately for Game A and Game B. However, analyses are repeated for mothers during Wave 3 and fathers during Wave 1 to explore whether results are similar. There were some missing data for almost all rounds (see Appendix). Missing data were caused by a variety of reasons, such as mothers accidentally seeing the answer, children accidentally telling mothers the answer, or researchers omitting rounds.

The first part of the analyses aimed to describe patterns in the total sample. Comparisons were made between the relative frequency of questions in the 50–50 categories (gender, skin color, t-shirt color). Prior to the analyses, outliers (defined as 13.271 SD from mean) were winsorized for both Game A (three for relative number of gender questions) and Game B (two for relative number of skin color questions, five for relative number of gender questions). One-way repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc comparisons with Bonferroni adjustments were used to compare the relative frequencies.

Second, differences in the tendency to use strategic color-evasiveness (i.e., not asking about skin color at all) based on ethnic-racial background of mothers, the version of the game, and ethnic-racial background of the researchers present were examined. Chi-square tests of independence were run to examine associations between using strategic color-evasiveness and ethnic-racial background of mothers, and between using strategic color-evasiveness and whether a Black research was present. McNemar tests were used to examine whether the use of strategic color-evasiveness differed between Game A and Game B.

In the second part, questions asked about skin color were examined in greater detail among noncolor-evasive mothers (i.e., mothers who asked about skin color at least once). First, comparisons were made between the duration of questions in the 50–50 categories (gender, skin color, t-shirt color). Outliers were winsorized for both Game A (five for duration of skin color questions, three for duration of gender questions, and two for duration of t-shirt color questions) and Game B (five for duration of skin color questions, three for duration of gender questions, and three for duration of t-shirt color questions). As duration variables remained highly skewed (standardized skewness 13), nonparametric Friedman tests and post hoc Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used. Second, comparisons between ethnic-racial focus on dark versus light skin color were made. One outlier on ethnic-racial focus on dark skin color in Game B was winsorized, but because variables of ethnic-racial focus on light skin color remained highly skewed Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used. Next, differences in timing of skin color questions, duration of skin color questions, and bias in ethnic-racial focus based on ethnic-racial backgrounds of mothers, version of the game, and ethnic-racial background of the researchers present were examined. Ethnic-racial group differences were examined using one-way ANOVAs (for timing and bias in ethnic-racial focus in Game A) or Kruskal–Wallis tests (in case of highly skewed distributions; timing in Game B, duration in Game A

and B, and bias in ethnic-racial focus in Game B). Differences between Game A and Game B were examined using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. Last, differences based on the presence of a Black researcher were examined using independent samples t tests (for timing in Game A and bias in ethnic-racial focus in Game A and B) or Mann–Whitney U tests (in case of highly skewed distributions; timing in Game B, duration in Game A and B) for the entire sample and per ethnic-racial group.

Transparency and Openness

This study's design and its analyses were not preregistered. Materials are not publicly available due to the privacy concerns for the models. Similarly, there was no consent from participants to publicly share data.

Results

Descriptives

On average, mothers needed eight (Game A, $M = 8.47$, $SD = 1.43$) to nine (Game B, $M = 9.09$, $SD = 1.77$) questions to complete the two rounds. The breakdown of the categories of the questions is shown in Figure 1. During Game A, mothers most frequently asked about gender, then hairstyle, followed by hair color or skin color. During Game B, mothers most frequently asked questions in the “other” category, about headscarf, and gender.

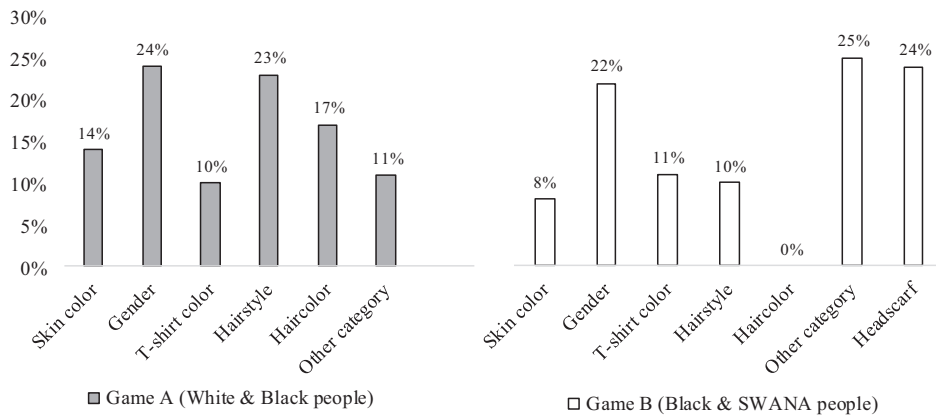
Overall Patterns of Color-Evasiveness

A repeated measures ANOVA was run to examine differences between the relative frequency of questions in the three 50–50 categories (i.e., skin color, gender, t-shirt color). Mauchly's test of sphericity indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated for both Game A, $\chi^2(2) = 63.33$, $p < .001$, and Game B, $\chi^2(2) = 22.93$, $p < .001$, and thus a Greenhouse–Geisser correction was applied (Game A, $\epsilon = .83$, Game B, $\epsilon = .92$). Significant differences were found for both Game A, $F(1.65, 444.46) = 210.92$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .44$, and Game B, $F(1.85, 495.24) = 281.61$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .51$. For both games, questions were more often about gender than skin color and t-shirt color (Bonferroni corrected $ps < .001$). For Game A, questions were more often about skin color than t-shirt color, whereas for Game B, questions were less often about skin color than t-shirt color ($ps < .001$).

Overall, 17% of mothers did not mention skin color once during the entire task (24% for Game A and 39% for Game B). Figure 2 displays the frequencies of strategic color-evasiveness (i.e., not asking about skin color once) in the two games separately, split by ethnic-racial background. Chi-square tests of independence between ethnic-racial background of the mother and strategic color-evasiveness showed that there were significant associations, Game A: $\chi^2(2) = 12.68$, $p = .002$, Cramer's $V = .22$, Game B: $\chi^2(2) = 29.81$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .33$. Specifically, White Dutch mothers were more likely to use strategic color-evasiveness than other mothers in both games, and Turkish-Dutch mothers were less likely to use strategic color-evasiveness in Game B. A McNemar test showed that there was also a significant difference in strategic color-evasiveness between Game A and Game B ($p < .001$): mothers showed more strategic color-evasiveness in Game B. Chi-square tests of independence furthermore showed that there were no

Figure 1

Breakdown of the Relative Frequency of Questions Asked by Mothers During Wave 1



Note. Categories with less than 1% are not shown (i.e., eye color and ethnicity/nationality). SWANA = South West Asian/North African.

associations between ethnic-racial background of the researchers present (i.e., whether there was a Black researcher) and strategic color-evasiveness of mothers, Game A: $\chi^2(1) = 0.03$, $p = .861$, Cramer's $V = .01$, Game B: $\chi^2(1) = 0.16$, $p = .692$, Cramer's $V = .02$. Similarly, no significant associations were found for the ethnic-racial groups separately.

Asking About Skin Color in Noncolor-Evasive Subsample

Table 1 shows the average time in seconds it took mothers to formulate questions about skin color. A Friedman test was run to examine differences in how long it took mothers to formulate questions in the three 50–50 categories. Significant differences were found for both Game A, $\chi^2(2) = 40.73$, $p < .001$, Kendall's $W = .14$, $n = 142$, and Game B, $\chi^2(2) = 11.04$, $p = .004$, Kendall's $W = .5$, $n = 117$.⁵ Specifically, it took mothers less time (about 2 s) to formulate questions about gender (Game A: $M = 4.72$, $SD = 2.64$; Game B: $M = 4.90$, $SD = 2.60$) than about skin color (Game A: $M = 6.69$, $SD = 3.81$; Game B: $M = 6.74$, $SD = 5.10$) and t-shirt color (Game A: $M = 7.25$, $SD = 4.46$; Game B: $M = 7.14$, $SD = 4.95$) in both games ($ps < .001$). There were no significant differences between the time it took mothers to formulate skin color or t-shirt color questions in either of the games (Game A: $p = .360$, Game B: $p = .487$). Table 2 shows the average timing of asking skin color questions for mothers who did ask about skin color at least once (higher score indicating an earlier question). When mothers asked about skin color, this was most often done as the second question (57%–69% for Game A, 41%–58% for Game B). When mothers did mention skin color, their ethnic-racial focus was more often on dark than light skin color (see Figure 3). This difference was significant for both Game A ($Z = -7.77$, $p < .001$, $r = -.54$, $n = 205$) and Game B ($Z = -8.32$, $p < .001$, $r = -.65$, $n = 164$).

Family Ethnic-Racial Background

Kruskal-Wallis tests showed that there were no significant ethnic-racial group differences in duration of formulating skin color questions during Game A, but there were for Game B (see Table 1). Specifically,

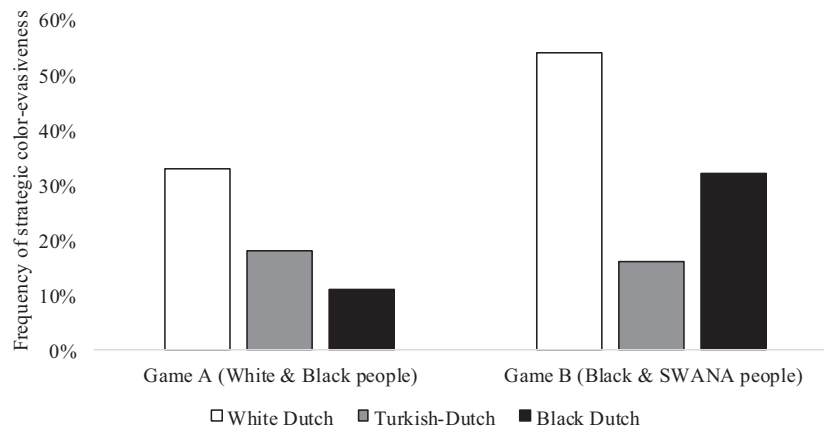
the White Dutch mothers took more time to formulate skin color questions than both the Turkish-Dutch and Black Dutch mothers during Game B (Bonferroni corrected $ps < .05$). Conversely, a one-way ANOVA showed significant differences between mothers of different ethnic-racial backgrounds in the timing of skin color questions in Game A, whereas a Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant differences for Game B (see Table 2). Tukey post hoc comparisons showed that in Game A White Dutch mothers asked about skin color later than Black Dutch mothers ($p = .047$). A one-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant differences in bias in ethnic-racial focus based on ethnic-racial background of the mothers in Game A, $F(2, 202) = 2.40$, $p = .093$, $\eta^2 = .02$, or Game B ($H = 1.74$, $p = .419$, $\eta^2 = .002$).

Situational Factors

Wilcoxon signed-rank tests showed that mothers asked about skin color later in Game B than in Game A ($Z = -7.78$, $p < .001$, $r = -.65$), whereas the time it took mothers to formulate skin color questions ($Z = -0.59$, $p = .552$, $r = -.05$) and the bias in ethnic-racial focus were similar in Game A and Game B ($Z = 0.27$, $p = .788$, $r = .02$). Independent samples t tests and Mann-Whitney U tests showed that there was no difference based on the ethnic-racial background of the researcher (i.e., whether a Black researcher was present) in the time it took to formulate skin color questions (Game A: $U = 5097.00$, $Z = 0.71$, $p = .478$, $r = .05$, Game B: $U = 2961.00$, $Z = -0.39$, $p = .697$, $r = -.03$), the timing of skin color questions, Game A: $t(203) = -0.80$, $p = .427$, Cohen's $d = -.12$, Game B: $U = 2534.50$, $Z = -1.90$, $p = .057$, $r = -.15$, or the bias in ethnic-racial focus of skin color questions, Game A: $t(139.08) = 0.74$, $p = .460$, Cohen's $d = .11$, Game B: $t(161) = -0.89$, $p = .376$, Cohen's $d = -.15$. Likewise, no differences based on ethnic-racial background of the researcher on any of the measures were found for the ethnic-racial groups separately.

⁵ Please note that only mothers who asked questions about all 50–50 categories could be included.

Figure 2
Frequency of Strategic Color-Evasiveness



Note. SWANA = South West Asian/North African.

Exploratory Analyses

Wave 3

Results from analyses with data from mothers during Wave 3 ($n = 189$) were mostly the same in terms of significance levels and directions as results from mothers during Wave 1 reported above (see Table 3). Deviations are discussed here. First, in terms of differences between the duration of questions in the 50–50 categories, an additional significant difference emerged for Game B: It took mothers significantly longer to formulate questions about skin color ($M = 6.94$, $SD = 5.00$) than about t-shirt color ($M = 6.32$, $SD = 4.34$, $Z = -2.22$, $p = .026$, $r = -.25$). Second, no ethnic-racial group differences for the use of strategic color-evasiveness emerged for either Game A, $\chi^2(2) = 0.84$, $p = .659$, *Cramer's V* = .07, or Game B, $\chi^2(2) = 4.70$, $p = .095$, *Cramer's V* = .16, nor in timing of skin color questions for Game A, Welch $F(2,63.64) = 2.74$, $p = .072$, $\eta^2 = .03$. For Game B in contrast, significant ethnic-racial group differences in timing of skin color questions were found, $H(2) = 7.42$, $p = .024$, $\eta^2 = .06$: White mothers asked skin color questions later in the game than Turkish-Dutch mothers ($p = .009$). In addition, ethnic-racial group differences in duration of skin color questions were found for both Game A, $H(2) = 13.31$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$, and B, $H(2) = 8.77$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2 = .07$, showing that White mothers needed longer to formulate these questions than Black Dutch mothers ($p = .001$ and $p = .011$).

Fathers

Results from analyses with data from fathers during Wave 1 ($n = 111$) were mostly the same in terms of significance levels and directions as results from mothers reported above (see Table 3). Deviations are discussed here. First, there were no significant differences in the duration it took fathers to formulate questions about gender, skin color, or t-shirt color in both Game A, $\chi^2(2) = 2.86$, $p = .240$, *Kendall's W* = .02, $n = 68$, and Game B, $\chi^2(2) = 4.77$, $p = .092$, *Kendall's W* = .05, $n = 49$. Second, analyses of ethnic-racial group differences for fathers were limited to White Dutch and Turkish-Dutch fathers, given that fathers in the Black Dutch families themselves had various ethnic-racial backgrounds. In contrast to results from mothers, there was no difference based on ethnic-racial background in strategic color-evasiveness for Game A, $\chi^2(1) = 0.67$, $p = .414$, $\phi = .08$. There was for Game B, $\chi^2(1) = 5.28$, $p = .022$, $\phi = .23$, with White Dutch fathers more likely to display strategic color-evasiveness. Group differences in duration of skin color questions reached significance for both games, duration Game A: $t(76) = 2.60$, $p = .011$, *Cohen's d* = .65, duration Game B: $U = 142.50$, $p = .006$, $r = .39$, in similar directions (White Dutch fathers taking longer to formulate skin color questions than Turkish-Dutch fathers). There were no differences in the timing of skin color questions, timing Game A: $t(77) = -1.70$, $p = .093$, *Cohen's d* = -.42, timing Game B: $U = 387.00$, $p = .096$, $r = .23$.

Table 1
Duration of Formulating Skin-Color Questions in Seconds in Mothers Who Asked About Skin Color in Seconds

Game	White Dutch	Turkish-Dutch	Black Dutch	<i>H</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Game A							
<i>n</i>	95	60	49				
<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	7.02 (3.72)	5.92 (3.83)	6.31 (4.12)	5.26	2	.072	.02
Game B							
<i>n</i>	65	61	38				
<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	8.25 (5.56)	5.63 (4.52)	5.18 (2.87)	11.18	2	.004	.06

Note. Higher scores reflect a longer time to formulate skin color questions.

Table 2
Timing of Skin-Color Questions in Mothers Who Asked About Skin Color

Game	White Dutch	Turkish-Dutch	Black Dutch	<i>F/H^a</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Game A							
<i>n</i>	95	60	50				
<i>M (SD)</i>	4.14 (1.50)	4.61 (1.73)	4.81 (1.63)	3.32	2	.038	.03
Game B							
<i>n</i>	65	61	38				
<i>M (SD)</i>	2.65 (1.05)	3.26 (1.43)	2.93 (1.38)	5.38	2	.068	.02

Note. Higher scores reflect earlier questions (i.e., mean score of timing of skin color questions in the two rounds with 0 = not asked, 1 = seventh question, until 7 = first question).

^a *F*- is reported for Game A, *H*- statistic is reported for Game B.

Discussion

The present study examined behaviors of Dutch parents during a social categorization game that could reflect social norms of color-evasiveness and White normativity. Although the majority of mothers asked about skin color at least once, results showed that mothers were less inclined to ask about skin color than about gender. Color-evasiveness was more frequent among White mothers and in the version of the game that included pictures of SWANA and Black adults, whereas the ethnic-racial background of the researchers present did not impact mothers' tendency toward color-evasiveness. Furthermore, whenever they asked about skin color mothers displayed patterns of ethnic-racial focus that reflect White normativity, irrespective of their own ethnic-racial background, ethnic-racial background of the researchers, and the version of the game. These patterns of color-evasiveness and White normativity were largely replicated in a subsample of mothers approximately 2 years later, and in a subsample of fathers.

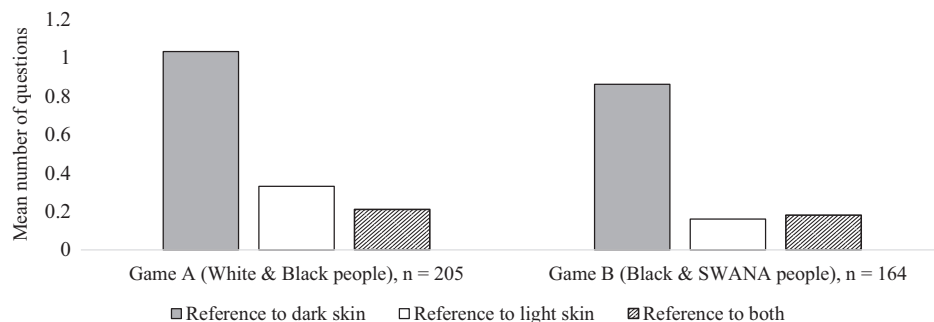
Color-Evasiveness

The game used in this research, based on the work by Norton et al. (2006), was designed in such a way that three characteristics were divided evenly among the pictures: gender, t-shirt color, and skin color. In order to "win" the game using as few questions as possible, which was the instruction for participants, asking about these 50–50 categories would thus be most efficient. Nevertheless, only gender

was in the top three of mostly asked categories. Mothers more frequently asked about gender than t-shirt color and skin color, and it took them less time to formulate gender questions than questions about the other two 50–50 categories. Although no consistent differences were found between questions about skin color and t-shirt color, the differences between skin color and gender are particularly interesting given that both race and gender are perceived and encoded in the brain rather automatically (Ito & Urland, 2003). These results therefore suggest that Dutch mothers are less comfortable asking about skin color than gender. It should be noted that gender was presented as a binary social category in the games, and results cannot be generalized to parental socialization about gender outside this binary. Although it did not take fathers longer to formulate skin color questions than questions about gender, the other results were replicated among mothers 2 years later and among fathers.

Overall, 17% of mothers displayed strategic color-evasiveness and did not ask about skin color once. As expected, White Dutch mothers displayed strategic color-evasiveness more often than Turkish-Dutch and Black Dutch mothers. In fact, percentages of White Dutch mothers avoiding questions about skin color (33%–54%) are fairly high as compared to percentages of White American adults displaying strategic color-evasiveness in interaction with another White player in previous studies (7%–11%; Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Norton et al., 2006). This discrepancy could on the one hand reflect cultural or time-related differences of societal norms. In addition, the discrepancy could reflect how adults

Figure 3
Content of Skin-Color Questions, if Asked



Note. "Other" category is left out due to very low means (0.005 and 0.006). SWANA = South West Asian/ North African.

Table 3

Summary of Results From Sample From Main Analyses (Mothers Wave 1) and Samples for Exploratory Analyses (Mothers Wave 3, Fathers Wave 1)

Variable	Mothers Wave 1		Mothers Wave 3		Fathers Wave 1	
	Game A	Game B	Game A	Game B	Game A	Game B
Relative frequency	gender > skin > shirt	gender > shirt > skin	✓	✓	✓	✓
Duration ^a	skin and shirt > gender	skin and shirt > gender	✓	skin > shirt > gender	n.s	n.s
E-R focus	dark skin > light skin	dark skin > light skin	✓	✓	✓	✓
E-R group differences						
Color-evasiveness	W > T and B	W > B > T	n.s	n.s	n.s. ^c	✓ ^c
Duration skin color qs ^a	n.s	W > T and B	W > B	W > B	W > T ^c	✓ ^c
Timing skin color qs ^b	W < B	n.s	n.s	W < T	n.s. ^c	✓ ^c
Bias in E-R focus	n.s	n.s	✓	✓	✓ ^c	✓ ^c
E-R background researcher						
Color-evasiveness	n.s	n.s			✓	✓
Duration skin color qs ^a	n.s	n.s			✓	✓
Timing skin color qs ^b	n.s	n.s			✓	✓
Bias in E-R focus	n.s	n.s			✓	✓
Game context						
Color-evasiveness	Game B > Game A			✓		✓
Duration skin color qs ^a	n.s			✓		✓
Timing skin color qs ^b	Game B < Game A			✓		✓
Bias in E-R focus	n.s			✓		✓

Note. Blank cells means that analyses could not be repeated. n.s. = no significant results; ✓ = results were similar to results from mothers Wave 1 in terms of significance level and direction of results; E-R = ethnic-racial, W = White Dutch; T = Turkish-Dutch; B = Black Dutch.

^a higher scores = longer time needed to formulate question. ^b higher scores = earlier question. ^c Analyses did not include Black Dutch fathers.

are less inclined to talk about skin color with children than with other adults, potentially caused by beliefs about how talking about race feeds prejudice among children (Wu et al., 2022). In addition, when White Dutch mothers did ask about skin color, they did so later in the game than Black Dutch mothers and it took them longer to formulate the question than both Black and Turkish-Dutch mothers. These patterns imply that White Dutch mothers adhere to the social norm of color-evasiveness more strongly than Turkish-Dutch and Black Dutch mothers and show it not only in the classic form of not asking about skin color at all, but also by longer avoidance of talking about skin color, and needing more time to choose the words to talk about skin color. Whereas taking longer to formulate skin color questions can also reflect being more elaborate or thoughtful when talking about skin color, generally having more pauses or saying *um* are interpreted as signs of discomfort (Fox Tree, 2002). The identified ethnic-group differences are in line with research on parental ethnic-racial socialization (Priest et al., 2014), and on differences in color-evasive beliefs between White adults and Black adults (de Bruijn et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2007). The results furthermore suggest that although color-evasive beliefs of White Dutch and Turkish-Dutch mothers have previously been found to be similar (de Bruijn et al., 2022), behaviors of White Dutch mothers are more in line with color-evasive social norms. An additional relevant observation was that mothers very rarely used terms referring to ethnicity or nationality in their questions (i.e., less than 1% of the questions in both games).

The patterns were largely replicated among White Dutch and Turkish-Dutch fathers. Additionally, whereas White Dutch mothers did not ask about skin color less often than Turkish-Dutch and Black Dutch mothers during Wave 3, patterns of differences in duration and timing of skin color questions were in line with the results described above: White Dutch mothers avoided asking about skin

color for longer and needed more time to formulate skin color questions. Ethnic-racial differences in color-evasiveness therefore seem more subtle during Wave 3 (i.e., not in “classic” evasiveness, but in timing and duration of skin color questions), but it is unclear whether the results are due to methodological differences, age of the children, or societal developments. Future research will need to keep tracking parental examples of social norms such as color-evasiveness to further evaluate trends.

Interestingly, mothers’ tendency toward color-evasiveness was different for the two versions of the game. To be more precise, mothers asked about skin color less often and later in the game with Black and SWANA adults than in the game with Black and White adults. These results were replicated in both exploratory samples. An important distinction between the two games is that in the game with Black and SWANA adults, some females (all SWANA females) wore headscarves, whereas no headscarves were worn in the game with Black and White adults. Mothers asked about headscarves relatively often in the game with Black and SWANA adults: It was the second most referenced category, with 24% of all questions being about headscarves. When a SWANA female was the selected picture to be guessed, asking about skin color could easily be avoided by asking about gender first, and asking about headscarves rather than skin color second. Therefore, the results could indicate that parents are more comfortable asking about headscarves than skin color, and thus avoid asking about skin color when possible. This would reflect societal patterns in the Netherlands where discussions of headscarves as compared to skin color are much more public (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2021), even though headscarves are highly racialized (Al-Saji, 2010) and thus talking about headscarves can act as a proxy for discussing race. At the same time, these results could be interpreted as suggesting that parents in the Netherlands are less comfortable or well-equipped

to mention skin color differences between people of color versus between people of color and White people. Whereas some of the SWANA adults in the pictures have a skin tone similar to the White adults, the terms White and Whiteness do not only reflect skin color but are connected to power relations and privilege (Wekker, 2016). SWANA adults in the Netherlands are typically not perceived as “White Dutch” and therefore do not experience similar privilege, as evidenced by higher levels of discrimination based on ethnicity and skin color against Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch people than against Dutch people “without an immigration background” (Andriessen et al., 2020). Although Dutch language on ethnicity, race, and skin color is developing, parents might struggle with finding the appropriate terms to describe people of color with lighter skin tones.

Unexpectedly, mother’s tendency toward color-evasiveness was not impacted by the ethnic–racial background of the researcher present. Results from fathers replicated these findings. Earlier work using a similar social categorization game showed that ethnic–racial background of the confederate with whom the game was played did have an effect of the prevalence of color-evasiveness of White adults (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Norton et al., 2006). In the present study, parents played the game in their own home with their child. The researcher was present to offer support but not directly involved in playing the game, potentially explaining why their ethnic–racial background did not impact the interaction between parent and child in the same way as in studies in which the researcher was the opponent in the game itself.

White Normativity

In line with our hypothesis, when mothers asked about skin color, they more often referenced a dark skin color than a light skin color. This bias in ethnic–racial focus did not differ based on ethnic–racial background of the mothers or researcher, nor on the version of the game, and was largely replicated in both exploratory samples. These results suggest that when parents in the Netherlands talk about skin color with their children, their discussion reflects the “invisibility” of Whiteness and thereby reinstates White normativity. Apart from being exposed to White normativity at school (Sijpenhof, 2020), both White Dutch children and Dutch children of color are thus likely exposed to this social norm at home. Children therefore potentially familiarize with a norm that reflects a form of contemporary racism (Bhandaru, 2013) from a young age. For children of color, internalization of White normativity can be a form of internalized racism, with potential negative consequences on their ethnic–racial identity development as well as their health (David et al., 2019). Furthermore, this exposure can limit White children’s development toward becoming anti-racist, because the developmental model of anti-racism theorizes that they will need to be able to identify their own Whiteness and White privilege (Hazelbaker et al., 2022).

Limitations and Constraints on Generality

There are some limitations to the present study. First, although the present study gives some insight in forms of parental color-evasiveness and White normativity, it should be noted that results reflect very basic forms only (i.e., mentioning skin colors) and in a specific game setting. Therefore, parents might additionally convey

these messages or social norms in different ways, or even convey contradicting messages and social norms, which is not uncommon when it comes to ethnic–racial socialization (Abaied & Perry, 2021). Nonverbal cues are similarly important (Skinner et al., 2020), but could not be examined in the present study. It is also possible that parents would apply different approaches in different situations (e.g., when incentives to break norms are higher). In addition, whereas parents are important socialization agents for children (Pauker et al., 2015), they are not the only referents that children learn social norms from. For example, teachers, peers, other family members or adults, and various forms of media, all can play a role in teaching children norms that prevail in society. Moreover, generalizability of the present findings to all families in the Netherlands is hampered by the fact that only families of three ethnic–racial backgrounds could be included, by the fact that all families lived in the urban region of the Netherlands (where they are exposed to higher levels of ethnic–racial diversity), and by the relatively high level of education of parents. Furthermore, although data are collected at two different time points for a subsample, it is difficult to reflect on longitudinal patterns. Differences between the two time points could reflect differences in parental willingness to discuss ethnicity and race with their older children, because especially White parents sometimes refer to the age of their children as a reason not to engage in ethnic–racial socialization (Vittrup, 2018). However, it could also reflect parents’ response to societal developments, as public attention for the Black Live Matter movement and racism in general increased in the Netherlands in between data collection of Wave 1 and Wave 3 (Ghorashi, 2023). At the same time, methodological differences due to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., home visits or digital appointments) could also explain different patterns. Nonetheless, results from both exploratory samples strengthen the robustness of our main results. Last, although the data provided opportunities to examine whether parental behaviors differed based on the presence of a Black researcher during the first wave, the effect of the presence of a Turkish-Dutch researcher could not be analyzed because this was highly correlated with the ethnic–racial background of the family. Diversity of the research team involved in the third wave was furthermore too limited to take the contextual factor of ethnic–racial background into account.

The results from this study thus do not give a complete overview of the way in which relevant social norms are transferred to Dutch children, but they do provide an insight in basic processes in the family that may underlie children’s learning of norms in society. Future research is needed to combine insights from this family perspective with insights from other social agents and examine other ways in which children are potentially unintentionally socialized toward racist social norms. Furthermore, empirical research establishing how children perceive and internalize these social norms, and how this impacts their (anti-)racist behavior and understanding of ethnic–racial inequalities could further guide initiatives to help children deal with and respond to racism in society. At the same time, qualitative perspectives on the underlying motivation of parental behavior and their understanding of relevant social norms can help guide initiatives to stimulate parents to try and move away from color-evasive and White normative norms. As the transfer of such social norms can be rather implicit and unintentional, actively including parents in this inquiry is an important step.

Conclusions

The present study provides insight in examples that White Dutch, Turkish-Dutch, and Black Dutch parents set in terms of color-evasiveness and White normativity. Whereas the tendency toward color-evasiveness is strongest among White Dutch parents, behavior of all parents was in line with White normativity. These results show that very basic situations, such as parent and child playing a game, potentially teach children societal norms that are conflicting anti-racist points of view while parents might be unaware of the examples that they set. Future research is needed to investigate how children internalize these social norms, and what can be done to help parents foster more inclusive social norms in the next generation.

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(Appendix follows)

Appendix
Sample Sizes and Missing Data

Wave	Game	<i>N</i>	missing
Wave 1	Mother		
	Game A		
	Round 1	269	1
	Round 2	270	0
	Game B		
	Round 1	269	1
Wave 1	Father		
	Game A		
	Round 1	109	2
	Round 2	111	0
	Game B		
	Round 1	111	0
Wave 3	Mother		
	Game A		
	Round 1	186	1
	Round 2	185	2
	Game B		
	Round 1	186	1
	Round 2	185	2

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