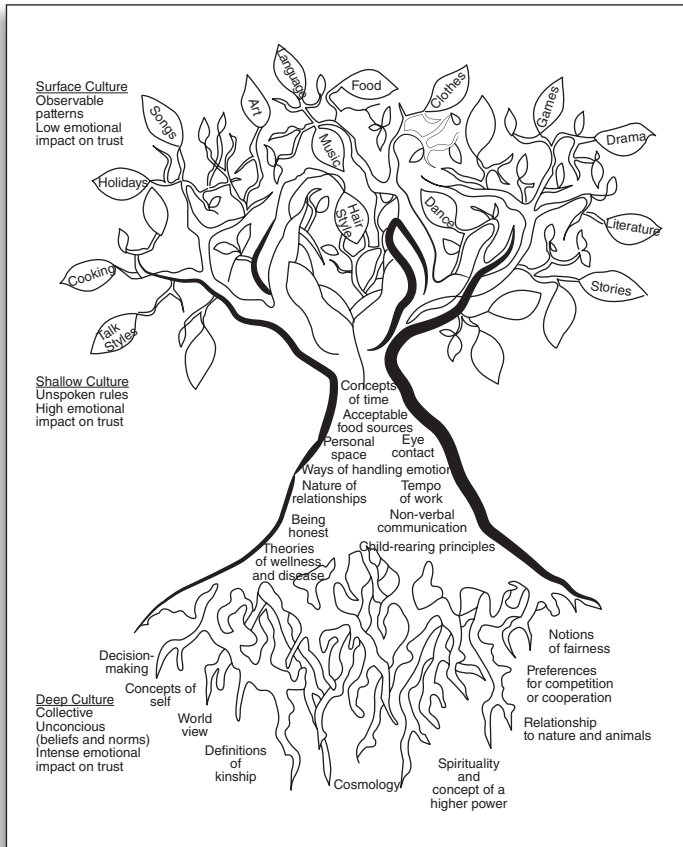


Figure 2.1 Culture Tree



Source: Illustration by Aliza Maynard.

part hidden deep in the water. Rather than use the metaphor of an iceberg, I like to compare culture to a tree. A tree is part of a bigger ecosystem that shapes and impacts its growth and development. Shallow culture is represented in the trunk and branches of the tree while we can think of surface culture as the observable fruit that the tree bears. Surface and shallow culture are not static; they change and shift over time as social groups move around and ethnic groups intermarry, resulting in a cultural mosaic just as branches and fruit on a tree change in response to the seasons and its environment. Deep culture is like the root system

of a tree. It is what grounds the individual and nourishes his mental health. It is the bedrock of self-concept, group identity, approaches to problem solving, and decision making.

**BUT I HAVE 19 DIFFERENT CULTURES IN MY CLASSROOM!**

“I have 19 different cultures represented in my classroom. Do I have to learn about the customs, foods, and beliefs of 19 different cultures?” This is the question I always get from teachers new to culturally responsive teaching. The key to understanding how culture guides the brain during culturally responsive teaching lies in focusing on deep culture. Rather than focus on the visible “fruits” of culture—dress, food, holidays, and