

XVI



TRESSES
AND
TEXTURES
-
EMBRACING
DIVERSITY
IN
HAIRSTYLING

There is neither Jew nor Gentile,
neither slave nor free, nor is there
male and female, for you are all one
in Christ Jesus.

— Galatians 3:28

Introduction

Imagine stepping into a world where every strand of hair tells a story of heritage, identity, and personal expression. The beauty industry has undergone a profound transformation in recent years, evolving from a landscape that often marginalized textured hair to one that increasingly celebrates the rich diversity of hair types, textures, and cultural styles. This shift represents more than just changing trends—it reflects a deeper cultural reckoning with inclusivity, representation, and the acknowledgment that beauty exists in infinite expressions.

As professional hairstylists in today's diverse marketplace, we stand at the intersection of artistry and cultural awareness. Our ability to work skillfully, respectfully, and confidently with all hair textures isn't just a professional advantage—it's an ethical responsibility. The journey toward true inclusivity in hairstyling requires us to examine our biases, expand our

Understanding and Honoring Hair Diversity

To truly excel in working with diverse hair textures, we must first understand the scientific and cultural foundations that shape different hair types. This section explores the biological basis of hair diversity while acknowledging the rich cultural contexts that give meaning to different hair textures and styles.

The Science of Hair Texture Diversity

Hair texture diversity stems from variations in follicle shape, which determine whether hair grows straight, wavy, curly, or coily. A 2019 study published in the *Journal of Cosmetic Science* found that the more oval or flat a follicle's cross-section, the curlier the hair will be. Straight hair typically grows from round follicles, while curly and coily textures emerge from increasingly elliptical follicle shapes.

Beyond follicle shape, several other factors contribute to texture diversity:

- **Protein Composition:** Variations in keratin proteins and disulfide bonds significantly impact curl pattern and strength.

- **Sebum Distribution:** Natural oils travel more easily down straight hair shafts, while curly and coily textures may experience drier mid-lengths and ends.
- **Moisture Retention:** Different textures exhibit varying abilities to retain moisture, with many curly and coily patterns requiring specialized hydration strategies.

Understanding these biological foundations allows us to approach texture diversity from a scientific perspective, informing our product selections and technique applications.

Classification Systems: Beyond Andre Walker

While **Andre Walker's** hair typing system (Types 1-4) has been widely adopted as a reference point for categorizing hair textures, contemporary hair science acknowledges that this system represents a simplified spectrum of a much more complex reality.

Modern texture classification considers multiple factors:

- **Curl Pattern:** The degree of wave, curl, or coil (ranging from straight to zigzag)
- **Density:** The number of hairs per square inch of scalp
- **Porosity:** The hair's ability to absorb and retain moisture
- **Elasticity:** The hair's ability to stretch and return to its original state

- **Width:** The diameter of individual hair strands (fine, medium, coarse)

When the hairstylist **Lorraine Massey** introduced her curl-centric approach in *Curly Girl: The Handbook* (2001), she helped shift the industry toward embracing natural textures rather than “correcting” them. Her work demonstrated that effective hair care requires understanding these multiple dimensions of hair character, not just curl pattern alone.

Cultural Significance of Hair Textures

Hair has served as a powerful symbol of identity, resistance, and cultural expression throughout human history. For many communities, particularly those of African descent, hair carries profound historical and social significance.

A few examples illustrate this cultural richness:

- **Pre-colonial Africa:** Elaborate hairstyles served as indicators of tribe, age, marital status, and social position.
- **Black American experience:** From hot combs during the post-Reconstruction era to the revolutionary Afros of the Civil Rights Movement, to the Natural Hair Movement of today, hair has been intertwined with politics, resistance, and self-affirmation.
- **Indigenous traditions:** Many Native American and First Nations peoples maintain spiritual and cultural practices around hair, with long hair symbolizing connection to community and ancestry.

- **South Asian contexts:** Hair oiling rituals reflect intergenerational knowledge transfer and familial bonding.

Personal Anecdote: Understanding Cultural Heritage

I once worked with a client who explained how her grandmother's hair wrapping techniques had been passed down through generations, surviving even through slavery and cultural oppression. As she entrusted me with her hair, I realized I wasn't merely styling it—I was being invited to participate in a living cultural tradition. This experience transformed my understanding of hair's profound significance beyond aesthetics.

Key Insight: Hair carries deep cultural significance that extends far beyond aesthetics, requiring stylists to approach each client's texture with respect, cultural awareness, and recognition of the heritage they represent.

Recognizing these dimensions means approaching diverse hair textures not merely as technical challenges but as expressions of cultural heritage deserving respect and celebration. This cultural awareness forms the foundation for truly inclusive hairstyling practice.

Cultural Competency in Textured Hair Care

Cultural competency—the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures—is essential for hairstylists working with diverse clientele. This section explores how to develop this competency specifically in relation to textured hair care.

Deconstructing Bias in the Beauty Industry

The beauty industry has historically centered European beauty standards, often positioning straight hair as the ideal while marginalizing textured hair as “difficult,” “unprofessional,” or requiring “correction.” This bias has manifested in various ways:

- **Product Development:** Until recently, mainstream hair care lines offered limited options for textured hair, particularly tighter curl patterns.
- **Professional Education:** Many cosmetology programs provide insufficient training on textured hair, with some states only recently beginning to require textured hair competency for licensing.
- **Media Representation:** Advertising, magazines, and other media have overwhelmingly featured straight or loosely waved hair as the beauty standard.

- **Salon Experiences:** Many clients with textured hair report negative salon experiences, including stylists who express frustration with their texture or recommend chemical straightening as the default option.

Acknowledging these historical biases is the first step toward dismantling them in our own practice. As educator **Nancy Twine**, founder of Briogeo Hair Care, notes: “You cannot solve a problem you’re unwilling to acknowledge exists.”

Language Matters: Communication and Terminology

The language we use around hair textures profoundly impacts client experiences and perpetuates or challenges biases. Consider these guidelines for respectful, inclusive communication:

- **Avoid loaded terminology:** Terms like “good hair,” “bad hair,” “unmanageable,” or “difficult” carry implicit judgment. Instead, use descriptive, neutral language like “coily,” “densely curled,” or “high volume.”
- **Practice active listening:** When clients describe their hair goals, listen without imposing assumptions. A client with coily hair isn’t automatically seeking straightening services.
- **Use inclusive consultation questions:** Rather than asking “What do you want to do about your frizz?” try “How would you like to style your texture today?”

- **Educate without condescension:** Share information about hair care in a way that acknowledges clients as experts of their own experience while offering professional expertise.

Case Study: Transforming Client Experience Through Language

Real-Life Example: Teenage Client with 4C Hair

Challenge: A teenage client with 4C hair showed visible hesitancy and discomfort during her initial consultation, despite her hair being healthy and beautiful.

Solution: When I gently asked about her discomfort, she explained that previous stylists had only used negative terms like “difficult” or “tough” to describe her hair. I immediately shifted to using positive, accurate descriptive language, calling her hair “beautifully coiled” and “versatile,” while showing genuine appreciation for her texture’s unique characteristics.

Outcome: Over subsequent appointments, I witnessed a visible transformation in her confidence and relationship with her hair. She began asking questions about styling techniques and eventually became one of my most enthusiastic advocates, referring several friends.

Lessons Learned: The power of language cannot be underestimated. Positive, respectful terminology doesn’t just describe hair—it shapes how clients see themselves and their natural beauty.

Client-Centered Approaches to Textured Hair

A client-centered approach is essential when working with textured hair, recognizing that each client brings unique hair patterns, needs, and cultural contexts. The relationship between a client and their hair often extends beyond aesthetics into identity, self-worth, and cultural connection.

Practice these client-centered approaches:

- **Comprehensive consultations:** Allow extra time for first-time textured hair consultations. Ask about hair history, current regimen, moisture needs, and styling preferences.
- **Respect cultural considerations:** Be aware that certain styles (like locs, braids, or particular cutting techniques) may hold cultural significance. Approach these with appropriate respect and knowledge.
- **Honor natural textures:** Position yourself as an ally in helping clients embrace their natural texture, rather than suggesting they “fix” or “tame” it.
- **Prioritize education:** Take time to demonstrate techniques and product application methods that clients can recreate at home.

Salon owner and texture specialist **Shannon King** explains: “When you honor a client’s texture history and preferences, you’re not just building trust—you’re acknowledging their autonomy and the relationship they have with their hair. This perspective transforms the service from a transaction into a collaboration.”

Mastering Techniques for All Hair Textures

Technical proficiency across the spectrum of hair textures requires specialized knowledge and skills. This section focuses on the practical aspects of working with diverse textures, from consultation to cutting, styling, and chemical services.

Consultation Techniques for Textured Hair

Effective consultations establish the foundation for successful textured hair services. Consider these specialized consultation approaches:

- **Texture analysis:** Assess multiple texture factors including pattern, density, porosity, elasticity, and width. Document these observations for future reference.
- **Dry assessment:** Evaluate textured hair in its natural, dry state before washing to understand its true pattern and behavior.
- **Growth pattern mapping:** Note cowlicks, growth direction changes, and density variations that will impact cutting and styling.
- **Lifestyle considerations:** Discuss maintenance commitment, styling preferences, and how the client's lifestyle should influence your recommendations.

Celebrity hairstylist **Vernon François** recommends asking clients to bring photos of their hair in different states—freshly washed, second-day, stretched, and styled—to gain a comprehensive understanding of how their texture behaves in various conditions.

Cutting and Shaping Diverse Textures

Cutting techniques must be adapted for different texture patterns. Consider these texture-specific approaches:

Straight to Wavy Hair (Types 1-2)

- Precision cutting techniques work well as these textures generally behave predictably.
- Consider weight distribution and face framing based on density and desired movement.
- For wavy textures, cutting slightly longer than the desired finished length accounts for reduced visual length when the wave pattern is active.

Curly Hair (Type 3)

- Dry cutting allows visualization of how curls naturally fall and clump.
- Cutting curl by curl preserves the integrity of curl families.
- Avoid over-layering, which can create excessive volume at the crown.
- Consider curl expansion factor—curls may appear 2-3 inches shorter than their stretched length.

Coily Hair (Type 4)

- Work with the hair's natural state rather than stretching it, which can lead to uneven results when the hair returns to its coiled state.
- Use visible cutting techniques where the client can see your work, building trust and transparency.
- Consider shrinkage factors of 50-75% when determining length.
- Focus on shape and silhouette rather than precise lengths.

Specialized texture cutting programs like Ouidad's Carve and Slice method or DevaCurl's DevaCut certification provide in-depth training on texture-specific cutting approaches.

Product Knowledge and Application Techniques

Product selection and application methods vary significantly across texture types:

Product Selection Principles

- **Moisture-Protein Balance:** All textures require both moisture and protein, but in varying ratios based on porosity and damage levels.
- **Weight Appropriateness:** Product weight should correspond to hair density and desired outcome—lighter products for fine textures, heavier products for dense, coarse textures.

- **Layering Logic:** The sequence of product application significantly impacts results, particularly for curly and coily textures.

Application Methods for Different Textures

- **Straight to Wavy:** Even distribution focusing on mid-lengths and ends, avoiding heavy application at the roots.
- **Curly:** Sectioned application with praying hands method or scrunching to encourage curl clumping and definition.
- **Coily:** Thorough saturation using techniques like shingling (applying product to small sections), raking, or the LOC method (Liquid, Oil, Cream) for maximum moisture retention.

Personal Anecdote: Learning from a Master

During my mentorship with curl specialist **Christo** of Christo Fifth Avenue, I learned that product application for textured hair is as much about technique as product selection. I remember him demonstrating how the same styling cream could produce dramatically different results depending on whether it was applied to soaking wet hair, damp hair, or dry hair. This lesson transformed my approach to product application across all textures.

Key Insight: The timing and technique of product application can be just as important as the product itself, especially when working with textured hair that requires specific moisture levels and application methods.

Chemical Services for Diverse Textures

Chemical services require texture-specific modifications to ensure hair integrity:

Coloring Considerations

- **Processing Time Adjustments:** Highly porous textured hair may process color more quickly, while low porosity textures may require extended development time.
- **Formula Strength:** Consider texture and porosity when determining developer strengths and formula concentrations.
- **Application Techniques:** Sectioning patterns and application methods may need modification for different curl patterns.

Texture Modification Services

- **Relaxers and Straightening:** When clients request these services, implement maximum protection protocols. Consider partial relaxing or spot treating rather than full-head application.
- **Curl Enhancement:** For clients seeking more defined curls, texture-appropriate perm solutions and techniques can enhance natural patterns.

- **Transitioning Support:** Develop protocols for clients transitioning from chemically straightened to natural texture, including trimming schedules and protective styling options.

The key to successful chemical services lies in thorough analysis, realistic expectation setting, and prioritizing hair health throughout the process.

Building an Inclusive Hair Care Practice

Creating a truly inclusive hair care practice extends beyond technical skills to encompass the entire client experience, from marketing to salon environment to ongoing education. This section explores strategies for building a practice that authentically welcomes and serves diverse clientele.

Creating an Inclusive Salon Environment

The physical salon environment communicates volumes about inclusivity before a word is spoken. Consider these elements of an inclusive space:

- **Visual Representation:** Display diverse imagery showing various hair textures, ethnicities, ages, and gender expressions in your decor, marketing materials, and social media.
- **Product Selection:** Stock products specifically formulated for a range of textures, including those from Black-owned brands and companies with demonstrated commitment to inclusivity.

- **Accessible Pricing:** Consider texture-neutral pricing structures that charge based on time and product usage rather than imposing higher fees specifically for textured hair services.
- **Physical Accessibility:** Ensure your space accommodates clients with mobility challenges and sensory sensitivities.

Salon owner **Christin Brown** of Santa Barbara's Tomahawk Salon transformed her business by intentionally creating a "texture haven." By featuring diverse imagery, stocking texture-specific products, and cultivating a team trained in all textures, she attracted a clientele that reflects the full spectrum of hair diversity, even in a predominantly white geographic area.

Inclusive Marketing Strategies

Marketing that authentically reaches diverse clientele requires thoughtfulness and cultural awareness:

- **Showcase Diverse Work:** Ensure your portfolio, website, and social media feature various textures, with particular attention to those historically underrepresented in beauty marketing.
- **Use Inclusive Language:** Audit your service descriptions, website copy, and social media for language that might alienate certain groups.
- **Target Marketing Efforts:** Consider targeted outreach to underserved communities through partnerships with community organizations, cultural events, or specialized publications.

- **Be Authentically Inclusive:** Avoid tokenism or superficial diversity efforts. Authentic inclusion means showcasing texture diversity regularly, not as a special feature or trend.

Marketing specialist **Lala Inuti** advises: “True inclusivity in marketing isn’t about checking boxes for representation. It’s about consistently showing that you value, understand, and can skillfully serve diverse clients through every aspect of your communication.”

Continuing Education in Texture Diversity

Texture education is a lifelong journey, not a destination. Consider these approaches to ongoing learning:

- **Specialized Training:** Invest in texture-specific education programs like DevaCurl certification, Ouidad training, or specialized texture courses from organizations like the Textured Hair Elevated Summit.
- **Cultural Immersion:** Attend hair shows, conventions, and events that center diverse textures, particularly those created by and for stylists of color.
- **Digital Learning:** Follow texture experts on social media, subscribe to texture-focused education platforms, and participate in online communities dedicated to textured hair.
- **Mentorship:** Seek mentorship from stylists with extensive texture experience, particularly those with personal and cultural connections to diverse hair types.

Education should encompass both technical skills and cultural context. As texture educator **Diane Da Costa** explains: “You cannot separate the texture from the person. To truly serve textured hair clients, you must understand not just the hair, but the history, culture, and lived experiences attached to it.”

Building Texture Expertise in Any Market

Stylists sometimes hesitate to invest in texture education if they work in markets with less visible texture diversity. However, texture expertise creates opportunities regardless of location:

- **Underserved Niche:** In predominantly straight-hair markets, texture expertise can position you as a specialized resource, attracting clients willing to travel for skilled texture services.
- **Hidden Demographics:** Many communities have more texture diversity than immediately apparent, including clients who have been straightening their hair due to lack of texture-competent stylists.
- **Universal Applications:** Texture knowledge enhances all hair services, as principles of moisture balance, porosity awareness, and structural cutting benefit all hair types.

Case Study: Building a Texture Business in an Unexpected Market

Real-Life Example: Jackie Carr in Rural Midwest

Challenge: Stylist Jackie Carr worked in a rural midwestern town with limited visible texture diversity and wanted to build expertise in textured hair services.

Solution: Carr positioned herself as the area's curl specialist through targeted marketing and specialized education. She invested in texture training, stocked appropriate products, and marketed her services through social media and word-of-mouth.

Outcome: Starting with just a handful of curly clients, Carr built a thriving texture-focused business. People began driving from hours away for her services. She now has a waiting list and has hired two other stylists who she's trained in texture work.

Lessons Learned: The demand for skilled texture services often exists even in unexpected markets—these clients just need someone qualified to serve them. Specialization can create opportunity regardless of location.

The Future of Inclusive Hairstyling

The beauty industry stands at a pivotal moment of transformation. The movement toward true texture inclusivity isn't a passing trend but a fundamental recal-

ibration of our professional standards and values. As we look to the future, several developments suggest the direction of inclusive hairstyling:

- **Education Evolution:** Cosmetology education is increasingly incorporating comprehensive texture training, with more states requiring texture competency for licensing.
- **Product Innovation:** The explosive growth of texture-specific product lines indicates a market recognition of diverse hair needs, with continued innovation expected.
- **Consumer Empowerment:** Clients with textured hair increasingly expect and demand knowledgeable service, driving industry-wide improvement.
- **Digital Democratization:** Online education has democratized access to texture knowledge, allowing stylists worldwide to develop texture expertise.

For the individual stylist, embracing texture diversity represents both a professional opportunity and an ethical commitment. When we expand our capacity to serve diverse textures with skill and cultural awareness, we contribute to a more inclusive beauty industry while positioning ourselves for continued relevance in an evolving marketplace.

The journey toward texture inclusivity calls us to continual growth—technically, culturally, and personally. It asks us to examine our biases, expand our skills, and embrace the beautiful complexity of human diversity as expressed through hair. By committing to this journey, we honor not just the hair before us, but

the full humanity of each client who trusts us with this deeply personal aspect of their identity and self-expression.

As you continue your professional evolution, remember that true texture inclusivity is both a skill set and a mindset—a commitment to seeing, celebrating, and skillfully serving the full spectrum of human hair in all its glorious diversity.

Actionable Steps

Immediate Actions (This Week)

1. **Audit Your Language** - Review your service menu and social media for potentially exclusionary language
2. **Assess Your Product Inventory** - Identify gaps in texture-specific products you currently stock
3. **Evaluate Your Portfolio** - Ensure your work showcases diverse hair textures and ethnicities
4. **Begin Cultural Education** - Start following texture specialists and educators on social media

Short-Term Goals (Next Month)

1. **Invest in Basic Texture Education** - Enroll in an online course or attend a texture-focused workshop
2. **Expand Product Offerings** - Stock products specifically designed for diverse hair textures

3. **Practice Inclusive Consultations** - Implement texture-specific consultation techniques with current clients
4. **Connect with Texture Community** - Join professional groups focused on textured hair education

Long-Term Strategies (Next 3-6 Months)

1. **Pursue Advanced Texture Certification** - Complete specialized training programs like DevaCurl or Ouidad certification
2. **Create Inclusive Marketing Strategy** - Develop marketing materials that authentically represent texture diversity
3. **Build Texture Referral Network** - Establish relationships with other texture-competent professionals
4. **Establish Ongoing Education Plan** - Commit to continuous learning about cultural competency and texture techniques

Endnotes

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Chapter Quiz

1. The chapter's emphasis on understanding and honoring hair diversity serves what purpose?

- A) It's a trend that will pass
- B) Inclusive expertise expands your market, serves clients better, and honors the cultural significance of hair
- C) Textured hair education is only for stylists of color
- D) Diversity training is politically correct but not practically important

2. The case study on "Transforming Client Experience Through Language" demonstrated:

- A) Language and terminology don't matter in hair services
- B) Using respectful, informed language creates trust, safety, and better client relationships
- C) Clients don't notice or care about the words you use
- D) Traditional industry terms should never be questioned

3. When building an inclusive hair care practice, the chapter recommends:

- A) Claiming expertise in all hair types without proper education
- B) Refusing to serve hair types you're unfamiliar with
- C) Investing in comprehensive education, using inclusive language, and creating a welcoming environment for all textures
- D) Inclusion is only about marketing, not actual skill

4. The chapter highlights cultural competency in textured hair care. What does this involve?

- A)** Treating all hair the same regardless of texture
- B)** Understanding the cultural, historical, and social significance of Black hair and textured hair care
- C)** Cultural competency is unnecessary if you have technical skills
- D)** Avoiding conversations about culture and race entirely

For answers, see the Quiz Key in the backmatter.

Chapter Worksheet

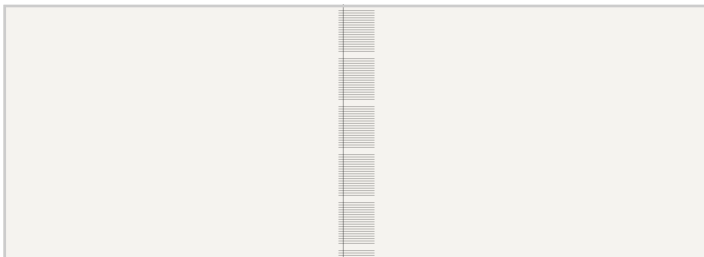
Reflection Questions:

Take time to consider how this chapter's concepts apply to your own experience and practice.

1. **Assess your current expertise across hair textures: What textures are you confident serving? Where do you need education? Be honest about your gaps.**



2. **Create your textured hair education plan: Research 3-5 courses, workshops, or mentorship opportunities focused on diverse hair textures and cultural competency.**



- 3. Audit your language and environment: Do your marketing, consultations, and salon language reflect inclusivity? What changes could make clients of all backgrounds feel welcomed and understood?**

- 4. Reflect on representation: Does your portfolio, social media, and client base reflect the diversity of your community? If not, what systemic or skill barriers exist, and how can you address them?**



Optional caption for the closing image