The globalized nature of modern organizations presents new and intimidating challenges for effective relationship building. Organizations and their employees are increasingly being asked to manage unfamiliar relationships with unfamiliar parties. These relationships not only involve working across different national cultures, but also dealing with different organizational cultures, different professional cultures and even different internal constituencies. Managing such differences demands trust. This book brings together research findings on organizational trust building across cultures. Established trust scholars from around the world consider the development and maintenance of trust between, for example, management consultants and their clients, senior international managers from different nationalities, different internal organizational groupings during times of change, international joint ventures, and service suppliers and the local communities they serve. These studies, set in a wide variety of national settings, are an important resource for academics, students and practitioners who wish to know more about the nature of cross-cultural trust building in organizations.

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A Cultural Perspective

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Contents

List of figures ........................................ page viii
List of tables ......................................... ix
Notes on editors ..................................... x
Notes on contributors ............................... xii
Foreword ............................................... xix
Editors’ acknowledgements .................. xxiii

Part I The conceptual challenge of researching trust across different ‘cultural spheres’ 1

1 Unravelling the complexities of trust and culture
   GRAHAM DIETZ, NICOLE GILLESPIE AND GEORGIA T. CHAO 3

2 Trust differences across national–societal cultures: much to do, or much ado about nothing?
   DONALD L. FERRIN AND NICOLE GILLESPIE 42

3 Towards a context-sensitive approach to researching trust in inter-organizational relationships
   REINHARD BACHMANN 87

4 Making sense of trust across cultural contexts
   ALEX WRIGHT AND INA EHNERT 107

Part II Trust across different ‘cultural spheres’: inter-organizational studies 127

5 Examining the relationship between trust and culture in the consultant–client relationship
   STEPHANOS AVAKIAN, TIMOTHY CLARK AND JOANNE ROBERTS 129
## Contents

6 Checking, not trusting: trust, distrust and cultural experience in the auditing profession  
**Mark R. Dibben and Jacob M. Rose**  
156

7 Trust barriers in cross-cultural negotiations: a social psychological analysis  
**Roderick M. Kramer**  
182

8 Trust development in German–Ukrainian business relationships: dealing with cultural differences in an uncertain institutional context  
**Guido Möllering and Florian Stache**  
205

9 Culture and trust in contractual relationships: a French–Lebanese cooperation  
**Héla Yousfi**  
227

10 Evolving institutions of trust: personalized and institutional bases of trust in Nigerian and Ghanaian food trading  
**Fergus Lyon and Gina Porter**  
255

### Part III Trust across different ‘cultural spheres’: intra-organizational studies

11 The role of trust in international cooperation in crisis areas: a comparison of German and US-American NGO partnership strategies  
**L. Ripley Smith and Ulrike Schwegler**  
279

12 Antecedents of supervisor trust in collectivist cultures: evidence from Turkey and China  
**S. Arzu Wasti and Hwee Hoon Tan**  
311

13 Trust in turbulent times: organizational change and the consequences for intra-organizational trust  
**Veronica Hope-Hailey, Elaine Farndale and Clare Kelliher**  
336

14 The implications of language boundaries on the development of trust in international management teams  
**Jane Kassis Henderson**  
358

15 The dynamics of trust across cultures in family firms  
**Isabelle Mari**  
383
Contents

Part IV Conclusions and ways forward 405

16 Emerging themes, implications for practice, and directions for research

MARK N. K. SAUNDERS, DENISE SKINNER
AND ROY J. LEWICKI 407

Index 424
Figures

1.1 Cultural spheres in the Badri case study  page 7
1.2 Cultural spheres in the Corus works council case study  22
1.3 A staged model of trust development across cultural boundaries  30
5.1 Levels of interaction in the consultant–client relationship  134
9.1 Trust, contract and cultural differences  232
9.2 Trust development in the face of what good cooperation should be  245
10.1 Urban marketing chain and cross-ethnic cultural links  264
11.1 US-American organization hierarchical trust-building process  300
11.2 German organization hierarchical trust-building process  301
11.3 Effect of organizational self-construal on preferred trust mechanism  303
### Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Assessments of risk by risk level and trust</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Assessments of risk by risk level and distrust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Trust and opportunism in vegetable production and marketing</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Trader credit to farmers</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>Traders buying and selling goods on credit</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>NGO partnership criteria by thematic unit (frequency) and culture</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>NGO partnership formation and trust-building processes</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>Preferred NGO partnership mechanisms</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>Sample characteristics</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>Glossary and frequency of antecedents across Chinese and Turkish respondents</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>Most essential antecedents for trust in supervisor</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>Frequency of trust profiles</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>Respondent organizations</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>Means, standard deviations and correlations</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>Multiple regression results: trust in employer</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>Cross-company comparison of employer–manager trust gap</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>Attitudes towards senior management</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Foreword

Trust is widely studied yet remains elusive. Everyone agrees that it is important, that social life could not exist without it, and that it is valuable, since the cost of building structures and controls that substitute for trust in and between organizations is enormous. More elusive still is how trust is established and sustained across cultures by those doing organizational work. Trust requires sending signals of trustworthiness, and differences in the meaning and interpretation of signals is the very essence of different cultures. As this volume’s editors, Mark Saunders, Denise Skinner, Graham Dietz, Nicole Gillespie and Roy Lewicki note, people from different cultures often bring mutually alien values and beliefs, uninterpretable behaviours, and incompatible assumptions to their organizational work, all of which can undermine the trust necessary to successful interactions and fruitful collaboration. These scholars address such fundamental questions as how do people from different cultures understand and develop trust in one another? How do they go about building, maintaining and repairing trust in their own culture, and with those in other cultures? Which practices work best to build and sustain successful cross-cultural trust in particular settings? This book reports the current state of our knowledge about cross-cultural trust building, and helps to further our deeper understanding of cross-cultural trust building in and across organizations.

This book brings together leading-edge conceptual thinking and empirical research on the nature, meaning and development of trust across multiple cultural boundaries. It is genuinely international, pulling together the leading trust scholars from around the world. Here readers will find strong empirical comparisons of how trust is created and maintained in organizations operating in the same industry but in different countries, comprehensive reviews of how trust is created and maintained in various organizational contexts in different national cultures, innovative theoretical lenses for interpreting cross-cultural differences in trust development, and conceptual, risk-taking papers that provoke and challenge our understandings of trust. The volume aims to unify the extant research on trust across different cultures, and to stimulate new research directions.
We feel that this book makes a fundamental contribution to the literature. The editors are to be congratulated for putting together a coherent, innovative and scholarly volume of distinguished international scholars. We hope that this book will stimulate debate on these increasingly critical questions for all of us working in and with organizations over the next decades.

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