

Surface Culture

This level of culture (the leaves of the tree) is made up of observable and concrete elements of culture such as food, dress, music, games, literature, stories and holidays.

Guiding Questions:

- How does your family identify ethnically or racially?
- Where did you live - urban, suburban, or rural community?
- What is the story of your family in America? Has your family been here for generations, a few decades or just a few years?
- Were you the first in your family to attend college? If not, who did - your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents?
- What are some of your family traditions - holidays, foods or rituals?

My Surface Culture:

Shallow Culture

This level (the trunk) is made up of the unspoken rules around everyday social interactions and norms, such as respect, courtesy, attitudes toward elders, concepts of time, personal space, nonverbal communication, eye contact, ways of handling emotion and gestures/animations.

Guiding Questions:

- What metaphors, analogies, parables or “witty” sayings do you remember hearing from parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles?
- What did your parents, neighbors and other authority figures tell you respect looked like?
- What physical, social or cultural attributes were praised in your community? Which ones were you taught to avoid?
- What got you shunned or shamed in your family?
- What family stories are regularly told or referenced? What message do they communicate about core values?
- How were you trained to respond to different emotional displays - crying, anger, happiness?
- How were you expected to interact with authority figures? Was authority of teachers and other elders assumed or did it have to be earned?

Were you allowed to question, or talk back to, adults? Was it okay to call adults by their first name?

My Shallow Culture:

Reflect on Culture Activity

Deep Culture

This level (the roots) is made up of tacit knowledge and unconscious assumptions that govern our worldview, such as notions of fairness, definition of family, spirituality, competition, cooperation, decision making and connection with nature.

Guiding Questions:

- What messages did you get about intelligence? Did you grow up believing it was set at birth? Did you believe it was genetic?
- Did you believe some groups were smarter than others?
- What messages did you get about why other racial or ethnic groups succeeded or not?
- Did you believe certain groups were more qualified/better suited for a certain job/profession?

My Deep Culture:

Culture Tree

Leaves represent Surface Culture:

Observable patterns

Low emotional impact on trust

- Holidays
- Music
- Literature
- Stories
- Games
- Cooking

Trunk represents Shallow Culture:

Unspoken rules

High emotional impact on trust

- Respect
- Personal space
- Concept of time
- Non-verbal communication
- Eye contact
- Ways of handling emotion

Roots represent Deep Culture:

Collective unconscious – beliefs & norms

Intense emotional impact on trust

- Notions of fairness
- Definition of family
- Spirituality
- Connection with nature
- Decision making
- Competition

