EL Civics #11: Cultural Differences

Probing questions for the essay about selected values

1. Beliefs about privacy

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| Question | In the U.S. | In my country |
| What does privacy mean?  How does the government protect the privacy of an individual?  Is it okay to talk in public/at work/with friends/with the family about subjects such as money, religion, politics, sex, other? What things do people never talk about in public? What topics are considered most private?  Are women expected to be more (or less) private than men? What could a man reveal in public that a woman could not, and the other way round? |  |  |
| Which statement is more true for you: *After I came to the U.S., my privacy has been very well protected/often disrespected.* Explain. | | |

1. Beliefs about aging

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| Question | In the U.S. | In my country |
| Is it easier to get a job when you are younger/older? Why?  How important is it to look young and in good shape? How much money will people pay and what will they give up to look young?  Are experience and wisdom generally valued in a person?  Are there special ways of referring to older people?  Do people earn more money with age?  At what age are people expected to get married? Have kids?  How do people spend their time after they retire?  Are there stereotypes about older people? |  |  |
| Which is more true for you: *After I came to the U.S., I feel I need to look younger/more serious.* Explain. | | |

1. Beliefs about women

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| Question | In the U.S. | In my country |
| What is the status of women in the society?  How much freedom do women have? For example, can they go out or travel by themselves?  How do women participate in public life (politics, justice, economy)?  On what matters are women decision makers? What issues do they decide at home? Who controls the household budget?  Who chooses the husband for a woman?  What qualities are important in a woman as a marriage candidate? What qualities do women seek in their future husband?  What are some of the ways in which women influence their husbands?  What is a typical woman’s relation with her mother-in-law?  How important is it for a woman to be educated? What level of education do they typically reach?  Do women earn salaries equal to those of men in the same positions? What professions do they usually choose? Are they able to apply for all sorts of jobs?  What do women do after their children grow up? |  |  |
| Which statement is more true for you: *After I came to the U.S., I was surprised by how well/poorly women are doing here.* Explain. | | |

1. Beliefs about nature

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| Question | In the U.S. | In my country |
| Does the country have a lot of wilderness?  Do most people live close to nature or separated from nature?  How is nature exploited by the government and corporations?  How is nature protected by the government? What effort does the government make to develop alternative energy sources? How does the recycling program work?  What is a typical citizen’s relation to nature? How much contact does s/he have with nature?  How strong is the environment protection movement? What issues does it focus on? |  |  |
| Which statement is more true for you: *After I came to the U.S., I was surprised by how people here care for/disrespect and abuse nature.* Explain. | | |

1. Beliefs about animals:

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| Question | In the U.S. | In my country |
| Do people keep pets? What animals are favorite pets? Are pets considered family members?  Are there animal rights? If a person abuses an animal, do they get punished? Can people legally abandon their animals?  Are there a lot of animals in the streets? What kind?  Does the country have public animal shelters? Is it legal for a shelter to put an animal to sleep?  How are the animals that are raised for meat treated? How are they killed?  Are there sacred animals?  Is there a lot of animal symbolism in culture and art? Which animals have most symbolic meaning attached to them? In everyday life, are they also respected?  What are the most disrespected animals?  What is people’s attitude to wild animals? Is hunting allowed and popular?  How are zoo animals perceived and treated? |  |  |
| Which statement is more true for you: *After I came to the U.S., I was surprised by how well/poorly animals are treated here*. Explain. | | |

1. Beliefs about supernatural phenomena

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| Question | In the U.S. | In my country |
| Is it common to believe in the supernatural? What supernatural things do people believe in?  In case of trouble, do people go for advice to a shaman, psychic, witch, etc.?  Do people often report supernatural experiences?  Are superstitions common? What are people superstitious about?  What is the importance of science education? Is science considered contradictory to religion, or do they coexist? If so, do they coexist in harmony or in separation from each other?  What is the importance of religion? |  |  |
| Which statement is most true for you: *After I came to the U.S., I was surprised by how religious/spiritual/superstitious/rational people are here.* Explain. | | |

1. Beliefs about education for young children

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| Question | In the U.S. | In my country |
| Who is considered responsible for the education of 2-5-year-old children: Parents? The government? Other parties?  Where do young children get better education: at school or at home?  What three most important things do parents want their young children to learn?  How early do children learn to read? |  |  |
| Which statement is more true for you: *After I came to the U.S., I was surprised by how much/little people here care about the education of young children*. Explain. | | |