

Pick-up lines dated, ineffective

BY ANNE REBAR
Columnist

"Are you lost? Heaven's a long way from here." I rolled my eyes and turned, expecting to see someone I knew trying to be funny.

Instead, I saw a guy I didn't know staring in my direction. I turned around looking for the person he was joking with. No one. Then I realized he was serious.

"Uh, no. Thank you," I said, and walked away.

Personally, the fact that people continue to use pick-up lines baffles me. However, "Dating Doctor" David Coleman, the inspiration for the movie "Hitch," says pick-up lines, invented by men to try to get into women's pants, exist because of women.

"It's harder for men to approach women because women think men just want sex — they inherently don't trust them," he said at his presentation Dec. 9 to Truman students.

So they exist because women are always skeptical of male intentions (which is smart if you ask me, but maybe I'm just pessimistic), but do they actually work?

Psychologists at the University of Edinburgh found that when it comes to picking up women, men and women have vastly differing ideas about what a successful pick-up technique would entail.

The study, published in the journal "Personality and Individual Differences," asked 205 undergraduates to rate con-

versation starters based on what would most likely make them want to continue a conversation. It found that men overestimate the effectiveness of off-color and crude, sexually suggestive remarks. Men also underestimate the effectiveness of humor, which turned out to be a preferred technique by women, though it still can be risky. To be safe, men should nix any lines that they think are absolutely hilarious but would stun their mothers into horrified silence.

Other lines women rated highly were those that suggested helpfulness, generosity, cultural literacy and wealth. It seems that intelligence and good old-fashioned chivalry win out over innuendos involving Fred Flinstone and all cheesy references to heaven or angels. Surprised? I'm not. Now can we please banish these ridiculous lines from the male's "how to pick up girls" playbook? Thanks, we girls really appreciate it.

Nick Strauss, journalist and author of "The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists," said in a "Forbes" magazine article that logically speaking, pick-up lines could never work because it makes the other person uncomfortable by hitting on them too soon.

Strauss says it's important to not come across as trying too hard, so starting a conversation with something nonthreatening that subtly shows off your attractive qualities will work much better.

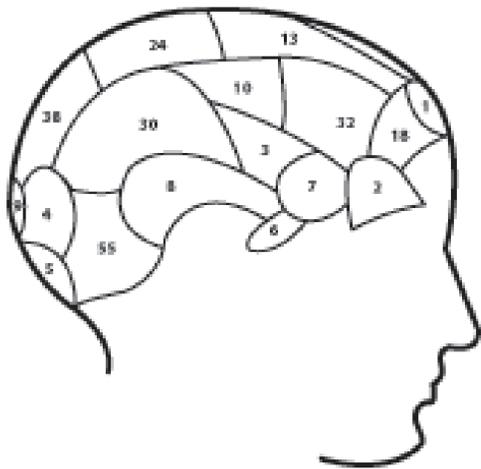
An example he gives is asking a girl to settle a debate or bet between you and



a friend. It opens up room for a longer conversation and gives a girl time to get comfortable with you before you show an overt interest in her. Because for me, "No, thank you" is pretty much the only possible response to "If I tell you that you have a nice body would you hold it against me?"

There's nothing worse than that awkward silence following a really bad pick-

up line. Usually we are stunned that those words seriously just left another person's lips and are quickly trying to figure out the best way to say no and get the heck out of there. So next time it seems like, "Hey, baby, you must be a light switch because you turn me on," would be a really funny thing to say to the hot girl standing next to you at the bar, do her a favor. Keep it to yourself and just say, "Hi."



BY ELIZABETH NECKA
Columnist

Renewed religious fervor spread through my family when my younger cousin began elementary school at the local church. Suddenly, there was this 6-year-old constantly asking us questions about God, leading prayer at dinner and getting excited to go to mass and sing the hymns.

My own spirituality has been a bit questionable lately, and I know the next step in my faith journey will lead me down a rocky road where I'm forced to introspectively answer a lot of scary questions. Hopefully, I'll re-emerge with a new vigor for whatever direction my faith takes me.

I always find it interesting when people mention their religious practices in passing. Although Truman has a wide variety of religiously affiliated organizations that many students are actively involved in, for me, a person's religion is something very intimate and personal to which I rarely gain exposure. So, I write this column in complete irony.

Coming from a relatively liberal but predominately Catholic hometown, I am intrigued by the different sets of values and practices abundant on campus. (With this column, however, it is not my intent to assert that any religion is more or less "right" or "correct" than another — I have no authority in that respect.) Think of the popularity of religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism in the Eastern world compared to Abrahamic religions in the Western world. Is religiousness and spirituality something driven by culture? Or is one's faith something more psychological that originates with our genes?

Interestingly enough, the levels of different traits that

The Truman Experiment:

Religious fervor studied through traits

compose our personalities correlate modestly with levels of spirituality and religiousness, suggesting that the strength of our faith is inherent in our personality. In a 2007 study from the Journal of Psychology and Christianity, psychologists administered a wide variety of surveys to regularly practicing adults to assess both their personalities and their general religiousness, comprised of the individual's awareness of and relationship with God, positive and negative experiences with God, sense of purpose in life, readiness to approach existential questions and perceptions of religious doubt. Neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience — four of the five main personality traits — were all related to religiousness. Only extraversion was not.

High levels of neuroticism, or the likelihood to worry, tended to correlate with more occurrences of negative experiences with God. Agreeableness and conscientiousness were associated with more positive relationships with God. As a general note, those higher in openness to experience were more likely to have a relationship with God. One might speculate that certain personality types are more likely to be religious, but it also could be that religious people tend to develop similar personalities.

A 1999 meta-analysis in the Journal of Personality reviewed a series of studies on religious practices, religious values and religious affiliation. In psychology, it's very hard to assert cause and effect, especially with factors such as genetics. There is no way to be certain that a person's biological composition is the only cause for certain aspects of personality, although it could be highly influential. One of the best ways to study the effects of biological disposition is through twin studies — identical, monozygotic twins share a DNA sample much closer than that of fraternal, dizygotic twins. If twins, especially those reared apart in separate environments, have more similar scores on the variables being studied than normal siblings, then we can assert a genetic influence.

Religious affiliation appeared to be influenced by the environment, an expected effect, considering that many people practice the religion of their parents because it is the one in which they were raised. However, twins tended to be more similar than other sibling pairs in

terms of their religious attitudes and values.

Anywhere from 20 to 30 percent of a person's belief in the observation of the Sabbath, authority of the Church and the Bible and respect to the Divine Law was completely out of their control, predetermined by their genetics. Although this might not sound like a large amount, relatively speaking, this is monumental. When genetics play this large of a role, they are considered significant factors.

For females in particular, religious practices such as the use of religion in times of need, frequency of prayer and church attendance were moderately correlated with the individual's biological composition.

The studies even focused on political and religious conservatism and permissive sexual attitudes, finding some genetic influence for these as well. Our genes might not determine what we believe, but they appear to determine how we believe.

It is important to note that this research on psychology and religion has a predominantly Christian focus. Given the plurality of religious affiliations, it is difficult to conceptualize the important components of religiosity that a researcher aims to study. Hence, limiting studies to the most common religion in the United States, Christianity, makes for ease in both sampling and definition while studying. Unfortunately, this means that our current understanding of spirituality is rather limited and hard to generalize.

So am I the oddball in my family for having a sort of faith crisis? Or is it in my nature, literally scripted into my genes, to face these doubts and questions? I haven't decided. And no thank you, Evangelicals who preach to me on the mall and in the fountain, I am not asking you for your guidance. I'll find my way in my own time.

I'm a logical thinker. I work through problems until I ascertain enough substantial evidence that I can be confident in my solution. Religion doesn't really permit you to do that — faith is about believing, not about knowing. But knowing my choice in faith isn't necessarily as deeply seated within me as the vigor with which I will practice it is comforting — finding my faith is about finding what feels right for me, not what is "right" or "wrong."

MEDITATIONS OF MICHELLE: Mindfulness tames clutter

BY MICHELLE MARTIN
Columnist

My friends and family tell me I am the spiciest person they know. All my life, I've been dubbed the "space cadet." Since my first years of grade school, I struggled with inattention and took ADD medication for years before deciding in college that I couldn't depend on a pill to solve my problems anymore.

Unfortunately, a running commentary of fantasy, worry and analysis constantly streams through my head. If I absentmindedly wade into this seductive current of daydreams, it lures me into the tantalizing world and keeps me distracted from whatever is actually happening. Despite my most valiant efforts, I am simply not the student who raptly follows a teacher's every word during a lecture.

Although I realize my issues with inattention are at least somewhat worse than average, I think most Americans struggle with it to some degree. We avoid boredom like the plague. A friend of mine tells me that her house literally has a television in every room — even

the bathroom. We have iPods to drown out dullness when we're walking around campus, and we usually read or talk to friends while we eat. TV commercials have reached a five-second run time and USA Today no longer prints stories that are long enough to jump to another page because readers might get bored and never finish the story.

With a new distraction around every corner, I am not surprised that ADD diagnoses rose among school-age children by three percent per year between 1997-2006, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Something in us always wants something more exciting than what is in front of us.

The downsides of this mentality? First of all, we waste our money funding our distractions, and we waste our time planning for future distractions simply to avoid existing without something colorful or interesting around. Second, we lose when we forget the moment we are in right now. I have read the words of Eastern mystics who claimed the present is the only thing that exists. After turning over the idea,

I decided this was true. Yes, the future will come, but the future only exists when it becomes the now — when we are living it.

When we spend all our time fantasizing about the future or wringing our hands over what could happen, we miss out. The same idea goes for the past. The cliché holds true — don't cry over spilled milk. If you spent all last weekend procrastinating instead of studying, then stressing out about it won't help. Just do the best you can right now.

On a side note, I don't think the Eastern philosophers meant that you can't plan ahead. As we all know, a degree-seeking Truman student probably couldn't emerge from college unscathed without planning ahead. But agonizing over what you cannot control is anything but productive.

Although I will probably never be rid of my inattentiveness, I have learned that practicing mindfulness — living in the present — helps me immensely. Mindfulness slowly tames the mind to ignore the mental clutter, but Lord knows I haven't mastered it — mindfulness is about as easy as capturing jelly in a net. We have hardwired

our minds to sniff out the most interesting objects around, so change takes some time. But I have discovered that when I consciously focus my attention on what I am doing right now, the present becomes a lot more interesting. My mind stops trying to plan out my next ten minutes or ten years, and I can relax and enjoy myself.

Anyone who has tried to pay attention in a boring class knows that mindfulness is pretty difficult. But from what I have experienced, simple practice eventually pacifies the wild beast. The more I think about mindfulness, the more frequently I remember to be here. When your mind simply cannot come down from the clouds, try breathing. As someone once told me, breathing connects the body and the mind. That sense of physical stability will focus your mind and bring you back. Meditation clears and sharpens my mind — without it, I would never have survived school sans Adderall.

Buddhist Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote a book called "The Miracle of Mindfulness." I distinctly remember one passage in which Hanh explains that even when we undertake tedious tasks,



like doing the dishes, the mindful individual doesn't do the dishes simply to make them clean. Rather, he or she does the dishes for the sake of doing the dishes. Hanh writes, "While washing the dishes, you might be thinking about the tea afterwards, and so try to get them out of the way as quickly as possible in order to sit and drink tea. But that means you are incapable of living during the time you are washing the dishes. When you are washing the dishes, washing the dishes must be the most important thing in your life. ... Each act is a rite, a ceremony."

Those dishes are sort of fun to wash when you are living every moment, and the tea afterward tastes quite robust when you savor every taste.