

When You Think About it, Size Doesn't Matter

An M.D. friend recently told me, "At work, I deliver about two hundred babies every year. At home, I'm an idiot."

I have a similar problem. I seem to be getting by just fine professionally, but at home I can't be trusted to take out the trash without detailed instructions and constant reminders.

I turned to the Internet to determine how widespread this problem might be, and somehow ended up on a site that statistically compares human heights. It turns out that I'm at least 97.5% sure my brain is bigger than yours.

I'm 6' 3" tall, which means less than 2.5% of American men and only .003% of American women are taller. The probability is very high that any of my parts are larger than any of your parts, just saying.

Good for me, because numerous studies indicate – all other things being equal – a larger brain amounts to greater intelligence. I choose to ignore the fact that all other things are almost never equal.

Being tall has its advantages, especially when dealing with those payment kiosks in parking ramps. On the other hand, hardly a week goes by that I don't bump my head on something. Not to mention the standard amount of knee space on an airplane.

LuAnn can testify that if I'm tired of arguing a point I'll sometimes play the "my brain is bigger than your brain" card, which usually ends the conversation abruptly and unsatisfactorily, but does end the conversation. So far I have avoided saying something even more patronizing like "That's okay - I know you're doing the best you can with your tiny little brain," which demonstrates my instinct for self-preservation is still intact.

To be fair – and I'm not sure why I'm starting that now - studies have suggested that although most females' brains are smaller than most males', that is compensated for because women's brains appear to be more densely packed with neurons. They are somehow wringing more horsepower out of a smaller engine.

In addition, the wiring in male brains is dissimilar to females', not to mention the output is poisoned by testosterone. This leads to what behavioral scientists like to call "butt-dumb behavior." For example, male vehicle crash deaths have more than doubled those of females for nearly every year since 1975. It also turns out that testosterone is a moderate immunosuppressant, leaving us more susceptible to whatever is going around. Woe is us.

Just to add to the confusion, there's also a real thing known as emotional intelligence (EQ - Emotional Quotient), which is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and the emotions of others. It's a developable skill not directly related to IQ, and has been shown to be a more important factor than IQ in determining professional success. Not surprisingly, women have a small but statistically significant edge over men in their ability to use emotions to their benefit.

To be clear, I am not saying here that most men are smarter than most women because of our humongous brains. I'm not even saying that any men are, have ever been, or will ever be smarter than any women. That way madness lies.

As you can see, attempting to compare intelligence and gender typically doesn't yield much in the way of productive discussion. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to take out the trash again – if someone will remind me how to do it.

You can take issue with anything written by Writers Group member Dave Parsons, but keep in mind his brain is probably bigger than yours.