

Culture of the nacidade

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Reading about the kind of life lived by the members of the Nacirema society was an eye opener for me in a number of ways. Not only did it make me realize how definitions of what is normal and appropriate differs from society to society, but it made me understand that there are nevertheless positive aspects to a culture that seems very strange and barbaric to me.

Firstly, the Nacirema are highly developed in terms of economics; they have a market economy and many people spend their time in " economic pursuits" (Miner, n. d). They also exchange gifts in exchange for services; for instance, gifts are given to the medicine men and herbalists to help cure their clients' maladies (Miner, n. d). I personally have not read about any case studies of " primitive" people who are so economically-minded, and a well-developed market system like this is proof for me of how civilized the Nacirema are. A second positive aspect is how well-knit the families are. Every house has a shrine where they cleanse their bodies and everyone enters this room " in succession" (Miner, n. d). Parents openly discuss purification rites with the children (Miner, n. d) and see it of utmost importance to initiate their children. The entire family has a common pursuit, desire to purify the body, which keeps them connected to each other. A third positive aspect is the fact that they put a lot of emphasis in cleansing and purifying the body. They are obsessed with hygiene and appearance, and I find it interesting that they share the belief that most people in developed, modern societies have, that good appearances have an effect on " social relationships," (Miner, n. d). This makes sense since I myself would not be attracted to people who are unclean and dirty. A fourth positive aspect of the Nacirema is how they have a " listener", who for me is the equivalent of a <https://assignbuster.com/culture-of-the-nacirema/>

psychotherapist. The listener simply listens to what his clients tell him about their problems (Miner, n. d). Lastly, it's interesting to see how the entire Nacirema society is neatly distinguished into different social roles; there are medicine men, herbalists, mouth men for example, and they are all highly trained in their own professions.

One negative aspect of the Nacirema is that they are a greedy people; they desire gifts at every service rendered and people are not entered into the latipso shrines for treatment if they cannot afford a gift to the healers, no matter how ill they are (Miner, n. d). Secondly, they are a sadistic and masochistic people (Miner, n. d) seen from the way the men needlessly lacerate their skin, women bake their heads in ovens, and from the vindictive "gleam" in the mouth-men's eyes as they treat clients (Miner, n. d). Thirdly, in terms of modern biology and medicine, the activities of the mouth-men can cause more harm than bring good; they sometimes pull out their clients' teeth, enlarge holes in decaying teeth (Miner, n. d), all which would cause a lot of pain to the clients. No good comes out of this, since "their teeth continue to decay" (Miner, n. d). Fourthly, some rituals inflict "psychological shock" (Miner, n. d) on the people; the fact that they have to undress and excrete in front of the healers, and women's naked bodies are poked by the medicine men (Miner, n. d), can disturb clients since they are used to being very private about their bodies. The last negative aspect about the Nacirema is the fact that they continue to believe in the magic of their mouth and medicine men, even when they cannot deliver positive results; even if the rituals "may even kill the neophyte, in no way decreases the people's faith in the medicine men," (Miner, n. d).

Works Cited

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