

Blondes vs brunettes: the battle of the brains



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A married couple were awakened by a call at 2: 00 a. m. The wife, a blonde, picked up the phone, listened a moment, and said, " How should I know, that's 200 miles from here! " and hung up. Her husband asked, " Who was that? " She replied, " I don't know; some woman wanting to know if the coast is clear. " When I read this joke, it made me laugh, but I must admit that I disagree with the underlying stereotype it is affirming. As I began to research this paper, I typed in a Google search for " blonde jokes" and got a whopping 1, 150, 000 results!

There is no point in exaggerating the obvious; the stereotype that blondes are dumb is alive and well. Despite the overwhelming database of jokes and taunts, blondes in fact are not deprived of brain power. Let us begin by considering where blondes first became the brunt of jokes and considered to be empty headed bird brains. There are several theories as to the origins. One that I find hilarious is that the ancient Greeks and Romans held a deep admiration for their flaxen-haired neighbors. As a result, they bleached their own hair.

This repeated bleaching of the scalp and consequent inhalation could have had an effect on one's mental status. Another theory is that during the Middle Ages, the common people were the ones who had to work laboriously outside in the fields. This caused their hair to lighten and being the lower class with no formal education, they were viewed as being unintelligent. Blonde jokes entered the American culture in the 1900s. (Wikipedia)

Whether these influences are the real reasons for the continuing stamp of ignorance blondes receive, the stereotype itself is a powerful influence on the way people think.

In fact, it is startling to consider the number of men and women alike who actually believe that blondes are dumb. Two researchers once did a random survey of 120 people, half men and half women. They were asked to look at pictures of a female model who wore four different colored wigs: platinum blonde, and natural blonde, brown, and red. They were given instructions to rate the model using different characteristics including intelligence. They reported in their results that when the same model wore the blonde wigs, she was rated far less intelligent – particularly by men.

The startling conclusion was even more disturbing when they also noted it was likely that those who rated the model in the blonde wig less intelligent were not even aware they were doing it. This is the impact a stereotype can have on society. Eventually, even if people cannot supply adequate evidence, the stereotype becomes engrained in their thinking to the point that they accept it as truth. The certainty remains that despite “ no persuasive evidence, that blondes are less intelligent than others” they are generally viewed as such.

The evidence suggests that hair color has nothing to do with an individual’s intelligence. One cannot help but notice as well that this stereotype seems to be almost entirely placed on the female gender. To further reinforce the negative stereotype, the image of the dumb blonde is a popular role to play. Marilyn Monroe, Britney Spears, Goldie Hawn, Lisa Kudrow and Barbie have all been made famous by “ playing dumb. ” This is merely entertainment exploiting a stereotype. American culture is highly influenced by media, so these images, movies, and ideas only reinforce an ignorant concept.

Occasionally, the twist turns to the truth as in the film *Legally Blonde* starring Reese Witherspoon. In this flick, the protagonist ends up being an intelligent graduate from Harvard Law School. This movie inspired the Columbia Broadcasting System to create a television special on blonde attorneys who went to Harvard. (Jobson) Not so dumb after all! Even if you have blindly believe this stereotype and hold fast to it, you will be hard pressed to find any scientific proof or research evidence that proves hair color requires a person to be less intelligent. There are plenty of examples that in fact, prove the opposite to be true.

Some historically well-known blondes who are brilliant include Jodie Foster who graduated magna cum laude from Yale University, Diane Sawyer, high profile lawyer Gloria Allred, and Barbara Walters. If one takes the time to read the biographies of these women, they cannot walk away convinced that these individuals are dumb. In the face of such evidence it is difficult to succumb to the belief that being blonde means being air headed. Still not convinced? Let me introduce you to Karen L. Nyberg, Ph. D. ; mission specialist STS-124 ' Discovery', lift-off May 31, 2008.

Karen's biography includes graduating Summa Cum Laude at the University of North Dakota, and multiple degrees in Mechanical Engineering. She has received the following awards: UND Young Alumni Achievement Award, Space Act Award, NASA JSC Patent Application Award, NASA Tech Briefs Award, NASA JSC Cooperative Education Special Achievement Award, Joyce Medalen Society of Women Engineers Award, D. J. Robertson Award of Academic Achievement, and the University of North Dakota School of Engineering & Mines Meritorious Service Award.

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She is also the recipient of numerous scholarships and other awards not listed here. (WRAL. om) Impressed? Is she blonde or burnette? Does she have red hair or black hair? See for yourself! The burden of proof is not to prove that blondes are more intelligent. It is simply to debunk the notion that blondes are dumber than others with a different hair color, when in fact, they are no less dumb than brunettes or red-heads. It is the stereotype that continues to persist that people hold to. It exists to such an extent that it even changes the way people behave. “ Recent research indicates that the stereotype of the dumb blonde is so ingrained in our psyche that it can subconsciously change the way we behave. (Sharpe)

Sharpe further explains that “ There are absolutely no scientific studies to support this stereotype. Stereotypes are cultural beliefs about social groups; they are not truthful pictures of who people are. ” (Sharpe) Granted, even blondes themselves at times do not help with how they are perceived. Paris Hilton, for example, has exploited the stereotype. In an interview several years ago with Barbara Walters, Paris mentioned she was going to drop the “ dumb blonde act” and commented that “ every decade has an iconic blonde. (IBN Live: A Network 18 Venture) Yet, this does not prove the point.

It merely exposes that there are those who will exploit it for their own benefit. There are all types of people with different IQ's, characteristics, peronalities, and levels of common sense and abilities. While one can find an abundance of blonde jokes there is no evidence supporting the notion that blonde hair is the cause and proof of a lack of brains. A blonde and a redhead met for dinner after work and were watching the six o'clock news. A man was shown threatening to jump from the Brooklyn Bridge.

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The blonde bet the redhead \$50 that he would not jump, and the redhead replied, " I'll take that bet! " Sure enough, he jumped. The blonde gave the redhead the \$50 she owned. The redhead said, " I can't take this, you're my friend. " The blonde said, " No. A bet's a bet. " So the redhead said, " Listen, I have to admit, I saw this one on the 5 o'clock news, so I can't take your money. " The blonde replied, " Well, so did I, but I never thought he'd jump again! " We all laugh, but the evidence is overwhelming; blondes contend with equal brains just as any other.