
Review

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Organizational Trust: A Cultural Perspective.

Mark N. Saunders, Denise Skinner, Graham Dietz, Nicole Gillespie, and Roy. J. Lewicki, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 430 pp. \$110.00, hardback; \$48.00, paper.

"Trust falls between hope and certainty," is a familiar premise. But how do we develop trust in the others we transact with? Which aspects of this process are universal, and which are a function of culture, including our national, occupational, and organizational cultures? How do we transcend differences to bridge cultural divides? Given that we all have multiple cultural legacies that provide conflicting imperatives in some cases, which of these cultural facets dominate to shape our behavior? How do our multiple cultural facets interact and change over time? These important and timely questions are addressed here by an international and interdisciplinary cast of authors.

The volume succeeds far more than most culture books because trust is such rich terrain for exploring cross-, inter- and multicultural dynamics. Trust consists of social signals: a trustee's behavior, reputation, and social positions are read as signs of trustworthiness by the trustor. While some signals may be universal legacies of biological evolution, cultural evolution favors distinctive signals that enable preferential trust of ingroup over outgroup others (Richerson and Boyd, 2005). Hence the challenge of earning trust as an outgroup member, whose signals may be missed or misinterpreted. Developing intercultural trust challenges both trustee and trustor to become mindful of their cultural differences and craft a common language, either by finding cultural facets that they share or by identifying universal signals of trust. The dynamics of cultural knowledge activation are critical to how we manage these challenges, as the book conveys through myriad examples of how managers' multiple identities fluctuate, in concert with those of others, as they navigate business interactions and how managers' prevailing cultural identities and habits evolve over time as a function of their experiences.

Bookended by the editors' introduction and conclusion, the fourteen contributed chapters portray trust formation, maintenance, and repair in many pockets of business around the world, varying in the industries, professions, and societies involved. The foundational chapter by Dietz, Gillespie, and Moon builds a coherent and circumscribed framework that is referenced throughout the volume. Trust is defined, not controversially, as a psychological state of accepting vulnerability toward another based on positive expectations. These expectations arise from both the trustor's propensities and the trustee's perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, 1995), evidenced by the trustee's prior behavior and, more indirectly, by third-party reports (whether via credit agencies or casual gossip), social category and network affiliations, social-role obligations (a minister's propriety, a physician's Hippocratic oath), and external institutions and regulations (norms and laws). In this view, trustors weigh the evidence from these various sources to

judge their level of trust. With each successful exchange and fulfillment of expectations, the evidence accumulates and trust is strengthened.

Next Ferrin and Gillespie provide a comprehensive review of the largely quantitative literature on the effects of national culture on trust. They find evidence for differences, particularly in generalized trust, which varies widely across countries (65 percent of Norwegians say most people can be trusted, compared with only 3 percent of Brazilians), associated with country-level measures such as wealth, education, and ethnic homogeneity (Delhey and Newton, 2005). This chapter also reviews trust's determinants and consequences and its role as mediator and moderator, finding evidence on each point for both universals and differences. For instance, while non-Western studies of adjudged trustworthiness replicate the factors of ability, benevolence, and integrity, they also identify additional predictors (e.g., thriftiness, deference) specific to some cultural groups. The remaining two chapters of part 1 present familiar critiques of the foregoing positivist approaches and advocate attention to managers' personal constructs and narratives. These break the flow of the book, however, and might have been better relegated to its final section.

The chapters in parts 2 and 3 resume the empirical approach yet feature qualitative rather than quantitative data. Avakian, Clark, and Roberts analyze extended interviews with English management consultants. Dibben and Rose contribute a similar study of auditors, charting changes with seniority in the centrality of occupational versus organizational identities. Möllering and Stache use interviews as well as personal observations to portray fledgling German-Ukrainian partnerships during the Orange Revolution. Yousfi presents a long-term ethnographic study of a private French firm working under contract to a public Lebanese firm. Lyon and Porter use similar methods in a study of traveling produce traders in Nigeria and Ghana. These chapters are chock-full of telling details. A Russian proverb holds that to trust a man you need to first eat with him a *centner* (about 100 pounds) of salt—a lot of lunches. A Lebanese maxim enjoins partners to work together like “one hand”—an emphasis on unity of purpose perhaps needed in such a diverse society. Nigerian traveling produce traders develop trust in different ethnic communities by staying as guests in their trading partners' houses; Ghanaians do so by attending their family funerals. This all-too-rare emphasis on qualitative studies serves to fulfill the editors' commitment to balance emic (native view) and etic (outsider) cultural analysis. Descriptions of managers' trust dynamics in experience-near constructs may reflect the volume's origins in a seminar series on the theory *and* practice of trust, funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council. It is a tribute to the book that readers will wish they had attended the seminars.

The editors seek to illustrate how emic and etic approaches inform each other. This succeeds most in regard to trustworthiness, where Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's factors are seen to be identifiable across cultures, albeit weighted and manifested differently. Emic studies of cultural

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misunderstandings spur hypotheses that can be tested in etic studies. For example, managers' descriptions of the strained French-Lebanese partnership are interpreted in terms of the French subcontractors' insistence on being trusted for expertise (ability) clashing with the Lebanese managers' need for gestures of openness and partnership (benevolence). A comparison of French and Lebanese samples could test the implied hypotheses about emphases on ability and benevolence in French and Lebanese business cultures.

Emic studies can also provide evidence for the generalizability and completeness of etic models. Ethnographic interviews and observation are useful in correcting the limitations of "imposed etic" studies that simply export Western instruments, missing distinctive aspects of the local psychology. When open-ended methods in non-Western settings reveal patterns that correspond to a Western model, this provides important evidence for its generalizability. When they also identify additional constructs, this points the way toward more complete models to be tested in a "derived etic" study (Morris et al., 1999). This is illustrated by Wasti and Tan's chapter on an interview/content analysis study with managers in Turkey and China. Most of the managers' statements about trust could be coded into Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's ability, benevolence, and integrity categories, which supports the model's generalizability. Yet Turkish and Chinese managers described affectively deeper benevolence behaviors than those discussed in the Western literature. Wasti and Tan note that this might reflect more paternalistic role expectations. Or it may reflect that this is an overly rational/evidentiary account of trust, which leaves out affect-based processes that are part of trust everywhere, even in the West (McCallister, 1995). Further, Wasti and Tan's interviews illustrate novel ways that trust emerges from multiplex relationships, which characterize business relationships in different kinds of collectivist societies (Morris, Podolny, and Sullivan, 2008).

The brief concluding chapter by Saunders, Skinner, and Lewicki integrates the quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the ambitious questions raised in the introduction. A strong point is their discussion of intercultural trust, which synthesizes insights from Kramer about the Cuban Missile Crisis negotiations and from Möllering and Stache about German-Ukrainian relationship-building meals. Consistent with the emerging cultural intelligence literature (Imai and Gelfand, 2010), the editors emphasize that intercultural trust develops when parties bring "openness to the other culture and a willingness to deal reflexively with cultural differences" (p. 414). It does not require that the two sides become alike, only that they make themselves more understandable and predictable to each other. This analysis follows from the book's trust models and entails concrete recommendations that would be valuable to practitioners. To invoke Lewin, there is nothing so practical as a good theory.

If the book falls short, it is in elucidating the dynamics of cultural multiplicity and malleability. Starting from the introduction, the editors approach these issues eclectically, drawing chiefly on three prior accounts that draw on

metaphors, respectively, to spheres, mosaics, and codes. Schneider and Barsoux (2002) use the term "spheres of influence" in its political sense to describe regional cultures and then invoke the notion of the spheres more loosely to describe industrial, organizational, professional, and functional cultures. Schneider and Barsoux represent these shifting spheres as akin to a bin of bouncy Pilates balls (Figure 1, p. 52). While heuristically useful in connecting their book's many examples of identity flux in international business, this spheres model doesn't predict *how* different cultural legacies interact; it merely suggests that they are very dynamic.

Chao and Moon (2005) described an individual's multiple cultural facets as a mosaic, constituted of tiles reflecting demographic, geographic, and associative features. While prosaic in relation to societies, the mosaic metaphor applied to individuals is novel and thought provoking. It directs attention to how multiple identities combine; that is, just as mosaic tiles contribute to emergent patterns, a given cultural facet (engineer) may combine with another facet (French) to affect behavior and trust dynamics beyond the additive effects of each facet. Building on this idea, Dietz, Gillespie, and Chao speculate that a manager with a merged Italian-American identity would be behaviorally consistent across contexts and hence more trustworthy than a manager with separate Italian and American identities. While this is an important and neglected question, the mosaic metaphor may be too simple to yield accurate predictions. The above prediction, for instance, conflates integrated cultural identities with integrated cultural habits, and research on biculturals cautions against this. Merged identities typically are associated, not with cross-situationally consistent behavior but with chameleonlike adaptation to situational cultural cues, and divided identities are associated with contrarian resistance to such cues (e.g., Mok and Morris, 2010). Chao and Moon assert that the emergent patterns of mosaics illustrate nonlinear dynamics, such as attractors, which underlie the interplay of cultural facets, yet they refer only to pop chaos books (Gleick, 1987) not to prior cognitive anthropology on cultural attractors (e.g., Sperber, 1998: chap. 6). Overall, the mosaic metaphor is more "promising" than "theory" at this point, as it doesn't distinguish the psychological processes involved in the play of multiple identities.

Code switching occurs when conversation partners intentionally and jointly switch languages or dialects (e.g., parents switching to French to prevent their children from eavesdropping). Molinsky (2007) suggested that managers similarly switch between behavioral codes and that they self-consciously enact the patterns of a foreign culture while suppressing their ingrained native-culture impulses. This seems a more self-conscious strategy than would plausibly fit most of the book's examples of managers dealing with culturally different others. Furthermore, whatever the prevalence of deliberate behavioral code switching, one can wonder about its role in trust development. Trust depends on perceived integrity, and effortful switches in a person's style would seem in tension with perceived integrity.

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As the spheres, tiles, and codes metaphors each have limitations, the editors try combining them. They represent a person's overall identity as a mosaic of spherical tiles (Figure 1.2, p. 22). They suggest that a person's mosaic evolves with experience, such as an auditor's mosaic evolving in its center "from a professional cultural tile of skepticism to an organizational cultural tile of client-friendly values" (p. 414). They also suggest that the tiles within a person-mosaic would be in flux and that the person-mosaics on opposite sides of a business meeting would seek alignment of tiles such as through code switching. While these images of waltzing mosaics are rhetorically engaging, I find the metaphorical *mélange* scientifically murky. More useful for integrating insights about the multiplicity and malleability of cultural identities and habits would have been social psychological models such as self-categorization and dynamic constructivist theories. Self-categorization describes how identity-related frames depend on the contextual salience of ingroup and outgroup actors as well as on the actor's level of subjective uncertainty (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Dynamic constructivism research elucidates how the cultural influence on trust-related judgments depends on motivational states such as the need for closure (Fu et al., 2007) as well as on contextual images and sounds that prime cultural schemas (Wong and Hong, 2005). These models also offer insights about how a person's culturally grounded trust propensities are changed over time by social experiences (Savani et al., 2011).

An incomplete analysis of the tricky workings of cultural multiplicity and malleability, however, should not deter readers from this important work. The book succeeds in analyzing cross-cultural differences and breaks new ground in identifying pitfalls and pathways in intercultural trust.

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