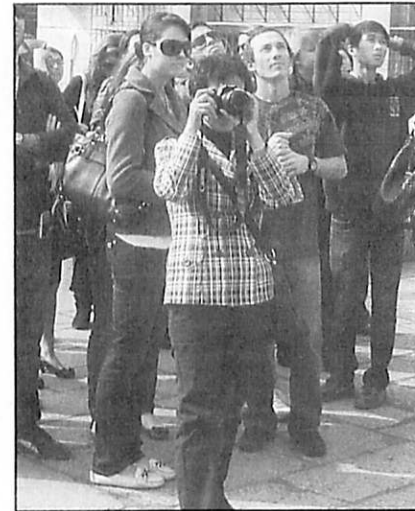


# WHY STUDY INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION?



## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Practical Reasons to Study Intercultural Communication
  - Adjusting to Global Workplace Heterogeneity
  - Adapting to Domestic Workforce Diversity
  - Engaging in Creative Multicultural Problem Solving
  - Comprehending the Role of Technology in Global Communication
  - Facilitating Better Multicultural Health Care Communication
  - Enhancing Intercultural Relationship Satisfaction
  - Fostering Global and Intrapersonal Peace
  - Deepening Cultural Self-Awareness and Other-Awareness
  
- Culture: A Learned Meaning System
  - Surface-Level Culture: Popular Culture
  - Intermediate-Level Culture: Symbols, Meanings, and Norms
  - Deep-Level Culture: Traditions, Beliefs, and Values
  
- Stamping Your Intercultural Passport

As we enter the twenty-first century, direct contact with culturally different people in our neighborhoods, communities, schools, and workplaces is an inescapable part of life. With immigrants and minority group members representing nearly 30 percent of the present workforce in the United States, practicing intercultural communication flexibility is especially critical in today's global world.

Flexible intercultural communication means managing cultural differences adaptively and creatively in a wide variety of situations. The underlying values of a culture (e.g., individual competitiveness versus group harmony) often shape communication expectations and attitudes. How we define a communication problem in a work team and how we approach the communication process itself are also likely to vary across cultures, ethnicities, situations, and individuals. For example, some cultural groups (e.g., German and Swiss work teams) may believe that addressing a workplace problem directly and assertively can be stimulating and spark further new ideas. Other cultural groups (e.g., Chinese and Korean work teams) may believe that approaching a conflict issue indirectly and tactfully can facilitate a more harmonious communication process.

With such layered complexity facing global and domestic diversity issues, we must practice intercultural communication sensitivity when dealing with culturally different others. This chapter examines the reasons why we should understand intercultural communication in diverse contexts. The chapter is developed in three sections. First, we offer several practical reasons why we should pay special attention to the study of intercultural communication. Next, we define the major characteristics of culture. We end by summarizing this first chapter and "stamping" your intercultural passport, continuing you on your intercultural journey.

### PRACTICAL REASONS TO STUDY INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

With rapid changes in the global economy, technology, transportation systems, and immigration policies, the world is becoming a small, intersecting community. We find ourselves having increased contact with people who are culturally different. In a global workforce, people bring with them different work habits and cultural practices. For example, cultural strangers may approach problem-solving tasks or nonverbal emotional expression issues differently. They may develop friendships and romantic relationships with different expectations and rhythms. They may also have different communication desires, end goals, and emphases in an intercultural encounter. In this twenty-first century global world, people are constantly moving across borders, into and out of a country. Neighborhoods and communities are changing. In what was once a homogeneous community, we may now find more diversity and cultural values in flux.

The study of intercultural communication is about the study of communication that involves, at least in

part, cultural group membership differences. It is about acquiring the necessary knowledge and dynamic skills to manage such differences appropriately and effectively. It is also about developing a creative mindset to see things from different angles without rigid prejudice. There are indeed many practical reasons for studying intercultural communication. We offer eight reasons here: increased global workplace heterogeneity, increased domestic workforce diversity, engaging in creative problem solving, comprehending the role of technology in global communication, facilitating better multicultural health care communication, enhancing intercultural relationship satisfaction, fostering global and intrapersonal peace, and deepening cultural self-awareness and other-awareness.

### Adjusting to Global Workforce Heterogeneity

In this global age, it is inevitable that employees and customers from dissimilar cultures are in constant contact with one another—whether it is through face-to-face, cellular phone, Skype, smart phone, or e-mail

**JEOPARDY BOX 1.1 TOP FIVE MOST VALUABLE  
GLOBAL BRANDS BY DOLLAR VALUE**

Brand name	Industry
1. Coca-Cola	Beverages
2. IBM	Business services
3. Microsoft	Computer software
4. Google	Internet services
5. GE (General Electric)	Diversified

Note: All U.S.-owned.

Source: <http://www.interbrand.com/en/knowledge/best-global-brands/best-global-brands-2008/best-global-brands-2010.aspx> (retrieved March 20, 2011).

contacts. To begin, do you know which companies have the most valuable global brands? Take a guess and then check out Jeopardy Box 1.1. Workplace heterogeneity on the global level represents both opportunities and challenges to individuals and organizations. Individuals at the forefront of workplace diversity must rise to the challenge of serving as global employees and leaders (Bhawuk & Sakuda, 2009; Moodian, 2010).

Many U.S. Americans are becoming global employees while staying on U.S. soil. An increasing number of computer workers in the United States are freelancing for companies overseas. In just one year, the number of international companies—from the UK, Australia, China, Pakistan, and India—that hired U.S. computer workers to work remotely jumped from 1,429 to 4,285 (Cook, 2010). In addition, hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers are currently working in overseas locations. U.S. corporations spend approximately \$25 billion annually on corporate relocation, and they also spend approximately \$16 million annually to transfer their employees for overseas assignments (Global Trends Relocation Survey, 2010).

Despite the number of U.S. workers overseas, international relocation researchers estimate that the proportion of U.S. workers who fail in their global assignments (i.e., return prematurely) ranges from approximately 10 percent to 20 percent—with the highest failure rates associated with assignments in developing countries (Global Mobility Effectiveness Survey, 2009). Contrast this with the fact that only

6 percent of assignees from Asia-Pacific-based corporations returned to their home countries before the end date of their international assignments. Although most U.S. international employees are considered technically competent, they may lack effective adaptive intercultural communication skills to interact appropriately and effectively in the new culture (Moran, Youngdahl, & Moran, 2009; Palthe, 2009; Storti, 2009).

Beyond workplace mobility and internationalization, the world's population is aging. Retirement for the 60-and-older ("baby boomer") population has begun, symbolizing a "graying economy" and an expected mass retirement. In the United States alone, the fastest growing part of the workforce will be of retirement age. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, the percentage of workers over the age of 65 will increase from 15 percent in 2006 to 19.7 percent by 2014 (Kinsman, 2006). Unbelievably, baby boomers, who accounted for 56 percent of full-time workers in 2007, will increase to 65.2 percent by 2014 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).

With the upcoming exodus of workers anticipated as a result of retirement, many countries are wondering how to replace the skills and knowledge that will be lost. In Japan, new products and services are being created especially for the retired population, such as health foods, adult education classes, and planned communities (Coleman, 2007). In the United States, many companies are starting mentoring programs to help with older-adult transition issues. The baby boomer is a potential bonanza for innovative global companies planning how to appeal to this aging population that will have money to spend. Equally relevant will be how to retain the important work experience and institutional wisdom that may be lost when this population is no longer working.

Global managers and employees, international human resource groups, global product development teams, multiethnic customer service groups, and international marketing and sales teams can all benefit from mastering intercultural communication competencies (J. Bennet, 2009; Gupta, 2009; Hyatt, Evans, & Haque, 2009). Any groups or individuals that must communicate on a daily basis with culturally diverse coworkers, clients, or customers can reap the rewards

of acquiring the awareness, knowledge, and skills of flexible intercultural communication. Intercultural communication knowledge and skills are needed to solve problems, manage conflicts, and forge new visions on both global and domestic levels (Bhawuk, Landis, & Munusamy, 2009; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

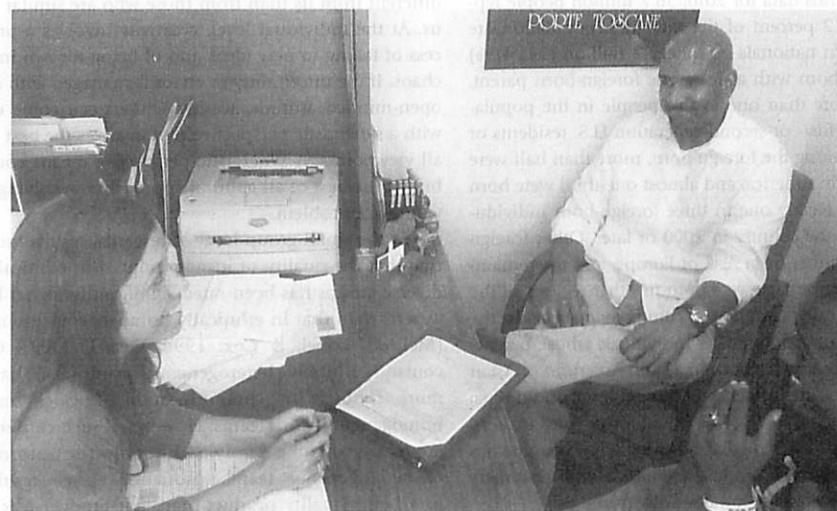
### Adapting to Domestic Workforce Diversity

Even if we do not venture beyond our national borders, cultural diversity becomes a crucial part of our everyday work lives (see Blog Pic 1.1—Workplace diversity). The study of intercultural communication on the U.S. domestic front is especially critical for several reasons. First, according to U.S. Census Bureau, we are now a nation with increased multicultural complexities and nuances—of the nation's approximately 307 million people, 65 percent are whites/non-Hispanics, 16 percent are Latinos/Hispanics, 13 percent are African Americans/blacks, 4.5 percent are Asian Americans, 1 percent reported as American Indians/Alaskan Natives, and 0.2 percent identified themselves as Native Hawaiians and

Pacific Islanders. Note that 1.7 percent of the population chose to identify themselves as two or more races.

The most sweeping demographic change in the United States is occurring in the Latino/a population. It is projected that in the year 2050, the Latino/a population in the United States will more than double in size (to approximately 30% of the total U.S. population), followed closely by an increase in the Asian American population (to approximately 9%). The African American population will remain stable (estimated at 15%), whereas the non-Hispanic white population will decline significantly (to approximately 46%) on the national level (Passel & Cohn, 2008). Hawaii, California, and New Mexico are the three most racially diverse states in the United States. Conversely, Maine, Vermont, and West Virginia are listed as the three most homogeneous states, with non-Hispanic whites making up over 93 percent of those states' populations (check out Jeopardy Boxes 1.2 and 1.3). The highest percentage of individuals of mixed-race identifiers were reported to live in Hawaii, Alaska, and California.

Second, we are moving at an accelerated pace with increased foreign-born diversity in the nation. According



Blog Pic 1.1 Workplace diversity has become an inevitable part of our daily life.



**JEOPARDY BOX 1.2 TOP FIVE MOST RACIALLY/  
ETHNICALLY DIVERSE STATES IN THE UNITED STATES**

1. Hawaii	77.3% minority population
2. California	59.9%
3. New Mexico	59.5%
4. Texas	54.7%
5. New York	41.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFF?\\_submenuld=people\\_10&\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFF?_submenuld=people_10&_sse=on) (retrieved July 17, 2011).

**JEOPARDY BOX 1.3 TOP FIVE MOST RACIALLY/  
ETHNICALLY HOMOGENEOUS STATES IN THE UNITED STATES**

1. Maine	5.6% minority population
2. Vermont	5.7%
3. West Virginia	6.8%
4. New Hampshire	7.7%
5. North Dakota	11.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFF?\\_submenuld=people\\_10&\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFF?_submenuld=people_10&_sse=on) (retrieved July 17, 2011).

to U.S. Census data for 2010, 36.7 million people representing 12 percent of the total U.S. population are foreign-born nationals. Another 33 million (i.e., 11%) are native born with at least one foreign-born parent, making more than one in five people in the population either first- or second-generation U.S. residents or citizens. Among the foreign born, more than half were born in Latin America, and almost one-third were born in Mexico. Nearly one in three foreign-born individuals entered the country in 2000 or later. Other foreign born were either from Asia or Europe, and the remaining small percentage were born in other regions of the world. Basically, current and future generations in the United States include many individuals whose parents or grandparents were born in a Latin American or Asian region. Thus, the influence of multicultural and diverse customers is expanding in every industry. Auto makers, retailers, banks, and media and entertainment industries must learn to reach out to these multiethnic customers with increased intercultural sensitivity and skills.

Third, skilled and highly educated immigrants (especially in the areas of computer and engineering service industries) play a critical role in U.S. advanced technology industries. The payrolls of leading information technology (IT) companies such as Intel and Microsoft include many highly skilled and foreign-born employees. Many U.S. immigrants have also contributed positively to the social and economic development of the nation. The richness of cultural diversity in U.S. society has led to dramatic breakthroughs in the fields of physics, medicine, science, and technology. Attention to diversity issues bolsters employee morale, creates an inclusive climate in the workplace, and sparks creative innovation (Cortes & Wilkinson, 2009; Rink & Jehn, 2010).

**Engaging in Creative Multicultural  
Problem Solving**

Our ability to value different approaches to problem solving and mindfully move away from traditional "either/or" binary thinking can expand diverse options in managing team intercultural problems. According to creativity research (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009; Sternberg, 1999; Tharp & Reiter, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 2010a), we learn more from people who are different from us than from those who are similar to us. At the individual level, creativity involves a process of taking in new ideas and of being thrown into chaos. If the uncertainty or chaos is managed with an open-minded attitude, team members can come up with a synergistic perspective that involves the best of all viewpoints. A synergistic perspective means combining the best of all cultural approaches in solving a workplace problem.

At the small-group level of research, results indicate that the quality of ideas produced in ethnically diverse groups has been rated significantly higher by experts than that in ethnically homogeneous groups (McLeod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996; Oetzel, 2009). Of course, culturally heterogeneous teams also have more conflicts or communication struggles than homogeneous work teams. However, if such conflicts are managed competently and flexibly, the outcome of heterogeneous team negotiations often results in a better-quality product than that produced by a

homogeneous team. Many recruiting experts say that they are launching aggressive campaigns to recruit top management candidates who have the leadership experience and the multicultural problem-solving skills in coordinating diverse team issues such as culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, and age. Workplace trend reports indicate that losing an employee can cost a company up to four times an employee's salary. Losing a vital employee with significant ties to a multicultural or diverse community can cost many missed business opportunities and fruitful outcomes.

Culturally and ethnically diverse teams have the potential to solve problems creatively because of several factors. Some of these factors include a greater variety of viewpoints brought to bear on the issue, a higher level of critical analysis of alternatives, and a lower probability of groupthink because of the heterogeneous composition of the group (Oetzel, 2005; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

**Comprehending the Role of Technology  
in Global Communication**

As global citizens, we are moving at an incredible rate of speed thanks in large part to the Internet. The Internet is the central hub—the channel that offers us a wide-open space to communicate globally and to connect with individuals from diverse walks of life. More importantly, this hub pulses with a speed and efficiency never seen before. Would you like to connect with your preschool classmate? Within five seconds, you can transport yourself into one of the many social networks and find your long-lost friend. Consider the following startling facts:

1. It took radio more than thirty years to reach 60 million people, fifteen years for television to reach 60 million people, and the Internet three years to reach more than 90 million people;
2. In a one-month period, YouTube.com had 100 million viewers in the United States watching 5.9 billion YouTube videos;
3. Although Google and Yahoo! websites receive approximately 280 million visitors per month, the approximately 116 million Facebook members

spend much more time surfing this site (over seven hours per month);

4. Ninety-three percent of U.S. Americans use cell phones or wireless devices; one-third of those are on "smartphones."

Sources: Hof, McWilliams, & Saveri (1998); "Hulu continues ascent" (2009).

In this twenty-first century, both individualists and collectivists, regardless of what cultures they are from, are at a crossroads of redefining, exploring, and reinventing their identities (Ting-Toomey, 2010b). On a global scale, new generations of individuals are attempting to create a third identity—a hybrid identity that fuses the global and local cultures together. This global connection is so appealing, and so very persuasive, that it constantly shapes and makes us reexamine who we are or what we want to become. Technology allows us to develop relationships across the barriers of time, space, geography, and cultural-ethnic boundaries. Because 84 percent of U. S. children have home Internet access, spending an average of one and one-half hours per day on the Internet (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010), when discussing important issues in intercultural and interracial communication, we can no longer afford to ignore the powerful influence of modern technology (see Blog Pic 1.2).

Technology drives what we listen to, what we download, and what we want to look like. It also forges a sense of global communal belonging when individuals do not relate to their particular cultural or ethnic group membership. While searching for a sense of belonging to a group, individuals end up finding each other in cyberspace. Understanding the impact of technology on every aspect of our lives will allow us to use communication productively—to engage in increased awareness, dialog, and collaboration between the local culture level and the global consumerism level.

By the way, do you know which countries have the highest ratio of Internet users? And which countries have the highest ratio of cellular mobile phone subscribers? Take a guess and check out Jeopardy Boxes 1.4 and 1.5. As we communicate across the globe through various electronic or wireless media, flexible intercultural communication becomes critical in such a global connective environment.



Blog Pic 1.2 We can communicate and connect from anywhere.

**JEOPARDY BOX 1.4** TOP FIVE COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST RATIO OF INTERNET USERS

Country	% of Population Penetration
1. United Kingdom	82
2. (South) Korea	80.9
3. Germany	79.9
4. Japan	78.4
5. United States	78.2

Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm> (retrieved March 2011)

**Facilitating Better Multicultural Health Care Communication**

As borders continue to merge and divide, one area rich in conversation is the state of multicultural health care (Anand & Lahiri, 2009). When Liliana was giving

birth to her daughter, the doctor was surprised that her husband, Senel, did not stand by Liliana. He did not coach her along or support her through the various stages of labor. In fact, he was not even in the delivery room to witness the delivery of a beautiful baby girl named Aryana. The doctor was quite perturbed and puzzled. Several months later, during a routine baby check-up, in chatting with Liliana, the doctor finally understood that Senel was not in the delivery room because of his Muslim faith and belief. For Muslims, birth comes through the "house" with a midwife in attendance, a very sacred place, and no man should be inside the room during the baby's delivery. Similarly, Native Indians in Belize and Panama also believe that the father should not be in the delivery room with the mother or the baby or else harm can come to both of them. If you were a trained nurse or health care professional, would you likely be aware of this religious tradition concerning childbirth?

**JEOPARDY BOX 1.5** TOP FIVE COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST RATIO OF CELLULAR MOBILE PHONE USERS 2009

Country
1. Montenegro
2. Hong Kong
3. Saudi Arabia
4. Russia
5. Lithuania

Source: [http://www.ofta.gov.hk/en/dataset/key\\_stat.html](http://www.ofta.gov.hk/en/dataset/key_stat.html); <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/saudi-arabia-sees-mobile-broadband-users-increase-291245.html>; <http://www.delfi.lt/news/economy/ITbussines/vel-augo-mobiliojo-rycio-abonentu-skaicius.d?id=29326053>; <http://www.bit.prime-tass.ru/news/show.asp?id=79606&ct=news>; [http://www.cgviesti.net/267703\\_Na-kraju-2009-vise-od-1-29-miliona-korisnika-mobilne-telefonije.html](http://www.cgviesti.net/267703_Na-kraju-2009-vise-od-1-29-miliona-korisnika-mobilne-telefonije.html) Retrieved on (retrieved July 17, 2011).

Many immigrants and multicultural citizens have high expectations that health care workers will respect their personal beliefs and health care practices. This is not always the case. For example, Fadiman (1997) documents a case in which a Hmong child became brain-dead after doctors in Merced, California, continuously miscommunicated with the parents. The clash between traditional Hmong beliefs and the role of Western medicine resulted in a tragic incident.

Multicultural health care in this global age is an additional concern because of the aging population. Many must agonize over the rising cost of providing quality care to aging parents and grandparents. They also must struggle with their own cultural and personal values of taking care of their aging parents at home or sending them away to a health care facility.

Additionally, immigrants with limited English skills must often struggle to communicate with the hospital staff, nurses, or doctors to convey a simple message. Many immigrants also use their children as translators—which easily tips the balance between the parental role and the child's role in a status-oriented family system. Worse, even if the child speaks English fluently, she or he may not know how to translate all the medical terms or medication prescriptions for a parent.

In addition, different cultural beliefs and traditions surround the concept of "death." For many U.S. Americans, death is a taboo topic. Euphemisms are

often used, such as "He is no longer with us," "She passed away peacefully," "She's in a better place," or "May he rest in peace." There are also a number of different cultural traditions in terms of burial practices. For example, the tradition among Orthodox Jews is to bury the deceased before sundown the next day and to have postdeath rituals that last for several days. When Muslims approach death, they may wish to face Mecca, their holy city in Saudi Arabia, and recite passages from the Qur'an (Purnell & Paulanka, 2008). Some Mexicans hold an elaborate ceremony known as a *velorio*, which may appear like a big party; in fact, they are celebrating the person's life because she or he has actually lived it fully. Likewise, the Irish hold a *wake*, and they eat and drink and celebrate the person's bountiful life. However, if you do not subscribe to any of the foregoing rituals, you would likely find it odd that some of these groups actually laugh and sing and dance during painful periods of grieving.

Concepts such as *ethnocentrism* and *ethnorelativism* and constructive intercultural conflict management skills such as *mindful listening* and *reframing* (as explored in the next few chapters) can serve as foundational building blocks for effective multicultural health care communication. Health care professionals and service providers can all benefit from mastering the knowledge and the skills of adaptive intercultural communication competencies.

**Enhancing Intercultural Relationship Satisfaction**

A meaningful life often entails deep relationship contacts with our families, close friends, and loved ones. However, with close contact often comes relationship disappointments and expectancy violations. If we already feel inept in handling different types of interpersonal relationships with people from our own cultural groups, imagine the challenges (plus, of course, the rewards) of dealing with additional cultural factors in our intimate relationship development process. Interpersonal friction provides a sound testing ground for the resilience of our intimate relationships.

According to expert researchers in interpersonal conflict (Canary & Lakey, 2006; Cupach, Canary, & Spitzberg, 2010), it is not the *frequency* of conflict that determines whether we have a satisfying or



dissatisfying intimate relationship. Rather, it is the *competencies* that we apply in managing our conflicts that will move the intercultural-intimate relationship onto a constructive or destructive path.

Even if we do not venture out of our hometown, the places for people to meet, to socialize, and to date are changing. An interesting phenomenon is online dating, both domestically and globally. In the past, dating was considered a private affair. Now, online dating services, chat rooms, and other social networking services allow people to meet on the basis of criteria they find important. Some people may disclose their ethnicities, and some people may not, in the early stage of courtship and flirting. Brooks (2003) reports that 40 million U.S. individuals date online! With Match.com and other various dating services, the supply is definitely in demand in this "hook-up" age.

With the dramatic rise of intercultural marriages and dating relationships in the United States, intimate relationships are a fertile ground for culture shock and clashes. According to Rosenfeld (2007), more than 7 percent of the nation's 59 million married couples in 2005 were interracial, compared with less than 2 percent in 1970. Alaska is reported as the top-ranked U.S. state with a biracial heritage population, followed by Hawaii and California. The Pew Research Center ("*Almost all Millennials*," 2010) conducted a study of over two thousand members of the Y (or "Millennial") Generation, those born after 1980. Results indicate that an overwhelming majority, regardless of race, are fine with a family member's marriage to someone of a different racial or ethnic group. When asked about marriage into a group to which they do not belong, nine of ten say they would be fine with a family member's marriage to an African American (88%), a Hispanic American (91%), an Asian American (93%), or a white American (92%). Another finding is that 54 percent have an interracial friend. Teenagers of today are often more receptive to developing close friendships and dating relationships across all racial lines compared with when data tracking began.

On the topic of intercultural family relationship satisfaction, for many U.S. adoptive families, which countries do you think most foreign-born adopted children come from? Take a guess and check out Jeopardy Box 1.6. The U.S. Census Bureau's very first

profile of adopted children reveals that 1.6 million adopted kids under age eighteen are now living in U.S. households. Although foreign adoptions are increasing and getting the most headlines, the report shows that 87 percent of adoptees from diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds under eighteen were born in the United States.

As more U.S. families are becoming families of color, the challenge is to grapple with issues of race, ethnicity, and even religion. For example, in a documentary entitled *Off and Running* (<http://offand-runningthefilm.com/>), Avery Klein-Cloud is your typical sixteen-year-old teenager—who happens to be an African American raised by Jewish adoptive mothers. Avery has two adopted brothers: Samuel, who is biracial (African American and white), and Zay-Zay, who is Korean. Raised with Jewish faith in a lesbian household, Avery goes on a quest to find her birth mother and, as a result, experiences a true identity crisis. At one point, as she struggles with her newfound black identity, she seeks help from a counselor and admits that "I don't know how to be black." Her identity crisis and challenges depict her struggle to find the answer to the question: "Who am I?" Beyond cultural and religious identity questions in many of these multicultural-multiracial family households, other relevant issues include where to live and raise a biracial family, reaching out and making connections with those ethnically similar to the adopted child, and understanding the dilemmas of a child's or an adolescent's multiracial-multietnic identity development stages.

Understanding the possible internal and external obstacles that affect an intimate intercultural

**JEOPARDY BOX 1.6 TOP FIVE COUNTRIES OF BIRTH FOR FOREIGN-BORN ADOPTED CHILDREN UNDER EIGHTEEN IN THE UNITED STATES, 2010**

1. China (Mainland)
2. Ethiopia
3. Russia
4. South Korea
5. Ukraine

Source: U.S. Department of State, 2010, [http://adoption.state.gov/about\\_us/statistics.php](http://adoption.state.gov/about_us/statistics.php) (retrieved March 25, 2011).

relationship can increase our acceptance of our intimate partners and family members. Intercultural relationship conflict, when managed competently, can bring about positive changes in a relationship. It allows the conflict partners to use the conflict opportunity to reassess the state of the relationship. It opens doors for family members to discuss identity struggles and family dynamic issues. Culture-sensitive, respectful, and empathetic communication can increase relational and family closeness and deepen cultural self-awareness. The power of being understood on an authentic level can greatly enhance relationship quality, satisfaction, and personal insight.

**Fostering Global and Intrapersonal Peace**

The need for global peace has never been more apparent. A look at the headlines in any international news magazines or newspapers in early 2011 and the headline news spotted: "Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, ... Libya" and the revolutionary protests staged by citizens across the Middle East. The role of technology galvanized the young and the old to come together and demand their citizenship rights, democracy, and freedom. As the famed journalist Fareed Zakaria (2011) notes, "It's too simple to say that what happened in Tunisia and Egypt happened because of Facebook. But technology—satellite television, computers, mobile phones and the Internet—has played a powerful role in informing, educating and connecting people in the region. Such advances empower individuals and disempower the state... Today's technology are all many-to-many, networks in which everyone is connected but no one is in control. That's bad for anyone trying to suppress information" (p. 31).

Not to mention the fact that more than ten years ago, the United States had never experienced terrorism so close at hand as on September 11, 2001, when almost three thousand individuals perished in the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The death toll included individuals from many other countries, such as Australia, China, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, and Sweden (<http://cnn.com>).

In part because of this event, in the past five years interest in pursuing advanced college degrees in Peace

and/or Social Justice Studies has gained tremendous momentum around the world. There are currently over 450 bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs and concentrations in forty countries and thirty-eight U.S. states to obtain a degree in Peace and Justice (Harris & Shuster, 2007). Programs are varied, such as at Depauw University, where you can major or minor in Conflict Studies, or you can join the Citizen Peacebuilding Program at the University of California, Irvine, or head off to the School of Peace Studies at Kyung Hee University in South Korea, which has been established since 1984.

In addition, other organizations have been dedicated to promoting peace, cultural, and spiritual development, and betterment of humankind. The Kyoto Symposium Organization in California, for example, was founded in 2004 to organize and administer the Kyoto Prize, awarded to individuals who have made "outstanding contributions to the betterment of humanity" (<http://www.kyotoprize.org>). In 2008, one such recipient was McGill University's Professor Emeritus Charles Taylor. In the Kyoto awards booklet, a beautiful bio and quotation exemplifies why peace and humanitarian tolerance are so relevant in our twenty-first century life: "Dr. Taylor is an outstanding philosopher who advocates communitarianism and multiculturalism from the perspective of holistic individualism.... He has constructed and endeavored to put into practice a social philosophy that allows human beings with different historical, traditional, and cultural backgrounds to retain their multiple identities and to live in happiness with each other" ([http://www.inamori-f.or.jp/laureates/k24\\_c\\_charles/ctn\\_e.html](http://www.inamori-f.or.jp/laureates/k24_c_charles/ctn_e.html)). This quote summarizes Dr. Taylor's vision, in which he believes that all people, and all groups of people, deserve recognition for their distinctive humanistic qualities despite historical rejections.

To practice global peacemaking, we must hold a firm commitment that considerations of fairness should apply to all identity groups. We must be willing to consider sharing economic and social resources with underprivileged groups to level the fear and resentment factors. We must start practicing win-win collaborative dialogs with individuals or groups we may currently consider our enemies. We must display a mindful listening attitude even if we do not like the

individuals or agree with their ideas or viewpoints. In displaying our respect for other nations or groups of individuals, we may open doors for more dialogs and deeper contacts. Human respect is a prerequisite for any type or form of intercultural or interethnic communication.

Global peacebuilding is closely connected to intrapersonal peacebuilding. If we are at peace with ourselves, we will hold more compassion and caring for others around us. If we are constantly angry and fighting against ourselves, we will likely spread our anger and resentment to others. The current spiritual leader of many Buddhists, the Holiness Fourteenth Dalai Lama, made comments on the importance of promoting world peace and thinking of the entire globe as a human family (<http://www.dalailama.com/messages/world-peace/a-human-approach-to-peace>; see Blog Post 1.1).

Let's also go visit Blog Post 1.2 and read the lyrics by John Lennon. Perhaps by listening to this song, we can engage in some imaginative peacebuilding work in our everyday lives—with our loved ones, families, close friends, classmates, teachers, neighbors, coworkers, and cultural strangers that come our way.

#### Deepening Self-Awareness and Other-Awareness

The late Tupac Shakur once rapped, *"Words of wisdom, they shine upon the strength of a nation. Conquer the enemy, on with education. Protect thy self, teach with what*

*you wanna do. Know thy self, teach with what we've been through"* (from Shakur's *2Pacocalypse Now*, 1991).

As we systematically acquire the building-block concepts and skills to deal with cultural differences, this knowledge base should challenge you to question your own cultural assumptions and primary socialization process. We acquire our cultural beliefs, values, and communication norms often on a very unconscious level. Without a comparative basis, we may never question the way we have been conditioned and socialized in our primary cultural system. Cultural socialization, in one sense, encourages the development of ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism means seeing our own culture as the center of the universe and seeing other cultures as insignificant or even inferior (see Chapter 8). As Charon (2004) describes the development of ethnocentrism, "Groups develop differences from one another, so do formal organizations, communities, and societies. *Without interaction with outsiders, differences become difficult to understand and difficult not to judge.* What is real to us becomes comfortable; what is comfortable becomes right. What we do not understand becomes less than right to us" (p. 156).

Without sound comparative cross-cultural knowledge, we may look at the world from only one lens—that is, our own cultural lens. With a solid intercultural knowledge base, we may begin to understand the possible value differences and similarities between our own cultural system and that of another cultural system. We may be able to explain

suffering. It then becomes both morally wrong and pragmatically unwise to pursue only one's own happiness oblivious to the feelings and aspirations of all others who surround us as members of the same human family . . .

. . . The global population is increasing, and our resources are being rapidly depleted. Look at the trees, for example. No one knows exactly what adverse effects massive deforestation will have on the climate, the soil, and global ecology as a whole. We are facing problems because people are concentrating only on their short-term, selfish interests, not thinking of the entire human family. They are not thinking of the earth and the long-term effects on universal life as a whole. If we of the present generation do not think about these now, future generations may not be able to cope with them.

Source: <http://www.dalailama.com>

#### BLOG POST 1.1

Today we are so interdependent, so closely interconnected with each other, that without a sense of universal responsibility, a feeling of universal brotherhood and sisterhood, and an understanding and belief that we really are part of one big human family, we cannot hope to overcome the dangers to our very existence—let alone bring about peace and happiness.

One nation's problems can no longer be satisfactorily solved by itself alone; too much depends on the interest, attitude, and cooperation of other nations. A universal humanitarian approach to world problems seems the only sound basis for world peace. What does this mean? We begin from the recognition mentioned previously that all beings cherish happiness and do not want

why people behave the way they behave from their culture's logic systems or value patterns. Whether you will be utilizing the knowledge and skills right on your own campus, in your classroom setting, in your workplace setting, and/or in your daily interpersonal relationship development contexts, we hope the knowledge building-blocks in this text will improve the quality of your everyday communication lives.

Intercultural knowledge can deepen our awareness of who we are, where we acquired our beliefs and values in the first place, and how we make sense of the world around us. To increase our self-awareness, we must be in tune with our own uncertainties and emotional vulnerabilities. We must understand our own cognitive filters and emotional biases in encountering cultural or ethnic differences. Knowledge brings the power of new insights. New insights, however, can be at times disconcerting and threatening. Confusion is part of the intercultural discovery journey. In this section, we have discussed eight practical reasons for why the study of intercultural communication is such an important topic. We are sure you can add other professional or personal reasons for why you should take a keen interest in this intercultural communication class. With the knowledge and skills gained as an intercultural student, and with imagination and creativity, we hope that you will find yourself applying these intercultural knowledge building blocks and these communication skills in diverse interaction settings. We now

turn to a discussion of the definitional elements of culture.

#### CULTURE: A LEARNED MEANING SYSTEM

What is culture? This question has fascinated scholars in various academic disciplines for many decades. As long ago as the early 1950s, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) identified more than 160 different definitions of the term culture. The study of culture has ranged from the study of its external architecture and landscape to the study of a set of implicit values to which a large group of members in a community subscribe. The term originates from the Latin word *cultura* or *cultus* as in *"agri culture, the cultivation of the soil. . . . From its root meaning of an activity, culture became transformed into a condition, a state of being cultivated"* (Freilich, 1989, p. 2).

To be a "cultivated" member of a cultural community, the implication is that you understand what it means to be a "desirable and ideal" member of that particular system. It means you have acquired the meanings of "right" and "wrong" actions that produce particular consequences in that cultural environment. It means you have been nurtured by the core values of that cultural community and understand what constitutes "desirable" and "undesirable" behaviors as sanctioned by members of that system.

Culture is basically a learned system of meanings—a value-laden meaning system that helps you to "make sense" of and explain what is going on in your everyday

#### BLOG POST 1.2

Imagine there's no heaven,  
It's easy if you try,  
No hell below us,  
Above us only sky,  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today . . .

Imagine there's no countries,  
It isn't hard to do,  
Nothing to kill or die for,  
No religion too,  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace . . .

Imagine no possessions,  
I wonder if you can,  
No need for greed or hunger,  
A brotherhood of man,  
Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world . . .

You may say I'm a dreamer,  
but I'm not the only one,  
I hope some day you'll join us,  
And the world will live as one.

Source: Words and music by John Lennon.  
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by EMI BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC. Used by permission.

intercultural surroundings. It fosters a particular sense of shared identity and solidarity among its group members. It also reinforces the boundary of “we” as an ingroup and the “dissimilar others” as belonging to distant outgroups. *Ingroup identity* basically refers to the emotional attachments and shared fate (i.e., perceived common treatment as a function of category membership) that we attach to our selective cultural, ethnic, or social categories. *Outgroups* are groups from which we remain psychologically or emotionally detached, and we are skeptical about their words or intentions (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010a, 2010b).

In sum, *culture* is defined in this book as a *learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings, and symbols that are passed on from one generation to the next and are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community*. Members within the same cultural community share a sense of traditions, worldviews, values, rhythms, and patterns of life. We explore some of the key definitional ideas of culture—popular culture, meanings, symbols, norms, values, beliefs, and traditions—in the following subsections.

Culture is like an iceberg: the deeper layers (e.g., traditions, beliefs, and values) are hidden from our view. We tend to see and hear only the uppermost layers of cultural artifacts (e.g., fashion, pop music, and mass-appeal commercial films). We can also witness the exchange of overt verbal and nonverbal symbols (see Figure 1.1). However, to understand a culture—or a person in a cultural community—with any depth, we must match their underlying values coherently with their respective norms, meanings, and symbols.

It is the underlying set of cultural beliefs and values that drives people’s thinking, reactions, and behaviors. Furthermore, to understand commonalities between individuals and groups, we must dig deeper into the level of universal human needs. Some universal human needs, for example, can include the needs for security, inclusion, love/connection, respect, control, and creating meaning. Although people in diverse cultures are dissimilar in many ways, they are also alike in many aspects—especially in the deep levels of the needs for human respect, connection, and security. Unfortunately, using the analogy of the iceberg, individuals usually do not take the time or effort to discover the deeper layers of universal human needs and connections.

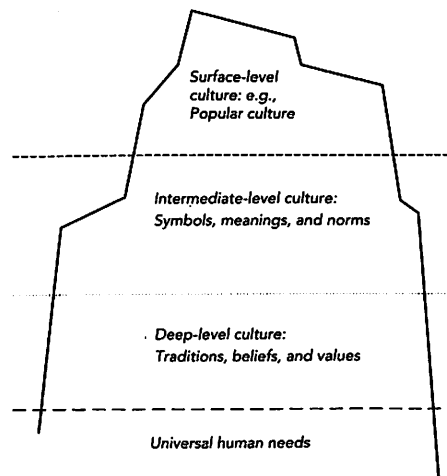


FIGURE 1.1 Culture: An Iceberg Metaphor

#### Surface-Level Culture: Popular Culture

On the most surface level, we often learn about another culture via the representation of its popular culture (for further examples, see Chapter 11). Popular culture is often referred to as “those cultural artifacts, processes, effects, and meanings that are popular by definition, derivation, or general understanding” (Zelizer, 2001, p. 299). Popular culture covers a wide spectrum of mediums—from pop music to pop gadgets, from pop karaoke to pop icons, and from global TV shows to global hip-hop fashion.

Popular culture (or *pop culture*) basically refers to cultural artifacts or systems that have mass appeal and that infiltrate our daily life. Popular images as portrayed in television, film, advertising, pop music, and even comic strips often reinforce cultural and gender ideologies in a society. The daily bombardment of television is one of our main sources of pop culture. Despite a limited number of women and ethnic minorities on television, for example, the media actually do offer sporadically some strong female gender roles (e.g., *Covert Affairs*, *Nikita*, and *The Good Wife*) and positive images of ethnic roles (e.g., *Hawaii Five-O*, *Modern Family*, and *The Game*). It is also important to

remember that all popular media are businesses that aim for mass consumption and profit-generating outcomes.

In this context, U.S. popular culture tends to dominate the global market. In 2010, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* won the prestigious International Television Audience Award for a Drama TV Series at the Fiftieth Monte Carlo TV Festival. *CSI* has won the award three times in the five-year history of the audience awards and is the highest rated global television show across five continents. The reasons for the global appeal of *CSI* could be because it is a fast-paced suspense drama, featuring attractive-looking actors, and depicting crimes committed and solved smartly within a one-hour span. Furthermore, many U.S. television shows are exported globally, such as *Glee*, *House*, *Lost*, and *The Big Bang Theory*. Contemporary television programming of reality shows (e.g., *American Idol*, *Jersey Shore*, and *Pawn Stars*) appeals widely across multiple national boundaries, especially with global online video streaming.

Furthermore, U.S. popular culture in the category of films also dominates on a worldwide level. Films like *Avatar* and *Inception* reflect the surface layer of U.S. commercial pop culture. Other films, such as *Iron Man*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *The Bourne Identity*, promote sweeping adventure, romance, open frontiers, and a spirit of exploration—images that reinforce the notion of the United States as a carefree, action-packed, adventure-seeking culture. Although the United States is one of the highest movie-producing countries, do you know what is the top-ranked highest movie-making country? Take a guess and check out Jeopardy Box 1.7, which lists the top five movie-

#### JEOPARDY BOX 1.7 TOP FIVE MOVIE-PRODUCING COUNTRIES IN 2009

Country	Features Produced
1. India	1,288
2. United States	677
3. China (Mainland)	456
4. Japan	448
5. France	158

Source: <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1116012934?ref=CatId=13&query=france+feature+films+2009+BO> (retrieved March 25, 2011).

#### JEOPARDY BOX 1.8 TOP FIVE MOST POPULAR U.S. NEWSSTAND MAGAZINES

1. Cosmopolitan
2. People
3. Woman's World
4. First
5. US Weekly

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations, <http://www.accessabc.com> (retrieved March 25, 2011).

producing countries in 2009. Beyond films, people also receive images of another country via news magazines and television shows. Do you know what are the most popular U.S. newsstand magazines? Take a guess and check out Jeopardy Box 1.8.

Furthermore, icons, such as Disneyland, McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Starbucks, and Nike brand names, in conjunction with pop music, television shows, and films, are some prime examples of global popular culture. Some forms of popular culture have a direct correlation with the culture's underlying values and norms, but other forms of popular culture have been created for sheer entertainment purposes and profit-making objectives. Popular culture is often driven by an economic industry with a money-making target audience in mind. Boosting global appeal is another aspect of popular culture driven by strong economic interests.

As the music industry continues to suffer a severe decline in revenue and rampant piracy issues, music labels are finding alternative ways to evolve and achieve success. Digital downloads are one way. Do you know the top five digital downloads of 2010? Check out Jeopardy Box 1.9. Another alternative is the unique manifestation of hip-hop and rap. Chile's Ana Tijoux was nominated in 2011 for her rap in Spanish in the Grammy category of Best Latin Rock, Alternative, or Urban Album. Korean pop's (K-pop) domination in Asia is slowly infiltrating the United States, with artists like Rain selling out in New York and the Wonder Girls opening up for the Jonas Brothers. Finally, the combinations of ethnic minorities singing hip-hop/rap and social networks (YouTube and Facebook) have appealed to the masses. Take, for example, the group Far East Movement. These Koreatown Los Angeles



## JEOPARDY BOX 1.9 TOP FIVE DIGITAL DOWNLOADS FOR 2010

Singer/group	Song	2010 Sales
1. Katy Perry feat. Snoop Dogg	California Gurls	4,398,000
2. Train	Hey, Soul Sister	4,314,000
3. Eminem feat. Rihanna	Love the Way You Lie	4,245,000
4. Taio Cruz	Dynamite	4,083,000
5. B.O.B. feat. Hayley Williams	Airplanes	4,004,000

Source: <http://www.billboard.com/charts#> (retrieved March 25, 2011).

rappers hit platinum with their song "Like a G6." It was the first time an Asian American group had a No. 1 digital single, eliciting about 10 million views on YouTube.

Some individuals consume a particular form of popular culture (e.g., CNN) as a way to be informed and included in their cultural community. By commenting on the headline news as reported on CNN, for example, individuals have a common symbol to rally around and to trade reactions with one another. Although having some information is better than no information before we visit another culture, all of us must remain vigilant in questioning the sources of where we receive our ideas or images about another culture. For example, the images we have acquired about Colombia, China, Israel, Sweden, and South Africa are often derived from secondhand news media. We should ask ourselves questions such as the following: Who are the decision makers behind the production of these popular images, icons, or sounds? Have we ever had a meaningful conversation with someone directly from that particular culture concerning his or her specific cultural or personal standpoints? Do we actually know enough people from that particular culture who are able to offer us multiple perspectives to understand the diverse reality of that culture? Do we actually have any acquaintances or close friends from that group who could help us to comprehend their culture on both a broad and a deep level?

In other words, we must be more watchful about how we process or form mental images about a large

group of people under the broad category of "culture" or "race." Although we can travel in time to many far-flung places through the consumption of various media, we should remain mindful that a culture exists on multiple levels of complexity. Popular culture represents only one surface slice of the embedded richness of a culture. For more popular culture discussions, see Chapter 11.

#### Intermediate-Level Culture: Symbols, Meanings, and Norms

A **symbol** is a sign, artifact, word(s), gesture, or nonverbal behavior that stands for or reflects something meaningful. We use language as a symbolic system (with words, idioms, and phrases), which contains rich culture-based categories to organize and dissect the fluctuating world around us. Naming particular events (e.g., "formal gathering" versus "hanging out") via distinctive language categories is part of what we do in everyday communication activities. Expressions such as "Where there's a will there's a way" (a U.S. expression) or "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down" (a Japanese expression) reveal something about that culture's attitude toward self-determination or group-value orientation. Intercultural frictions often arise because of the ways we label and attach meanings to the different expressions or behaviors around us.

The **meanings** or interpretations that we attach to a symbol (e.g., a national flag or a nonverbal gesture), for example, can cue both objective and subjective reactions. People globally can recognize a particular country by its national flag because of its design and color. However, people of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds can also hold subjective meanings of what the flag means to them, such as a sense of pride or oppression. Other symbolic meaning examples can include the use of different nonverbal gestures across cultures. An animated "OK" nonverbal gesture sign from the United States, for example, with the thumb and forefinger signaling a circle, can mean money to the Japanese, a sexual insult in Brazil and Greece, a vulgar gesture in Russia, or zero in France.

**Cultural norms** refer to the collective expectations of what constitutes proper or improper behavior

in a given interaction scene. For example, whether we should shake hands or bow to a new Japanese supervisor when being introduced reflects our sense of politeness or respect for the other individual in the scene. However, to enact a proper "getting acquainted" interaction script, we must take the setting, interaction goal, relationship expectation, and cultural competence skills into account.

The **setting** can include the consideration of cultural context (e.g., the interaction scene takes place in Japan or the United States) or physical context (e.g., in an office or a restaurant). The **interaction goal** refers to the objective of the meeting—a job interview meeting is quite different from a chance meeting in a restaurant. A meeting to "show off" that you are an expert about the Japanese culture (therefore, you bow appropriately) is quite different from a chance meeting with a Japanese supervisor in an American restaurant (therefore, maybe a slight head nod will do).

The **relationship expectation** feature refers to how much role formality/informality or task/social tone you want to forge in the interaction. Last, **cultural competence skills** refer to the cultural knowledge you have internalized and the operational skills you are able to apply in the interaction scene. For example, if you do not have a good knowledge of the different degrees of bowing that are needed in approaching a Japanese supervisor, you may make a fool of yourself and cause awkward interaction. You may end up with an improper performance in the "getting-acquainted bowing" scene. By not differentiating the different levels of bowing (e.g., lower bowing for supervisors and shallow bowing for low-ranking staff), you may have committed a cultural bump without conscious realization.

To understand a culture, we must master the operational norms of a culture. However, beyond mastering the prescriptive rules of what we "should" or "should not do" in a culture, we must dig deeper to understand the cultural logics that frame such distinctive behaviors. Although norms can be readily inferred and observed through behaviors, cultural beliefs and values are deep seated and invisible. Cultural traditions, beliefs, and values intersect to influence the development of collective norms in a culture.

#### Deep-Level Culture: Traditions, Beliefs, and Values

On a communal level, culture refers to a patterned way of living by a group of interacting individuals who share a common set of history, traditions, beliefs, values, and interdependent fate. This is known as the *normative culture* of a group of individuals. On an individual level, members of a culture can attach different degrees of importance to these complex ranges and layers of cultural beliefs and values. This is known as the *subjective culture* of an individual (Triandis, 1972, 1994, 1995). Thus, we can talk about the broad patterns of a culture as a group membership concept. We can also think about the culturally shared beliefs and values as subjectively subscribed to by members of a group, demonstrating varying degrees of endorsement and importance (Ting-Toomey, 2010a, 2010b, 2011).

**Culturally shared traditions** can include myths, legends, ceremonies, and rituals (e.g., celebrating Hanukkah or Thanksgiving) that are passed on from one generation to the next via an oral or written medium. They serve to reinforce ingroup solidarity, communal memory, cultural stability, and continuity functions. Culturally shared traditions can include, for example, the celebrations of birth, coming-of-age rituals, courtship rituals, wedding ceremonies, and seasonal change celebration rituals. They can also include spiritual traditions, such as in times of sickness, healing, rejuvenation, mourning, and funeral rituals for the dead (M.F. Bennett, 2009).

**Culturally shared beliefs** refer to a set of fundamental assumptions or worldviews that people hold dearly to their hearts without question. These beliefs can revolve around questions as to the origins of human beings, the concept of time, space, and reality, the existence of a supernatural being, and the meaning of life, death, and the afterlife. Proposed answers to many of these questions can be found in the major religions of the world, such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Peering into U.S. culture, do you know what are the top five religions in the United States and which countries have the largest Christian and Jewish populations? Take a guess and check out Jeopardy

**JEOPARDY BOX 1.10 TOP FIVE RELIGIONS IN THE UNITED STATES**

Religion	%
1. Christianity	78.4
2. Judaism	1.7
3. Buddhism	0.7
4. Islam	0.6
5. Hinduism	0.4

Source: <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports> (retrieved March 25, 2011).

**JEOPARDY BOX 1.11 TOP FIVE COUNTRIES WITH LARGEST CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH POPULATIONS****Top Five Countries with Largest Christian Populations**

1. United States
2. Brazil
3. Russia
4. China
5. Mexico

**Top Five Countries with Largest Jewish Populations**

1. United States
2. Israel
3. France
4. Argentina
5. Canada

Source: Ash (2011, p. 80, 82; based on World Christian Database).

Boxes 1.10 and 1.11. Do you know which are the top five countries with respect to the largest Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim populations? Take a guess and cross-check your answers with Jeopardy Box 1.12. People who subscribe to any of these religious philosophies tend to hang on to their beliefs on faith, often accepting the fundamental precepts without question. They also tend to draw from their deeply held beliefs to subscribe meanings and explanations for why certain things happen in the cosmic order of life itself.

Beyond fundamental cultural or religious beliefs, people also differ in what they value as

**JEOPARDY BOX 1.12 TOP FIVE COUNTRIES WITH LARGEST BUDDHIST, HINDU, AND MUSLIM POPULATIONS****Top Five Countries with Largest Buddhist Populations**

1. China
2. Japan
3. Thailand
4. Vietnam
5. Myanmar

**Top Five Countries with Largest Hindu Populations**

1. India
2. Nepal
3. Bangladesh
4. Indonesia
5. Sri Lanka

**Top Five Countries with Largest Muslim Populations**

1. Indonesia
2. Pakistan
3. India
4. Bangladesh
5. Iran

Source: Ash (2011, p. 80; based on World Christian Database).

important in their cultures. **Cultural values** refer to a set of priorities that guide “good” or “bad” behaviors, “desirable” or “undesirable” practices, and “fair” or “unfair” actions. Cultural values (e.g., individual competitiveness versus group harmony) can serve as the motivational basis for actions (Stringer, 2003). For example, an Israeli psychologist, Shalom Schwartz (1990, 1992; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001), believes that we should understand the underlying motivational values that drive human actions. Those motivational values or basic value needs include the following: satisfying biological needs, social coordination needs, and the survival and welfare needs of the group.

From his various research studies in more than fifty countries, Schwartz has further identified ten value clusters that motivate people to behave the

way they do in different cultures. These motivational value clusters or value types include the following: self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism; security, tradition, and conformity; power and benevolence; achievement; and universalism. Although self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism appear to reflect individualistic value tendencies, security, tradition, and conformity appear to reflect group-based, collectivistic value patterns. Power and benevolence seem to reflect whether individuals crave social recognition or deeper meaning in life. Achievement and universalism reflect whether individuals are ambitious and crave material success or whether they are universalistic oriented in wishing for a world at peace and inner harmony. More important, Schwartz’s research indicates that a clear structure of values does emerge in reflecting people’s underlying needs. The value structure and the relationship between value types appear to be consistent across cultures. However, cultures vary in terms of how strongly or how weakly they endorse a particular cluster of values.

To understand various communication patterns in a culture, we must understand the deep-rooted cultural values that give meanings to such patterns. An in-depth discussion of the contents of cultural values appears in Chapter 3.

**STAMPING YOUR INTERCULTURAL PASSPORT**

Overall, culture is a complex frame of reference that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings, and symbols that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community. Oftentimes, our ignorance of a different culture’s worldviews or values can produce unintentional clashes between ourselves and people of that culture. We may not even notice that we have violated another culture’s norms in a particular communication scene. The result may worsen the intercultural misinterpretation process.

In summary, this chapter discusses several reasons why we should study intercultural communication. In discussing the definition of culture, we explored the three levels of understanding a culture: surface-level, intermediate-level, and deep-level culture. If you have fully understood all the concepts of Chapter 1, you have now earned one stamp on your intercultural passport. You can continue on your journey mindfully—read, observe, notice, experience, and learn. The remaining chapters will address intercultural communication flexibility issues, value dimensions, multilayered identities, verbal and nonverbal communication competence issues, and much more.