Name(s)

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Project Number

J0310

Project Title

Blonde Today, Brunette Tomorrow! Influence of Hair Color on the Perceived Intelligence of Women

Abstract

Objectives/Goals
The purpose of this study is to verify if women#s hair color makes a noticeable difference in social perception of women#s intelligence.

Methods/Materials
Using Adobe Photoshop, four subjects, two blonde teenage girls and two blonde middle age women, were each given four different hair colors: silver blonde, blonde, light brown, and dark brown. Four surveys, with four pictures each, were arranged so that there would not be two pictures of the same person with a different hair color in the same survey. SurveyGold software was used to design and post the surveys on the internet. One hundred participants took one survey each and rated each person on a scale of one to seven for friendliness, sociability, intelligence, attractiveness, and confidence; this way the subject would not know that only the intelligence factor would be analyzed. A comparison of the average intelligence ratings of those subjects was made for each different hair color.

Results
All subjects received the lowest average intelligence ratings when they had silver blonde followed by blonde hair color, and the highest average intelligence ratings when they had dark brown followed by light brown hair color. There was no age interaction between subjects and respondents. There was a gender interaction with the subjects; male respondents gave a lower intelligence rating to the subjects when they had silver blonde and blonde hair compared to the female respondents. Blonde respondents# lowest intelligence ratings were higher than the lowest intelligence ratings of all the respondents of the other hair colors. Subjects were found more attractive when they had silver blonde and blonde hair colors.

Conclusions/Discussion
My results were similar to previous researches and findings that the stereotype #Dumb Blonde# is still alive. This study shows that one seemingly small change in physical appearance can change the way that people perceive an individual. This might be an advantage to some (dying your hair brown when applying for a new job) or a disadvantage to others (being called #dumb#).To reduce the effect of these images, newspapers, television and radio should portray people in a more respectful way. In the meantime, we shouldn't stereotype people because sometimes stereotyping can have an unfair effect on others.

Summary Statement

This study shows that women with any type of blonde hair are still perceived as less intelligent but more attractive.

Help Received

My parents helped me learn how to post the surveys on the internet and how to use SurveyGold software to analyze the data.