

Body ritual among the nacirema by horace miner essay sample



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In the article, “ Body Ritual among the Nacirema,” author Horace Miner talks in detail about the culture of a North American clan, the Nacirema. Horace Miner seems to be particularly interested in the magical beliefs, practices, and rituals of the Nacirema clan. The “ Body Ritual among the Nacirema” article shows many different examples of culture, cultural relativism, ethnocentrism, and qualitative research methodology.

The sociological concept of culture is shown in nearly every paragraph of this article. Horace Miner clearly took a lot of time to learn as much about the Nacirema culture as he possibly could. Miner specifically talks about the Nacirema culture in paragraph 3. He mentions “ While much of the people’s time is devoted to economic pursuits, a large part of the fruits of these labors and a considerable portion of the day are spent in ritual activity. The focus of this activity is the human body, the appearance and health of which loom as a dominant concern in the ethos of the people.” This statement makes it an example of culture because he talks about the particular value that the Nacirema place on ritual activity and how they devote so much of their lives to it.

Ethnocentrism is lightly used in paragraph 12. Miner says “ One has but to watch the gleam in the eye of a holy-mouth-man, as he jabs an awl into an exposed nerve, to suspect that a certain amount of sadism is involved. If this can be established, a very interesting pattern emerges, for most of the population shows definite masochistic tendencies.” I believe this to be the sociological concept of ethnocentrism because what Miner may think is sadism, may just be a normal thing to the Nacirema. What seems to be masochistic tendencies to Miner, may just be the tedious job of the “ Holy-

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mouth-man.” The man, as well as the Nacirema clan, could be so used to these practices that they may not even give it a second thought, but to Miner, it is uncommon, so he’s going to put a different label on it. Miner also uses the sociological concept of ethnocentrism in paragraph 20, where he states “ Our review of the ritual life of the Nacirema has certainly shown them to be a magic-ridden people.

It is hard to understand how they have managed to exist so long under the burdens which they have imposed upon themselves.” This is considered ethnocentrism because Miner considers the way the Nacirema live to be a burden. What is an everyday, normal, way of life for the Nacirema, would be considered a burden to Horace Miner because he is used to his own customs and way of life, so he considers other ways of life as “ wrong” or “ abnormal.” Miner is bias to his own culture, so he is unable to understand why the Nacirema choose to live the way that they do, even though to them, it is not a choice, but all that they know.

Qualitative research methodology is used throughout the entire article. Miner’s main focus is on the Nacirema clan, so he focused on a small group or community, rather than a larger focus, so that means he was using Qualitative research methodology rather than quantitative research methodology. Not only did he only focus on the Nacirema, but more specifically, he focused mainly on their magical beliefs, practices, and rituals, which made it possible for him to go into even greater depth and detail of the unique customs of this particular clan.

The Majority of “ Body Ritual among the Nacirema” is written using the sociological concept of cultural relativism. Miner wrote all, but the last paragraph and some of paragraph 12, in this concept. He wrote all the facts of the clan without being bias and he spoke of all the specific things the clan did and he told why they did those specific things. For instance, in paragraph 15 where he states “ Bathing and excretory acts are performed only in the secrecy of the household shrine, where they are ritualized as part of the body-rites. Psychological shock results from the fact that body secrecy is suddenly lost upon entry into the latipso.

A man, whose own wife has never seen him in an excretory act, suddenly finds himself naked and assisted by a vestal maiden while he performs his natural functions into a sacred vessel. This sort of ceremonial treatment is necessitated by the fact that the excreta are used by a diviner to ascertain the course and nature of the client’s sickness,” Miner states an uncommon ritual to those who are not a part of the Nacirema clan, as though it is a normal thing. He then explains why the Nacirema do this ritual. I imagine it would have been hard to write that specific paragraph without putting one’s own opinion in, but Miner did just that, and kept the concept of cultural relativism flowing throughout the paragraph.

Miner clearly wanted to write an informational article on the Nacirema culture of magic rituals, practices, and beliefs. He did mostly a good job of writing a fairly unbiased view of the clan. He did use the sociological concept of ethnocentrism and showed that he was a little bias to his own way of living. Miner also used the sociological concepts of culture, cultural

relativism, and qualitative research methodology in his article to show the <https://assignbuster.com/body-ritual-among-the-nacirema-by-horace-miner-essay-sample/>

unbiased sides of the Nacirema clan. Although the Nacirema way of life is vastly different from Miner's, as well as our own, that does not make their culture any less normal than others.

Miner, Horace. (2012, January 2) Body Ritual among the Nacerima Summary.
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