

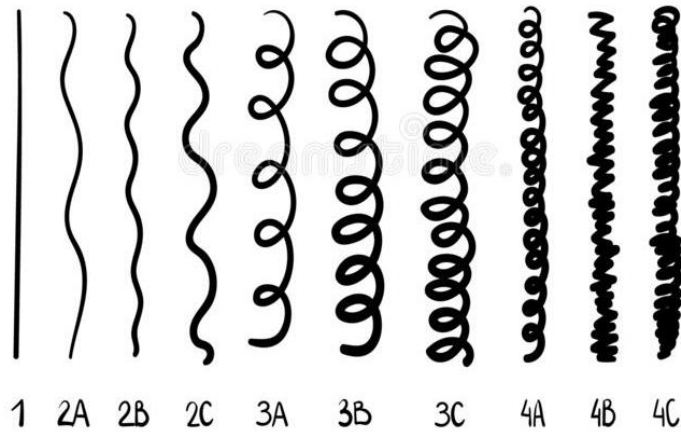
This week's question to consider:

Have you ever wanted to touch a stranger's hair, and wondered whether it was appropriate?

Pro tip: It's not. It is never appropriate to touch someone else without their consent, in any situation, ever, hair or body. It is also terrible to ask to touch someone's hair in most contexts.

Hair can be categorized by type, on a scale. For example:

If your hair falls straight as a pin, your hair type is **Type 1**. You likely use a brush to brush your hair, can wash it as frequently as you choose, and have a variety of styles and tools available to you, that most people know about. Your hair may be curl resistant. Ads for shampoo and conditioner and hair products in magazines, television, billboards, and movies have traditionally been targeted to you. You perhaps chose to perm your hair at some point in your life, which may or may not have fallen out, leaving your hair as straight as it ever was. It can perhaps be termed silky. Your hair is very much represented in media.



If your hair can be categorized as wavy, it likely falls into **Type 2** range. Variety of wave, variety of options, and you can typically straighten your hair or curl it with the right products and technique. You too have several style options, likely brush your hair, and have access to a variety of tools and products to manage your hair and shape it into compliance. Your hair is heavily represented in media everywhere you see.

If your hair is curly, it's **Type 3**. You have probably had to figure out how to take care of your hair so that it is happy. This has meant a variety of things, depending on your hair's thickness, how much you care, who has taught you about your own hair, your culture, where you live, and its level and pattern of curl. Your hairstylist may or may not know how to cut your hair, you may leave the salon with it styled into Type 1 or Type 2 shape, and representation of your hair type is atypical. Perhaps you have spent years using different creams, pomades, gels, conditioners, styling products, etcetera, all to tame the frizz, with varying degrees of success. You've fought humidity (in vain), and over time have either found something that works for you, kind of works for you, or have given up. When Merida in *Brave* came on the scene in 2012 you smiled in recognition.

If your hair is kinky, perhaps gravity defying, or falls in coils, your hair type is **Type 4**. You have hair that refuses to be managed without significant effort and research. There are protective

hair styles for your hair type. Your hair scoffs at brushes with a “I could break you” gleam. You rarely comb your hair because you want to protect it. Your ancestry likely contains African countries. Wash day is not an excuse to not hang out, it’s a whole process to wash your hair and you need that time. You have dedicated conditioners and oils to hydrate your hair. You have looked at the humidity like it is a traitor. Afros fall into this category of hair. People who do not have this type of hair or know anyone who has this type of hair usually are very surprised at the level of maintenance, effort, and research required to take care of Type 4 hair in this Type 1 world.



Those with 4C hair tend to know more about Type 1 hair than people with Type 1 hair know about 4C, and it shows in how people with curly hair are approached. Television

shows, movies, ads, availability of products in stores, stylist knowledge, price of maintenance... these avenues cater heavily to Type 1 and Type 2 hair. In schools, people with Type 3 or Type 4 hair have people touching without their consent, their whole lives. There is not often discussion around Types 3 and 4. This lack of understand breeds curiosity, which is natural, but the way to alleviate that curiosity is not to touch a person’s curly hair. It’s to normalize these types of hair so that Type 1 and Type 2 hair is not the assumed default.

Please teach your students about hair. Please talk about it. Do it through representation, indirect discussions, imagery, however you wish. But talk about it. It is a validating starting point and subtle way to begin discussing anti-racism in new ways.

Recommended Reading:

Medium Article by Ijeoma Oluo (March 2017) | [I Was Supposed to Have Good Hair](#)

Tune in next week for a tip on equity!

3C since ‘83,

Your friendly neighbourhood Anti-Racism & Equity Coach
Therese Trofimencoff