

# Body rituals of the nacirema

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Body Rituals of the Nacirema tells a story of a tribal group's lifestyle and the rituals of it. Miner is actually talking about the American culture. As most of us know, Nacirema is American spelled backwards. In this article, Miner's intention is not to express the extreme human behavior with the Nacirema, but the way it affects our perception of an unfamiliar culture. If we were to look at the Nacirema's behaviors with regards to appearance and hygiene without the slightest bit of knowledge about their culture, all of their actions might seem absurd and baffling. Ceremonies performed at the Latipso are among the most interesting practices of the Nacirema. Initially it puzzled me as to why people would fork out money for expensive gifts and willingly go to the temple when a full recovery or survival cannot be guaranteed. The rituals to exorcise sickness or purify patients are often more harmful than the sickness itself. A closer observation of the article indicated that the Latipso actually stands for a hospital, while the medicine men are doctors and the vestal maiden nurses. The temple seems to portray death to some but it is considered a haven for healing from within the civilization. Miner made the effort to allow others to realize that the way studies were representing distinctive culture was biased. Without the proper understanding of any society, cultural misunderstandings are bound to occur. While we take a step further into the discussion on the Nacirema as an alien group of people, we have to understand their customs and rituals from a cultural perspective. Nothing could be more interesting than to present a cultural analysis of the Nacirema and discern the true nature of their existence. From a sociological point of view, the Nacirema culture depicts a traditional practice through acceptable and respected rituals which help us gain knowledge of an influential custom whereby followers are the ones enlightened with the truth

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as our society looks upon it. One of the fundamental beliefs of the Nacirema is that the human body is ugly and that its natural tendency is to disease. It is unwise to think that we can completely purge ourselves of all cultural biases or ethnocentricity. In the eyes of sociologists, rituals are equivalent to daily activities that bring us together with our beliefs, duties and piety. Social solidarity is established as rituals holds people together with their values. Rituals contributes to the making of a society, which is why one must look at things from a different perspective in order to understand another person of a different background. Perhaps Miner wanted us to realize certain truth about ourselves, which in turn creates a dilemma for those who conduct scientific research or pursuits. On one hand they are responsible in presenting their findings without biases but on the other hand, this becomes an unrealistic expectation. It might be more honorable for them to abandon all pretensions of impartiality than to risk declaring their own opinions as fact. It seems ironic to what a paradox the Nacirema culture is, because a person's body is most abused while it serves as a powerful force behind their beliefs. However, the important factor to take note of is that even though cultural practices are different, they are exceptionally ordinary to those living in that particular civilization. Miner has helped us realize various aspects of our culture with a brilliant approach. Body Rituals of the Nacirema is meant to get us to look at our own culture from a different view since we have the mentality of ourselves being normal while other cultures seem so strange. In reality, we appear just as strange as other cultures are to us. People are the same everywhere because of our perceptions but more importantly, because of our inability to think further and come to terms with our flaws. At this

point, we should look upon other cultures with renewed objectivity and understanding.