

Body ritual among the nacirema

Countries



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Connor Doyle Summary of Body Ritual among the Nacirema 10/20/2012
Introduction to Sociology The Nacirema Horace Miner depicted this cultural group located in Northwest America " living in the territory between the Canadian Cree, the Yaqui and Tarahumare of Mexico, and the Carib and Arawak of the Antilles" (Miner 503). Closely imitating the United States of America. If you take a look at the Nacirema's name spelled backwards, its American. The concept behind this is that Miner wanted to describe American's rituals in a way that people would deem crazy.

But in all actuality, it's what us humans do everyday and never think twice of it. For if we forgot to do one of these things, we would feel uncomfortable all day long. " According to Nacirema mythology, their nation was originated by a culture hero, Notgnihsaw," Hines describes that, " he was known for two great feats of strength---the throwing of a piece of wampum across the river Pa-To-Mac and the chopping down of a cherry tree in which the Spirit of Truth resided" (Miner 503). This is referring to, what many religions call, God. It's a universal feeling that everyone wants to encounter, that there is a higher power somewhere.

He then goes on to say the " Nacirema culture is characterized by a highly developed market economy which has evolved in a rich natural habitat" (Miner 503). This is referring to our Free Market Economy. The way we evolved in a " rich natural habitat", is that we've always been prospering since our birth as a country. With the exceptions of some down falls, we have been the world's leading power. It states that the Nacirema focus a lot of activity on the human body and its appearance. He states that it is a dominant concern, making every other aspect in life second best.

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Though many cultures have similar rituals to this, regarding the body, these aspects on society are quite unique. They even believe that their own human body is ugly making it a natural reaction to try and improve your situation. They also acknowledge the fact that the human body deteriorates and attracts disease. Since man knows these facts, the only option left is to perform rituals regarding the improvement of your body. He says that in every Nacirema's house there is at least one shrine devoted mainly to the self-improvement of the people. This is referring to what we commonly know as a bathroom.

If you really come to think about it, the bathroom is almost solely used for self-improvement. Every action from shaving, to brushing your teeth is preconceived and is subconsciously telling you that you need these things everyday. He goes on to say that "the rituals associated with it are not family ceremonies but are private and secret." Then he states that the only time you really talk about these rituals are to your children, and only telling them the basics while they are still growing up. Another big part of the Nacirema culture is the medicine man.

He is the only one that knows what is in the secret potion. Every Nacirema believes that if they are to go without these magic potions, they would cease to live. It goes hand in hand with the culture of our society. If people don't have a cure for the smallest thing, they still feel vulnerable. We rely on so many prescriptions, medications, and cure-alls for a quick fix. Without these things, we as a society would feel completely weak. They say that the medicine man can only work if they receive "substantial gifts" (Miner 504), which is the same for our doctors as well.

Even when the Nacirema have been done with the charms, they still keep the expired remains in their drawer just for safety. In fear that without these charms, they would remain vulnerable. The medicine man is even able to make a woman's breast larger or smaller, depending on the request. The holy man, referred to in the Nacirema culture, is what we commonly know as the Dentist. Miner says that in addition to brushing and maintaining their teeth, they visit a "holy-mouth-man" once or twice a year. They refer to a Dentist tool's as "paraphernalia, consisting of a variety of augers, awls, probes, and prods" (Miner 504). To the untrained eye that's what it looks like. Not many other cultures around the world, that are not as prosperous, ever make visits to a Dentist. They go on to say that "these objects in the exorcism of the evils of the mouth involves almost unbelievable ritual torture of the client" (Miner 505). There has always been a fear of pain when attending the Dentist. Young children dread going every year, but to their parents and their society it is standard to have a high maintenance mouth.