Chapter 16
Tools to Disrupt the Legacies of Colorism: Perceptions, Emotions, and Stories of Childhood Racial Features

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Do you remember getting your hair combed as a child? What emotions did you feel as you got your hair combed? Was it an ordeal or a painful time to be endured? Or was it time that you felt loved and cared for by a special person?

Culturally sensitive infant and early childhood practitioners have few systematic tools to assess the impact that psychological residuals of historical trauma have in developing parent–child and family relationships (Lewis et al., 2013). Within African-American communities, the topic of hair and skin color has long been a focus for popular media and interdisciplinary studies (Byrd & Tharps, 2001; Prince, 2009). Researchers in diverse regions of the world, such as India and South Africa (Erasmus, 2000), Brazil, (Hordge-Freeman, 2015) and Puerto Rico (Neal-Barnett et al., 1996), report the impact of hair and skin color on Black women's self-concept and children's development. These emotionally toxic intergenerational legacies may permeate the everyday interactions of Black caregivers with their young children.

The historical trauma associated with racialized African features, specifically light or dark skin tone and kinky-curly hair type remains a modern-day standard to judge the beauty of African-American women and girls. A colorist-historical trauma framework views colorism as a function of historical trauma impacting the psychological and physical well-being of African Americans (Meyers, 1999; Ortega-Williams, Crutchfield, & Hall, 2019). The racial environment may be one of the most profoundly influential factors in the feelings that children of color have about themselves and their relationships with their caregivers. The structured tools, the *Neck-up drawing*© (Lewis & Joseph, 2017), and the CERAR story are introduced in this chapter. The *Neck-up drawing*©, a projective measure, will help adults and primary caregivers share their memories and tell stories based on freestyle drawings of

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their racialized self as a child from the neck up. Several case examples are presented in the chapter to illustrate the childhood memories and emotions associated with hair texture and skin color to adults using the *Neck-up drawing*©.

Broaching the Topic of Race

At the first meeting with a client or family, seasoned practitioners may become stymied with the question, "*How do I ask about race?"* Race may be a difficult topic to broach when meeting a client of color (Day-Vines et al., 2007). The routine of combing hair presents a nonthreatening entry point to begin these conversations. Joining with a parent or caregiver for mutual observations of videotaped hair combing interaction presents opportunities for both parental insight eg., reflective functioning and mentalizing), and therapist assessment and intervention.

In 2019, the fastest growing populations in the United States will be identified as "multicultural" based on diverse social identity groups including gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social class (Vespa, Medina, and Armstrong, 2020). In this chapter, we present a clinical protocol using drawings and narrative techniques to assess the impact of negative childhood messages of colorism, the parent's internalized stereotypes about skin color and hair type, on the quality of their behaviors, attitudes, during hair combing interaction (HCI) and developing attachment relationship. These stereotypes may become triggered during hair combing times.

The concept of broaching race is described by Day-Vines et al. (2007), to prepare counseling students to work with clients on issues of race, ethnicity, and culture during the counseling process. They state, "*Broaching refers to the counselor's ability to consider the relationship of racial and cultural factors to the client's presenting problem, especially because these issues might otherwise remain unexamined during the counseling process.*" (p. 401).

A therapist's broaching behaviors are characterized as an attitude of openness coupled with a commitment to continually explore issues of diversity with the client. It is the therapist's role to initiate race-related dialogues, or this topic may remain taboo in a racially stratified society where race is not sufficiently discussed (See Wilson, Chap. 9).

Day-Vines et al. (2007) present a continuum of broaching styles that they argue parallel the counselor's stage of racial identity formation (Helms, 1990). We adapted this broaching continuum to help understand challenges that might arise in the therapist-client discussion of the racially charged topics of race and hair combing interaction (HCI). The stages of racial identity formation may explain both the therapist's and client's levels of internalized stereotypes.

The Neck-up assessment protocol allows the therapist to explore racial trauma associated with the client's internal working model of their early attachment relationships. Observed parenting behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs can then be understood within the larger racial context and history of oppression (Meyers, 1999).

These racialized trauma memories can trigger a mental alarm in clients who do not have the ego strength to address unresolved attachment issues. Their psychic defenses may lead to perceptions of the therapist's questions as challenges and criticism to their idealized image of their mothers.

Understanding the Practitioner's Childhood Experiences of Colorism

Countertransference refers to the therapist's unresolved intrapsychic or personal conflicts, which may have occurred in early childhood (Crawford & Lewis, 2017). We address these issues through the reflective practice questions at the end of this chapter. Culture-based countertransference includes the therapist's culturally held assumptions, stereotypes, norms, beliefs, and values; attitudes related to race, ethnicity, and gender; political, religious, and moral worldviews; the influence of family of origin beliefs and intergenerational messages (Lewis & Ghosh-Ippen, 2004).

A lack of awareness of culture-based reactions may significantly impact the practitioner's ability to provide authentic and respectful service to all individuals (Crawford & Lewis, 2017). For a different-race or same-race clinical practitioner, bringing up the emotionally charged topics of race, skin tone, hair, and a client's mother are fraught with potential landmines. Three interpersonal dynamics must be considered by the therapist/practitioner during an HCI assessment: how ready is the client to assessing the sensitivity of the topic of the client's internal working model with their primary attachment figure; assessing the client's level of internalized oppression; and the practitioner's skill in broaching issues of race. Careful consideration of these three areas will support the practitioner's understanding of the role of racial trauma in Hair Combing Interaction (HCI) assessments.

A Client's Internal Working Model

The structure of a client's internal working model (Bowlby, 1969) developed over the course of many interactions with their primary attachment figure helps tell the story of race-based trauma, and guides the use of the HCI tools for assessment and intervention. When a parent is asked to recall early caregiving experiences, many thoughts and feelings come to mind about the quality of care and the resulting attachment relationship with parents and other primary caregivers. The quality of care given may have been nurturing or not, leading to a working model for relationships described as loving and secure or abandoning, avoidant, and insecure. Memories around hair combing are particularly evocative. For example, after completing the Neck-up drawing, one parent shared the emotion word, *nothing*, when asked to describe feelings about getting their hair combed. The parent explained, "*I have no memories of my birth mother completing this routine task.*" She went on

to relate that her hair had often been uncombed or "neglected" by her substance-abusing mother. She then burst into tears after sharing these memories. It offered a moment for empathy and greater understanding about all she had lost. A tool to enhance parental reflective functioning is provided at the end of this chapter.

Internalized Oppression

A second emotionally charged area may emerge when assessing the client's level of internalized oppression. As we discussed in the ethnobiography of the parent or primary caregiver, they may be at a different stage of awareness of their racial identity as a person of color (See Lewis & Weatherston, Chap. 4). When unrecognized negative stereotypes of a racial group become internalized and are seen as "normal" within a network of family members, these messages may be passed down through the generations (Parmer et al., 2004). For generations the practice of teasing and joking about a child's "nappy hair" or "ashy dark" skin is expressed with laughter and normalized at family events. Thus, a parent who spontaneously blurts out the same message to their child, "*You got some bad, nappy hair to comb!"* may minimize or justify the continued practice of these messages in the presence of the therapist. The therapist, after listening carefully, may ask the parent who might have said that to them, and then wonder how those words felt long ago. The parent may deny that these messages have a negative, emotional impact on their relationship with their child or their child's self-image. The psychic defenses in place when it comes to critiquing anyone's mother may have layers of protection from outsiders seeking to break in (Crawford & Lewis, 2017). Intentionally listening, responding with empathy, and addressing these messages are critical for the therapist when conducting a racially informed assessment or intervention using parent or primary caregiver–child hair combing interactions.

Disrupting Intergenerational Nappy-Haired Legacies of the Historical Trauma of Slavery

The Neck-up drawing© helps the practitioner to answer the question: *What was this parent's childhood self-image of their racialized features*? The answer gives the practitioner an emotional window into understanding a parent's feelings about their hair and their racial features including skin color, nose, lip size or in the case of lighter-skinned or white/Caucasian adults, their red hair and facial freckles. Drawings completed by adult caregivers of color from a variety of backgrounds and different family backgrounds will be used throughout the chapter to illustrate these points.

Telling the CERAR Story

The second part of the *Neck-up drawing*© protocol uses the storytelling technique of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (Westen, 1991). Using the parent's drawing of racialized features of their childhood self as a stimulus, the practitioner asks the parent to tell a story to explain the two emotion words they selected to describe feelings about their hair, as well as feelings about getting their hair combed. These stories may provide clues to the counselor or therapist about underlying dynamics of the person's interpersonal relationships and racial self-attitudes. Beginning the session with this protocol may complement trauma treatment for individuals reporting traumatic HCI memories. The *Neck-up drawing*© may be used as a single administration for assessment or as a series of drawings over several sessions. The repeated use of a drawing protocol provides the practitioner or therapist with a themed-based structure to support the client in processing childhood memories of racial trauma associated with their hair type or skin tone. The practitioner or therapist, in turn, will need to have a place to reflect on what is shared and their own memories awakened in the assessment and intervention process (See Part II, Reflective Supervision and Practice).

In a formal assessment by a clinical researcher, this drawing may be used with standardized measures of ethnic identity, internalized stereotypes, or coping with racial discrimination. Caution should be used with the *Neck-up drawing*© as a formal projective assessment tool. For example, the degree of shading used by a client in some clinical contexts may be an indicator of depressed mood (Cox, 1993). But, in the context of drawing a picture of your racialized self, it may be an accurate depiction of their skin tone.

The *Neck-up drawing*© provides a practitioner with the opportunity to explore further questions about memories of positive, negative, or ambivalent messages about race from diverse members of a child's network of relationships. The following pictures and stories describe the impact of early messages of racial acceptance or rejection on the adult's depiction of their racialized self-image from the "neck up."

The Neck-up Drawing Protocol: The Internal Model of the Adult's Perception of their Racial Self-image

Projective tests assume that the way a test taker perceives and responds to an ambiguous scene reveals inner needs, feelings, conflicts, and desires (Cox, 1993; Hass-Cohen et al., 2018). An adult recalling childhood experiences of chronic trauma of stigmatized racial features may include unconscious emotions associated with their features. For parents, the racial features of their newborn infant or young child can become a trauma trigger. With this projective test, the therapist may be able to explore with the parents or caregiver their emotions and feelings in response to their infant or child's racial features and the possible origins of their response in their childhood experiences of racial acceptance or rejection based on these same racial features.

Memorialized Representations

We ask adults to recall their childhood image of their racialized features at about age 5 years of age. In the analysis of children's drawings, Cox (1993) uses the term "memorial representation" to describe the adult's production of the drawing having abstracted the distinguishing and invariant features of an object. These are then stored as an internal model or a memorial representation. We suggest that you think of the racial features depicted in the drawings as memorialized representations.

To explore childhood experiences with hair texture and skin color, we undertook a case study approach using a projective measure, the *Neck-up drawing*©, and the informal scores from the *Recognition of the Impact of Colorism on Children Scale* (RICS) (Lewis & Comer, 2015) completed by the participants. The case studies allowed an in-depth view of the impact of skin tone and hair texture on children. Case studies were conducted with seven participants who were selected based on demographics. The semistructured interviews typically lasted 10–20 min and were recorded. Four participants were female, three were male and ages ranged from 26 to 59 years old. In the beginning of each interview, participants were given a consent form describing details of the study. The order of the protocol used with each participant was for them to complete a brief form of their background demographics, draw a picture from the neck up when they were a young child, identify their hair type and skin color from forced-choice descriptions, and complete the Recognition of the Impact of Colorism on Children Scale (RICS).

What will be presented next are the pictures and brief summary of the stories participants developed based on the emotional reactions to their drawings (Figs. 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, and 16.7). All names of participants are fictional[1], and each signed a consent form for their stories and pictures to be shared. There will be no clinical interpretations of these drawings. What will be discussed are the stories that the participants shared about their choice of emotions to describe their hair and experience getting their hair combed.

Case Study #1 Jane – Positive Emotion – "Patience," Negative Emotion – "Insecure"

Jane's Story

Jane is a 27-year-old African-American female from Washington, D.C. She was fully engaged throughout the survey and openly discussed childhood experiences in relation to her paternal twin sister, Jill. The *Neck-up drawing*© specifically requested the participants to draw a picture of themselves from the neck up when they were

[1] All names and other personal identifiers in the cases in this chapter have been changed to protect privacy and confidentiality.

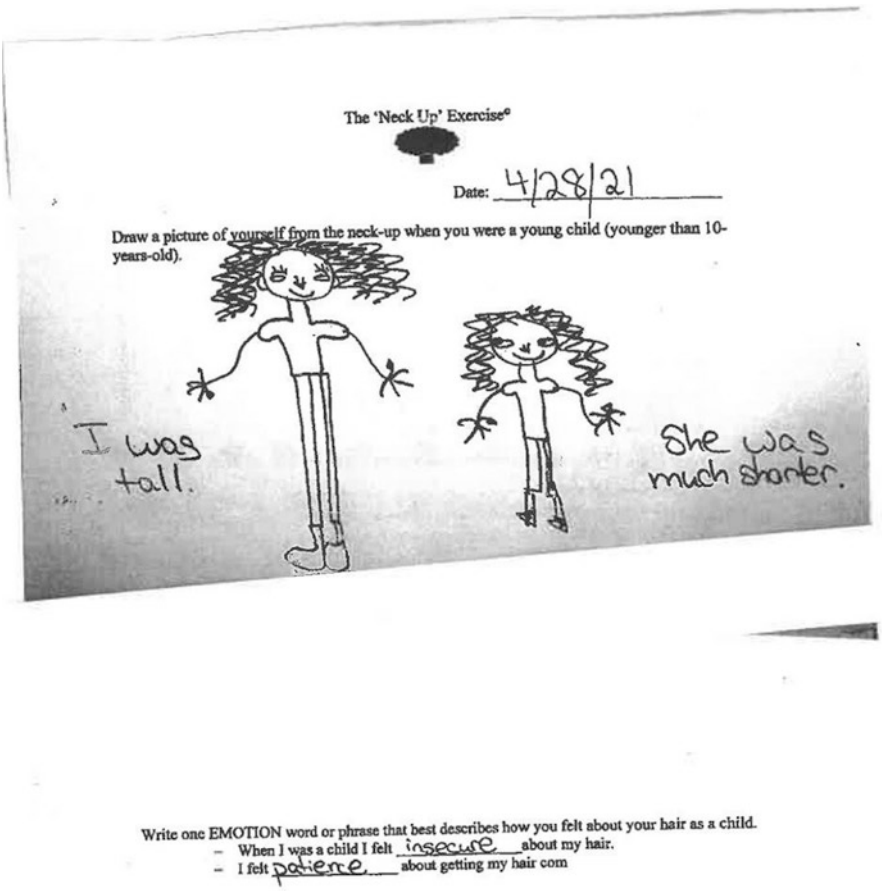


Fig. 16.1 Jane: A dark-skin twin's Neck-up drawing of her light-skin twin sister

young children. Jane's interpretation of the exercise shed light on the dynamics of the relationship with her twin sister. Jane drew a full body picture of herself and twin sister as children. She identified herself as tall and her twin sister, Jill, as "much shorter." Written below Jill's depiction in parenthesis was the word, "twin." Interestingly, Jane drew herself bigger and used "twin" instead of sister or twin sister to identify Jill. Jane frequently paused while completing The Neck-Up exercise. She would stare at the drawing and even place her hand to her mouth as if she was in deep thought about what to add next.

Jane stated she felt insecure about her hair as a child, and was patient when getting her hair combed. Jane's explanation of her feelings was somewhat unfocused as she stared off to the background. She stated,

> "I was insecure about my hair because I didn't realize how magical it was or could be because I didn't have…" Jane then looked back at the screen and continued, "My mom didn't know how to do hair…um and it was a lot. I have a lot of hair."

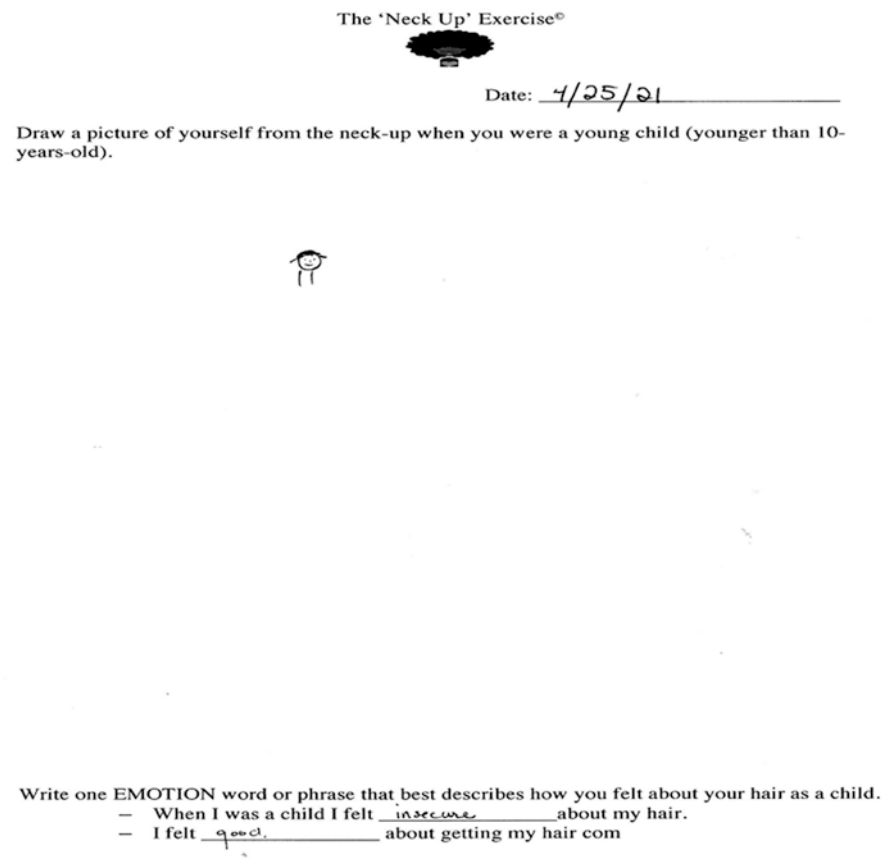


Fig. 16.2 Anne's Neck-up drawing of positive and negative emotions

She returned her focus to the background and described how her hair looked as a child. It's important to note how Jane's focus returned back to the screen when explaining that her mother didn't know how to comb her hair as a child. She stated, "My mom didn't know how to handle it." Jane said her mother would put their hair in plaits and tell them to, "go on about their business."

Jane folded her arms and explained she had patience when getting her hair combed because it would look "halfway decent." She exhaled deeply while briefly rocking back and forth before answering the next question. Jane often stared to the background when responding to questions. She would look back at the screen toward the end of her statement. This consistent ritual of body language suggested the intimate childhood experiences she shared.

Jane described various hairstyles her cousins would put in her hair. She stated they would put, "cornrows in it, putting beads on the end of barrettes, pigtails with barrettes." Jane's face looked tense as she nodded her head and shared how she had her first hair relaxer before the age of 10 years. She rocked side to side and explained

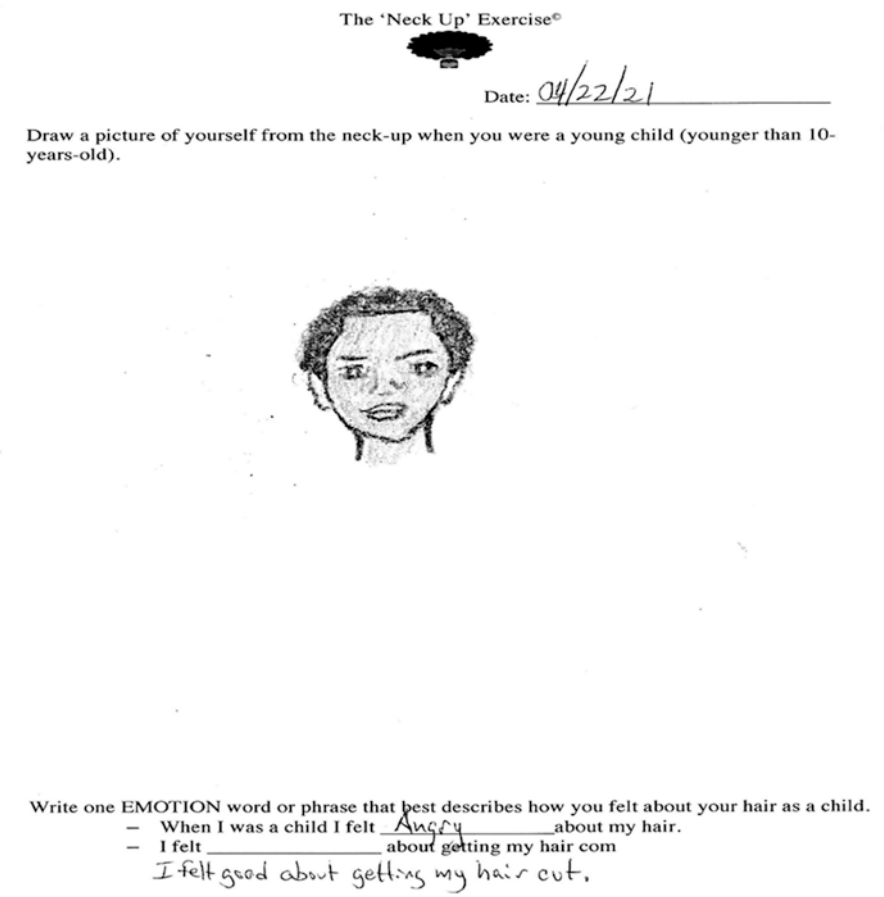
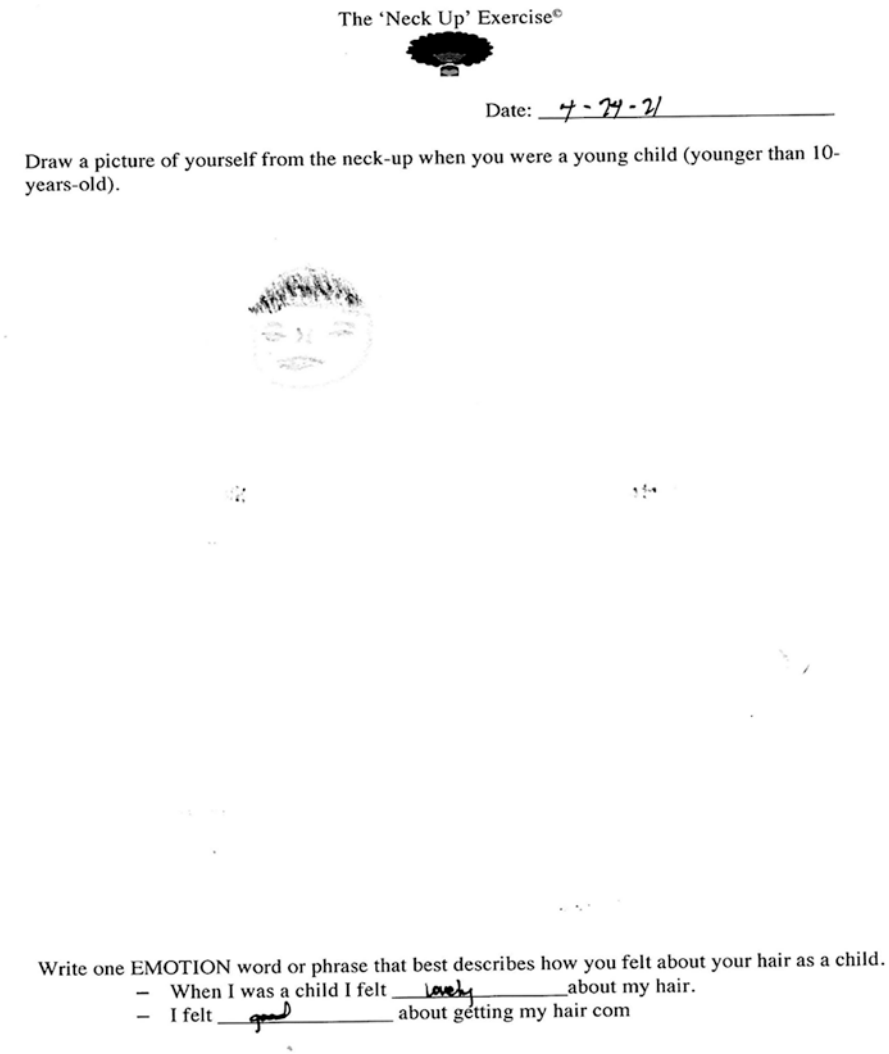


Fig. 16.3 A Black Male's Neck-up drawing: "I felt good, I felt angry"

why she wanted a relaxer as a child. Jane exclaimed, "My twin and I wanted to resemble Tia and Tamera." Tia and Tamera Mowry are identical twin actresses who had a popular television show named, "Sister, Sister."

Jane described her sister's hair as, "not as thick and long as mine." She stretched her hair to show its length and explained it wasn't like this as a child because, "relaxers pulled out my hair." Jane continued to describe physical characteristics of herself and twin sister. She said, "I am 5'10, brown skin with lean build." She shared that her sister was, "about 5'4, light skinned and she's a bit more curvy than I am." While pointing to herself, Jane stated, "My mom looks like this and my father is much shorter and light skinned." She stated that her sister was referred to as, "the daughter of the milkman" when they were children. Jane explained this was, "just a joke from around the way, if your mom is sleeping with the milkman, the man who delivers milk while the father is away at work, because she was lighter than I was." She shared they both had the same hair texture but "within the past 10 years, mine


The 'Neck Up' Exercise©

Date: 4-24-21

Draw a picture of yourself from the neck-up when you were a young child (younger than 10-years-old).

Write one EMOTION word or phrase that best describes how you felt about your hair as a child.

- When I was a child I felt lovely about my hair.
- I felt good about getting my hair com

Fig. 16.4 Jon's Neck-up drawing and positive emotions about hair combing interaction

just went a different direction." Jane explained that her sister likes to get her hair flattened and cut. She also shared that she was compared to her twin sister's physical attributes as a child. Jane further explained, "For example, when it came to dating, men, young boys would befriend me and hope that I put in a good word for them with my twin." She said that they would associate her darker skin complexion with "difficult." Jane stated that she used to get called, "Black Jesus" as a child. While using air quotes, she said her sister was referred to as the "golden child". They were never treated differently at home. Jane said they were always seen as twins in the home; however, outside of the home, people would "start to separate us."

The 'Neck Up' Exercise©

Date: 4-24-21

Draw a picture of yourself from the neck-up when you were a young child (younger than 10-years-old).

Write one EMOTION word or phrase that best describes how you felt about your hair as a child.

- When I was a child I felt bad about my hair.
- I felt horrible about getting my hair com

Fig. 16.5 Sara's neck-up drawing: 'I felt horrible'

Jane shared the differences caused issues within herself. She stated, "Just growing up during that time, where you're trying to figure out who you are and certain things are growing in certain areas and other things are not and you think…oh wow, now we're comparing." Jane explained that she wished she would have learned how to appreciate her hair as a child. She said she regrets she didn't have those things but tries to implement them with her nieces and nephews.

Jane stated that if she could give advice to her 10-year-old self, she would say, "Don't compare yourself to what you see on TV and learn who you are or want to be at a very young age, so that way you can kind of fight off forces that tell you who you are."

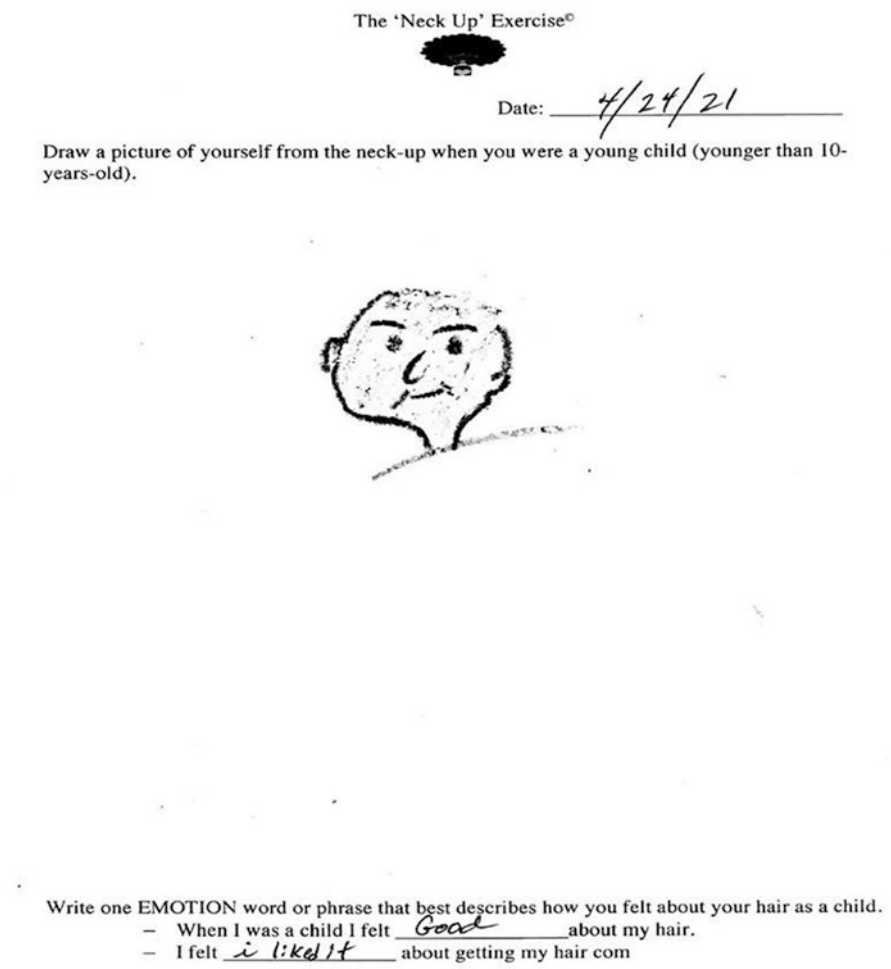


Fig. 16.6 Lee: Black male Neck-up drawing, "I felt good"

Case Study #2 Anne – Positive Emotion – "Good", Negative Emotion – "Insecure"

Anne's Story

Anne is a 49-year-old mother of three from Kansas. She quickly completed the Neck-up exercise, taking a very small portion of the paper to illustrate herself as a child. Anne hesitated before writing the emotion words describing her hair as a child. She felt "insecure" about her hair as a child, but felt "good" about getting her 4a/4c hair combed (for more information on different types of hair: https://www.

The 'Neck Up' Exercise©

Date: 4-23-21

Draw a picture of yourself from the neck-up when you were a young child (younger than 10-years-old).

Write one EMOTION word or phrase that best describes how you felt about your hair as a child.

- When I was a child I felt Alright about my hair.
- I felt horrible about getting my hair com

Fig. 16.7 Pam's Neck-up drawing: I felt "alright"

medicinenet.com/what_are_the_four_types_of_hair/article.htm). Anne spoke with transparency when reflecting on childhood experiences with her hair. Following a brief pause, Anne exhaled deeply and stated, "I would think, as a child, I didn't value, you know African-American hair, kinky coily hair." She noted that as she grew up, she began to learn, "that our hair is actually very beautiful."

Anne passionately shared that she was motivated to "embrace" and "master" her hair through seeing representation of natural hairstyles. She stated, "I was the Queen of wigs and weaves, but now I really value my own natural hair." Anne shared society played a role in not valuing her natural hair as a child. She said,

> As a child, when you go to school, you see Caucasian girls, they have long, silky, pretty hair flowing and then as African American children, we had kinky coily hair that didn't move, that you know we wore braids, pigtails, braided-up, but it wasn't…you know, it was a difference. And I think later on, I kind of learned that black hair could be beautiful too.

I think it's important to note how Anne described the qualities of Caucasian hair in present tense.

Anne described her skin tone as medium. She was not teased about skin tone or hair type as a child. Anne agreed that light skin is prettier than dark skin. She also feels Black men prefer light-skinned women with straight hair and light-skinned people have more opportunities than dark-skinned people.

Case Study #3 Jaylen – Positive Emotion – "Good," Negative Emotion – "Angry"

Jaylen's story

Jaylen is a 30-year-old African-American father from Louisiana. Changes were observed in his voice and tone throughout the interview. Specific questions and topics elicited various feelings and emotions .

After completing the Neck-up execise, Jaylen calmly shared he felt angry about his hair as a child. We continued to explore his description of anger in relation to his hair as a child. Jaylen stated, "Because I always was," he briefly paused and continued, "I guess under the impression I had bad hair." His voice changed to informative and matter of fact as he explained, "In society, it was a norm that Black people had bad hair."

Jaylen described the opposite reaction to getting his haircut. While laughing, he exclaimed, "I loved getting my hair cut because my hair wasn't nappy then." Continuing to smile, Jaylen reaffirmed his prior statement. He said, "So, yeah, uh, I used to like to get my hair cut". Jaylen laughed and agreed that there are people in his family who value light skin and straight hair in children. He shared that it was always the assumption light skin is prettier than dark skin when he was a child. Jaylen stated, "That's what society tells you, now that I'm older, I mean I love my skin complexion." His voice began to shake as he laughed and continued, "But when I was younger, I used to pray that I…I used to wish that I was light skinned, so I know what that's about."

Toward the end of his interview, Jaylen shared that at this point in his life, he doesn't care to know more about why people value one skin color and hair type over the other. He concluded, "At this point, it is what it is."

Case Study #4 Jon – Positive Emotion – "Lovely," "Good"

Jon's Story

Jon is a 26-year-old African-American male from Missouri. He does not have children. Jon's demeanor during the interview was reserved and quiet. During "The Neck-up exercise," he briefly hesitated with a sigh before quickly completing the drawing and identifying an emotion word. Jon felt lovely about his 4c hair as a child, and shared he felt good about getting his hair combed.

It is important to note that I (V. White) interviewed Jon with a female participant, who was more vocal during the survey. Jon remained quiet as the other participant asked questions concerning the survey. He murmured a brief chuckle when she asked what number on the Hair Type scale represented "nappy" or "thick" hair.

Jon described his skin tone as dark and strongly agreed that things people say about skin color or hair type have an impact on children. As a child, people made fun of his skin color or hair type. Jon expressed he has forgiven those who hurt his feelings as a child. He agreed that dark-skinned people are treated differently than light-skinned people, but Jon does not feel light skin is prettier than dark skin.

Case Study #5 Sara – Negative Emotions – "Bad", "Horrible"

Sara's Story

Sara is a 53-year-old African-American female with children. She resides in Missouri. Unlike the other participants interviewed with her, Sara was outspokenly vocal about childhood experiences with her hair and skin tone. She described her hair type as 4b and dark skin tone. When asked to identify an emotion word or phrase that best describes how she felt about her hair as a child, Sara responded, "bad" and "horrible" with no hesitation. As she approached the following section on hair type, Sara calmly presented a question. She asked, "What does this indicate, 'what is your hair type like, would it be referred to as nappy?' She shared that her hair was often referred to as coarse and thick when she was a child. Sara noted she felt her hair was "nappy" as a child, because it was hard to comb through. Her tone became low and somber. Sara's voice sounded shaky as she continued to reflect on her hair combing experiences as a child. When getting her hair combed, Sara stated, "They would have to oil it, put that grease in it, and I used to hate it when they did that."

Similar to other participants, Sara agreed that dark-skinned people are treated differently compared to light-skinned people. She shared, as a child, people made fun of her skin color or hair type. Sara described her skin tone as dark and shared she has forgiven people who hurt her feelings as a child about skin tone or hair type. Overall, she expressed satisfaction with her skin tone and hair type.

Case Study #6 Lee – Positive Emotion – "Good"

Lee's Story

Lee, a 54-year-old African-American male from Arkansas, was interviewed with Pam, a 50-year-old African-American female from Missouri. Both participants are parents; however, their childhood experience with their hair contrasted in interesting ways. During the Neck-up exercise, Lee playfully laughed at Pam's attempt to draw hair barrettes. He glanced at her drawing and remarked, "Really?" as to question the accuracy of the image. Pam laughed and gleefully added, "That's all I got." Lee's playful demeanor continued throughout the survey. He shared that he felt good about his hair as a child and liked getting his hair combed. Lee identified his hair texture as 4c and dark skin tone.

When asked to rate the statement, "the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice," Lee chuckled and stated, "Oh, y'all getting personal" with a grin. He similarly agreed that things people say about skin color or hair type can hurt a child's feelings. Lee also was teased about skin tone and hair type as a child. He does not think light skin is prettier than dark skin, but he agreed that Black men prefer light-skinned women with straight hair. Lee feels light-skinned people have more opportunities than dark-skinned people. He is satisfied with his skin tone now but has not forgiven family or community members who hurt his feelings about skin color or hair type as a child.

Case Study #7 Pam – Positive Emotion – "Alright," Negative Emotion – "Horrible"

Pam's Story

Pam is the 50-year-old African-American female mentioned in a previous interview. She put great emphasis on the Neck-up exercise. While drawing, she laughed and stated, "I am not a good drawer. It is not gonna be pretty." Then she pointed at the hair on her drawing and exclaimed, "These are supposed to be ponytails."

Pam stated she felt "alright" about her hair as a child, but she felt "horrible" about getting her hair combed. She identified a mixture of 2b and 3b as her natural hair texture and categorized her skin tone as medium. Pam shared she didn't like getting her hair straightened as a child. She passionately described getting her hair straightened as a "brutal" experience. She agreed that some things people say about skin color can hurt a child's feelings. She also was teased about her skin color or hair type as a child. Pam believes Black men prefer light-skinned women with straight hair; however, she does not personally think light skin is prettier than dark skin. Pam is satisfied with her skin tone and has forgiven family or community members who hurt her feelings as a child.

Summary of the Neck-up Stories

The drawings and interviews exposed a range of experiences of trauma and positive memories (Hass-Cohen et al., 2018). These memories included their personal internalized racial stereotypes as they reflected on their childhood experiences of acceptance or rejection based on their skin tone and hair type. While listening to the rich and colorful stories of each respondent, I (V. White) often felt an intangible cutural string that connected our childhood experiences of colorism and hair texture. I observed participants gain insight throughout the interview as their experiences were finally recognized. Listening to each case acknowledged and confirmed the long term impact and importance of recognizing Childhood Experiences of Racial Acceptance and Rejection CERAR (Lewis & Comer, 2015).

All participants expressed some degree of emotions about their childhood experiences with their hair type and/or skin color. We discussed responses using the following themes: 1) impact on children, 2) skin color satisfaction, and 3) hierarchy of light or dark skin color and hair type.

A Caution for Reflective Conversations

It is difficult to engage clients in working on psychic material that has long been repressed (See chapters on Reflective supervision). There is a risk factor that the client will not return to therapy if they experience the topic as too difficult for them to cope with at that time in their therapeutic journey. When introducing the concept of race there may be a similar response from the client who may not yet be at the point of trusting that a different race therapist is genuine in bringing up the topic. Similarly, if the topic of race in relation to their presenting clinical problem and their interactions with their child during the hair combing task is brought up too soon with a same race therapist, the response may be, "Why do they only want to talk about race?" Reflective supervision should be entered into with great care and respect for the thoughts and feelings of each other.

Accessing Memories of Mama: 'Yo Mama! – Playin' the Dozens'. The formation of an attachment partnership is created by a cacophony of emotional memories that build up during HCI (Green, 1990). These memories are ultimately about memories of the caregiver's primary attachment figure whether that person be the mother, grandma, dad, or foster mother. Talking about a person's mother and their childhood relationship may be fraught with potential (landmines) that can derail a client/therapist relationship. The added layer of race increases the potential lethality of introducing the topic of memories of mother and race.

In African-American communities, a long-standing practice among young adolescent males is what is known as "verbal dueling" (Wald, 2014). This practice, also called "playing the dozens," is designed to allow a man, the descendant of oppressed and marginalized men, to prove to an observing audience of male peers, just how tough he is. The central focus of the "Dozens" are derogatory remarks about the

other man's mothers. The criteria for the depth of the remark are its humor and comedic value. For example, "Man, yo' mama so fat, when you called the ambulance to take her to the hospital, they had to send a semi-truck!" The amount of laughter from the admiring peers signals approval of the "cut." The recipient of the joke must quickly and loudly respond with an even more intense and comedic attack on the mother of the attacker. This back-and-forth repartee is one of the few culturally appropriate ways for members of the Black community to criticize anyone's mother.

As a guide for therapists to use to broach the subject of race we present the key areas of assessment to be considered as you broach the topic of race with a client. This guide can also be used within a context of reflective supervision to support the therapist building their skill level in broaching the topic of race and ethnicity with clients showing varying degrees of awareness and resolution of their internal working model of their attachment figure, the client's and therapists' stage of racial identity, and concept of broaching race to set goals for strengthening their relationship with their child using hair combing interaction. Most importantly, by listening and addressing the racial context of parent–child relationships and the risks and vulnerabilities such as acceptance and rejection based on skin color and hair type, the therapists aid the client in interrupting longstanding intergenerational patterns that had its origin in the trauma of slavery (Branch, & Newcombe, 1986; Wilkerson, 2020). Similarly, when engaging in reflective supervision, the supervisor is wise to listen and support the therapists' experiences, stories and self-awareness about racial identity, acceptance, and rejection within a protected space.

Generations of families of color, living with the toxic stigma and stereotypes, invisibility, and oppression, may have family structural systems reflecting this racial wounding. Surviving and nurturing darker-skinned children in communities where fears of violence and little access to support services are a constant reality of daily life (Fromm, 2012; Wilkerson, 2020). Further, the unrecognized media-based psychological triggers, such as the repeated showing in social media and television images of darker skinned people, and acts of race-based, authority-perpetrated violence directed at darker-skinned people, may continue to traumatize families of color (Ashing et al., 2017). The unconscious reminder of the lethality and danger of dark skin color may revive old internalized stereotypes that "black is bad" and accompanying emotions of anxiety, shame, or rage (Cheek, 1984). The current social climate of highly publicized, race-based police shootings of Black people serve as continuous triggers for protective survival behaviors that may be expressed through harshly authoritarian parenting styles with children.

Trauma-informed interventions typically focus on individual and family level resources to address children's experiences of trauma and violence (Fromm, 2012). We suggest these resources include knowledge of race-based historical trauma responses and implications for infant and young child development (Wright, 1998). Unrecognized, these legacies impact the quality of working relationships as well as parent–child relationships. The culturally sensitive and racial-informed early childhood practitioner has the opportunity to provide guidance for families to recognize the emotional impact on young children of message colorism, or even simply joking about a child's skin color or hair type. Parents and families of multi-racial or

bi-racial children will gain understanding of the significance of messages about racial features on children with this protocol (Miller & Miller, 1990). With these simple narrative tools of the Neck-up drawing© protocol, the CERAR interview, and the listening ear of the practitioner, parents have the experience of being validated. Their racial stories are heard by a "powerful other," their therapist, or helper. Using the Neck-up tool as an interactive activity in parent groups, parents experience becoming visible and validated through social support from parent peers hearing their story. The parent may then use these tools with their child in the form of story-telling with their child during hair combing time interrupting the intergenerational transmission of historical trauma responses. Most importantly, they reinforce positive memories for their child's routine time of having their hair combed.

Reflective Questions

1. The Hair Combing Interaction assessment protocol, Neck-Up Drawing, and the CERAR Interview are tools that invite inquiry and reflection about racial identity, ethnicity, and culture. How can you sensitively use these tools in your practice or teaching of undergraduates or graduate students working with families of color?
2. Who combed your hair as a young child? What thoughts or memories are awakened in you as you think about hair combing experiences, pleasurable or painful, and what does it help you to think more deeply?
3. How comfortable would you, as White person or a Person of Color, be in broaching the topic of culture, race, or ethnicity with a client family?
4. Take time to reflect on why it is so important in 2021 to bridge the gap in our understanding of each other, as White or a Person of Color, by talking courageously and sensitively about race, culture, ethnicity, and inclusion?

Tools for Reflective Parental Functioning

Yale Child Study Center provides tools for enhancing parental reflective functioning.

Minding the Baby: http://mtb.yale.edu/training/index.aspx

Clinical Model: https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/communitypartnerships/mtb/model/

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