
TABLE II
Questions to Ask About Culture

Family Structure

Who is considered to belong in the family?
What are the rights, roles and responsibilities of the members?

Life Cycle

What are the important stages, periods and transitions in life?
What behaviors are inappropriate or unacceptable for children at various ages?

Roles

What roles are available to whom?
How are roles acquired?

Interpersonal Relationships

How do people greet each other?
Who may disagree with whom?
How are insults expressed?

Communication

What languages and dialects are spoken?
What are the characteristics of speaking "well"?
What roles, attitudes and personality traits are associated with particular aspects of verbal and nonverbal behavior?

Decorum and Discipline

How do people behave at home and in public?
What means of discipline are used?

Religion

What religious roles and authority are recognized?
What should an outsider not know or acknowledge knowing?
<http://www.nwrel.org/cnorse/booklets/ccc/table2.html>

Health and Hygiene

How are illness and death explained?
How are specific illnesses treated?

Food

What is eaten, in what order and how often?
What are the rules for table manners, including offering foods, handling foods and discarding foods?

Holidays and Celebrations

What holidays are observed? For what purposes?
Which holidays are important for children?
What cultural values are instilled in children during the holidays?

Dress and Personal Appearance

What significance does dress have for social identity?
What is the concept and value of beauty and attractiveness?

Values

What traits and attributes in oneself or others are important? Undesirable?
What attributes in the world are important? Undesirable?

History and Traditions

How are history and tradition passed on to the young?
How do cultural understandings of history differ from "scientific" facts or literate history?

Education

What are the purposes of education? What kinds of learning are favored?
What teaching and learning methods are used in the home?
What are parental expectations for boys versus girls?

Work and Play

What behaviors are considered "work"? "Play"?
What kinds of work are prestigious? Why?

Time and Space

What is considered "on time"?
What is the importance of punctuality?
How important is speed of performance?
How are groups organized spatially by age, gender and role?

Natural Phenomena

Who or what is responsible for rain, thunder, floods and hurricanes?
Are behavioral taboos associated with natural phenomena?

Pets and Animals

Which animals are valued and for what reasons?
What animals are considered appropriate as pets? Inappropriate?

Art and Music

What forms of art and music are most highly valued?
What forms of art and music are considered appropriate for children to perform or appreciate?

Expectations and Aspirations

Do parents expect and desire assimilation of children to the dominant culture, language or dialect?
What cultural values are expected to be maintained despite the degree of formal education?

(From Saville Troike, M. A Guide to Culture in the Classroom. Rosslyn, VA: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1978.)

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