

EQUITY WORKS

Leading for Liberation *Developing the Culturally Responsive Schools We Need*

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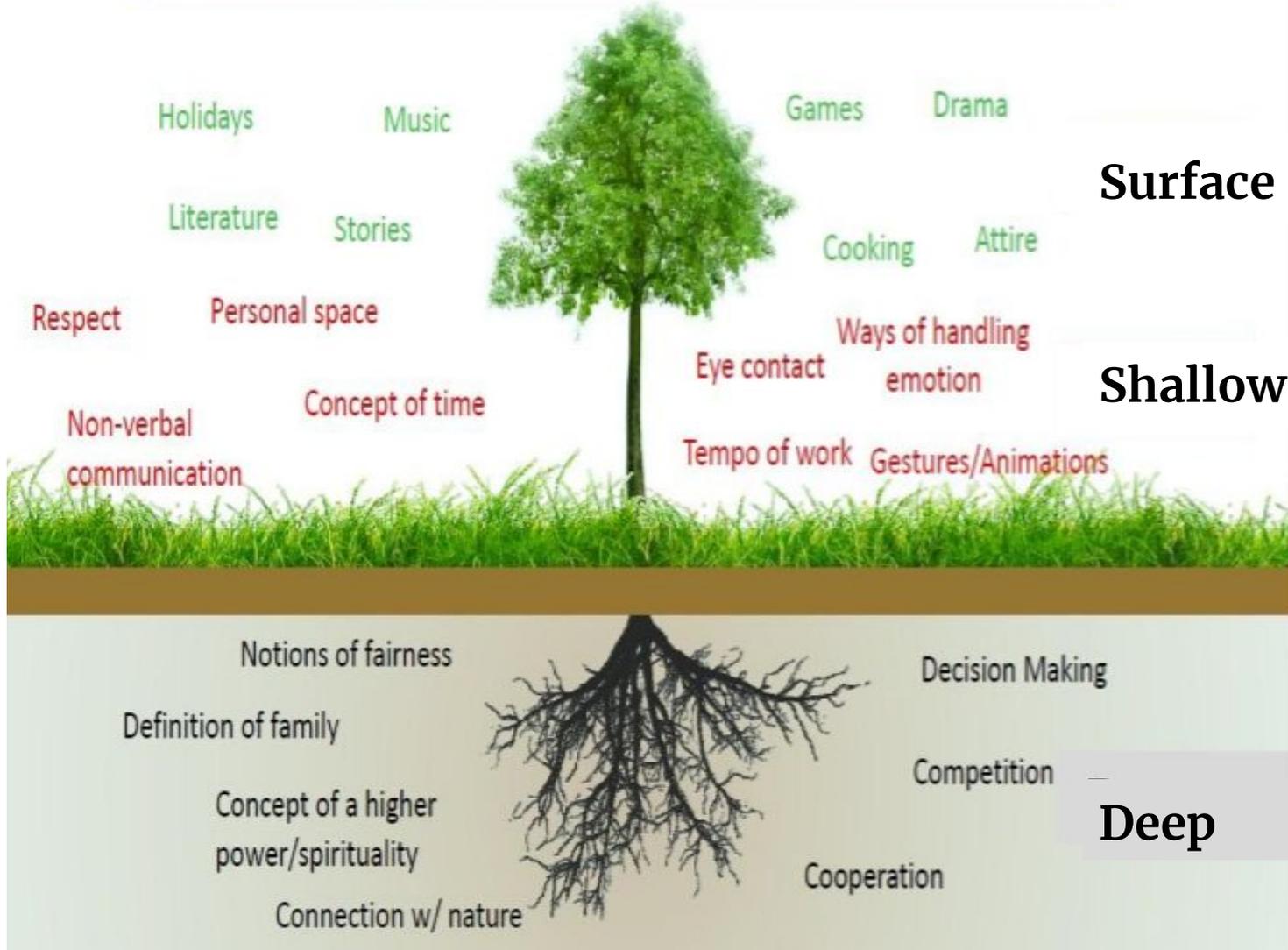
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The Culture Tree

Our Cultural Frames of Reference



Adapted By Charles Alexander, Jennifer Craft, and Marya Hay of Montgomery County Public Schools (MD) from Zaretta Hammond 's (2015) *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*

Surface Culture: This level, **the leaves**, is made up of observable and concrete elements of culture such as food, dress, music, games, literature, stories, and holiday.

Guiding Questions:

- ★ How did 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, or great-grandparents?
- ★ What are some of your family traditions - holidays, foods, or rituals?
- ★ How would you describe your family's economic status - middle class, upper class, working class, or low income? What does that mean in terms of quality of life?
- ★ What family folklore or stories did you regularly hear growing up?
- ★ Who were the heroes celebrated in your family and/or community? Why? Who were the antiheroes? Who were the "bad guys"?

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, and 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:

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 shapes your world view about teaching?
- ★ 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?
- ★ What did you learn about “doing school”? Was it a place where your culture was comfortable?

My deep culture: