

TO NICKNAME OR NOT? Naming, Nicknaming and Title Practices from Around the World. The Culture Hour Discussion 11/30/2010

How babies are named, where, by whom...whether nicknames are used and by whom and where and the use of titles are a very interesting and culturally specific.

The rules are quite diverse depending on the culture to which you belong.

In our discussion, we learned that in Pohnpei, Micronesia, a title system exists whereby a title like "Nahnmwarki" or king is given to a particular person after the person holding the title dies. Once the title is accepted, there are certain obligations associated to the title and you are no longer called by your given name or nickname. The title becomes your name.

According to another student, Arpan from Nepal, Nwaran is a baptism and naming ceremony celebrated in Nepal. Nwaran is celebrated in the Hindu tradition on the 11th day after a child is born. This ceremony is performed to give a birth name to a child according to his/her lunar horoscope which is usually not the name by which he/she is known. Typically, a priest is invited to perform the ceremony at home, and he finds the child's lunar horoscope from his birth details, as the mother is still recovering at home with the child. In fact, until the mother or child is 'purified' (from past birth etc in the religious sense), they should not visit the temple. One can also perform a Nwaran on the 21st or 41st day after birth if for some reason the 11th day was not observed.

In some cultures, like Morocco, students reported nicknames are only used between friends and usually have a funny story or connotation. The Moroccans stated that these nicknames would not be used with the family as it would appear disrespectful.

In my family, adults are always referred to with the title "Mr., Mrs., Miss or Ms." by children. Children are not allowed to call adults by their first name. The title of Aunt and Uncle are used by family members and can be used for very close family friends.

What do you call Americans? First name, nickname, Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss??

I always introduce myself and listen closely to how someone introduces his/herself to me. I use the name that the person presents. If I am unsure, I err on the side of being formal using Mr. or Ms. with the last name. I chose "Ms" for a woman because "Mrs" means you are married and "Miss" means you are single. "Ms" is used for both married and single women. So, again, I use it to be safe or until I know for sure the individual is married. The person will correct you if he or she prefers a nickname or first name usage. And a final caution, I try to never shorten a person's name without permission or without the person telling me directly because Kimberly is Kimberly -- not Kim :-). And other people are not always reliable sources -- you may hear other people call me Kim or refer to me as Kim, but I introduce myself as Kimberly. And the same

applies to Michael Hernandez. He introduces himself as Michael, but other people refer to him as Mike. I call him Michael because that is how he introduces himself.

Ultimately, names are very personal and are directly related and connected to how we present ourselves, so it is a sensitive area. You can easily offend someone by *not using a title, not using the right name, shortening his or her name*, so it is important to pay attention!

Let me know your customs and traditions around names, nicknames, naming ceremonies, titles etc. Follow and add to the discussion thread on the ISS Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?topic=16125&uid=94044962755#!/topic.php?uid=94044962755&topic=16>

Happy namecalling ☺ hahaha!



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