

Baby Hair: A Child's Socialization into Ethnocentric Monoculturalism through Hair

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“I love my hair because it’s a reflection of my soul. It’s dense, it’s kinky, it’s soft, it’s textured, it’s difficult, it’s easy and it’s fun. That’s why I love my hair.”

-Tracee Ellis Ross

Qualitative Study

- Purpose of study- The purpose of this study is to explore how children are socialized into society through how they and others view their hair.
- With a qualitative study, I have no hypothesis as I would with a quantitative study. The objective is an exploration of an area that is an integral part of a race and culture.

ETHNOCENTRIC MONOCULTURALISM

- **Ethnocentric monoculturalism** is the individual, institutional, and societal expression of the superiority of one group's cultural heritage over another's. In all cases, the **dominant group** or society has the ultimate power to impose their beliefs and standards upon the less powerful group.
- Sue, D., & Sue, D.W. (2015) Counseling the Culturally Diverse

ETHNOCENTRIC MONOCULTURALISM

Five Components:

- **1. BELIEF IN SUPERIORITY**

- Western cultures are “more advanced.”
- Lighter skin, eye, and hair color is valued.
- Christianity is superior to other religions.
- Individualism and the Protestant work ethic are highly valued.
- White privilege—advantages of Whites in society.

Examples



Nude pantyhose



Crayons



Flesh-colored bandages



Dove lotion



Whose flesh tone is represented?

ETHNOCENTRIC MONOCULTURALISM

- **2. BELIEF IN THE INFERIORITY OF OTHERS**

- Non-western characteristics (e.g., dark complexion, non-Christian religions) are seen as inferior.
- Culturally diverse groups may be seen as less intelligent, less qualified, and less popular, and may possess undesirable traits.

ETHNOCENTRIC MONOCULTURALISM

- 3. POWER TO IMPOSE STANDARDS
 - The dominant group has the power to impose standards on nondominant groups.
 - Minorities can be biased/prejudice, can hold stereotypes, and can believe that their way is the best way. **Yet if they do not have the power to impose their values on others, then hypothetically they cannot oppress.**
 - It is power or the unequal status relationship between groups that defines ethnocentric monoculturalism.

ETHNOCENTRIC MONOCULTURALISM

- 4. MANIFESTATION IN INSTITUTIONS
- **Institutional racism**- a set of policies, practices, priorities, and accepted normative patterns designed to subjugate, oppress, and force dependency of individuals and groups on the larger society.
 - (e.g., systems of promotion and tenure, redlining, Stop and Frisk, Jim Crow laws/codes).

Literature Review- Academic Journals and the Media



- **Limited empirical studies or peer-reviewed articles**
- Brooks, W., & McNair, J. (2015) “Combing” through representations of Black girls’ hair in African American children’s literature. *Children’s Literature in Education*. 46: 296-307.
- Byrd, A, and Tharpes, L. (2014, April 30). When Black hair is against the rules. New York Times Magazine. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/01/opinion/when-black-hair-is-against-the-rules.html>
- Hopson, M. (2009). Language and Girlhood: Conceptualizing Black Feminist Thought in “Happy to be Nappy.” *Women and Language*. 31 (1), 31-35.
- Johnson, D. (2009). Hairitage: Women writing race in children’s literature. *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 28(2), 337-355.
- Reese, D. (1998) Young children and racism. *Parent News*. Retrieved from <http://webshare.northseattle.edu/fam180/topics/anti-bias/yngchildracism.html>
- The Conversation (2016). For African-American families, a daily task to combat negative stereotypes about hair. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/for-african-american-families-a-daily-task-to-combat-negative-stereotypes-about-hair-60154>
 - **Internalized oppression; combatting negative beliefs; secure attachments; The Natural Connections Center for Research and Training- Tulane University-** <http://naturalconnectionscenter.com/tulane-university/>

Legislation and Regulation of Hair

- School- May 12, 2017- children punished for wearing hair extensions- <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/05/11/black-students-malden-school-who-wear-braids-face-punishment-parents-say/stWDIBSCJhw1zocUWR1QMP/story.html>
- Work- Dreadlock ban during the hiring process is legal- <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/u-s-court-rules-dreadlock-ban-during-hiring-process-legal-n652211>
- Military- Finally, the military retracts ban on natural hairstyles- <https://www.bet.com/style/2017/08/24/us-army-lifts-ban-on-natural-hair.html>
- Group Home- Child's hair shaved off- <https://www.necn.com/news/new-england/Mom-Unhappy-With-Schools-Response-After-Daughters-Head-Shaved-Without-Permission-451816223.html>

Research Method

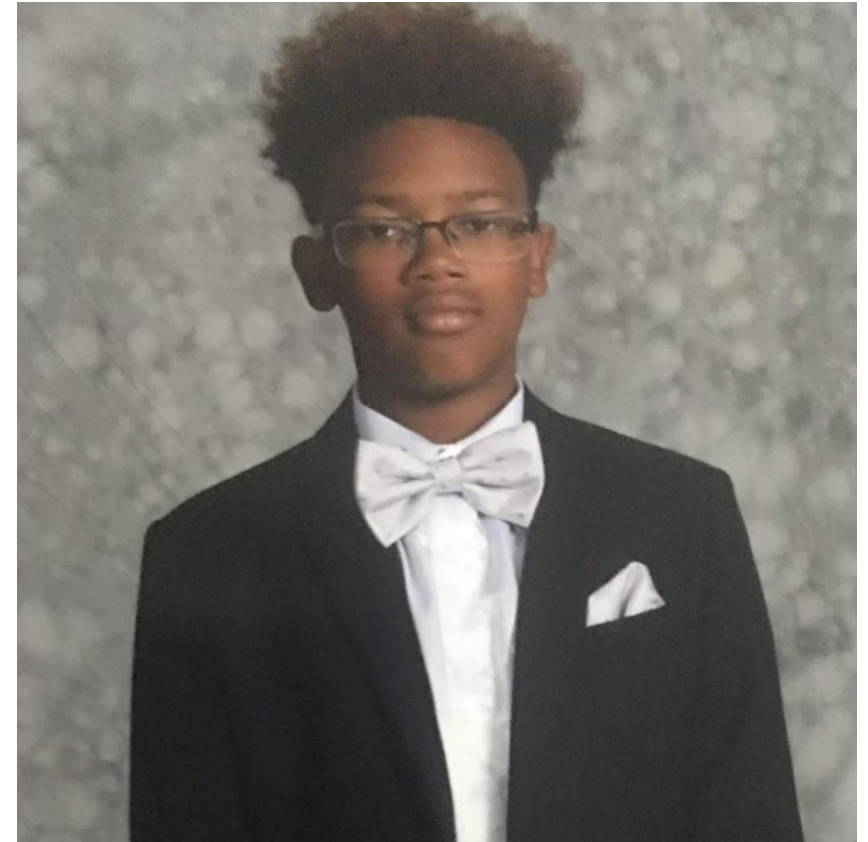
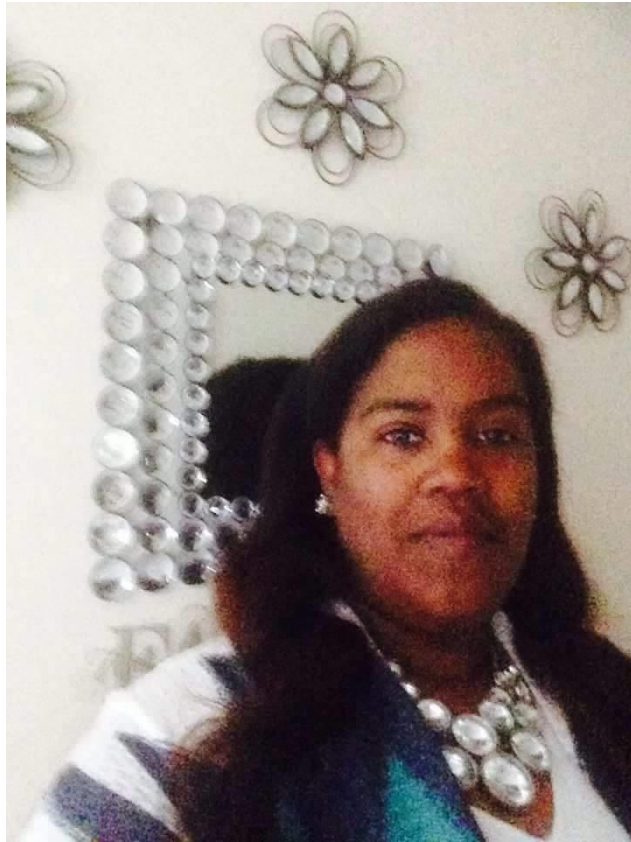
- IRB
- Interviews (questions)
 - Narratives
- Transcription of narratives
- Coding
 - Categories and themes
- Analysis

Critical Race Theory

- Origin- legal framework
- Recognizes institutionalized racism and White supremacy
- Importance of storytelling- creating our narratives- naming one's own reality
- Essentialism philosophy- reducing a category (race) to the subgroup (African American children/ AA women who are parents)- different experiences
- White privilege- regulations do not apply
- Microaggressions
- Empathic fallacy

Research Questions- examples

- Q3. Can you discuss what occurred. In discussing the event, please include:
 - What was said (and/or done) to your child?
 - Who perpetrated the actions (who said something to your child, or did something to your child)?
 - How many people were involved?
- Q4. How did your child respond to the event (include any statements and feelings involved)?
- Q5. What was your response to your child's reactions? Please explain your reaction.
- Q6. Did you face an event similar to your child's during your childhood? Please explain your answer.
- Q7. Did you talk to your child about the event? Please describe the conversation.
- Q8. Did you do anything to help your child "get through" the event? Please explain what you did.
- Q9. Did you talk with those involved who initiated the event? If yes, please describe what occurred?
- Q10. What was the outcome of this experience for your child? For you?



Participants- Stephanie and Trey

Stephanie and Trey's summary

The teacher made a comment about my son's hair that I felt was inappropriate. My son was in the process of growing dreads at a time when dreads weren't as possible as they are now. The teacher said in front of my son's classmates, "What was your Mom thinking by doing that to your hair? "

As a result the other students in the class laughed at the statement.



Participants- LaTesa and Angel

LaTesa and Angel's story

- Incident 1- Caucasian boy in class commented on her barrettes and beads that she wore in her hair, asking why did she wear them and why did she wear her hair the same way after a couple of days.
- Incident 2- She came home from school and asked me as soon as she got in the car, why is her hair not long and straight like a friend in her class. (Hispanic girl with thick long hair). She cried because she wanted her hair long and straight.



Participants- Vernitra and Carlee



Vernitra and Carlee-Summary

One afternoon, I picked my daughter up from school. When I dropped her off from school her hair was down, but when I picked her up, her hair was in a ponytail. There were two teachers in the classroom, and I asked them what happened to her hair. One of the teachers informed me that she pulled her hair up because all of the children had been playing in her hair all morning. My child's hair was put in a ponytail because it was distracting kids.



Participants- Angela and Nadiyah

Angela and Nadiyah- summary

- Nadiyah's little white friends commented about her hair. The times she has worn it curly, it is in a natural state. I remember her telling me someone told her she looked like Mickey Mouse because of her two ponytails. She came home and said she wanted to wear it (hair) down. She wondered why she couldn't wear it loose to school. She said it hurt her feelings. She likes to wear her hair straight.

Participants- Nakeshia and Victoria



Nakeshia and Victoria- summary

- Swim/sleepover
- Gave mother (White) instructions and supplies to take care of her child's hair.
- Pick-up- hair is disheveled
- White mother- I don't know how to do Black hair
- Child- "Mommy is my hair ugly and do they think it is nappy?"

Theme 1

- Introduction into racism through ethnocentric monoculturalism- end of an aspect of innocence

Theme 2

- Setting of event
 - Outside home
 - With peers
 - Outside the safety of home

Theme 3

- Feelings of confusion
- At a young age
- Importance of socialization into racism
- **Racial socialization** is important as it can buffer the negative effects of racism (Sue & Sue, 2015).

Theme 4

- Mother/parent's role:
 - Supporter
 - Teacher- socialize children about prejudice and racism
 - Counselor
 - Cheerleader
 - Advocate

From the Voice of Mothers- Stephanie

I was livid at the teacher's lack of professionalism. I immediately contacted her to set up a meeting with her and the principal. Of course she wanted to explain that she meant nothing by the statement. She felt that the hairstyle was not appropriate for a young child. I explained to the teacher that my son's uncle is a local hair stylist who recently started growing dreads and my son wanted his hair like his Uncle's hair. Unsure if this incident was the cause however this teacher lacked tenure and did not return the following year.

From the Voice of Mothers- LaTesa

I encouraged her to understand that she is beautiful just the way she is and to not try to be like anyone else, but to be her best self. We read books like "I love my hair" by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley, and other books available on YouTube. We watched the Sesame Street clip on YouTube that teaches kids to love their hair. Link: <https://youtu.be/enpFde5rgmw>

We listened to it for a week straight and she always dances to the song. Because she was so interested in straight hair, for fun my sister suggested she wear a wig so when she feel the urge to have long hair she can play in her wig. No different than what we did as kids with towels and t-shirts, she just has an actual wig. So she went and picked out a wig with reddish/purple hair and played with for about a week or two. Then she was on to the next thing.

For my situation I believe it's more of my child's personality. She was coming into her own and wanted to try new hairstyles. So I embraced more big girl NATURAL hairstyles that allowed variety.

When she feels the need to change things up on her own, she has her wig in collection with her dress up clothes. Please note this was her first time being in a classroom setting with a Hispanic girl. So she was familiar with hair textures of Caucasian girls and never said anything



You have to learn how to stand up for yourself. I'm trying to handle it at home. I'm trying to let it build up her self-esteem to accept herself, and try not to hold on to everything that somebody else has to say.

From the Voice of Mothers-
Angela

From the Voice of Mothers- Vernitra

I told her that her hair was pretty. It is pretty no matter what. I told her to not get upset if someone is playing in her hair. She just said they were playing in her hair. She didn't say anyone made her feel bad or anything.

I asked one of the teacher's why she put her hair up, and she said she did it to prevent the others kids from playing in her hair. I felt like that wasn't the right way to handle the situation.

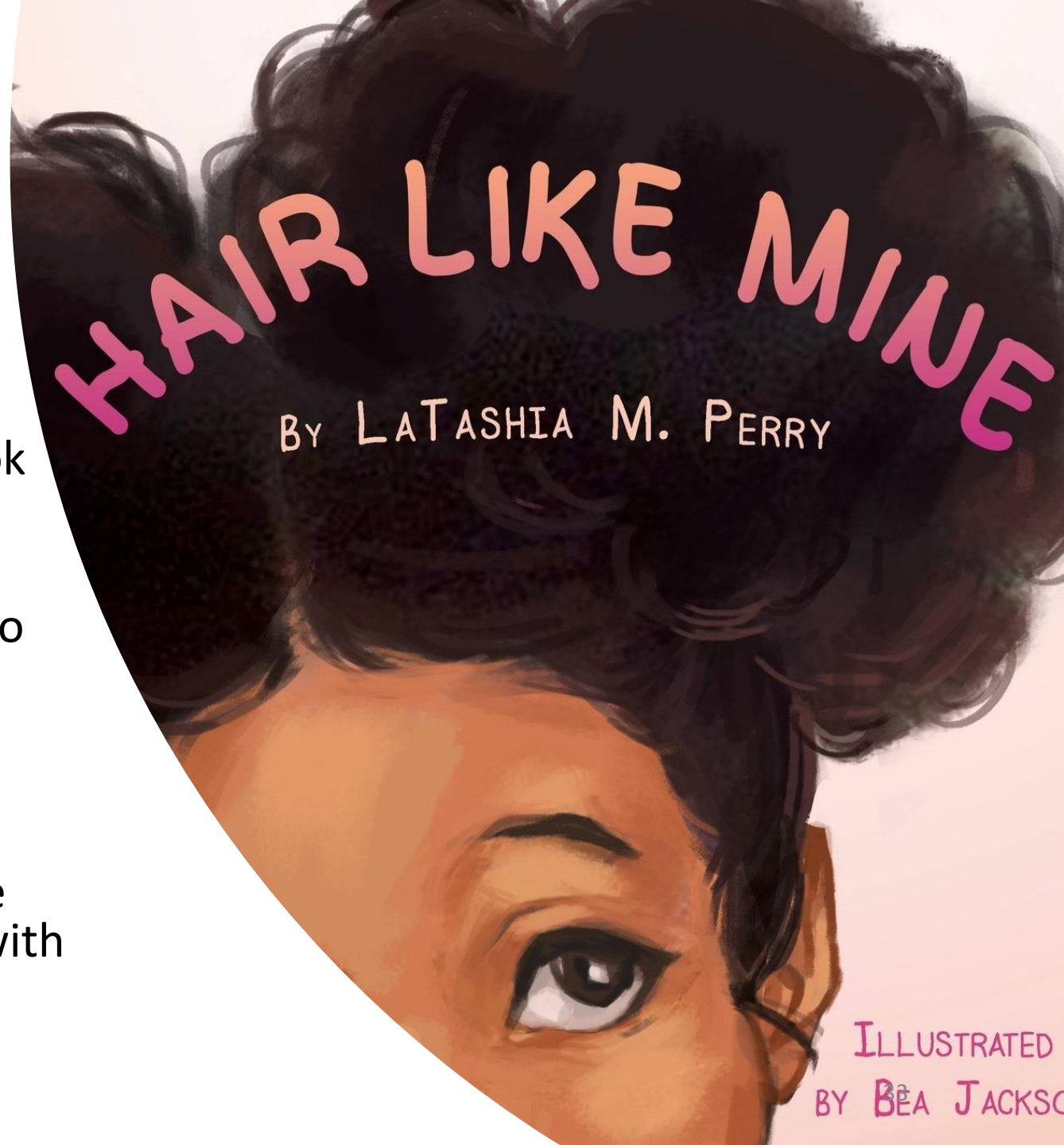
I was upset because I felt like the teachers should have told the students to keep their hands to themselves instead of putting her hair up in a ponytail. And I felt like she was being punished for something that the other kids were doing.

From the Voice of Mothers- Nakeshia

I felt hurt and sad for my child. I read a book to her called “Hair like Mine” by LaTashia Perry.

I had to explained that all hair is beautiful no matter what texture. I also explained that African-American hair is so unique because we can wear all kinds of styles, braids, straight, curly, and kinky.

I continue to remind her about the book we read together, and I have empowered her with encouragement of how beautiful she is no matter what hair style she is sporting.



What Mothers Learned

- Stephanie- I would like for others to embrace diversity!
- LaTesa- Be open to listening to your child. Hear what they are saying and teach them to embrace and love every curl, twist and Afro puff! We are a special creation by God designed with detail, so be the example and show them through your own actions. Love yourself!
- Angela-I'm learning how to get her to love her own hair in the state that it already is in.
- Vernitra- Its's necessary for women of color to talk to their children, especially girls, about being confident in yourself and just understanding that just because your hair looks a certain way, you shouldn't have confidence in yourself. It is best for me to start talking to her about things like this at an early age, so when she gets older she will know how to handle situations like this.
- Nakeshia- What I learned from this is experience is to teach our children how to be self-sufficient. We need to teach are children at an early age how to care for their hair. Also, empower our Black Girls to love and embrace their natural hair.

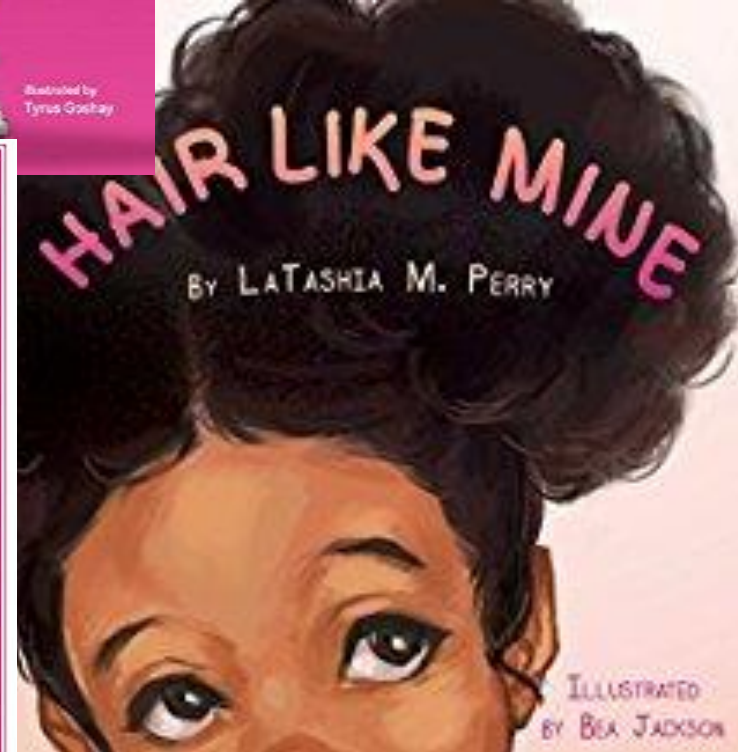
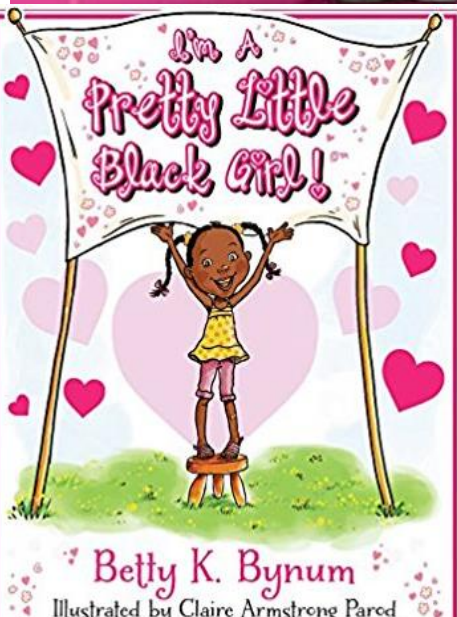
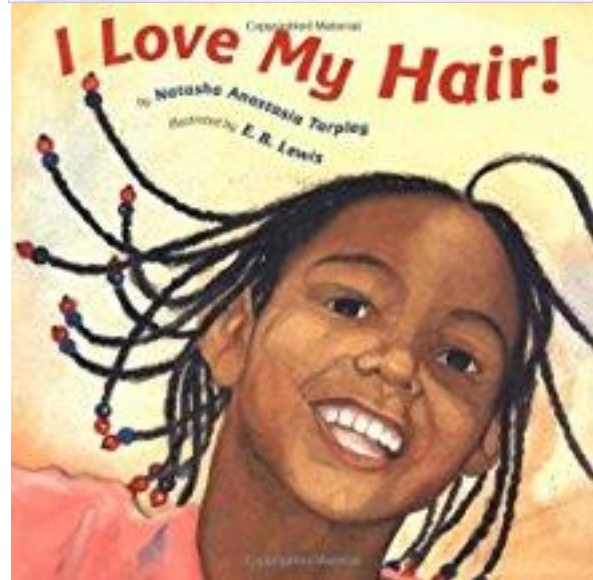
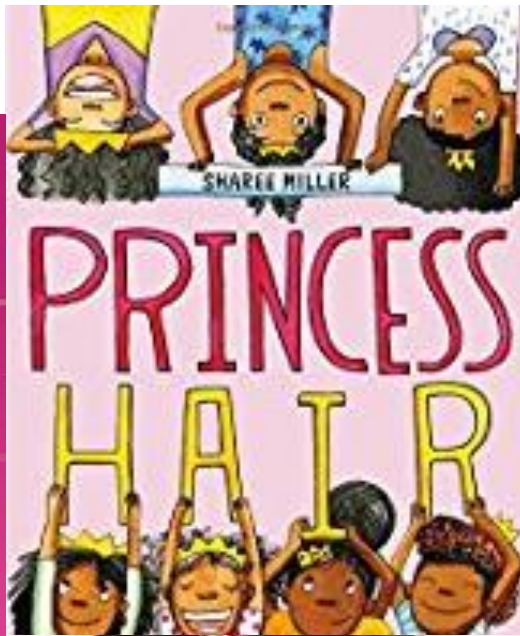
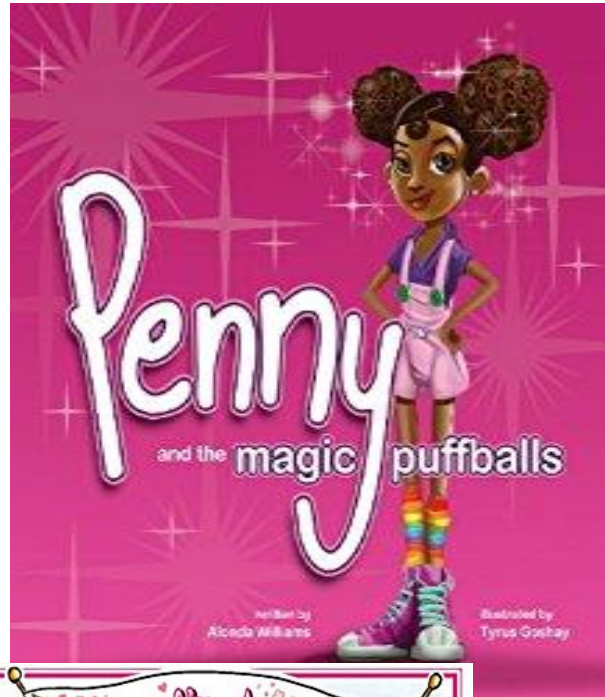
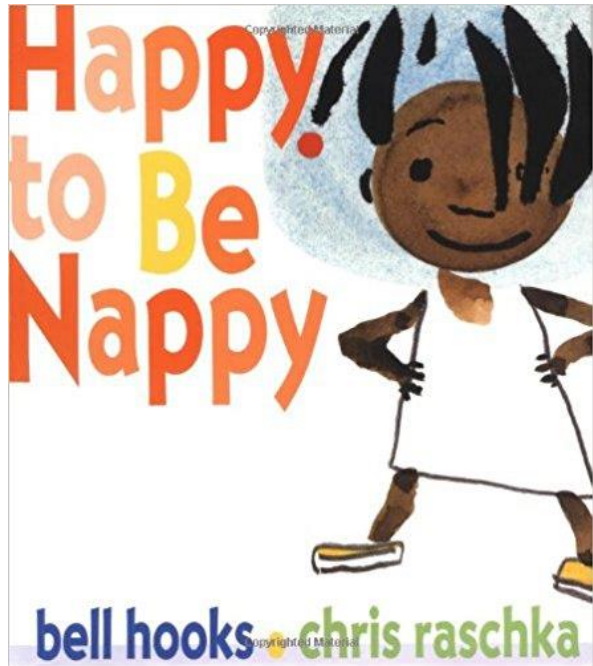
Miles and Miles to Go

- Need more studies
- People in positions to make policy-awareness
- Cultural sensitivity
- Empowering parents to empower their children

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
(Robert Frost's Stopping By the Woods on a Snowy Morning)



Books about Hair








Why Do We Need These Books?



Best little girl books

Best books for those little girls ages 2-6.

All Votes

- **Madeline**
by Ludwig Bemelmans
★★★★★ 4.22 avg rating — 163,187 ratings
score: 5,110, and 52 people voted
- **The Mystic Princesses and the Whirlpool**
by P.J. LaRue (Goodreads Author)
★★★★★ 4.33 avg rating — 96 ratings
score: 3,598, and 36 people voted
- **I Can Cook "Cake Baking"**
by Marika Germanis (Goodreads Author)
★★★★★ 4.65 avg rating — 23 ratings
score: 3,295, and 33 people voted
- **Olivia**
by Ian Falconer
★★★★★ 4.13 avg rating — 52,851 ratings
score: 2,751, and 28 people voted
- **Fancy Nancy**
by Jane O'Connor
★★★★★ 4.15 avg rating — 22,131 ratings

★★★★★ 4.27 avg rating — 254,922 ratings

score: 2,133, and 22 people voted

- **Matilda**
by Roald Dahl
★★★★★ 4.29 avg rating — 469,920 ratings
score: 1,664, and 17 people voted

- **Chrysanthemum**
by Kevin Henkes
★★★★★ 4.32 avg rating — 44,819 ratings
score: 1,659, and 17 people voted

- **Brave Donatella and the Jasmine Thief**
by Caroline McAlister
★★★★★ 4.11 avg rating — 47 ratings
score: 1,400, and 14 people voted

- **Pinkalicious**
by Victoria Kann
★★★★★ 4.06 avg rating — 16,999 ratings
score: 1,372, and 14 people voted

- **Ladybug Girl**
by David Soman
★★★★★ 4.07 avg rating — 4,139 ratings
score: 1,160, and 12 people voted

- **Be-U-Tee-Full! (Cali and the BF Crew)**
by The BFF Crew (Goodreads Author)
★★★★★ 4.75 avg rating — 20 ratings
score: 1,100, and 11 people voted



by Bonnie Ferrante (Goodreads Author) (Illustrator)

★★★★★ 3.77 avg rating — 13 ratings

score: 398, and 4 people voted

- **Alice The Fairy**
by David Shannon (Illustrations)
★★★★★ 4.07 avg rating — 6,252 ratings
score: 390, and 4 people voted

- **The Nutcracker**
by Susan Jeffers
★★★★★ 4.26 avg rating — 1,481 ratings
score: 383, and 4 people voted

- **Brontorina**
by James Howe
★★★★★ 4.00 avg rating — 1,046 ratings
score: 380, and 4 people voted

- **The Big Big Sea**
by Martin Waddell
★★★★★ 4.18 avg rating — 170 ratings
score: 374, and 4 people voted

- **Fanny**
by Holly Hobbie
★★★★★ 4.14 avg rating — 228 ratings
score: 368, and 4 people voted

- **Princess Smartypants**
by Babette Cole
★★★★★ 4.14 avg rating — 228 ratings

Videos About Hair

- Sesame Street- <https://youtu.be/enpFde5rgmw>
- Whip My Hair (Sesame Street)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owlmAh-GUTs>
- Willow Smith's Video-
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymKLymvwD2U>
- Solange Knowles- Don't Touch My Hair-
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTtrnDbOQAU>

References

- Sue, D., & Sue, D.W. (2016) Counseling the Culturally Diverse
- More sources on slide 9.



Thanks to our mothers-

- We still need more!
- Priscilla Wilson
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