Body Ritual Among the Nacirema

[Institutional Affiliation(s)]

Author Note

**Reflection of Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism**

The Nacirema is a group of North Americans living in the region between the Yaqui & Tarahumara of Mexico and the Canadian Cree. Horace Miner articulates the story of an eccentric lifestyle and its rituals. The two major aspects he covered in his writing are Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativity.

Ethnocentrism refers to the evaluation of cultures following preconceptions instigating the customs and morals, and of one's own culture, whereas, cultural relativity states that we should understand others in the context of their cultural values.

Horace Miner’s article, “Body Ritual among the Nacirema”, is a reflection of ethnocentrism. The author well explained the American cultural practices related to hygiene and cosmetics associated with a prehistoric tribal society. Miner described that Americans have so many beliefs that seem ridiculous when viewed from somebody else's perspective (Miner 1956). But throughout his writing, he points out that we should use our cultural preconceptions against our societal standards. But on the other hand, he allows the reader to be more open to understanding the values and beliefs of other people and judge them according to their cultural beliefs rather than own.

Miner’s article depicts a situation in which society has a natural tendency to adopt modernism. But people are trapped in their traditional ways of living and are too blind to see and realize their perspective is not necessarily the best way to observe things, particularly in a positive way.

Miner relates his piece to cultural relativism. He defined culture as an art and a representation of human intellectual achievements. He wants to set an example of cultural relativism by looking at American Rituals the way Americans themselves perceive. In the end, Miner is tries to make us realize that we are all trying to see other’s life the way we live, which is morally ridiculous. We should not define others according to our beliefs but rather according to their own.

References

Miner, Horace. 1956. “Body Ritual among the Nacirema.” *American anthropologist* 58(3): 503–7.