

FOREWORD BY
BOB WAISFISZ OF THE
HOFSTEDE CENTRE

ACCESS *to* ASIA

YOUR MULTICULTURAL GUIDE TO
BUILDING TRUST, INSPIRING RESPECT,
AND CREATING LONG-LASTING
BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

SHARON SCHWEITZER, J.D.
WITH LIZ ALEXANDER, PH.D.

WILEY

Advance Praise

Well before Austin became the venue for Formula One, the city's leadership considered it important to focus on our globalization efforts and develop an internationally inclusive mindset. We at the Chamber of Commerce know the importance of building trust, inspiring respect and creating long-lasting business relationships with the many international communities that choose to invest here. That is why we are excited that one of our own, international etiquette expert and intercultural consultant Sharon Schweitzer, has stepped up to author such a detailed, resource-rich book. Access to Asia will be invaluable to anyone who understands that today's business, whether corporate or civic, depends on developing sound, long-term relationships. We know from having watched our diverse community grow exponentially how important this is to business success today.

**— Michael W. Rollins, CCE, President & CEO,
Austin Chamber of Commerce. Austin, Texas USA**

China in 24 pages? Didn't think it could be done? Sharon Schweitzer presents what the visiting business person needs to know with her clear, comprehensive, no-nonsense advice. In just this one chapter, she has incorporated Chinese expectations, communication patterns and work organisation in a simple, succinct way (including some useful phrases in Mandarin.) I found her commentary on key differences between the Chinese and Western way of doing things highly illuminating and her references to experts in the field very appropriate and useful. The 8 point self-awareness exercise at the end of each chapter is a good way to check how close or how far apart you are to your Chinese partners or those in the other nine Asian countries offered in this book. Such a wealth of information!

— Barry Tomalin, Author of *World Business Cultures: A Handbook* (3rd Ed. 2014). Redhill, United Kingdom

“After more than three decades helping business travelers better understand their colleagues in other cultures, I know how vital it is to understand country-specific customs and avoid costly international faux pas. It is refreshing to see that in addition to the invaluable insights and practical advice offered in *Access to Asia*, Ms. Schweitzer helps readers to assess their own readiness for working with Asian cultures, acknowledging the most important requirement for cross-cultural success: know yourself first, in order to know others!”

—**Dean Foster**, President, DFA Intercultural Global Solutions, and author of the John Wiley Global Etiquette Guide series, USA

“Unlike typical regional business guides, *Access to Asia* focuses on the deeper side of cultural understanding. It goes beyond rules and facts and helps the reader make sense of the often subtle, yet profound, cultural differences found in Asia—something that’s critical for building successful relationships. Sharon Schweitzer understands that cultural understanding is not just a set of techniques to use, facts to learn, or rules to follow. By learning the cultural perspective of others, we explore the hidden parts of our cultural self. *Access to Asia* provides a great starting point for this profoundly satisfying journey.”

—**Joseph Shaules**, director, Japan Intercultural Institute, Author of *The Intercultural Mind: Connecting Culture, Cognition and Global Living*, Tokyo, Japan

“*Access to Asia* is like the Lonely Planet for business travelers—an essential handbook. In the West if you have the business logic set in place that is enough for business to get done. But in Asia, typically, you must establish a route to the heart of the person you are dealing with. Only then will business happen. Sharon Schweitzer understands this and offers readers a very clear and invaluable guidebook.”

—**Srikanth Bhagavat**, Managing Director and Principal Advisor, Hexagon Wealth, Bangalore, India

“As we emphasize through our Gateway program, today’s higher education institutions must graduate globally competent students with an awareness of and adaptability to diverse cultures. *Access to Asia*’s focus on relationship building makes it essential reading for global citizens—current and future—so they understand how success in Asia depends on cultural awareness.”

—**Dr. William I. Brustein**, Vice Provost, Global Strategies and International Affairs, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA

“Success in today’s business world is increasingly dependent upon foundations of deep social and cultural understanding, particularly in Asia’s business environment. Having a highly organized, detailed and focused multicultural guide is invaluable. *Access to Asia* is that invaluable book of significant educational value for budding entrepreneurs, universities and colleges offering undergraduate, graduate and MBA courses focusing on international business. *Access to Asia* is a must-have resource for international travelers looking to boost their business interests in Asia.”

—**Dr. Steve Leslie**, Former Executive Vice-President and Provost, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas, USA

“As the world grows smaller and smaller the understanding of different cultures, especially those so different from our own, has never been more vital. Access to Asia is the must-read book for any traveller to the East, however much they think they already know. There has been nothing like it for some time and the literary world has been crying out for such a book. It is teeming with invaluable gold dust that has made Sharon Schweitzer’s stellar work one of the 21st century’s best promotions of cross-cultural awareness.”

—**William Hanson**, British etiquette consultant, broadcaster and author of *The Bluffer’s Guide to Etiquette* (Bluffer’s Media, 2014)
Manchester, England

“As the President of The Protocol School of Washington, I am thrilled one of our great graduates, Sharon Schweitzer is now making significant contributions to our field with the publication of her book *Access to Asia*.

I strongly endorse the focus in Sharon’s timely book toward building trust and inspiring respect in the international business arena, in addition to stressing the importance of developing strong business relationships with counterparts in Asia. After all, we are not “going” global—we are global! The same deep knowledge and enthusiasm for developing truly unique, captivating advice that Sharon shares with her clients can be found in this book. As a current or future business leader with an eye to cultural competence, you will find the insightful advice in this practical resource invaluable.”

—**Pamela Eyring**, Owner and President, The Protocol School of Washington, USA

“The importance of understanding different cultures around the world has never been greater. Learning to discern the subtle differences within Asian cultures enables us to understand and appreciate better the opportunities such

diversity affords. Sharon's life experience, research and resultant depth of understanding and clarity of Asian cultures, within a framework of eight crucial questions, makes this book a must have for anyone interested in expanding their understanding of global affairs."

—**Jay Remer**, Canada's Etiquette Guy, Author of *The Six Pillars of Civility*, St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada

"Access to Asia by Sharon Schweitzer fills a much needed information gap for international business travelers.

Frequently, CEOs and other high level executives, during programs or coaching sessions, ask me for an information source for specific hard facts about a country. Usually travel time is very short and they are focused on strategic results. But during the non-task interactions, ignorance about the basic facts of the country could be embarrassing as well as erode trust. I think this book provides pertinent information quickly prior to a business trip or hosting international counterparts. Also, this book creates the awareness that besides the hard facts of business such as legal regulatory and financial aspects of doing business in a country, we must be aware of the cultural factors or "Smart factors" such as: differences in decision making, communication, or establishing a relationship of confidence and trust. Access to Asia by Sharon Schweitzer will help to remove the blind spots that are impediments to success in doing business in Asia."

—**Sheida Hodge**, Author, *Global Smarts: the art of communicating and deal making anywhere in the world*, Seattle, Washington USA

"Access to Asia is. . . bursting with authentic information."

—**Richard D. Lewis**, author of *When Teams Collide: Managing the International Team Successfully* and *When Cultures Collide*

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Foreword

As the Founder of itim International, which has been associated with the work of Professor Geert Hofstede for the past 30 years, we have long emphasized that when it comes to national cultural differences, culture only exists by comparison. We human beings have much in common, but we are also all unique. Culture, in this regard, describes the differences that exist between groups—be they nations, regions, or organizations.

When visiting the 10 Asian countries showcased in this book, as a potential business partner, or business colleague, or because you've been seconded abroad for a longer period of time, Sharon Schweitzer's *Access to Asia* will be of considerable benefit. Adopt the advice offered within these pages and it will empower you as a global professional by helping you understand the breadth and depth of successful intercultural relationships.

We are all busy people, often feeling that we have little time to focus on strategy when tactical matters are pressing. Sharon Schweitzer demonstrates that she understands this. Not only is *Access to Asia* packed full of information you may not have come across elsewhere, those nuggets are presented in a readily accessible way. Ms. Schweitzer comprehensively covers the building blocks needed in order to get a true sense of each of these 10 important Asian markets through the Country Basics sections. She has gone even further, however, by amassing considerable on-the-ground insights related to eight important questions.

In many books covering the differences between values patterns of different cultures, many of the most important dos and don'ts are overlooked. This is not the case with *Access to Asia*, which is why I highly recommend this book to everybody who truly desires to build trust, inspire respect, and create long-lasting business relationships in this important region of the world.

Bob Waisfisz
Managing Partner of The Hofstede
Helsinki, Finland

About the Authors

Sharon Schweitzer, J.D., is an international business consultant focusing on intercultural communication and global etiquette for future and current international leaders within Global 2000 companies. Her practice, during earlier years as an employment attorney, involved cultural dynamics and communication within groups and between individuals. Sharon is a popular radio and TV guest, conference speaker, and columnist. She consults throughout the U.S., as well as in Asia, Europe, and the U.K. Sharon's website is www.sharonschweitzer.com

Liz Alexander, PhD, is the multiple award-winning author of 14 books, and co-founder of boutique consulting firm Leading Thought. She directs her gifts and passion to helping aspiring thought leaders harness strategically valuable, actionable insights to grow their businesses and boost revenue. Liz also acts as book strategist and consulting co-author to business leaders, entrepreneurs, and consultants worldwide. Please connect with her at info@leadingthought.us.com.

Introduction

In the world of high-speed motor brands dominate—Formula One and NASCAR. Both require skill, strategy, and intense focus. In all other respects, they couldn't be more different.

Formula One is the racing equivalent of a Louis Vuitton store: high class, with European roots and international appeal. Formula One races, known as Grand Prix, showcase technologically sophisticated, single-seat, purpose-built cars driven by men like Prost, Villeneuve, and Schumacher with engines designed by world-class talent at Alfa Romeo, Ferrari, Maserati, Lotus, and Mercedes-Benz. The only two U.S. Americans who have won in Formula One's 62-year history are Phil Hill in 1961 and Mario Andretti in 1978.

NASCAR (the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing), on the other hand, is an all-American phenomenon whose heroes have first names such as Denny, JJ, and Kyle. Stock cars are almost indistinguishable from those you'd find in a Chevrolet, Ford, or Dodge showroom. In contrast to Formula One, almost all NASCAR Sprint Cup Series winners have been U.S. Americans. Whereas attendees at Formula One races can enjoy four-star hotels, expensive restaurants, suites and grandstand seats, NASCAR fans tend to prefer an RV, eat BBQ, and drink beer.

When Formula One announced that it would race again in the U.S. at the purpose-built track named Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, many were surprised. Other U.S. venues were under consideration to host the race. However, misperceptions of Texas as a state with cactus, men in cowboy hats, and armadillo were shown to be wrong. Austin's reputation as the Live Music Capital of the World is just one indication of the city's culture of inclusiveness, sophistication, and willingness to embrace new experiences. Formula One held its inaugural race in Austin in 2012 and given its ten-year contract with Texas, racing is expected through 2022 and beyond.

The awareness, flexibility, understanding, and a willingness to adapt are similarly essential when conducting business across different world cultures. If you have ever traveled to China, India, Japan, or any of the other Asian

countries explored in this book, you will appreciate how important it is to travel with an open mind and not to expect that domestic business practices are understood elsewhere.

Where there are cultural differences, there is the potential for misunderstanding. That is why the overarching question at the heart of this book is: What do I need to know, think, and do to build trust, inspire respect, and create long-lasting business relationships in Asia?

A Journey of Passion

As the daughter of a military officer, Sharon has spent her life exposed to different cultures—she's a real “third culture kid.”¹ Her passion for helping others professionally benefit from enhanced cross-cultural relationships began in 1989, the year she graduated from law school. After spending a month that summer experiencing China, Hong Kong, and Thailand with a fellow summer associate, she wrote in her journal: “I need to be doing something where I’m traveling and working with people in different cultures.”

Nevertheless, back in the U.S., Sharon did what most recently-graduated lawyers do: She joined a law firm. Two years later, she began working for the Texas Attorney General’s office, which reignited her fascination with the way different mindsets and priorities impact how people communicate and resolve conflict.

By early 2008, Sharon had visited all seven continents and over 30 countries, and had gained a professional understanding of how to bridge the gap between people from different cultures. Taking a two-year sabbatical from the law, she visited the Czech Republic and immersed herself in family and culture. Then she embarked on a series of courses at the Protocol School of Washington to emerge as a newly minted corporate-etiquette and international-protocol consultant, and a protocol officer.

From Etiquette to Intercultural Exchange

For the first six years after launching Protocol and Etiquette Worldwide, Sharon was influenced by experts in the field of international etiquette and intercultural awareness. What she found was that her clients wanted more than third-hand advice. They were hungry for realistic, practical, and implementable guidance that would enable them to be more successful in our globalized economy. They wanted to hear Sharon’s experiences and stories!

¹David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009).

In 2012, the city of Austin asked Sharon to present on cross-cultural awareness in readiness for the inaugural Formula One races. Her interest in the research of social psychologist Geert Hofstede and his son (Gerte Jan), as well as that of cross-communication consultants Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner deepened. Sharon's lifelong cross-cultural experience, training, and research have been funneled into this book.

From our great personal love of Asia, and in light of the increased interest worldwide in doing business across that continent, we chose to focus this book on Asia. By crafting material that engages, educates, and entertains, we intend to take you on a personally fulfilling journey.

A Questioning Framework

As the eighteenth-century French philosopher Voltaire said, “Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers.” After interviewing over 100 international professionals for this book, we noticed a pattern emerging: eight core questions whose answers were essential in attracting and building the relationships upon which today’s successful businesses depend. Having researched many of the models offered by cultural gurus such as Edward Hall, Florence Kluckhohn, Fred Strodtbeck, Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, George Simons, Janet Bennett, and Milton Bennett, we found these eight questions reflect topics vitally important for culturally aware businesspeople.

Why *These* Asian Countries?

To counter the desire to cover every country as if they were equally important to U.S. business interests, Sharon engaged the global intelligence firm Stratfor, asking them to produce a report on U.S. American business travel to Asia in order to identify the current and future top-ranking countries for U.S. investment and travel.² Six countries—China, Hong Kong,³ Japan, India, South Korea, and Taiwan—accounted for over 70 percent of all U.S. business travel to Asia and represented the top U.S. regional trade partners, as well as key

²“American Business Travel to Asia: A Look at Top-Ranking Countries for U.S. Investment and Related Travel,” Stratfor Global Intelligence, August 24, 2012.

³Although sovereignty of Hong Kong was passed from the United Kingdom to China in 1997, the rules of transfer stated that the region would remain self-governing until July, 2047. Hong Kong maintains its own legal system, taxation, currency, and business guidelines. Although technically a Special Autonomous Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong will be treated as a separate country throughout this book.

destinations for U.S. investment. According to Stratfor, business travel to these countries, with the possible exception of Taiwan, is not expected to decline significantly over the next two decades.

However, we also wanted to include countries that were likely to emerge as increasingly important destinations for U.S. business travelers over the next 20 years. Among these top-ranking countries are Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Finally, it was Sharon's personal fascination with the mysterious Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, which led to our inclusion of that country here.

How This Book Is Structured

This book opens with an overview on culture, which explains why cultural awareness is important to establishing successful relationships, followed by an introduction to our eight-question framework. For all readers who seek an understanding of the United States, in addition to the 10 Asian countries, we have included a chapter on U.S. culture. U.S readers will gain a better self-awareness and understanding of their own culture. Overview of Concepts and Terms, offers an alphabetical collection of key concepts. Please contact Sharon at sharon@sharonschweitzer.com with your suggestions and insights for improving this list.

Each of the 10 country chapters that follow help expand your knowledge through the eight-question framework. Topics in these chapters include

- A brief historical overview
- The names of heroes and sports figures
- An explanation of etiquette and protocol
- Insider tips on socializing
- Fiscal calendars and a list of important holidays

There is also a quiz in each chapter together with a Self-Awareness Profile.

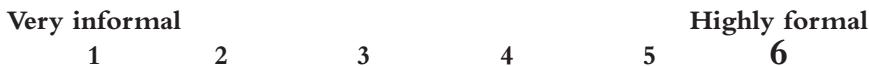
Self-Awareness Profiles

This simple exercise prompts you to self-identify where you currently stand on topics related to the eight-question framework. This visual comparison will help you discover your current mindset and behavior to help develop more robust business relationships in each country. You will find these graphics after the eight-questions section and the cultural summary within each country chapter. We suggest photocopying the graphics or using a pencil within the book so that you can see, over time, how you have adjusted your mindset.

Here is an example, concerning formality within Japanese business:

Example

How **formal** do the **Japanese** tend to be in business? (Note: numbers set in bold indicate the prevailing cultural preference.)



If you fall within the range of 5 or 6 on this continuum, you will likely easily adapt to Japanese formalities within business. If you are someone more comfortable with showing emotion in business dealings, expressing strongly held opinions, and acting assertively with others, you may need to consider seeking intercultural training.

Business Is Relationships

Regardless of home country, human beings share a common desire to *relate*. In their work identifying the universal attributes called *strengths*, the Gallup Organization found that out of the 34 personal themes described by the Strengths-Finder assessment tool, the top five were common internationally: Achiever, Learner, Relator, Responsibility, and Strategic. The placement of these themes in the top five differed slightly according to whether it is U.S. or international data, but whether we're from Baltimore or Bangalore, San Francisco or Shanghai, achieving, learning, and relating appear to be primary concerns for us all.

Regardless of the industry, then, we are *all* in the relationship business. Understanding this is even more salient when operating abroad. As Professor Christine Uber Grosse points out: “Personal relationships matter in Asian business, in contrast to their lesser role in U.S. business. As a result, U.S. managers do not always understand the need to establish trust and build business relationships with Asian partners and clients.”⁴

From Theory to Practice

Prior to the launch of the inaugural Formula One U.S. Grand Prix at Austin’s new Circuit of the Americas, Sharon was asked to write a series of articles and

⁴Christine Uber Grosse, “US-Asian Communication Strategies to Develop Trust in Business Relationships,” *Global Business Languages* 10, no. 5 (2005), <http://docs.lib.psu.edu/gbl/vol10/iss1/5>. (accessed January 10, 2015)

to conduct workshops on international protocol and etiquette, to help prepare Austin's business community for welcoming international visitors. While speaking privately with various attendees, Sharon shared the following story to illustrate how intercultural respect and courtesy play a huge role in establishing long-lasting business relationships:

Some years ago, on a tour of American cities, a Chinese delegation visited Austin. On the final night of their stay, after attending well-organized business and government events around the city, the delegates were treated to a banquet featuring Texas BBQ at a real estate broker's private residence. Each delegate received individually-wrapped gifts of memorabilia unique to Texas. The organizers even supplied slippers so everyone could remove their shoes before entering the private residence, if desired. Everything went smoothly and the delegation traveled to the next stop on their national tour. Their next experience was quite different, however. On one occasion the Chinese delegation waited thirty minutes before someone realized they were in the wrong downtown high-rise—they'd ended up next door. The delegates were not as impressed as they had been in Austin. When the Chinese returned home, they invited the Austin real estate host to make presentations and talks in China. These opportunities have subsequently boosted her business internationally. Segue not smooth.

While Robert Burns wrote in Scottish dialect, fellow Scot Liz has anglicized this quote from one of his poems to make it more understandable: "Oh, would some Power the gift to give us/to see ourselves as others see us!"⁵

With that in mind, the chapters that follow help you learn about the values held by your Asian clients and partners, but they also encourage you to view U.S. cultural values in a new way. With a willingness to adapt, this material can help you develop strong, long-lasting business relationships for powerful, mutual benefit.

⁵"To a Louse," RobertBurns.org, www.robertburns.org/works/97.shtml (accessed November 21, 2014).

1

A Question of Culture

When we marry, most of us discover that our spouse's family has a different set of expectations, values, and beliefs, ranging from broad topics, such as boundaries to specific subjects such as shared holidays. Invariably, these are different from the way *we* were raised. If we can reconcile our own values with those of our new extended family, we avoid the potential culture clash; if not, and things escalate, the end result can be unpleasant. The same holds true in business.

J.B. (not his real name) is a factory owner in Chennai, in southern India, whose mid-sized business produces revenues of around \$250 million a year and has two joint venture agreements. One relationship, with a German company, has happily lasted 18 years. The other, with a U.S.¹ company, he wants to draw to a close, because of their less than desirable approach to doing business.

For example, on one occasion, J.B. wanted to spend \$5,000 to manufacture a tool for a particular project and was questioned at length by his U.S. partners as to why he didn't just buy the tool from vendors overseas. J.B. responded that these vendors did not allow him to purchase a single item, only items in bulk, which he felt was wasteful and would incur unnecessary shipping costs. Overall, it was going to be considerably less expensive to make the part. After further laborious discussions, his U.S. partners reluctantly agreed.

¹The United States of America has been abbreviated to "U.S." in this book.

In contrast, J.B.'s experience with the Germans is such that, "If I make a request, they will ask me if that is the best solution in my opinion. If I say yes, they trust my expertise." Why would J.B.'s experience with the Germans be so different than the experience with his U.S. partners? In short: cultural differences. But before examining this example further, let's explore what we mean by the word *culture*.

We use the word *culture* in many different contexts, including countries, organizations, and groups, and we talk about *cultural misunderstandings*, *cultural clashes*, *cultural fit*, and even *culture shock*. However, books and articles focused on cultural topics often neglect to define the term. Perhaps that is not surprising, considering the complexities involved in explaining culture.

Culture was originally an agricultural term, used in the Middle Ages, stemming from the Latin word *cultura*, meaning the care, cultivation, or honoring of the land; we still talk about *cultivating* plants. But since the early nineteenth century, culture also became associated with the beliefs, values, and customs of different civilizations. Culture is complex and hard to pin down with a single definition because it encompasses many subcomponents.

Culture

"Culture is the accumulation of life experiences spanning generations."

Sheida Hodge, *Global Smarts*²

One place to start is to compare culture with similar but not synonymous concepts, such as identity, nationhood, values, and norms. Renowned intercultural researcher and the author of numerous books on this topic, including *Culture's Consequences*,³ Geert Hofstede advises that culture is distinct from identity: Your identity has more to do with where and with whom you belong, as in *national identity*, or your identity within a particular group. Culture, on the other hand, is concerned with "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another."⁴ In that regard, Hofstede considers culture to consist of "the unwritten rules of the social game."⁵ These are the rules we learn from observing what goes on in our specific environment, together with the learning

²Sheida Hodge, *Global Smarts: The Art of Communicating and Deal Making Anywhere in the World* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

³Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, 2nd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

⁴"Culture," Geert Hofstede, www.geerthofstede.nl/culture (accessed November 21, 2014).

⁵Ibid.

we get from others, rather than something we are born knowing, such as the human propensity for smiling, or the fear of death, which are innate across all races.

Some of the earliest influences of Hofstede and others stemmed from research conducted by cultural anthropologists. For example, Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck's (1961) *value orientations* theory postulated six different types of beliefs, influences, and relationships. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck differentiated them according to the following dimensions:

- Relationship with nature—especially the need for control
- Social structure—whether focused mostly on individuals or groups
- Appropriate goals—being or doing
- Time—past (traditions), present (current circumstances), or future (desires/goals)
- Basis of human nature—good or evil
- Conception of space—public or private

These anthropologically sound dimensions speak to all forms of community, including our business lives.

Culture is not synonymous with nationhood for the simple reason that just under 200 countries exist in the world today,⁶ whereas, according to Richard Lewis, there are some 700 national and regional cultures.⁷ Additionally, culture is not synonymous with concepts such as norms and values; it *encompasses* them.

Pattern Interrupt

“(M)any Japanese executives are reserved, polite, quiet, and rarely display emotion. Somewhere there is probably a loud, boisterous, gesticulating Japanese manager who is as emotional and imperious as any prima donna. Just because we haven’t met him (or her) doesn’t mean that no such person exists.”

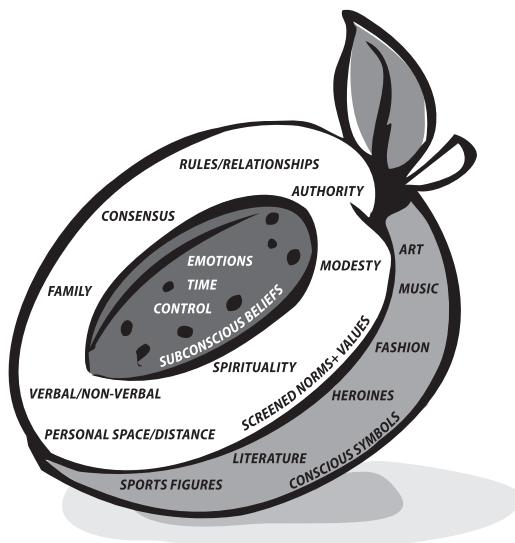
Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway⁸

⁶“How Many Countries?,” Infoplease, www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0932875.html (accessed November 21, 2014).

⁷Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey International, 2006).

⁸Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*, 2nd edition (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2006).

Many commentators, including Fons Trompenaars⁹, Geert Hofstede,¹⁰ George Simons,¹¹ and Sheida Hodge¹² have represented culture as a multi-layered model. Depictions of these representations are either in the form of concentric circles or an iceberg, and highlight the difference between the cultural components of which we are aware and those that are subconscious. Think of a peach with three layers: the outer skin, the flesh, and the innermost pit or stone, as in Figure 1.1:



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Figure 1.1

This approach aligns with Edward T. Hall's three levels of culture, outlined in *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*.¹³ As you can see in the peach graphic, the outer skin represents the conscious or visible *manifestations* of culture, including literature, food, music, fashion, and art. These are often

⁹Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012).

¹⁰Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind-Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*, 3rd edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010).

¹¹George Simons, *Cultural Detective*, <http://diversophy.com/> (accessed November 21, 2014).

¹²Hodge, *Global Smarts*.

¹³Edward T. Hall, *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984, 1989).

visible, such as the *kimono* in Japan, the *sari* in India or the *hijab* in Malaysia. The middle layer or *flesh* comprises norms and values that are often unknown to people outside that culture. Examples include authority, consensus, family, modesty, personal space, and spirituality.

The innermost pit or stone represents the hidden or subconscious assumptions held by a culture about how the world *works*, such as fatalism, environmental control, and notions of time. Consider the analogy of a goldfish in water. That medium is pivotal to the way the goldfish lives and breathes until the water evaporates or the bowl breaks. This is similar to the culture shock that many experience when moving to a different culture.

Let's now consider the less-than-desirable relationship J.B. has with his U.S. partners and contrast that with his more satisfactory dealings with the German company. How can this be, when you would expect there to be greater similarities between Germany and the U.S. than between Germany and India?

Many factors are involved in business dealings with culturally different partners. One model was developed by Geert Hofstede, who, having analyzed cultural differences since the late 1960s, identified six "dimensions of national cultures,"¹⁴ three of which are especially pertinent to the J.B. example.

The first of these is what Hofstede identified as *uncertainty avoidance*, meaning the degree to which a culture is tolerant of ambiguity and feels comfortable with unknown situations. Ironically, the United States and India are closer to each other in terms of their comfort with uncertainty than either of them is with the Germans. However, as Hofstede explains, the Germans compensate for their desire to avoid uncertainty by relying on others' expertise. This aligns well with the Indian preference for *power*, another of Hofstede's dimensions. In India, power is unequally distributed throughout the culture, with the *boss* (J.B.) being the final decision maker. When the Germans asked J.B. if his suggestion was the best option, and he confirmed that it was, they accepted his opinion. The Germans were presumably able to reduce their level of uncertainty by giving credence to the power differential that J.B. is afforded in Indian society as the head of the company.

The third relevant dimension to mention here is that of *short-term* or *long-term orientation*. Germany and the U.S. are both examples of the Western tendency for seeking results in the short-term. In comparison, many Asian cultures, such as India, prefer to take a long-term view. As one Indian executive explained:

"By taking the long view, Indians are apt to make allowances for the fact that not everything is always going to go to plan. That includes the fact that early on in a relationship there are bound to be hiccups. This is only to be expected, given the complexity of human interactions. Yet it's remarkable

¹⁴Ibid.

to us how Americans hold to the belief in one Truth, whereas we Indians know there to be many Truths, each one applicable according to the context in which it is applied.”

Again, why is there more alignment between the Indian and German executives, and more friction between J.B. and his U.S. partners? Perhaps because of J.B.’s industry experience and expertise, the Germans received assurance that their short-term needs would be met. Trust is highly relevant here. Former President Ronald Reagan’s comment, “Trust but verify,” is anathema to Indians, who would not consider the need for verification to be indicative of trust.

Why This? Why Now?

Cultural considerations vary geographically in many countries. In the U.S., for example, conducting business in the Midwest is different from doing so in Texas or California. As the former CEO of Coca-Cola, Doug Ivester, said, “As economic borders come down, cultural barriers go up, presenting new challenges and opportunities in business.”¹⁵ According to Athanasios Vamvakidis, an economist in the International Monetary Fund’s Asia and Pacific Department, “Alongside the globalization process, countries have been increasing their regional economic links through regional trade agreements.”¹⁶

As economic borders have come down, what about the cultural barriers? The authors of *Getting China and India Right*, Anil K. Gupta and Haiyan Wang, stated that any organization looking to make progress in these markets needs to embrace the kind of long-term orientation typical of India and China and rarely found in Western countries:

According to Gupta and Wang: “Most companies will find that their existing knowledge about how to succeed in other markets teaches them little about how to succeed in China and India. If they want to aim for market leadership rather than merely skimming the cream at the top, they will need to engage in considerable learning from scratch.”

With that in mind, you are about to discover a little more about the ways U.S. culture compares with Asian cultures. What you find out will create a baseline for understanding the different perspectives among these cultures and help create deeper, more lasting, and more trusted relationships. After all, in order to know how to relate to other cultures, you first need to know where *you* are standing.

¹⁵Robert Rosen, *Global Literacies* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 21.

¹⁶“Regional Trade Agreements or Broad Liberalization: Which Path Leads to Faster Growth?” *IMF Staff Papers* 46, no. 1 (March 1999).

So, here's a question for you:

Who Are “Americans”?

The term *American* is very broad and includes the inhabitants of Central, Latin, North, and South America. It doesn't just refer to people who live in the U.S., as the following table illustrates.

Table 1.1

North America	A continent with 23 countries (Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; Canada; Costa Rica; Cuba; Dominica; Dominican Republic; El Salvador; Grenada; Guatemala; Haiti; Honduras; Jamaica; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; St. Kitts & Nevis; St. Lucia; St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Trinidad and Tobago; United States) and dozens of possessions and territories. ¹⁷
South America	A continent with 12 countries (Argentina; Bolivia; Brazil; Chile; Columbia; Ecuador; Guyana; Peru; Paraguay; Suriname; Uruguay; Venezuela) and three territories (Falkland Islands; French Guiana; Galapagos Islands). ¹⁸
Central America	A region comprising seven countries (Belize; Costa Rica; El Salvador; Guatemala; Honduras; Nicaragua; Panama). ¹⁹
Latin America	A region comprising: Mexico, Central America, South America, and “the islands of the Caribbean whose inhabitants speak a Romance language.” ²⁰

There are numerous *Americans* in the world who have cultural customs and ways of interacting that are quite different from those found in the U.S. This is why, for this book, we have elected to use a more specific term and refer throughout to *U.S. Americans*.

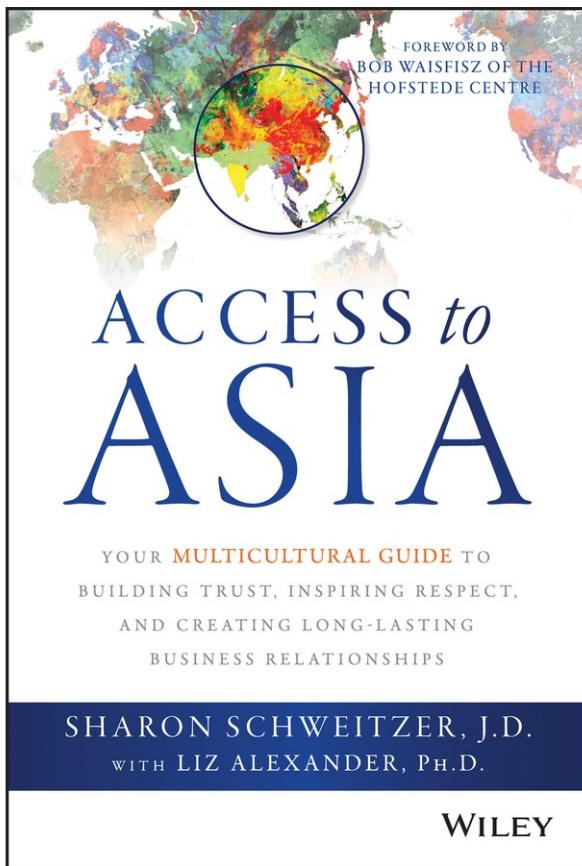
Bear this in mind as you turn to the next chapter, in which we explore a little more about how U.S. Americans *think*.

¹⁷“North America,” Worldatlas, www.worldatlas.com/webimage/country/na.htm (accessed November 21, 2014).

¹⁸“South America,” Worldatlas, www.worldatlas.com/webimage/country/sa.htm (accessed January 9, 2015).

¹⁹“Central America,” Worldatlas, www.worldatlas.com/webimage/country/camerica.htm (accessed January 9, 2015).

²⁰Roger A. Kittleson, “History of Latin America,” Encyclopedia Britannica, April 10, 2014, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/331694/history-of-Latin-America (accessed January 9, 2015).



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