

EDITORIAL

Improving 'gaydar' harmful

It's pretty common for quirky new scientific studies to make their way into the news cycle. Their subjects are guaranteed to pique the interest of readers, such as the real number of calories in some piece of celery you just ate, or that taller people have a greater likelihood of playing basketball. But many involve sex.

While some are fun to read, many are a waste of time and brainpower. Even though they're not hurting anyone, they aren't exactly working to cure cancer either. But according to a story published in the Los Angeles Times this week, some scientists think

that sexual orientation can be successfully correlated with certain appearance cues.

The story mentions one study that found that the hair of gay men was 3.5 times more likely to grow in a counterclockwise fashion.

Still another found that men who were left-handed were 34 percent more likely to be gay. That figure grew to 90 percent for women.

What?

Scientific inquiry is fine, but not only do we not see a constructive application for any of this data, it's likely that the findings could fuel prejudice and discrimination.

Looking for genetic cues of sex-

ual orientation sounds like the top of a slippery slope, especially considering other scientific research in the areas of genetic modification.

If that procedure ever becomes acceptably mainstream, we fear that such a procedure could be used not to guard against disease and birth defects, but to prevent or "cure" homosexuality in future generations.

Not to mention the pain that would come to those who wish to keep their orientation private if a scientist were to go on national television and declare that "X" is a sure sign of homosexuality.

Our Opinion

Editorials represent the majority opinion of The Daily Illini Editorial Board, whose members are Steve Contorno, editor in chief; Susan Kantor, managing editor; Kathleen Foody, assignment editor; Andrew Mason, opinions editor; Meghan Montemurro, assistant assignment editor; Wes Anderson, copy chief.

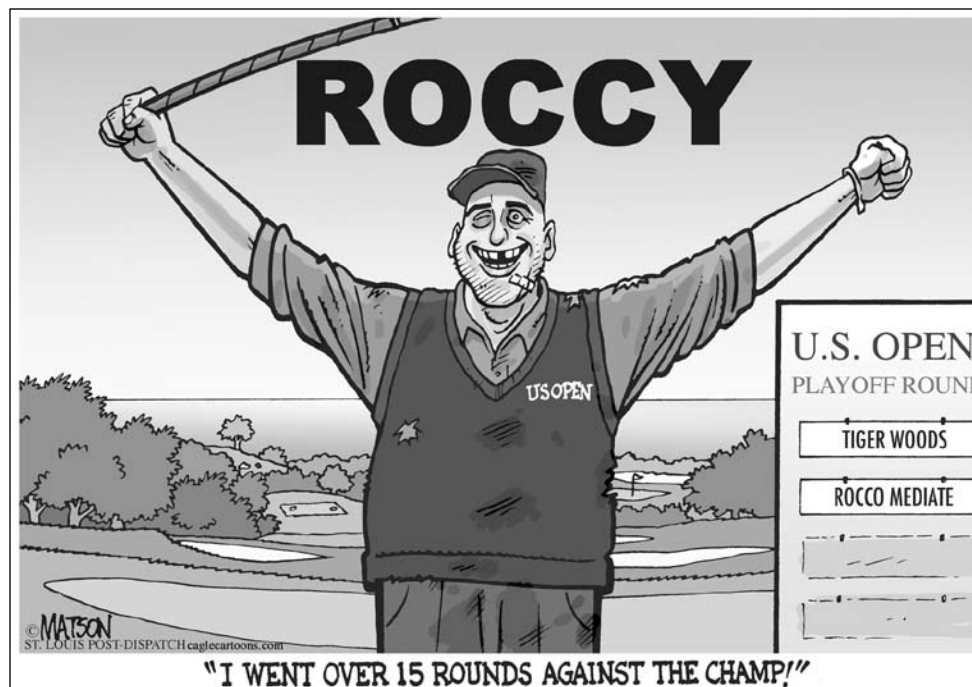
Obviously, we are all not the same genetically or physically, but there are many better ways to embrace our differences than, as the story put it, "working on gaydar."

In most cases, science is its own virtue. But once in awhile, we can't help but think that there are some things that aren't worth finding an answer to.

Finding out if eggs are healthy? Yes. Curing cancer? Most definitely. Perfecting gaydar? Not even close.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

RJ MATSON, THE ST. LOUIS POST DISPATCH



My manhood is burning

The manliest thing a guy can have is confidence, and I summoned all mine in a very manly way recently when I bought a vanilla and lime-scented candle.

This was the first aromatic candle purchase of my life. I started with no idea which one I wanted to buy, but I knew why I wanted it: I had to convince a girl that I am the sort of sensitive, caring guy who always has scented candles on hand.

There's something fascinating about candles. I think this is because, when used properly, they involve fire. Fire has fascinated mankind for literally dozens of years. It has mythical properties that nothing else can reproduce. For example, in 1871 it was briefly able to stop political corruption in Chicago by burning down the entire city. Also, were it not for fire, "Chariots of Fire" would have had to be called "Really Fast Chariots." So it was really important that I not mess up this purchase.

The Yankee Candle store at Market Place Mall had too much variety for me to make a decision, so Lisa, the manager, led me on a tour. I never thought candles could be interesting — and after sixty minutes of walking through the entire store and discussing them, I realized I had wasted an hour of my life.

Lisa began by having me sniff the candles to see how well the scents matched the labels. It was uncanny: The "Vanilla Cupcake" candle really smelled like a vanilla cupcake; "Sweet Strawberry" really smelled like fresh strawberries; and "Cottage Breeze" really smelled like deodorant.

Actually, this was a common theme in the store. A lot of the candles, mostly the ones with names like "Windy Air" and "Nocturnal Night," smelled like Right Guard gel.



SCOTT GREEN

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No matter how enthusiastically the sales staff endorsed these, I was not ready to set a romantic mood with the fragrance of armpits.

A lot of the candles Lisa showed me did smell pretty good, especially "Lilac Blossoms," but I was concerned my manhood might suffer if I purchased anything floral-scented. Just for admitting I liked the lilac candle, I'm probably going to have to learn how to fix a carburetor.

I had to figure out which of their candles was manliest. "What kind of candle would they light in the locker rooms at the Super Bowl?" I asked.

"Beach Walk," Lisa said after some thought. I took a sniff. Deodorant. Manly. But still not what I was looking for. Besides, the Giants probably would have wanted a candle that smelled like Bill Belichick's tears. Lisa didn't have anything like that in stock.

I ultimately went with "Vanilla Lime" because it was simple, and also because it smelled like a Creamsicle. That accomplished, I was on to my next chore: buying deodorant. I wanted one that smelled like a candle.

Scott is a third-year law student. He's going to need some help fixing his carburetor.

Readers' opinions

The Daily Illini reserves the right to edit or reject any contributions. Summer letters must be limited to 200 words. Contributions must be typed and include the author's name, address and phone number.

University students must include their year in school and college.

Inquiries about possible guest columns should be submitted to opinions editor Andrew Mason via e-mail or by calling 217.337.8366.

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