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A Cultural Observation Project for Outbound Students to France

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A CULTURAL OBSERVATION PROJECT FOR OUTBOUND STUDENTS TO FRANCE

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This project by Fiona Cook is
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ABSTRACT

This project contains guided question sheets and topics for discussions on cultural values which I developed while leading a summer Outbound group to France. They are designed to help students who are in an immersion or homestay situation to focus their attention on the various aspects of everyday life in France, to make careful observations, to share and compare their findings with other group members with the goal of gaining greater understanding of and appreciation for the French culture.

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IN THE BEGINNING...

The idea behind this project germinated in my mind as I was considering my role as an Outbound leader in terms of facilitating cultural learning. This would be an easy task, I thought. My posting was to France, a country in which I have not only spent a lot of time, but also feel very much at home. But then I realized that for this very reason my position would be a rather delicate one. I wanted to find a way by which I could use my own knowledge of the French culture to enhance my group's experiences, to channel their discoveries, observations and reactions in the most constructive manner in order that they should reach their own conclusions about the French people and culture.

While working in the Foreign Language Office, I had come across a book on France produced by The Wider Horizons Discovery Program, which contained activities for visiting High School students to France, designed to focus their observations on specific features of French culture. I decided that I could create question cards along similar lines which would explore in depth those aspects which relate most directly to the unique experiences of the Experimenter, while at the same time being more specifically geared to the French culture than The Experiment's own Observation Guide.

THE PURPOSE

My intention was that this project would enable my group members to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the French culture through providing a firm basis from which they would be able to examine its functioning.

There is a Dogon proverb which states:"The stranger sees only what he knows". Of course, he will be noticing more than just the familiar, but he will be seeking to confirm the generalizations he has heard already, his preconceptions, and will be interpreting what he does see in terms of his own cultural values and experiences.

To get beyond that attitude towards a new culture, to penetrate and see it as it really is, rather than how one thinks it is or should be, the stranger needs to observe carefully what is going on around him, for these are the concrete and external manifestations of the values, attitudes and beliefs of that culture.

The cards, I had hoped, would prove suitable to that very purpose. They would, at least, encourage curiosity and active involvement in the new culture through exploration, investigation and observation. They could be worked on by individuals, in any order, at any speed, and could help fill in moments of boredom with a constructive learning exercise. The guiding questions would help group members to focus their attention carefully on various aspects of everyday life and offer direction for analyzing the new and unfamiliar patterns. At the same time, they would allow individuals the space for making their own

discoveries and help them to organize their impressions. Lastly, I had hoped that they would lead the group members to look beyond the obvious, to examine cultural patterns in more depth and help increase understanding through clarifying cultural differences. Thus, the project would provide the means for making the fullest use of the six week stay for learning about and for gaining an appreciation for the French culture.

A danger which faces the observer, is the tendency to make overgeneralizations about the culture from limited experiences within it. This was where I felt that investigations on an individual level would be able to benefit and support the learning of the group as a whole. My aim was that by sharing and comparing observations, through discussion we would be able to refine generalizations and to reach conclusions not only about the most common patterns, but also about the variety and range present within the French culture.

THE PROJECT IN PRACTICE

I had originally planned to compose the cards before leaving the States and to xerox them, so that I would be able to provide each group member with her own set, but lack of time prevented me from doing this. As it turned out, however, this proved to be a very good thing.

I ended up writing the cards during the homestay where I was immersed in the French culture and reminded of countless details, dimensions and dynamics which I would surely have forgotten to include had I managed to prepare them in advance. The fact that I was in a French family at the time enabled me to create cards on those aspects of daily life which were the most relevant to the Experimenters' experiences and to offer questions on these which were both specific and gave direction to their cultural exploration.

The original question cards, of which there were four copies of each, were written on index cards and shared between group members according to the proximity of their homestays. I gave out the first three on the sixth day of the homestay period while on the group visit to Mont St Michel, and explained their use in aiding cultural exploration amd learning. Thereafter, I distributed a further eight cards at intervals up to the end of the homestay period. On receiving a new card, the group members copied the questions into their journals, therefore, even if they were unable to complete all the answers in detail, they had at least absorbed the questions through this task.

During the Informal Trip, I gave out a few more cards

dealing with more general topics.

An important part of the learning process was the sharing and comparing of observations. Unfortunately, it was difficult to set aside enough time for this during the travel period. There was also more urgent business to be taken care of - general discussion on the homestay, observations on regional differences, planning activities, travel arrangements and talking about re-entry to the States. The discussions on those cards which related to family life and issues affecting young people went very well, and for some of the others - eg. Food and Drink, Shopping, Transport, etc. - I drew out only the key points for discussion and the questions about which I knew there would be contrasting answers. Further discussions on points emerging from the cards took place spontaneously and informally in small groups while travelling.

In the cards themselves I had included a minimum of questions calling for comparisons or personal reactions. My intentions had not been to avoid these areas completely. I knew they would probably be the most prominent features in my group members' journals. I had, however, hoped that through this deliberate omission I would enable them to see French cultural patterns more clearly in the context of the entire way of life, without the constant temptation of making cultural judgments. The discussions allowed these reactions to surface. This is a delicate step in the growth of cross-cultural awareness and usually by questioning further (eg.Why do you think the French like to buy their eels live?), reasoning led to an understanding and acceptance of the situation.

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CONCLUSIONS

The group members were unanimous about the value of the cards in helping them to focus their attention and to make clear cultural observations on the different aspects of French everyday life experienced during the stay, but they were unable to complete them all thoroughly through lack of time. I was very satisfied with the results of the project, although if I was to lead another group I would make a few minor changes in the process. I would confine the cards to the homestay period so that the travel period would be left reasonably free for discussions on the findings, cultural values and regional variations.

I think that this project would probably work best with a semester programme where there would be more time available for making the observations and following them up with weekly discussions on the various topics.

Although developed specifically for looking at the French culture, I believe this project could be adapted successfully to programmes in other countries, through some minor adjustments and cultural translations. I also think that some of the aspects, patternsand values which this project seeks to clarify are areas which could be explored in the language classroom, especially in conjunction with films, cultural texts and interviews with natives of the target culture.

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPENDICES

Appendix A : The Drop-off

This was an experiment in the technique of using cards containing guided questions as an aid to cultural exploration.

Appendix B : The Observation Cards

These are revised, improved versions of the originals. The revisions which have been made are mostly based on points which emerged during the discussions.

Appendix C : Discussions on Cultural Values

These are suggested topics and questions for discussions designed to aid exploration of the values, attitudes and beliefs in the French culture today.

Appendix D : Other Materials

This section contains the lists compiled from discussions during Orientation on suggested ways to work on language skills and things to do during the homestay to increase cultural involvement.

Appendix E : Bibliography

APPENDIX A : THE DROP-OFF

THE DROP-OFF

On the second day of Orientation the group had their first direct exposure to the French culture in the form of a drop-off to the small town of La Ferté sous Jouarre (pop. 6000). I divided them into groups of four which I felt would enable them to walk around without being too conspicuous. My instructions were to get a feel for the town so that on return they should be able to draw a plan locating landmarks and main buildings. I then gave them the question cards I had prepared. These were designed to encourage communication, exploration and discovery of the various components of a small French town. The four basic tasks which involved changing money and sending a post card home were assigned to each group. Beyond that the questions were different on each card, although they dealt with the same locations.

Whereas the questions asked only about physical and practical aspects of the town, the discussion afterwards focused almost entirely on the human - observations of the people and their experiences of communication and interaction.

A complete list of the questions, arranged according to the locations involved in finding the information, follows.

THE QUESTIONS

THE BANK: Go to a Bank and change a traveler's cheque.

What are the Banks' opening hours and days?

THE SHOPS: Buy a postcard and a packet of airmail envelopes.

What can you learn about the region from the postcards?

What kinds of shops are there in the town?

THE CAFÉS: Go to a café and write the postcard to your parents.

How many cafés and restaurants are there in the town?

THE POST OFFICE: Go to the Post Office and send the card home.

What is the airmail rate to the States?

THE TOWN HALL: When was the Town Hall built?

What is the population of the town?

Who is the Mayor?

THE CHURCH: What is the name of the main church?

What denomination is it? How old is it?

When are services held?

THE MARKET: Is there an open market?

When and where is it held?

THE STATION: How much is a return ticket to Paris?

How many trains are there a day to Paris?

THE CINEMA: What film is playing tonight at the cinema?

What time does it start? How much is a ticket?

GENERAL: Name 2 places where you can buy stamps.

Name 3 different places where you could "use the bathroom"

How would you amuse yourself if you lived here?

APPENDIX B : THE OBSERVATION CARDS

GREETINGS

Language: When, where and with whom are verbal greetings used?

Under what circumstances are strangers greeted?

What are the different forms of address you have heard?

List the different phrases you have heard used when meeting and when taking leave.

What was the relationship between the participants in each case?

Note whether you think each is formal or informal.

How do you decide which to use?

Gestures: When and between whom is the handshake used?

When and between whom is kissing used?

Answer in terms of age, sex, level of acquaintance, etc.

What do you think are the rules about which is used?

How do you decide which to use?

When is a gesture used in addition to verbal greetings?

To help you in your observations you may like to fill in the following table to show in which combinations you noticed the handshake or kissing in use.

	Adult	Adulte	Jeune♂	Jeune♀	Enfant
Adult					
Adulte					
Jeune♂					
Jeune♀					
Enfant					

TU and VOUS

List five different situations where you heard "vous" used.

List five different situations where you heard "tu" used.

Which are used in your family? Among the extended family members? With the parents' friends?

Which did you use with the parents when you arrived?

Do you still use the same form? If you have changed, how did it happen?

Have you noticed any circumstances in which the speakers use different forms to each other? In which the speaker changed to the other form while talking to the same person?

How long does it take a young person to use "tu" with another young person? With a friend of their parents?

When might a French person use "tu" to a total stranger?

In what ways do you think using "tu" or "vous" might affect the relationship between two people?

What do you think the rules are? You might like to consider the following categories: Age, sex, social class, level of formality, level of acquaintance.

Which is used when talking to God? To a priest?

Do you think it is an important distinction to the French?

THE FAMILY

How would you describe family relationships in 3 adjectives?

Do you notice any effects of region, climate or setting on family life and activities?

Which family members work outside the home?

Who makes the decisions on the various areas of family life?

What responsibilities do individuals have in and around the home?

What material possessions influence family life? How?

How much time is spent together as a family group?

What activities do they do together during the day? At the weekend? During vacations?

Do they converse much together? When? Who participates?

What is the means of family transportation?

Does the family participate in activities outside the home? What kinds? How often?

How often are outside friends included in family activities?

How close is the extended family? How often do they see them?

Are the family members involved in religious, community or political affairs?

CHILDREN

How would you describe relationships between parents and their children?

Who controls the children in the home? How is it done?

How are the children's linguistic and social errors corrected?

Do the parents show involvement and interest in their children's education? In what ways?

Are the children included in their parents' conversations and activities?

Do the parents get involved in their children's activities?

What activities do the children do independently of their parents outside the home?

Do the children act differently in front of their parents than alone?

How much freedom are the older children given?

What privileges do the older children have over the younger ones in the home?

How do they spend their free time outside the home?

Where do they go in order to meet up with other young people?

FOOD AND DRINK

At what times are the meals served? How long does each last?

What kinds of foods and drinks are served for each meal?

Which is the main meal? Which are eaten together as a family?

How is the table set? Draw a plan using the French words.

Describe table manners? How are the knife and bread used?

What, besides consuming, goes on during a meal?

Who buys the food? Where? How often?

What food or drink items are produced or gathered by the family?

Who prepares the food? Are you able to help?

Who sets the table and cleans up? What happens to leftovers?

What are the staple foods and preferences?

What proportions of various foods are served? Is it a balanced diet?

How often are meat, seafood, eggs and dairy products served?

What drinks do the family consume and when?

What proportions of food are bought fresh, frozen, canned or ready to eat?

What foods or drinks are served for special occasions?

How much between-meal eating goes on?

Have you heard any sayings or beliefs about foods or drinks?

What things have you tried that you had never had before?

Have you learned any French recipes yet?

What are the attitudes of the French towards food and drink?

How much social drinking goes on? When? Why? Where? With whom? How much?

SHOPPING

What kinds of shops are there in your homestay community?

Where does your family do most of their shopping?

How far do they go for regular shopping expeditions?

How often do they shop in small stores, the supermarket, the open market? What items are purchased at each?

Do they buy things anywhere else? What? (eg. Wine from a "cave")

For which items must they travel further than their regular shops?

Which member of the family shops for which items?

What kinds of conversations go on between shop staff and customers?

What happens when a customer enters a small shop?

Are you left to browse while shopping?

Check out the cheese counter in a small shop and in a supermarket.

How many kinds are available?

How many come from other countries?

Which kinds are produced locally?

What are the prices of the most popular kinds?

Are there many imported food items available? Which? Where from?

Can you find all the ingredients you need to make a typical American meal?

How is the shopping carried and transported home?

How much space for food storage is there in the home?

How much comparison of prices and quality goes on?

RELIGION

How many churches (and other religious buildings) are there in the community? How many denominations/religions are represented?

Which is the main church? Is it also the biggest and oldest?

What is its age, style, building material, and location?

What kinds of decorations are there inside? What is depicted?

How many services are held per week? When are they?

Go to one if you can? How many men/women attend the service?

What is the average age of people in the congregation? What proportion are old, young or children?

Can you find out what percentage of people in the community attend religious services?

Does your family ever go to church? How often? When?

Do the children go to sunday school or youth organizations run by the church? Do the parents encourage religious education?

Is there evidence of religion in the home (statues, crosses, etc.)? Do they say grace before eating?

Is there a church school in the community? Do your brothers and sisters go to it? What proportion of the children go to it?

Is there any religious instruction in public schools?

Have you noticed any influence of religion on public life?

What religious holidays are public holidays too?

Try and visit a cemetry. Note the styles of tombs and any interesting inscriptions. Do they indicate priority placed on the individual, on the family, or on sociaty at large?

TRANSPORT

How does each member of your family normally get around?

How far do they travel each day to get to work or school? How do they get there?

What forms of public transport are available? Is it convenient? Does it work efficiently? Do your family ever use it?

Does the family have a car (or more than one)? What size is it? Is it a French make? Do they make good use of it?

What is the price of gas compared with the U.S.(1 gallon = 3.9 litres)?

What problems are there for drivers in French cities and towns?

How fast do they drive in the city? On country roads? On major roads?

Do they stay within the speed limit all the time? Usually?

Do French drivers seem to pay attention to road signals?

Have you noticed billboards or television advertisements which mention road safety? What advice is given?

Do French drivers behave politely and considerately towards other drivers? Towards cyclists and motorcyclists? Towards pedestrians?

How do they display displeasure while driving?

At what age can French people start driving?

How does one get a driving license?

Does everyone automatically learn to drive?

At what age can French people start to ride a mobilette?

THE OPEN MARKET

Is there an open market in your homestay community?

Does your family ever go to the open market in other communities?

If so, why?

How often is the open market held?

Where is it held? Is there a special market place?

What kinds of stalls are there? Which are you surprised to see?

What proportion sell food items?

Which food items are gathered or grown locally? What proportion are these of the total?

What products come from elsewhere in France? From other countries?

How do prices, quality and variety compare with permanent shops?

Are there any things available only at the open market?

Which essential everyday items are not available here?

Is there any bargaining? On which kinds of stalls?

What kinds of conversations go on between seller and buyer?

What items are you surprised by at the open market?

Have you noticed any other kinds of street selling in France apart from the official open markets?

THE CAFÉ

To gain an understanding of the role of the café in French life, you should try to visit a variety during your stay in France.

The café is also a great place to observe people, their socializing and listen to the spoken language.

Keep a list of interesting café names.

Where is the café located?

Describe the size, decor, seating arrangements, etc.

Which day and what time is it? What are the café's opening hours?

How many customers are there?

What proportion are standing at the counter? Why might they prefer to stand?

What proportion of the customers are male? What proportion are under 30 or over 60?

What kinds of people seem to use the cafés for socializing?

Does the owner converse much with the customers?

What proportion of the customers are regulars? How could you tell?

What proportion are consuming alcohol, hot drinks, food, other? Can you see any correlation between this and age/sex/time?

What are the customers doing apart from consuming?

How long do they seem to stay at the café?

If there are seats on the sidewalk, do they face the street or the café? Why do you think this is?

~~Ask the owner when are the busiest/quietest times of the week.~~

Ask some customers how often they come to cafés, how long they spend in them and why they come.

Can you draw any conclusions from the above data about the role of the café? Did any of it surprise you?

ADVERTISING

How much advertising is there on television? On the radio?

What proportion of newspapers and magazines are devoted to commercial advertising?

Are there many billboards in French towns? Between towns?

What seem to be the major themes in advertising in France?

How direct are the majority of advertisements?

What kinds of products are aimed at which segments of the population (Consider: age, class, sex, etc.) How can you tell?

How are various products made to be appealing?

Choose one item, eg. mineral water or alcoholic drinks, and look at the different ways it is presented in advertisements.

Advertisements often reflect cultural ideals. What is shown to be:

- The ideal lifestyle?
- The ideal home?
- The ideal family?
- The ideal male role?
- The ideal female role?
- The ideal male-female relationship?
- The ideal possessions and "necessary" luxuries?
- The ideal relationship between people and nature?
- Beauty?

To what extent do these affect people's desires and ambitions?

GRAFFITI

Graffiti is the tool by which minority groups and individuals publicize their concerns and opinions, but it may also indicate many of the political, social and moral issues facing the French people today.

Keep a note of graffiti, and flyers announcing meetings and demonstrations too, while in France.

What is the desired outcome of the author/organizers?

Is the location of its display relevant?

What proportion show:

- Autograph, personal message, etc.
- Political concerns - on local, national, international or philosophical level?
- Social concerns, racial feelings, etc.
- Environmental and ecological concerns
- Religious feelings
- Humour
- Others?

Based on your observations, what do you think are the major concerns and feelings of some French people today?

Which groups seem to be the most active and widespread in France?

How influential do you think graffiti is on people's thinking?

How accurate an indicator is it of the majority's feelings?

CLOTHING STYLES

Sit in a public place (eg. cafe, park, station, etc.) and look at how people are dressed. Make a note of the common styles in terms of the table below.

	MALE		FEMALE	
	Older	Younger	Older	Younger
Coat, head-wear				
Top, dress, etc.				
Pants, skirt				
Foot-wear				
Bag, other items				

Is the way the French people dress as stylish as you expected?

Have you noticed any differences in the way people dress in Paris and other large cities compared with smaller cities and towns?

Do some window shopping - note the current styles and colours of clothes and shoes? What proportion of people are wearing the latest fashions?

What are the prices like compared with the States?

Are many clothes available in the shops imported from other countri

Describe casual styles - for what occasions are they worn?

What are formal styles like? For what kinds of occasions do people dress up?

How might the way people dress indicate social class?

Those who are least stylish have what in common? (Age, sex, other?)

Have you noticed any regional styles? To what extent are they due to traditions or to climatic differences?

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

In order to get a better understanding of regional variation in France, you might like to consider the following questions in relation to each of the towns and cities we visit.

What is the topography of the region? In what ways does it affect the form and function of the town? How does it influence the way of life?

What is the climate throughout the year? Is it reflected in the building styles or the function of the town? How does it affect the life and character of the people?

What is the form of the town? Has it changed through history? How? Is there evidence of structures for defense?

What means of access are there today? What were there in the past?

What is the function of the town today? Does the form reflect its function or past functions? Has the function changed through history? How?

What are the local architectural styles and building materials? What factors have influenced their establishment?

Have you noticed any local art forms or skills? Regional costumes?

Is there a local, distinct culture? Does it have its own language or dialect? Do a large proportion of people still speak it?

Are there local customs and traditions which thrive today?

Is there a local political movement or important local issues?

Are there local food and drink specialities? Which did you try?

SYMBOLS OF FRANCE

Where and how have you noticed the following French symbols in use?

Le Tricolore

Le coq

Marie-Anne, la semeuse

La Fleur de Lys

La Croix de Lorraine

Le Tour Eiffel

APPENDIX C : DISCUSSIONS ON CULTURAL VALUES

DISCUSSIONS ON CULTURAL VALUES

Within a culture there is a system of values, attitudes and beliefs which influence the members' behaviour and view of the world. Have you made any observations or experienced any incidents which might throw some light on the French culture regarding the following topics?

TIME

How is time defined? The following questions may help to answer this.

Is it seen as limited or unlimited?

What are the French words concerning its use and waste?

Do people seem rushed or relaxed?

What is the desirable pace of life?

Is punctuality seen as important? For an appointment? For an invitation?

How late is late?

Are patterns of life very regular (meal times/bedtime etc.)?

Is the past important? Does it have a strong influence on present?

Is planning for the future seen as important? Are plans general or very specific? How far ahead are plans made?

GOALS

Do people have goals in life? What kinds? Material or spiritual?

What do people want for their children?

Do they imply flexibility and mobility or stability?

How is 'the good life' defined? Who has achieved it?

CLASS AND STATUS

What kind of person is valued and respected by society?

What kind of personal qualities are valued?

Does age or sex affect respect offered to a person?

On what does the upper class base its strength? (money/birth/power/et

How is class displayed visibly? Is there a difference in the city and in the country?

How do people relate to others whose class is different? Are differences stressed or minimized?

Are neighbourhoods cross-sectional or mixed of classes?

Do you see much evidence of social mobility? How is it achieved?

Is personal achievement and effort given credit?

How do minorities fit in on the social scale?

What part does education play in the class system?

MONEY AND MATERIAL WEALTH

What is the attitude towards money?

Is it seen as necessary for happiness?

Is it spent carefully or freely? Are prices compared before a purchase? Is money enjoyed? How?

Do people save? Do they economise visibly? How?

Are money and prices discussed in the home much?

How are children introduced to the ideas of money and spending?

How much evidence is there of gambling? Is it popular?

What constitutes material comfort? What possessions are seen as necessary/luxuries? Which affect family life? How?

What is the nature of property? Is private ownership common/desired?

Are people territorial and possessive? Do they lend and share?

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

How do people judge others? On what bases?

On what basis is a stranger accepted?

Are differences between people stressed or minimized?

What is the meaning of friendship? Which French words show degrees?

What is the meaning of hospitality? How seriously are invitations offered and taken? Is it 'open house'?

How is person to person competition viewed? How is it evaluated?

How is aggression (serious and friendly) viewed?

How do people get others to agree with them?

Is privacy valued and respected? What are relationships with neighbours

How is being alone viewed? Is it ever encouraged? When?

How is affection shown? How? When? With whom?

Are other emotions (anger/dissappointment/tears/etc) displayed in front of others? How? When? To whom?

GENDER

How clearly are sex roles defined?

In what ways are superiority and equality displayed?

What rights have members of the different sexes?

What is the ideal male role? What is the ideal female role?

Are roles changing? Are they viewed differently by young and old?

What are the male/female duties in the home?

What social activities are done in single sex groups?

Which jobs tend to be done by one sex or the other?

What have you seen of women in power and professional positions?

What proportion of friends are the same sex/opposite sex among children, young people, adults and old people?

THE NATURAL WORLD

What is understood as 'the nature order'? What does "natural" mean?

What is the relation between the human and natural worlds?

What do people consider a harmonious balance?

To what extent is nature exploited or controlled?

Is an effort made to conserve nature?

Is nature appreciated by people? Is it respected? How is it used?

What aspects of daily life show ecological economy/awareness?

Is there concern over pollution? Destruction of the natural world? What is being done?

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Do people see a relationship between health and food?

Is the diet balanced? Do most people seem well-fed and healthy?

What proportion of food is bought fresh? How organic is the diet?

What kind of seasonings are used?

What proportion of food sold/consumed contains artificial additives, preservatives or colouring?

Is a lot of sugar consumed by people/ by children?

Do people go to the dentist regularly? How often do they brush their teeth?

What are beliefs held about the health values of certain foods?

Does your family use mineral water, tisanes, artichokes,garlic?

What are common complaints relating to food and drink? What kinds of treatments are used?

Are herbal cures valued? Are there many herbalists, chiropracters, accupuncturists?

Under what conditions would people go to a doctor or clinic?

WORK AND LEISURE

What is the attitude towards work? What is seen to be its value (monetary gain, personal fulfillment, social duty, etc)?

At what age do young people have to choose their field?

How much flexibility is there in a career in France?

Is it easy to change careers? Go back to school later? To change jobs?

Are community evening classes available? In what subjects?

How easy/competitive is promotion? On what basis is it awarded?

Is there much geographical mobility concerning career?

To what extent do people define themselves in terms of their job?

How much leisure time is there? Is it considered sufficient?

How is leisure time used? What forms of fun, pleasure and relaxation are common?

How much do people travel during vacations? Do they stay in the local region, go to another region (always the same?), go to another country?

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

How is education viewed? Is it valued? When is it seen as ended?

What is the nature of learning? Is it active or passive?

Is experiential learning seen as important?

Is the education system competitive?

What are motivating factors? Is encouragement offered at home?

How does one enter higher education?

What do people read in terms of newspapers, magazines, books?

Are they well-informed on current issues? On international issues?

Do they show interest in local/national/international affairs?

Are they politically and socially aware?

MODESTY

What are the attitudes towards toiletry? To what extent is privacy demanded by either sex?

What are the attitudes towards the states of dress or undress of either sex? Is total or semi nudity accepted? Where? When?

Is pre- or extra-marital sex acceptable for either sex? What are the sexual mores in French society?

What is the attitude towards prostitution? Is it open or hidden?

Do attitudes and values on any of these issues vary according to age and gender? Do you think standards are changing?

CULTURAL PRIDE

Is cultural (national/regional) pride strong?

How is it manifest?

Which aspects are people proud of?

Are they what you expected?

SUPERSTITIONS

Have you heard any? Do people seem to be superstitious?

What things are considered lucky or unlucky? What are the reasons?

PROVERBS

Have you heard any?

What can they tell you about cultural values?

If you have collected some, classify them in terms of subject - eg. Food, time, money, sex roles, superstitions, etc.

APPENDIX D : OTHER MATERIALS

WAYS TO WORK ON LANGUAGE

Keep a notebook for new words and expressions

Listen carefully to intonation patterns

Practice articulation in front of a mirror

Notice fillers and exclamations

Notice styles of formality and informality in speech

Notice informal expressions and slang

Look out for non-verbal language - sounds, gestures, body language

Ask for vocabulary in specific areas - eg. house, cooking, clothes, town, shops, etc.

Answer questions and talk about your family, town, state, interests

Ask questions and show interest in the family's way of life - the local region, customs and traditions, interests, etc.

Read newspapers, magazines, comic books (eg. Asterix)

Read short stories and children's books

Watch television, go to the cinema

Listen to talk shows on the radio, eavesdrop on conversations

Listen to records - try to understand the songs

Read labels in shops and museums

Visit a bookshop and read the summary of the story on the back

Learn children's songs, rhymes, riddles, tongue-twisters

Interview someone

Play word games with the children, eg. Scrabble

Do easy crosswords

Listen for jokes - what do the French find funny?

Listen for proverbs - what can you learn about cultural values?

APPENDIX E : BIBLIOGRAPHY

THINGS TO DO DURING THE HOMESTAY

Keep a journal of cultural observations (do the cards)

Help out around the house, garden. Establish your own chores

Help prepare meals and learn some French and local recipes

Go shopping with the family and to an open market

Go to church with the family

Go for a walk or a cycle around the town/community

Visit your parents place of work

Go to a café, swimming pool, cinema, shopping, sports game

Go sightseeing, visit a museum or art gallery

Play with the children, learn their games. Learn "Boules"

Teach the children some American games and activities, eg.cards

Cook an American meal, dessert, cookies

Work on your language

Keep cultural mementos to make a scrapbook when you get home

Interview someone

Research human interest stories and history of the community and region

Ask older people their memories and experiences of World War II, how things were before the war, changes that have taken place in their lifetimes.

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