**Study Purpose**

Little is known about trust in non-Western cultures. Existing theories may not generalize to non-Western settings. Basic theoretical research is necessary to explore this possibility in order to optimize the effectiveness of cross-cultural interactions. Our key objective was to use grounded theory to build a foundational science of the interpersonal trust “lifecycle” in non-Western cultures.

**Interpersonal Trust**

Positive expectations and a willingness to be vulnerable. Includes perceptions of ability, benevolence, and integrity.

**Trust Violations**

Mistakes, betrayals, and other unmet expectations can cause trust to erode, which can lead to resentment and withdrawal.

**Grounded Theory Approach**

Data were gathered without formal hypotheses. This approach involved qualitative data collection (interviews), coding data, identification of themes, connecting and interrelating data, and creating an explanatory theory.

**Sample Demographics**

The 128 interviewees were members of the FIT Community, of which 55% were male and 70% were international. National Origins: US 25.2%, China 21.7%, India 25.2%, Middle East 23.5%, and Brazil 4.3%.

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**Findings & Implications**

Our research resulted in a novel framework of the trust lifecycle in work contexts, incorporating perspectives from each represented culture (see figure above). This model’s multiple feedback loops capture affective and cognitive responses to trust development, violations, and repair, and how behaviors are impacted. These findings are a snapshot of how trust may differ across cultures, and they provide impetus for more research into the role of culture in trust. Our data indicate that the salience and importance of various responses to trust related experiences differ across cultural groups. It appears that trustworthiness is evaluated based on met or unmet expectations, some universal dimensions align with established theories, and some cues are under-explored and culture-specific. Trust deficits hamper individuals’ ability to adapt quickly to different cultures. This research and the insights derived from it will improve understanding of and interacting effectively with other cultures.

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**So what does it all mean?**

To achieve effectiveness in any situation, individuals must be trusted by those with whom they are working. In order to maintain or repair trust in culturally diverse settings, we provide these recommendations:

1. **Spend some time getting to know one another.** Trust develops more naturally and easily in a working relationship when individuals are more familiar with each other.
2. **Discuss expectations with collaborators up front.** Make sure you know who is responsible for what and when.
3. **Communicate promptly with your other collaborators if you have any problems with completing your work or attending a meeting.**
4. **In times of conflict, maintain a polite and respectful demeanor when expressing your own concerns.**

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**About Us:** The Relationship and Interaction Optimization in Teams (RIOT) lab at Florida Tech, directed by Dr. Jessica L. Wildman, conducts scientific organizational research in the areas of teams, trust, and culture in the workplace. The goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of how relationships and interactions between individuals working together can be maximally effective. Questions about the current study can be directed to fitriotlab@gmail.com.

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