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BLEED

Jump in

Group affiliations often beat out desire for individuality

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Americans like to pride themselves on individualism. We see ourselves as individuals, work within an entrepreneurial system that rewards the individual and look to a past interpreted through the eyes of the individual.

But in our effort to define the individual, we seem to forget that we are essentially members of a group or many groups. More often than not, our outward personalities are dictated by the social groups of which we are a part. We interpret information and events more through the eyes of the group than through the eyes of an individual. And often, our identity as a group is based off what makes our group unique. And confrontation between groups vindicates the identities of those involved.

We can all relate with college football. It is a dominant feature of life in Nebraska. I have never been that great of a fan, but when I visit friends in Michigan, I am immediately a Husker. Whether or not I am a Husker doesn't matter; my friends from up north don't give me much choice. Because I am from Nebraska, and they are very much from Michigan, I am a Cornhusker and, more importantly, had a hand in robbing their team of a national championship. Frankly, I don't care who won and who lost. But having pride in my home state, I will quickly sing the praises of coach Tom and the rest of the boys, vehemently defend my identity as a Nebraskan and in general become the Husker they had originally accused me of being. Am I a Husker now? My opinion doesn't really matter. I identify myself with the state of Nebraska and, in the eyes of others, am therefore a Husker.

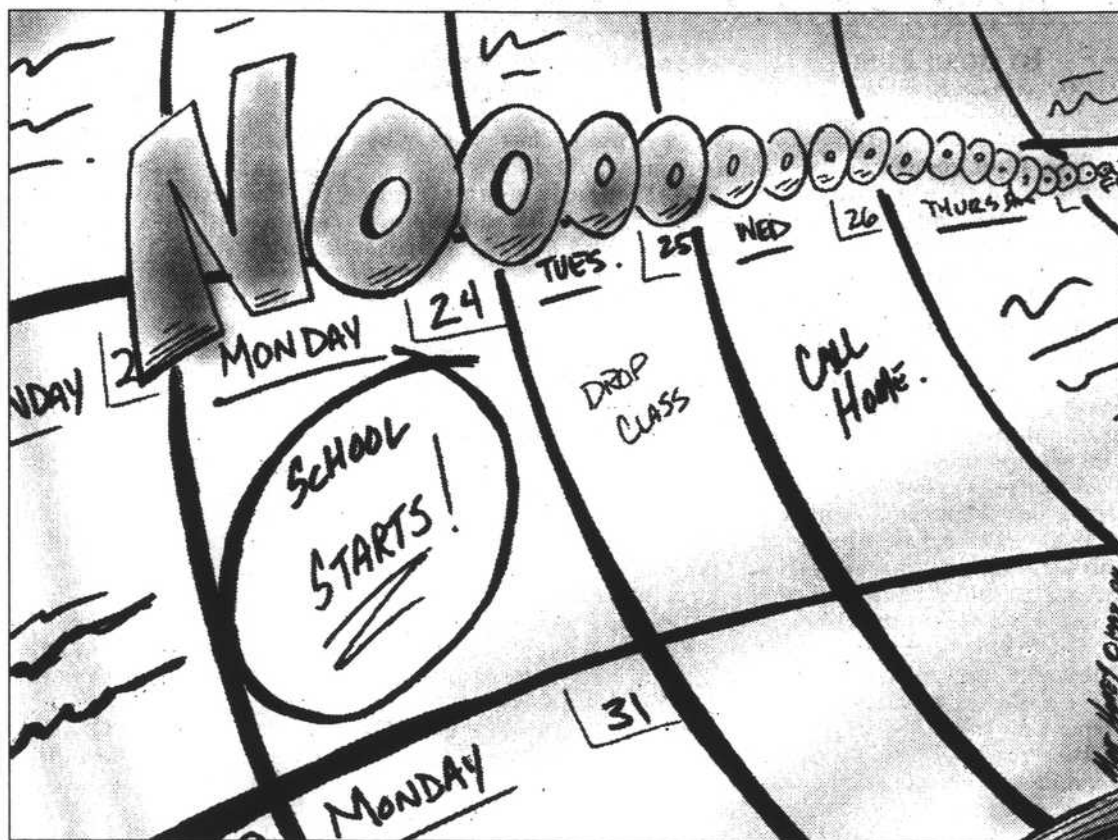
This happens to everyone in every sort of group. We cling to group identities and group conflicts in everything we do. There are plenty of examples: people who use PCs over Macintosh, drive Fords over Chevys, or vote Democrat or Republican. Why we choose this side or that isn't very obvious, or in many cases, a necessary question to answer.

And resolution of conflict between groups needs to be as decisive as the conflict itself. One side must WIN and the other must LOSE. There are few things more un-American than a tie game. Baseball games will go to extra innings until the cows come home. The heart and soul of a true fan will come out for sudden death overtime, and how could the tie-ridden game of soccer ever make the leagues in America?

Going back to Nebraska football, look at how controversial the decision to award the National Championship to both US and THEM was. Fans can only shake their fists, put the last nails in the coffin of the Bowl system and wait for next year.

The sports analogy is a good one to use because it is relatively benign and we can all relate to it. Were I to have used a current situation in the Congo, where ethnic violence between Hutus and Tutsis has broken

Haney's
VIEW



Barb
CHURCHILL

It takes two

Blame shouldn't rest solely on Clinton's shoulders

CHURCHILL is a graduate student in saxophone performance and a Daily Nebraskan columnist

If you are a public figure, you give up your right to privacy under the law.

This is what the Clinton-Lewinsky sex scandal is all about. The lack of privacy, combined with President Clinton's atypical version of morality and Monica Lewinsky's supposed youth and inexperience, has given most media organizations a new lease on life.

Pity poor Monica Lewinsky. How could she be taken in by that evil man, who just happens to be the President of the United States?

At least, this is what everyone wants us to believe — Lewinsky's lawyers, Ken Starr, most major news organizations. Every single one of them has used Lewinsky's relative youth (she's 24) and lack of experience to exonerate her, and excoriate Clinton.

But is this angle really right? Linda Tripp believes so. Tripp wants everyone to know what a backstabbing, wife-abusing adulterous lowlife Clinton really is. That's why, she says, she's told everyone everything poor old Monica said to her. Just to set the record straight.

The possible book deal had nothing to do with it.

Why is it, anyway, that Lewinsky's behavior has gone unchallenged? Why has she "gotten off," both literally and figuratively, if she's to be believed, with bad behavior at the least, and sexual addiction at the worst?

I mean, think about it. Both

Lewinsky and Clinton are possible sex addicts. And sexual addiction, according to Sex Addicts Anonymous, includes the feeling of powerlessness over debilitating, compulsive behavior relating to sex.

And, on Lewinsky's part, how could anything be more debilitating, not to mention demoralizing and just plain stupid, than to have oral sex in the White House? With a married man? One who has had affairs before?

This is not the rational, assured behavior of an adult. And isn't Lewinsky supposed to be an adult, someone who is supposed to be able to make her own choices?

Look at the choices Lewinsky has made. She chose to live on her own, in Washington, D.C., in order to positively promote growth and change in her own life. She wanted to be in the most powerful place in the world, to associate with the most powerful people and hopefully make a difference in the world.

But the fact is, life doesn't give you what you want. We start out with assumptions, some of which prove to be true, some of which prove to be false. And one of the curses of being a public figure is that you must make your mistakes in public, which adds to the pain and suffering you feel.

But sometimes, making mistakes is a gift, although it can seem to be a curse. Making mistakes and living through them, living with the pain, disappointment and the disillusionment, is part of being human. And we all make mistakes, Lewinsky and Clinton among them.

Everyone knows the mistakes Clinton has made. But no one has paid any atten-

tion to Lewinsky's mistakes. And by my count, she's made several whoppers.

Number one: She (allegedly) had oral sex with a married man. Number two: she bragged about it to "loose lips" Tripp, not exactly the most trustworthy person in the entire universe. Number three: she can't seem to realize her problems are of her own making.

Lewinsky is a deeply flawed individual, which makes her just like the rest of us. And, no lie, it must be difficult for her to have her peccadilloes flaunted before every major newscast, on the Internet and everywhere else there is a media outlet.

As this week's Time Online story "Over to You, Bill" says, the whole Lewinsky-Clinton scandal may come down to an argument over the definition of what, exactly, is sex. Many men do not consider oral sex to be in the same category as full-fledged sexual intercourse. So, if Clinton said he never had sex with her, he could very well have been telling the truth — from a certain point of view.

The polls haven't been kind to Lewinsky, either. Although many people in the United States believe she is telling the truth as she sees it, they also see her as flighty, flaky and extremely lightweight. The American public believes she deserves everything she gets, from political cartoons to the unauthorized explicit Web sites hawking nude pictures. One lawmaker, quoted anonymously in Time's story, said "The President is going to say 'I didn't do it'. And it's going to go down to, who do you trust, the President or some floozy who wants to get herself out of trouble?"

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