Reviews for RULE MAKERS, RULE BREAKERS
How Culture Wires Our Minds

"This brilliant book is full of well-documented insights that will change the way you look at yourself and at the world around you. Gelfand presents a wealth of scientific evidence with a light touch that has the reader eager to know what comes next. I can't think of anyone who won't learn something important from this book."
--Barry Schwartz, bestselling author of The Paradox of Choice, Practical Wisdom, and Why We Work

“Despite their great importance, the hidden factors that influence whether people comply with what is expected of them or write their own script has long gone underappreciated. With this book, Michele Gelfand has done much to unravel the mysteries of human motivation. Anyone interested in how social norms -- and, therefore, people -- operate will be grateful for her compelling analysis."
--Robert Cialdini, bestselling author of Influence and Pre-Suasion

“A fascinating and profound book by one of psychology’s most creative researchers. The well-chosen facts and findings about different cultures will make you alternately laugh, nod, and moan—and make you eager to read more. Beautifully written, packed with scientific facts and findings, this important book celebrates and explains the diversity of human culture. It emphasizes a key dimension of cultural difference: Some cultures pressure everyone to follow the same rules, while almost anything goes in other cultures—and Gelfand carefully and impressively lays out the pluses and minuses of both types. Anyone interested in the deep mysteries of human life and cultural diversity will find this book a rich source of information and a thought-provoking challenge to common assumptions. It’s quite possibly this year’s best book on culture."
--Roy F. Baumeister, bestselling coauthor of Willpower and author of The Cultural Animal

"Remarkable. Not just an enlightening book but a game-changing one. By uncovering the inner workings of tight and loose cultures, Rule Makers, Rule Breakers suddenly makes sense of the puzzling behavior we see all around us--in colleagues, family, and even ourselves."
--Carol Dweck is the bestselling author of Mindsets

"A fantastic book, academically anchored yet also fun to read and filled with practical implications. Its beauty derives from the breadth of its insight as Gelfand focuses in to illuminate, in succession, countries, states, corporations, groups and individuals. How many books pull off the feat of connecting clocks on city streets, to merger and acquisition outcomes, to groups that can both execute and explore? What an achievement!"
--Michael L. Tushman, coauthor of Winning Through Innovation and Lead and Disrupt

“Is your world tight, or is it loose? In this smart, provocative, and very entertaining book, Michele Gelfand argues that the tendency to devise and abide by rules, or, alternatively, push behavioral limits is the fundamental distinction between human societies, capturing what really matters in summing up the difference between Germany and Brazil, or Mississippi and California, or rich and poor. Whether the arena is large or small—a superpower summit, a
boardroom meeting, or a backyard barbecue—this insightful and stimulating work will help you better understand yourself and those around you.”

--Paul Bloom, Brooks and Suzanne Ragen Professor of Psychology, Yale University, author of Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion

“In an ever-shrinking world, understanding and negotiating cultural differences has become essential to daily life and the fate of nations alike. In Rule Makers, Rule Breakers, Gelfand presents a valuable lens for decoding the nature of our cultural conflicts and an intriguing new tool for solving them.


“Gelfand shows through clever psychological experiments and sagacious readings of history that the world’s societies have generally tended to cluster around tight norms that favor authority and frown on deviance (as with ancient Sparta, Pakistan and Germany) versus loose norms that allow and even encourage people to bend the rules (as with the Inuit of the Central Arctic, Brazil and the United States). She offers a particularly timely analysis for our current Age of Anxiety and uncertainty, where people and nations no longer feel confident in what the next generation and near future will bring (hence an increasing but impractical nostalgia for a mythic past as the guide for tomorrow).”

--Scott Atran, cofounder of the Center for the Resolution of Intractable Conflicts at Oxford University, and Research Director in Anthropology at the French National Center for Scientific Research
“Why do some countries enjoy internal peace, effective governance, and productive economies, while others are dysfunctional and impoverished? In this dazzling book the cultural psychologist Michele Gelfand shows that a large part of the answer lies with social norms—rules of behavior that enable coordination and cooperation in large-scale societies. When people don’t abide by socially expected rules, families, businesses, and whole societies splinter apart. But is there a downside to following the rules too closely? Read Rule Makers, Rule Breakers to find out.”
—Peter Turchin is the author of Ultrasociety: How 10,000 Years of War Made Humans the Greatest Cooperators on Earth

“I devoured Michele Gelfand’s new book. This is not just a lively page-turner about some of the most important and intractable issues of the day but a must-read book that will fundamentally change the way you look at the world, particularly at our bewildering cultural moment, moving you past the simplistic, media-driven binaries of globalist-nationalist, red state-blue state, and rural-urban. You will emerge a smarter, broader person, with a deeper, more informed perspective for thinking and talking about the issues that consume us all.”
--Todd Kliman, Winner of the MFK Fisher Distinguished Writing Award and author of The Wild Vine

“A thought-provoking look at the contours of modern tribalism—one that uses a deceptively simple dividing line: the split between ‘tight’ and ‘loose’ cultures and personalities. By examining everything from communal norms to socio-economic differences, Rule Makers, Rule Breakers will make you see differently the people, places and organizations you think you know, including yourself.”
--Dante Chinni, coauthor of The Patchwork Nation and Director of the American Communities Project at George Washington University