

Being naked

Americans see the human body as dangerous

Veera Supinen

"As a European, I find it strange and sad that the Daily Nebraskan has more than one ad of abortion clinics or adoption services every day but hardly ever a condom ad."

nothing better than taking a sauna at least once a week. And because saunas are such nice places, they are very popular among young people. And there we are, all naked and happily chatting to each other. Later, we put our clothes on and act perfectly normal. Of course, we often have to explain to foreigners, especially Americans, the distinction between the Scandinavian saunas and orgies, but we are used to it. As a matter of fact, nobody would even think about sex in the sauna. It is too hot, too pleasant in other ways, and somehow also too "sacred" — an excellent place to meditate.

And naturally, we have to be naked in the sauna. If someone would insist on keeping a swimming suit on, the others would consider this person extremely weird (it definitely feels better to be naked in a sauna) as well as not hygienic. In public swimming halls, visitors are supposed to wash themselves and take off their swimming suits before entering the sauna.

Curiously enough, the instructions at the Campus Recreation Center are the opposite — "Be sure that you wear a proper attire while in the sauna (towel, shorts, etc.). This is for health and safety reasons." Most Americans wash themselves regularly and are concerned about their hygiene. How

is it possible to argue that a wet, sweaty towel, often already used at the gym, could be more hygienic than a clean human body? An important factor behind this and many similar rules must be a concern for those people who find naked human bodies disturbing.

I would laugh at the Americans' prudishness as most Scandinavians do, and patiently explain our points of view over and over again. Except it seems to me that Americans' opinions on sexuality and nudity are not just harmless and a little bit naive but a sign of a more serious cultural trauma.

In today's America, as in Victorian times, the human body and sexuality are often considered dirty, dangerous and shameful. At the same time, however, the American media is obsessed with the subject. Somehow the whole picture reminds me of a bunch of elementary school kids who, during a field trip to a museum, are pecking at the naked statues.

I don't claim that the United States' many sexually related problems, such as teen-age pregnancy, AIDS and sexual crimes are direct consequences of this sometimes twisted attitude many Americans still have toward their sexuality. I do believe, however, a liberated discussion on sex and a more natural approach to the human body could be a healthy way to start solving these problems. As a European, I find it strange and sad that the Daily Nebraskan has more than one ad of abortion clinics or adoption services every day but hardly ever a condom ad.

An American friend of mine told me — just between you and me — sometimes after taking a shower he likes to walk in his apartment with no clothes on!

I hope he's not feeling too guilty about it.

Supinen is a junior history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Lenient parents add to teen-age behavior

Here's another entry for Bill Bennett's Index of Leading Cultural Indicators: The 26th annual survey of high-achieving teen-agers — those listed in Who's Who Among American High School Students — reveals that cheating is common in their schools, whereas studying hard is not.

These kids are not members of minority groups, nor are they disadvantaged — arguably, they are too advantaged. The vast majority are suburban, white kids who attend public schools, reports The Washington Times. Eighty-nine percent said cheating is common at their schools, and 76 percent admit to cheating on tests themselves.

If this is true of the highest achieving high school students, what does this tell us about the average kid?

There's more bad news in this survey. The kids paint a picture of home life that is, if not quite Sodom and Gomorrah, certainly a very, very long way from "Father Knows Best." Three out of five teen-agers who said they had sex did so at home when their parents were away. And one out of three said their parents were aware that they had "guests" at home in the parents' absence. One out of five said they drank at the homes of friends with their parents' knowledge.

In other words, parents are willfully looking the other way as their children cheat on tests, have sex in their bedrooms and drink alcohol. Only 13 percent of these high-achieving high school students said his or her parents were "very strict."

The lenience with which they are familiar at home extends to the classroom as well. "Too many teachers are afraid to call kids on cheating because they're afraid they'll be sued," Paul Krause, publisher of Who's Who, told the Washington Times.

Apparently, they're also afraid of demanding serious work from their charges. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed said they spend seven hours a week or fewer studying. Contrast that with reports from the A.C. Nielsen company, showing that the average teen-ager spends 21 hours a week watching television.

As much as I blame teachers, unions and school bureaucrats for dumbing down the curriculum in the past 30 to 40 years, it is clear that they would not have been able to get away with this theft from the young without the tacit collaboration of parents.

When teachers are afraid to punish cheaters for fear of being sued by irate parents, the tacit compact between adults in the community — the agreement to socialize the young together — has broken down. The image of American schools that emerges



Mona Charen

"Are we raising a generation of spoiled brats? Would you want your children to attend a school where some kids get away with using the f-word to their teachers?"

from this survey is of warehouses for understimulated and underchallenged kids, kids who are not learning right from wrong but are probably internalizing all the wrong lessons about their "rights."

A few years ago, The Washington Post ran a story about my neighborhood school system in Fairfax County, Va. Teachers are forced to endure ugly profanity from their students on a regular basis, the story said, because parents decline to support the teachers when complaints are raised. The kids in Fairfax County schools are from all over the globe and represent many races and religions, but it is fair to say that a majority are white and upper middle class. Fairfax, with its huge complement of federal workers as well as lawyers, consultants and lobbyists feeding off nearby Washington, D.C., is one of the wealthier counties in the nation.

Are we raising a generation of spoiled brats? Would you want your children to attend a school where some kids get away with using the f-word to their teachers?

Parents seem all too eager to turn over the job of civilizing their children to the schools. But unless there is true cooperation between parents and teachers — unless teachers know that they will be supported by parents if they must discipline a child — the job of inculcating basic values like honesty cannot go forward.

Still, the news from the Who's Who survey is not all bad. Asked to name the things that are "out" among high schoolers, the respondents listed "O.J. Simpson, cocaine, and Bill and Hillary." OK, they also listed "Newt," but that just lends more credence to the idea that they've been neglecting their studies.

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Career choice

Salesman encounters many odd customers

Aside from keeping chemistry professors employed, I spend my free time selling appliances for a local company. (Editor's note: I have spoken with Steve and he has agreed not to plug his company, Merchandise Mart, in this article...er.dammit!)

I'm quite proud of my prowess with appliance sales and am willing to bet my life savings (A total of \$62,875 owed to Erotica Enterprise) that by the time you're through reading this article, four out of five of you will skip class to buy a salad shooter.

The other person, no doubt the guy who likes Ayn Rand, will sit there and wish he were a tortoise. (Confidential to Ayn Rand guy: Erotica Enterprises loves me very much, please don't shoot me. — Steve)

Here is a typical conversation between myself and a potential appliance customer.

Customer: "Excuse me sir, How many cycles does this dishwasher have?"

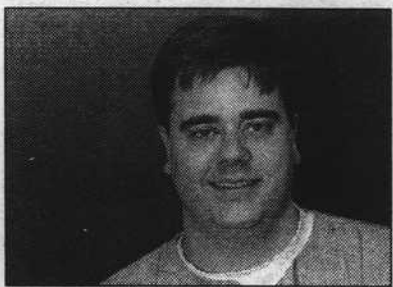
Me: "This particular dishwasher is still suffering severe emotional distress from the O.J. verdict and is not for sale. I suggest you try our competitor down the street who is not only cheaper, but more importantly, doesn't allow his appliances to watch TV."

Customer: "Rot in hell."

This conversation generally takes place nine times a day and is accompanied by unusually large amounts of the phrase "Yo' momma fat boy!"

You're probably thinking you could do a better job. I'm here to tell you that selling appliances is anything but easy.

How would you combat an irate customer who demands to know what time you close and how much something is? I deal with these kinds of "people" every day.



Steve Willey

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Not everything about selling appliances is evil, however. Being downtown, my store provides shelter for all kinds of strange humans.

Every day, a man named "Clovis" comes in and shops for a "Ram-Rod." (I'm not making this up.) He has a problem with his tongue and cannot pronounce the word "poontang" without getting big laughs from other customers and myself.

If I'm ever fortunate enough to make a sale, I get what is called a "commission." Now I'm not positive, but I think the word

"commission" has French origins.

Charlemene LeReaux, a large employer in Paris during the late 1800s, is credited with first developing the idea of commissions.

Legend has it, LeReaux was Europe's leading producer of rabbit spit. Because of understandably small sales, he developed the commission idea to distract his employees from realizing they weren't making any money whatsoever.

Customer: "Polly Vou France" LeReaux: "We, and I also zell Le'Rabeet Speet."

Customer: "Rot in hell."

Here's a helpful hint. If any of you decide that a sales career is indeed for you, to ensure success, try to remember two simple things.

Either stay in Nebraska, or target elderly people who think you're Boris Yeltsin. The reason I say to stay in Nebraska is because I have discovered a sure-fire sales method.

As long as you say Tom Osborne has used, recommended or sneezed on your product, you are guaranteed an instant sale.

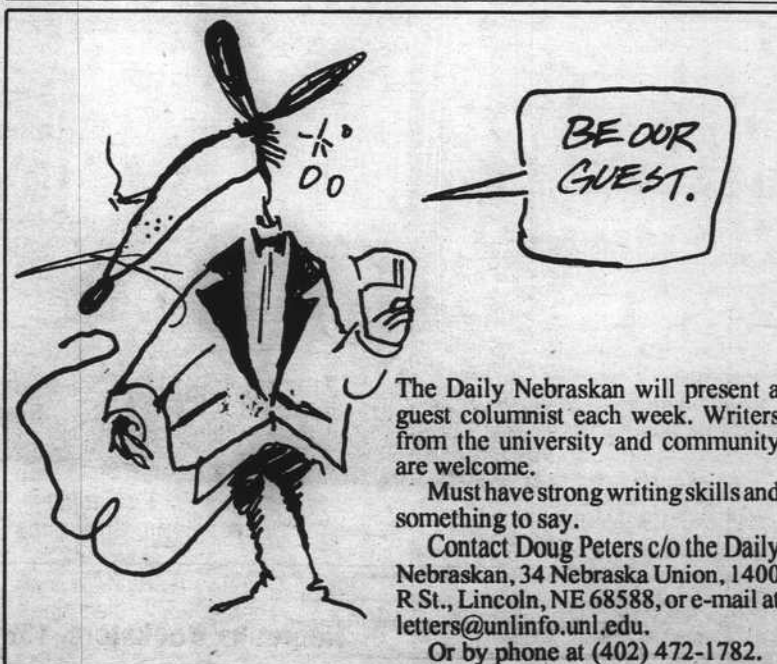
Nebraskans will pay phenomenal amounts of money for those items. Rumor has it a man in Elsie, Neb., paid \$1,300 for a pair of underwear that was supposedly "christened" by Tom himself.

Personally, I'm not conniving enough to be an underwear salesman. (Which, by the way, is listed as the third-most conniving job in America, behind only the Presidency and Athletic Director of UNL.)

I'm going to stick with selling appliances. I'm not one for quitting and taking the easy road.

And I'll bet my chemistry teachers are thrilled to hear that.

Willey is a junior ag-journalism major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



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