

Nacirema case paper

Countries



The Nacirema case study reminds us how cultural rituals were many years ago and how some of them are still existing today. The Nacirema tribe has many unconventional practices of how they live day to day. From the article "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema," it is clear that they believe their bodies are not attractive and should not be presented in a promiscuous way.

Professor Linton documented the North American Tribe who think their bodies as naturally disgusting. They perform daily magic rituals to their bodies to prevent it from being decayed or diseased in anyway. Some of the rituals use potions, charms and physical suffering.

One ritual they focused on was the one that was concerning the mouth. The Nacirema tribe believed that there is a strong relationship between their mouth and their social life. If they did not perform the oral rituals, it was correlated to them losing their friends and families. They perform a daily "mouth-rite" which is done by "inserting a magic bundle of hog hairs into the mouth, along with certain magical powder, and then moving the bundle in a highly formalized series of gestures." (Allard 20) This body ritual is performed daily by everyone in the Nacirema Tribe.

If I was to relate this ritual to something similar in the American culture, I would relate to people brushing their teeth every morning. The bundle of hog hairs (pretty disgusting to put in your mouth) is the same as the American toothbrush. The magic powder is similar to the toothpaste and the action of moving it in a series of formalized gestures is the same as us moving our toothbrush around our mouth to brush our teeth (I'm pretty sure everyone has a routine of how they brush their teeth every morning - I know I do).

Along with that, the people also visit the “ mouth-men” voluntarily once or maybe twice a year for torturous mouth rituals.

The “ holy-mouth-man” enhances any existing holes in the person’s teeth by using crude tools and then continues to fill the holes with “ magical materials. ” These magical materials that are placed into the holes of the teeth are used to stop their teeth from decaying and to draw friends closer. What surprised me is that even if these people did not have any naturally occurring holes in their teeth, the “ holy-mouth-man” would gauge out normal teeth to purposely make holes in the client’s mouth. He would then follow through to filling them with the “ magic materials. Part of this ritual is similar to the American culture of visiting the dentist. It is recommended for people to visit the dentist at least once or twice a year. The idea of filling any holes in the teeth seems like they are talking about people having cavities in the teeth. In the American culture, dentists use ‘ fillers’ which is similar to the “ magical material” used to fix the holes in the teeth. I am surprised that the “ holy-mouth-man” would proceed to make a hole in a client’s teeth even if they are perfectly fine. I find that appalling and not similar to the American culture.

I also find it to be strange that these people still visit the “ holy-mouth-man” even though their teeth are not getting any better. They still continue to go through the suffering just to be accepted in the Nacirema Tribe. After reviewing the article by Horace Miner, it is apparent that people of the Nacirema Tribe seem to have a reason for everything they do regardless of whether it is right or wrong or makes sense or not. Some of those reasons make sense but the main one that concerns me is why they inflict pain and

<https://assignbuster.com/nacirema-case-paper/>

harm on one another in these forms of rituals when physical torture is not even required for them.

A prime example would be the one I discussed earlier of making holes in teeth when their teeth are perfectly fine. There is no need to purposely cause pain to the client to make a hole in their teeth when it is not necessary. This kind of behavior is related to people who are associated with masochism and sadism. Masochism is derived from inflicting pain on one self and sadism is derived from inflicting pain on others. The people are going to the "mouth-men" to inflict pain on themselves even if they do not need to.

What is interesting is that Nacirema is actually American spelled backwards. It brings attention to whether these types of rituals are all make-believe or fantasy with the terms used such as "magic." These rituals would not be accepted in the American culture (in the horrendous way it is described) but it relates to diversity and the acceptance of everyone's culture regardless of whether you will follow it or not per say. This article is a great example of people during barbaric things which might not be acceptable to one person but is the norm to another.