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A mediated model of trust and its antecedents in the client-consultant relationship

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A MEDIATED MODEL OF TRUST AND ITS ANTECEDENTS IN THE CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP

by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated my wife Theresa Ann Lesperance, whose support, patience, understanding, and generosity have been a source of inspiration and humility.

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and Dr. Nancy Brown. I'd also like to thank David Lingholm for his assistance in data collection and data entry.

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I. Introduction

The field of performance improvement has integrated much theory – and practical application of theory – from disparate foundational disciplines toward the effective design, implementation, and evaluation of instructional and non-instructional interventions (ISPI, 2010; Pershing, 2006). Yet, as noted by Davies (1975), "no matter how pert our development and evaluation procedures, no matter how sophisticated and scientifically based our techniques, little will be achieved if the quality of human relations is overlooked or ignored" (p. 372).

In the forty-five years since the inception of performance improvement as a field of practice and study, understandable debate has ensued over individual historical contributions, terminology, and even what the field should call itself (Willmore, 2008). In the more recent years of this genesis there has been a greater focus on the role of the practitioner as consultant, as shown through an influx of practical handbooks (Hale, 2006; Pershing, 2006; Robinson & Robinson, 2008; Rummler, 2007), as well as courses of study in university programs.

It has been argued that there are four key areas of knowledge and skill for a performance consultant to be effective: business knowledge, knowledge of human performance technology, partnering skill, and consulting skill (Robinson et al., 2008). Of these four key areas, both practical handbooks and university courses focus their primary attention on knowledge of human performance technology, with only cursory coverage of these other areas, though acknowledging their importance for the successful practitioner (Pershing, 2006). Indeed, in the context of performance improvement, it seems that much research effort is placed on the more "technical" aspects of performance – for

example, the efficacy of instructional design models, the effect of differing instructional strategies on learning, the usage of performance models in various settings – but this does not nearly account for the whole of the human relationship experience that occurs during the engagement process of individuals in the client-consultant interaction. Though there are myriad factors that can influence this relationship (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006), a core construct within these dyadic social exchange relationships is trust (Powers & Reagan, 2007). A core component of this notion of "partnering skill" is the active building of trust with a performance consultant's clients (Robinson et al., 2008).

Focusing on this aspect of the "relationship-side" of consultancy has relevance today with this increased wave of interest in performance consulting, as well as a general lack of in-depth attention in both research and practice on the relational "partnering skill" aspects of consultancy. This clarifies the importance of understanding and improving performance improvement consultant-client relationships as fundamental to the advancement of our field.

This study looked to improve the contributions of performance consultants, instructional design consultants, and training consultants by explaining the effect that several variables have on trust as a mediator to relationship commitment within the context of the client-consultant relationship. This chapter introduces the topic, describes the theoretical framework, lists the hypotheses, and explains the key concepts and potential limitations of the study.

Antecedents

In a foundational study, two sociologists studying trust in the 1980s described it as the expectations that result from benevolence and honesty (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).

Inherent in its definition is the concept of some form of interaction with some *other* – someone to be trust*ing*, and someone to be trust*ed*. Trust is somehow born from, developed or lost, and integral to, the human relationship. One interesting modern manifestation of the human relationship is that of the client-consultant relationship. The factors that fundamentally influence the quality of the client-consultant relationship can be of key concern to consultants that engage with clients in dyadic relationships. Within the field of performance improvement, these consultants could perform such roles as performance consulting, instructional design consulting, needs assessor/evaluator, and more.

We know, both heuristically and empirically, that trust is important.

The central role of trust in relationships has been established through empirical research in many domains, including the following: intimate relationships (Costa, Bijlsma-Frankema, & de Jong, 2009; Feng, Lazar, & Preece, 2003; Greenberg, Warwar, & Malcolm, 2010; Larzelere et al., 1980; Yum & Li, 2007), sales (Auh, 2005; Doney, Barry, & Abratt, 2007; Kim & Ahn, 2006), and business channel marketing (Kingshot, 2005; Powers et al., 2007). Almost all of the models that describe the nature of relationships include trust as a core construct (Palmatier et al., 2006).

The "Great Recession" has implications for trust in multiple ways. Trust in businesses overall in the United States is down nearly 20% from 2008 (*Edelman Trust Barometer*, 2009). This is due in large part to perceived managerial malfeasance and lack of shared and timely information, in terms of financial institutions as well as corporations overall. The impact of this decrease in trust to modern industrialized "powerhouse" economies such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and France, is that

higher levels of trust of individuals in corporations to "do what is right" (i.e. benevolence) are correlated to confidence in investing. This perceived benevolence also translates directly to sales, as over 90% of people surveyed purchase a product or service from companies they trust, over half of which are willing to buy at a premium. In contrast, 77% do not purchase a product or service from companies they distrust. Moreover, distrust leads to criticism to a friend or colleague of a product or service; whereas, trust leads to recommendations to a friend or colleague (*Edelman Trust Barometer*, 2009).

In terms of the field of management consulting, the recession has led to shrinkage in the expenditures of corporations on hiring external consultants. As noted in the *Economist*, February 26, 2009:

> Although big consulting firms such as Accenture and McKinsey like to claim that their services are fairly immune to downturns, there are already signs that demand for consultancy is waning. Siemens, a German industrial giant, recently said it would scrap all external advisers to save hundreds of millions of euros. Other firms are likely to follow its lead.

Trust then, as a differentiator, can be a potential competitive advantage to consultants in a tough market.

The context of the consultative relationship, whether it be management, training, or performance consultancy, is one of highly qualified and trained advisory services (Applebaum & Steed, 2005) as well as functioning within an environment of social exchange. Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a primary framework to understand the interpersonal relationship (West & Turner, 2007). SET was developed in the 1950s as a sort of hybridization of economic theory and behavioral psychology. As such, it

combines econometrically-driven concepts such as transaction, resource, and reward with behavioral psychology concepts such as stimulus, response, reinforcement, and punishment. Homans (1958) reinvigorated the argument that social behavior, whether in a dyadic or small group context, was in fact a form of exchange. This social exchange can be summarized by borrowing a basic equation from the field of economics:

$$\text{Profit} = \text{Reward} - \text{Cost}$$

This innate measurement occurs during social exchange, whereby each actor tries to maximize one's profits through determining the value of the exchange by estimating their own subjective evaluation of cost, reward, and profit.

Within the client-consultant relationship both parties engage in this measured form of assessing the costs and rewards of maintaining the relationship. Trust, as an important mediating variable, runs throughout.

Description of the Problem

The problem in the current study concerns the role of trust as a mediating variable between three key antecedent variables – perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information – and the outcome of relationship commitment, within the context of the client-consultant relationship. This study attempted to determine the degree to which these antecedents affect trust, whether trust plays the role of mediator, and the degree to which trust affects relationship commitment. A focus on these variables is one means of potentially improving the contributions of consultants who focus on training, instructional design, or performance improvement.

The client-consultant relationship offers a unique context in which to explore the role of trust. In more general buyer-seller relationships, of which the client-consultant relationship is a sub-set (Levitt, 1983), distinctions are often made between *discreet* transactions, which have a distinct beginning, short duration, and conclusive ending through the delivery of some agreed upon goods or service, and long-term or *relational* transactions, which transpire over time, draw from previous exchanges, and rely on trust and efforts of unity to resolve conflicts (Liyanto, 2008). In this study the client-consultant relationship will be conceptualized as a relational transaction with a long-term orientation, which parallels the recent trend of business marketing toward a focus on customer retention and loyalty exhibited by companies such as Dell, eBay, Vanguard, Grainger, and many others (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000).

However, the client-consultant relationship is not commonly empirically studied in the literature. In the broader context of exploring trust in a business environment, there is a trend of looking at a more generalized buyer-seller relationship. Several studies looked at the buyer-seller relationship in terms of vendor-retailer perspective (Cannon, Doney, Mullen, & Petersen, 2010; Lu, Trienekens, & Omta, 2008; Redondo & Fierro, 2006). Another perspective offered is the buyer-seller relationship in terms of manufacturer-distributor (Bruning, 2002; Kingshot, 2005). Since the client-consultant relationship exists as a distinct sub-set of the buyer-seller relationship (Levitt, 1983), this lack of research represents a gap in the literature (Karantinou & Hogg, 2001). Further, much of the extant business management client-consultant literature is conceptual in nature, offering much theoretical value yet little empirical support to the trust

conversation (Ambler, 2006; Bantham, Celuch, & Kasouf, 2002; Richards, 2006; Tomenendal, 2007).

Similarly, the buyer-seller relationship is generally thought of as being representative of a relationship between *firms* (Bstieler & Hemmert, 2008; Cannon et al., 2010; Costa et al., 2009), not *individuals*. This does not translate well down to the interpersonal level, where the client-consultant relationship abides, and where distinct goals, planning, and management occur (Rummler, 2007). At this level, the relationship is viewed as on-going exchange between two individuals, and the quality of that relationship is measured based on the outcomes to the individuals, not the firms.

In sum, there is a dearth of empirical research that looks at trust in relational transactions in the context of the client-consultant dyad. This research attempted to bridge those empirical gaps. Previous research has identified correlation between certain antecedent variables and trust, as well as the effect of trust on the relationship overall in terms of relationship commitment (Bansal, Irving, & Taylor, 2004; Emden, Droge, & Calantone, 2004; Jayachandran, Sharma, Kaufman, & Raman, 2004). However, no research has explored the three antecedents on trust modeled in this study explicitly, and with trust as a mediating variable, within the context of the client-consultant relationship.

Purpose. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect that perceived level of expertise, shared values, and the sharing of meaningful information have on trust as a mediator to relationship commitment in the dyadic client-consultant relationship. If trust mediates between key antecedent variables and relationship commitment, both managers and consultants can improve the quality and performance within the context of the client-consultant relationship by focusing on the development of trust.

Hypotheses

Stated formally, this study will test the following hypotheses:

H_1: Trust mediates the relationship between perceived level of expertise and relationship commitment.

H_2: Trust mediates the relationship between shared values and relationship commitment.

H_3: Trust mediates the relationship between sharing of meaningful information and relationship commitment.

H_4: Perceived level of expertise is positively related to trust.

H_5: Shared values is positively related to trust.

H_6: Sharing of meaningful information is positively related to trust.

H_7: Trust is positively related to relationship commitment.

Justification of the Problem

It is hoped that this study can impact future research in any of three ways. First, this research hopes to contribute to reinvigorating the conversation on trust; specifically, on the variables that affect trust and how trust mediates to other factors of the relationship such as relationship commitment, but also to overall relationship quality. This latter construct of relationship quality has garnered attention more recently in the literature (Athanassopoulou & Mylonakis, 2009; Huntley, 2006; Lu et al., 2008; Vieira, Winklhofer, & Ennew, 2008), and may be a trend towards future research in regards to this study.

Second, it is hoped this study will contribute to creating an interest in research specifically on the client-consultant dyad. This type of research should be of keen interest to the management consulting industry, which as of 2008 represented a $150 billion global business sector (Gross & Poor, 2008). Similarly, both performance consultants and training consultants, and their managers, should be interested in this study. As previously mentioned, this is an overlooked relationship within the literature and warrants future research.

Third, it is hoped that this study inspires future researchers to test the model presented in various contexts. For example, though this study explores this relationship in terms of a client-*external* consultant relationship, the model can be explored in a relationship of clients and *internal* consultants – those that work within the same organization as the client. Due to the different dynamics of *inter*-organizational versus *intra*-organization relationships, this would most likely demonstrate different results than relationships of clients and external consultants. It has been argued that external consultants have a financial, administrative, political and emotional independence from the client that may not be available to an internal consultant (Applebaum et al., 2005). Additional contexts may also include those relationships that are consultative by definition, but not necessarily seen as such, for example lawyer-client, physician-patient, financial planner-client, physical therapist-patient, and more.

From a practical perspective, it has been argued that empirically identifying antecedent, or precursor, variables within relationships helps to create a tactical framework within which one can pro-actively act to positively affect those variables, and thus the relationship overall (Palmatier et al., 2006). It is hoped that this study will

provide a model to practitioners in the performance improvement and instructional technology fields that can help to improve their consultative contributions within their relationships by focusing on key variables that affect their client's trust in them. For example, if we know that a client's perception of a consultant's level of expertise has an effect on trust, then a consultant can act pro-actively to reinforce and communicate those aspects of expertise that reflect a high level of technical competence and knowledge to the client, thereby increasing trust in the relationship and contributing, in its due measure, to relationship commitment and the likelihood of a long-term focus within the relationship.

Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory (SET) posits that social interaction is an exchange of both material and non-material goods whereby through actions each actor incurs costs and benefits (Homans, 1958). West and Turner (2007) further state that SET also suggests that in any type of interpersonal relationship, "the major force is…the satisfaction of both people's self-interest" (p. 206). SET also assumes people seek rewards and avoid punishment, people are rational, the evaluation of costs and rewards is subjective to the individual (West et al., 2007).

Expanding on this second assumption of rational choice, SET "assume(s) that interaction partners make rational choices between behaviors based on full information of the behavioral contingencies and long-term consideration of profit maximization" (Molm & Wiggins, 1979, p. 1158). As the authors assert, this is an important point because it identifies the moment in time at which an actor makes the evaluation of the potential

costs or rewards of an action as *prior* to the action taken, not after, whereby an actor uses

rationalization to justify one's previous actions.

Homans (1958) offered a theoretical SET model which Emerson (1976) furthered

(see Figure 1).

$$A_{x_i} \longrightarrow B_{y_j}$$

$$A_{x_i} \longleftarrow B_{y_j}$$
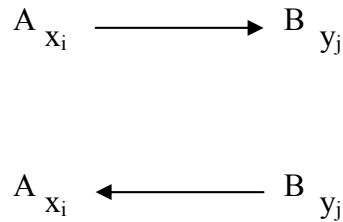
Figure 1. SET model of dyadic exchange

Adapted from Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social
Exchange Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 2*, 335-
362 and Homans, G. C. (1958). Social Behavior as
Exchange. *The American Journal of Sociology, 63*(6),
597-606.

In Figure 1, A and B represent the *actors* in a social exchange relationship; x_i and

y_j represent the *operant behaviors* of transacting *resources* from one actor to the other,

and x and y, as part of the operant behavior, represent the specific resources. The arrow

in the first frame of the figure illustrates the transaction of a resource x from actor A to

actor B. A key tenet of SET is that there must be some sort of *reciprocation*; that is, that

actor B would transact resource y to actor A either as a result of receiving x, or as a

precursor. Thus, there is a certain level of trust already present in the exchange

relationship; indeed trust would seem a necessary component to any exchange

relationship that is on-going and not a one-time event, which connotes the idea of an on-

going exchange relationship, and not a one-time, or *discreet*, exchange (Liyanto, 2008).

An offshoot of SET is the commitment-trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This theory posits that trust and relationship commitment are not only determinants to the relationship; but that they are also the two *key mediating variables*. Trust and relationship commitment are mediating variables because they mediate between five antecedents (i.e. relationship terminating costs, relationship benefits, shared values, communication, and opportunistic behavior) and five outcomes (i.e., acquiescence, propensity to leave, cooperation, functional conflict, and uncertainty). The authors present this nomological framework as the Key Mediating Variables (KMV) model.

The research proposed in this study uses SET as a theoretical framework and builds upon the KMV model by focusing on two of the antecedents to trust as offered in the KMV model: shared values and communication. An additional antecedent has been added to these two – perceived level of expertise, since it has been found to contribute to trust as well (Eiser, Stafford, Henneberry, & Catney, 2009; Sen, Goswami, & Airiau, 2006; Tsai, Chin, & Chen, 2010), and is especially germane to the client-consultant relationship in the context of this study.

Model. This study offers a new model that extends previous research and looks at trust as a mediating variable between its antecedents and relationship commitment (Figure 2). The three exogenous variables to trust are perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information. Each is hypothesized to have a positive effect on trust. Trust is hypothesized to have a positive effect on relationship commitment.
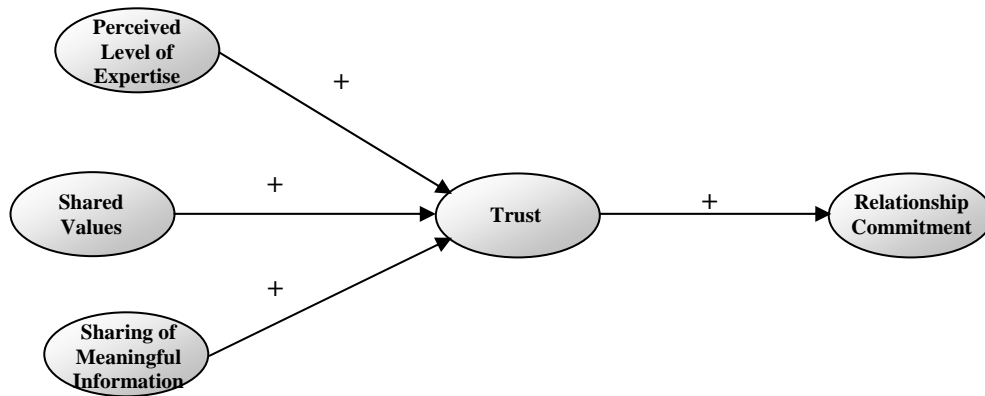
Figure 2. A model of trust, its antecedents, and relationship commitment.

Independent Variable Operationalization

Perceived level of expertise: A client's perception of a consultant's knowledge and technical competence (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Shared values: Values that are expressed through the demonstration of expected patterns of behaviors (Lipset, 1975).

Sharing of meaningful information: The formal and informal sharing of meaningful information in a timely manner (Fynes, Voss, & De Burca, 2006; Wakefield, Stocks, & Wilder, 2004). Meaningful in this definition means a high level of quality that represents a valued resource in the exchange relationship; for example, a final needs assessment report, detailed design document, verbal sharing of best practices, or evaluation summary report.

Dependent Measure Operationalization

Trust: The expectations that results from benevolence and honesty (Emden et al., 2004; Jones, 2004). Benevolence is the extent to which an individual is genuinely interested in a partner's welfare and is motivated to seek maximum joint gain. Honesty is the extent to which an individual's statements of future intentions are believable.

Relationship Commitment: The belief that an on-going relationship is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it (Emden et al., 2004; Li, Browne, & Wetherbe, 2006).

Conceptual Definitions

Consultant. This study shares the conceptualization of consultant with that of Applebaum and Steed (2005) in that a consultant is one who offers "an advisory service contracted for and provided to organizations by specially trained and qualified persons who assist, in an objective and independent manner, the client organization to identify management problems, analyze such problems, and help, when requested, in the implementation of solutions" (p. 69). For the purposes of this study, and in alignment with the above definition, the term consultant refers to those individuals who function in an external capacity within a social exchange relationship to an individual or an internal client at a distinct organization. In other words, the consultant is not employed at the same organization as the client, and thus the client could be assumed to have some greater breadth in decision-making in potentially three ways; engaging in the exchange relationship, developing trust, as well as committing to a long-term exchange relationship.

Client. For the purposes of this study, the term client refers to those individuals who function as a primary individual contact or the primary internal (business) contact within a social exchange relationship to an external consultant.

Potential Limitations and Delimitations

This cross-sectional study explored the role of trust as a mediator between three antecedent variables and relationship commitment in the context of the client-consultant relationship. A primary limitation to this study stems from the research design. A cross-sectional design means that causality will be less strong than with a longitudinal design (Babbie, 2007). A primary challenge to the research findings with cross-sectional studies that explore causality is that the direction of the causality can be difficult to determine. Mediator research literature makes two key points on this topic. First, though measuring a mediator variable before the dependent variable does not ensure that changes in the mediator caused changes in the dependent variable, it "makes the inference of causality more tenable" (Preacher & Hayes, 2008, p. 36). Second, more confidence in causal inferences can result from experimental manipulation of the independent variables, as opposed to simple observation (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). Both of these considerations have been built in to the design of this study to make the inference of causality more tenable.

Though the model offered several important variables as antecedents to trust, there may be others that play an important role. For example, a client may have developed trust in a consultant based on experience with past outcomes. Because of this study's use of a convenience sample, the client-consultant relationship was

conceptualized as one in which there is no previous experience from which the client could evaluate past outcomes. It is possible that there are additional variables that affect trust in the client-relationship that can be addressed in future research. These may include performance satisfaction, opportunistic behavior, investments, relationship termination costs, and more.

Another potential limitation was that this study explored the client's view of the relationship. This decision was made because the client's perceptions of the consultant's behavior factor predominantly in the client's overall assessment of the relationship, a view similar to that held in the buyer-seller trust literature. However, a richer view of the dynamic of the dyad could be captured by evaluating the perspective of the consultant as well.

This study used a survey design methodology that presented participants with a scenario containing manipulations of the independent (antecedent) variables. Two additional limitations to this study exist as a result of this scenario design. The first is in regards to the possibility of gender being a confounding variable due to the choice of context for the scenario – an automotive service and repair facility. Though throughout the instrument gender neutrality was accomplished, it must be acknowledged that it is still a common assumption that an employee at an automotive service and repair facility would be male. Gender can be controlled through the demographic survey item included in the instrument (see Appendix B). Secondly, the sequence of the manipulated independent variables as presented in the scenario may possibly have an effect in itself on trust. The sequence reflects a common service process and was determined by the author's experience in the service department as an automotive training consultant to

automotive manufacturers. The sequence of factors was outside the scope of this study, and as such was not included as an antecedent to trust. However, to minimize any potential effects it may have on the study the sequence of factors in the scenario remained constant throughout all eight different versions of the scenario.

The primary delimitations of this study were resultant of feasibility issues. The first was the design choice of using a convenience sample of students. Though this can act to increase internal validity, it is at the expense of generalizability (Trochim, 2006). However, though using college students for a descriptive study would not be generalizable since they are not representative of the general population. For explanatory research is it acceptable as social patterns and processes of causal relationships are more generalizable and stable than individual levels of a construct (Babbie, 2007). One challenge was in effectively creating the tool such that the student can properly represent the viewpoint of the client in the client-consultant relationship. This was ensured through feedback and two waves of piloting of the tool prior to data collection, a technique that can strengthen internal validity (Trochim, 2006).

Summary

This chapter presented an introduction and background for the current study on the role of trust and several related variables in the client-consultant relationship. A purpose, problem statement, set of hypotheses, and justification were developed which support the hypotheses. The study's theoretical framework, including a new model, was presented. Key concepts and terms were defined, limitations were explored, and the significance of the study in terms of improved performance to managers and consultants within the client-consultant relationship was discussed.

II. Literature Review

The goal of the review of the literature is to describe the state of the empirical and conceptual conversation regarding the variables and theories that apply to the dyadic exchange relationship, specifically as it applies to the context of the client-consultant relationship. To achieve this goal, empirical findings and theoretical work in the literature are reviewed across several disciplines. The historical role of the consultant as advice-giver is discussed, as is social exchange theory. The variables of the current study are explored. Conceptualized stages of the relationship are compared and the differences between discreet and relational transactions are discussed. Finally, the role of power and relative dependence are positioned within the context of the current study.

The Consultant and Advice Giving

Applebaum and Steed (2005) describe a consultant as one who offers:

> an advisory service contracted for and provided to organizations by specially trained and qualified persons who assist, in an objective and independent manner, the client organization to identify management problems, analyze such problems, and help, when requested, in the implementation of solutions. (p. 69)

Often, delineation exists between the function of an external consultant and an internal consultant. This distinction is important since it can affect the quality of the relationship itself. An external consultant refers to those individuals who function in an external capacity to an internal client at a distinct organization. In other words, the consultant is not employed at the same organization as the client, and thus the client could be assumed to have some greater breadth in decision-making in potentially three ways: engaging in the exchange relationship, developing trust, as well as committing to a

long-term exchange relationship. An internal consultant works within an organization and consults to fellow organizational personnel. A primary difference between an internal or external focus is breadth of experience. Potentially, internal consultants would have a more limited level of experience in terms of different types of organizations worked with, and domain-specific solutions (e.g., training, instructional design, performance, management). This contrasts with an external consultant who could gain exposure to multiple organizations and their unique situations and be able to share that breadth of knowledge with a client (Applebaum et al., 2005).

In a classic work, Bryson (1951) suggested that the giving of advice to others is one of the oldest forms of human interaction. This role of advice-giver is a primary one for a consultant. When dispensing advice, the consultant uses internal decision-making processes based on a multitude of inputs: knowledge, experience, sensitivity to context, and underlying philosophical beliefs, among others. These types of processes, naturally, occur on the part of those who receive the advice as well. Similarly, a client's own intrinsic inputs play a major role in a client's decision-making processes.

In following this idea of advice-giving, Buchen (2001), suggests that there are three levels of consulting roles: consultant, executive coach, and trusted advisor. The first, consultant, is in a more public role of a "do-er"; that is, one who solves problems, evaluates, and offers conclusions. The executive coach plays more of a semi-private role, listening, asking questions, and reflecting, while still playing a basic consultative service of getting things done. Alternatively, the trusted advisor plays a purely introspective role in observing, exploring, and posing problems to aid high level decision-makers in moving in the right direction. Though Buchen's context is that of management consulting, these

conceptualizations seem appropriate for other consultative domains as well, particularly performance consultants.

Buchen explored consultant roles, while Karantinou and Hogg (2001) explored client-consultant relationships. The authors found that in long-term client-consultant relationships two key factors recurred: the central importance of trust, and the importance of similarity of organizational philosophies. Long-term relationships are based on mutual trust, and, moreover, the development of this trust takes time. The idea of similarity of philosophies is akin to shared values in the social psychology literature and represents a "search for some overall degree of congruence or fit between the world views" (Karantinou et al., 2001, p. 274). This concept of shared values suggests that a certain drive to understand the other is inherent in the client-consultant relationship. That understanding is primary in assessing similarity, or dissimilarity, and thereby offers a standard by which an individual determines to what level trust will develop.

In a similar study, Athanassopoulou and Mylonakis (2009) offer interesting findings by taking a case study approach at a major international consulting firm to assess key characteristics of client-consultant relationships. Two of these characteristics, trust and similarities in the philosophies of the organizations, are found to be key constructs. Trust was found to be a cornerstone of the relationship from both actors' perspectives. Indeed, a primary task of the consultant is the focus on the development of trust; "upon this basis it is then easier to develop a relationship that could become long-term" (p. 273). From the client perspective, the desire is to see from the consultant empathy, honesty, and concern for the client's well-being (i.e., benevolence), components of trust which also parallel findings in the social psychology and marketing literature. The aspect of the

relationship identified as similar philosophies, or "similarity" in social psychology parlance, describes a "degree of congruence or fit between world views" (p. 274) that acts as an additional foundation for the relationship. As such, it plays a role as an antecedent to commitment to a long-term orientation between actors in the client-consultant exchange dyad.

Other researchers have argued for the benefit of understanding one's own philosophical underpinning. Visscher-Voerman and Gustafson (2004) speculated that if an instructional design consultant's underlying philosophical beliefs could be known, it would help to clarify their decision-making processes. These philosophical beliefs reflect a particular world-view, or paradigm (see Table 1).

Table 1
Philosophical Paradigms.

Philosophical Paradigm	Design characteristics
Instrumental paradigm (Modernism)	Planning-by-objectives
Communicative paradigm (Critical Reasoning)	Interactive communication to reach consensus
Pragmatic paradigm (Pragmatism)	Interactive and repeated tryout and revision
Artistic paradigm (Connoisseurship)	Creation of products based on connoisseurship

Adapted from Visscher-Voerman & Gustafson (2004). Paradigms in the Theory and Practice of Education and Training Design. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 52*(2), 69-89.

The *instrumental paradigm* is ubiquitous in modern business and is based upon a "modernist" world-view. This world view incorporates the notion that there is great

value to an analytic and scientific process. Thus, in this paradigm, a process that focuses on analysis, goal-orientation, objectives, outcomes, and the "procedurization" of the consultative process itself is commonplace. Due to this objectives-driven approach, the instrumental paradigm represents perhaps the most common framework in which a client-consultant relationship exists in an instructional design, training, or performance consulting situation.

The *communicative paradigm* is one of consensus building and is based upon a "critical reasoning" world-view. From this perspective, truth and reality are seen as being relative to the perspective and context of the individual. Thus, there is no absolute "right" answer, and the input and consensus of a dyad or team would by its nature be more sound and valuable than any single individual. Hence, stakeholders' consensus and a strong team exemplify this paradigm. The *pragmatic paradigm* is a "yeah, but does it work?" approach. It is based upon the "pragmatic" world-view, which is wary of "analysis paralysis", and wants to affirm value and usability as quickly as possible. Feedback and several iterations are expected to get any solution as efficient and effective as possible prior to implementation. Lastly, the *artistic paradigm* is non-linear and creative. It is based on a "post-modernist" world-view, which as de-emphasizes a scientific approach. Rather, this is explorative and "connoisseur-istic", and is not necessarily well-suited for the time-sensitive nature of most client-driven projects (Visscher-Voerman et al., 2004).

Trust

Trust has been found to be a central factor in relationships by various researchers (Palmatier et al., 2006). Indeed much of the literature, both theoretical and empirical, and across multiple disciplines, has argued for the significance of trust in relationships. Almost all of the models that describe the nature of relationships include trust as a core construct (Ryu, Park, & Min, 2007). Further, where trust exists there also exists a propensity for a long-term focus on the relationship and the potential for relationship commitment (Emden et al., 2004; Lee & Dawes, 2005). Further, trust has been found to be a central construct in social exchange relationships (Dwyer, Hiltz, & Passerini, 2007).

The trust literature offers a multitude of definitions of trust. Trust has been described as the expectations that result from expertise, reliability, and intentionality (Gefen & Straub, 2004). Hence, this is a "professional-leaning" definition that emphasizes the idea of being expert and well-intentioned. Similarly, trust has been argued to have three main facets: reliability, integrity, and confidence (Bansal et al., 2004; Li et al., 2006). The introduction of confidence in this definition brings to light the idea that a person has confidence that another will do or act in a certain way, thus there is a level of risk. In this context, risk has been described as a probability determined by the expectation that someone will act in a certain way / the expectation that someone will not behave in a certain way (Li et al., 2006; Powers et al., 2007). Risk is inherent in all long-term exchange relationships (Cho, 2006; Guitierrez, 2006). Thus, where there is trust, there is also risk.

Finally, in a concise yet encompassing definition, trust has been described as the expectations that result from benevolence and honesty, where benevolence is the extent to which an individual is genuinely interested in a partner's welfare and is motivated to seek maximum joint gain, and honesty is the extent to which an individual's statements of future intentions are believable (Jones, 2004).

In a key study on interpersonal trust, Larzelere and Huston (1980) developed and validated a dyadic trust scale that measured benevolence and honesty in intimate relationships. In addition to validating their scale, findings include that trust is related to self-disclosure, and that trust increases with commitment, and decreases with relationship termination.

Many recent studies have researched trust, as well as built upon the work of Larzelere and Huston by using the dyadic trust scale. For example, Bansal and Irving (2004) studied consumer commitment in an automotive repair service setting and offered a model in which trust is hypothesized to have a positive effect on affective commitment. In this context, affective commitment reflects a type of loyalty and psychological drive to maintain the relationship. The authors found that trust indeed has a positive effect on affective commitment.

Similarly, Fynes, Voss, and De Burca (2006) explored trust and other variables in the context of relationships within supply chains in the electronic manufacturing industry. A key finding is that communications, as the formal and informal sharing of meaningful information in a timely manner (Wakefield et al., 2004), has a positive effect on trust. Additionally, trust was found to have a positive effect on co-operation. Moreover, trust

mediated between communication and co-operation, thus confirming that communication is an antecedent to trust, and trust is an antecedent to co-operation.

Obtaining similar findings, Wakefield, et al. (2004) looked at trust in an e-commerce environment. Consumers were administered questionnaires that collected their feelings toward several variables which were hypothesized to affect perception of web site quality, trust in the web site, and purchase intention. The authors hypothesized and found that communication, as operationalized above by Wakefield, et al. (2004), has a positive relationship with initial trust in a web site.

Furthering Larzelere and Huston's work on interpersonal trust, Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985) studied three proposed dimensions of trust and three types of interpersonal motives in the relationship. These dimensions of trust are predictability, dependability, and faith. The first of which, predictability, refers to an assessment and forecast of a partner's behaviors based on past experiences. Thus, predictability develops over time and is based on the sum of past behaviors, under the influence of such factors as consistency of recurrent behavior and a stable social situation. Dependability is a dimension that goes farther than this, and is an assessment not on behaviors, but on the person. This component of trust is seen as a core element of trust as it is usually conceptualized. The final dimension, faith, is emotional in nature and based on the belief that whatever the future holds, the partner will always look after the other's best interests.

The authors also posit three types of motivation for individuals within an interpersonal intimate relationship; intrinsic, instrumental, and extrinsic. Instrumental motivation is active when a partner uses the relationship as an instrument to some beneficial end, for example money, sex, or praise. These types of benefits exist within

the relationship itself. In contrast, extrinsic motivation identifies benefits as a result of the relationship, that is, external to it. For example, societal acceptance due to marriage to a person of high social standing would be extrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivation describes drivers that are mutually beneficial, such as mutual goals, sharing, and personal reward in the successes of the other. A key finding of the study is the confirmation that trust is related in a significant way to successful relationships. Additionally, an important part of this relationship between trust and relational success is the core construct of faith – the belief that one's partner will act in benevolent ways despite potential negative future occurrences.

In a study that further explored the concept of dependability as outlined above – that is, an assessment of the person as opposed to behaviors – Miller and Rempel (2004) looked at trust in married couples as both outcome as well as an antecedent, through an iterative reinforcement process, to the evaluative quality of a person's motives behind one's actions. The authors hypothesized that if trust was high between a married couple, then there was more likely to be a "charitable evaluation" of the motives underlying a partner's behavior, as opposed to simply focusing on the behavior itself. This charitable evaluation, in turn, acts to reinforce trust in the dyad. Alternatively, in low levels of trust the evaluation of motives would be less charitable, thereby further reducing trust within the dyad. Key findings of the study were that these "partner enhancing attributions" did indeed determine the level of trust within the dyad, and the level of trust determined the likelihood of the attributions to be charitable (high trust), or not (low trust).

Wieselquist (2009) similarly looked at trust in the interpersonal dyad. In this context, trust was placed in a theoretical model in relation to forgiveness, and also as a

predictor of relationship commitment. The author argues that forgiveness incurs costs, yet is beneficial to the relationship by demonstrating to the forgiven person a willingness to incur these costs as well as a level of caring about the relationship's future. Thus it was hypothesized that trust varies to the degree that an individual perceives a partner to be forgiving. Not only was this hypothesis confirmed, but trust was also found to be an antecedent to relationship commitment.

Building on previous research that determined the relevant factors in the buyer-seller relationship, Powers and Reagan (2007) identified the most important of these factors and their relative levels of importance over the course of five distinct stages of the buyer-seller relationship. The variables studied were reputation, performance satisfaction, trust, social bonds, comparison level of the alternative, mutual goals, power/interdependence, shared technology, non-retrievable investments, adaptation, structural bonds, cooperation, and commitment.

These variables were measured over the course of five stages of the buyer-seller exchange relationship: partner selection, defining relationship purpose, setting relationship boundaries, creating relationship value, and relationship maintenance. Trust was found to be more active in the later stages of the relationship because it develops over the course of the relationship. Additionally, trust was found to be a precursor to relationship commitment. Not surprisingly, perhaps, relationship commitment was found to be more active in the later stages of the relationship, after trust has been built and a value-decision has been made by both parties to commit to the long-term relationship.

In a key study drawing from a wide range of industries and a broader selection of variables, Anderson and Narus (1990) present and empirically test a model of buyer-

seller (distributor-manufacturer) partnerships. The authors describe an important distinction between trust in an interpersonal relationship and trust in an inter-organizational relationship. In the former, it is the actor's own personal resources that are at stake as outcomes of the exchange; whereas, in the latter it is the resources of the organization that are ultimately at stake. Trust thus may incur greater intensity during interpersonal exchange. A key finding includes the importance that the timely sharing of meaningful information (communication) plays as an antecedent of trust in the relationship.

An important argument about trust is whether it is a uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional construct. It has been argued that a shortcoming of much research in the marketing domain is the view of trust as uni-dimensional (Ganesan, 1994). From this uni-dimensional perspective, trust is considered a single variable with one or more components, determined by its operationalization. For example, in this study trust is operationalized as the expectations that result from benevolence and honesty. Here, trust has two components; benevolence and honesty, but is looked at as uni-dimensional; i.e., one dependent measure. Ganesan (1994) argues that much of the interpersonal relationship literature has found trust to be a multi-dimensional construct. In the author's study of vendor-retailer long-term relationships, trust was considered a multi-dimensional construct comprised of two components, credibility and benevolence.

Thus, trust-credibility was considered a separate dependant measure from trust-benevolence (Figure 3). The reason for this was that both trust-credibility and trust-benevolence were hypothesized to have a significant effect on long-term orientation, but the data revealed only trust-credibility had such an effect.
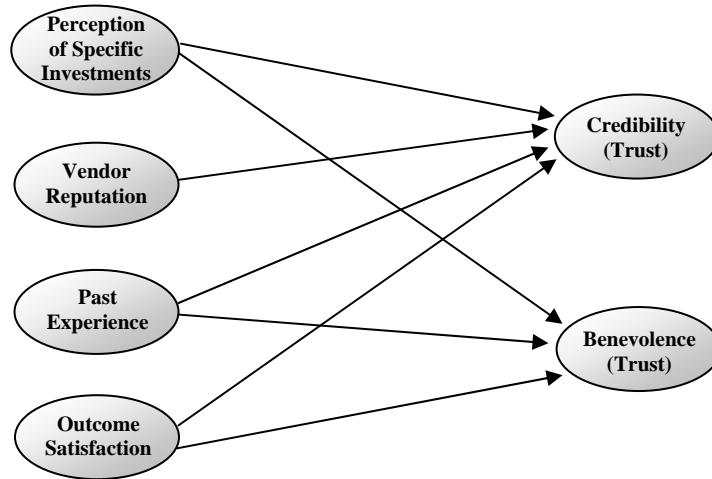
Figure 3. Trust as a Multi-Dimensional Construct

Adapted from Ganesan, S. (1994). Determinants of Long-Term orientation in Buyer-Seller Relationships. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(2), 1-19.

An important point is that there is danger in generalizing what should be viewed as interpersonal trust to organizational trust (Anderson et al., 1990). In the former, actors are more likely to expose themselves and their resources to loss than in an inter-organizational setting. In the latter, it is the firm's resources that are potentially in jeopardy as a result of the relationship. Hence, "trust as a construct in channel partnerships…may entail less intensity and personal commitment" (Anderson et al., 1990, p. 45).

An alternative theoretical view of trust is offered via the TORI approach (Gibb, 1978). Within this framework, the components of trust are organized as part of an active individually-driven set of processes of relating to oneself and others: trusting-being (T), organizing-showing (O), realizing-actualizing (R), and interdepending-interbeing (I). In its application to management theory, which also may hold value in terms of the client-

consultant relationship, the processes are further clarified describing actions/outcomes for each component.

- Trusting-being (T): personal behavior produces trust; role or depersonalized behavior produces defense

- Organizing-showing (O): authentic openness produces integration; covert strategy produces counter-strategy and circumvention

- Realizing-actualizing (R): internal realization results in high productivity; persuasion produces resistance and disintegration

- Interdepending-interbeing (I): interdependence produces energy; control produces dependence/rebellion

In each process, the TORI model provides a prediction for the outcomes, both positive and negative, of the approach taken by an individual through the process. If we change the focus slightly from that of a manager relating to those managed, to that of the consultant managing the client-consultant relationship, then the organization of these processes becomes quite meaningful (Table 2). A consultant can use the process of *emotionality* to focus on nurturing trust and peripheral factors such as inclusion and growth. *Communication* can mean the timely sharing of meaningful information, akin to the conceptualization of communication in many relationship marketing buyer-seller studies (Fynes et al., 2006; Wakefield et al., 2004), as well as the conceptualization of the meaningful sharing of information in this study. *Motivation* can be used by the consultant to frame the driving force behind a relationship, or project, in terms of setting goals, solving problems, or managing performance. Lastly, *interdependence* considers

the client-consultant relationship itself in terms of the power-dependence aspect, flow of information, and the structure of the relationship itself.

Table 2
TORI structure of management theory

Process	Attributes
(T) emotionality	Inner trust, emotionality, acceptance, inclusion, membership, growth
(O) communication	Open communication, flow of "hard" data and data about perceptions, input and output
(R) motivation	Realizing potential, goal formation, productivity, work, creativity, performance, motivation, problem solving
(I) interdependence	Control, organization, structure, flow, form, relationships

Adapted from Gibb, J. (1978). *Trust: A New View of Personal and Organizational Development*. Los Angeles: The Guild of Tutors Press.

Due to the recent popularity of relationship marketing in business strategy, the marketing literature has conducted a large number of empirical studies that explore the antecedents, mediators, moderators, and outcomes of buyer-seller relationships. In a meta-analytic study that collected data from over 100 studies, Palmatier, et al. (2006) sought to analyze and synthesize the findings of these studies. A primary challenge in such studies is to create a consolidated framework that contains all appropriate constructs and integrates their different operationalizations. The authors accomplished this task by first identifying various constructs that had different names but similar definitions, and similar names but different definitions. These were then synthesized into a master list of constructs with each owning a single definition. Second, the authors required the

constructs to have at least 10 effects that empirically supported their analysis. This reduced the list to 18 total constructs.

A second stage of the meta-analysis was to create a model of an overarching nomological framework that properly represented the supported findings from the pool of research. This was accomplished by placing the constructs in a model in line with both the theory used in the studies and with the frequency of their placement in extant studies. The causal ordering of the model was more than 90% consistent with extant studies, with the exception of two variables – conflict, and cooperation – which were consistent with approximately 70% of extant studies.

Due the nature of relationships, and relationship marketing, having the twin perspectives of buyer and seller, the authors further organized the constructs in the model by which perspective was most germane. For example, seller expertise exists as a variable that is most important from the seller's perspective. Alternatively, dependence on the seller is most pertinent from the buyer's perspective.

Key findings from this meta-analysis include the relative influence that different antecedents have on relational mediators, including trust. Though conflict has the largest overall effect, and a negative one, the two factors that had the greatest positive effects are seller expertise and communication. Seller expertise, or the seller's skills and knowledge, are "the most important value-creating attributes" (Palmatier et al., 2006, p. 143). This has implications for managerial decisions in terms of commitment to human resource development, performance improvement initiatives, and training. Communication, which has to do with the amount, frequency, and timing of information sharing, is reflective of "value-creating opportunities and resolving problems" (Palmatier

et al., 2006, p. 143). A third variable, similarity, also has a positive effect on trust. Similarity refers to commonalities, such as appearance, lifestyle, and status, at the individual level; culture, values, and goals at the organizational level. It is argued that these common reference points ease the exchange from a simple transaction to a relational basis.

These three variables – expertise, communication, and similarity – as antecedents to trust, not only play a key role in the relationship but "are some of the most effective relationship-building strategies" (Palmatier et al., 2006, p. 150).

Perceived level of expertise

As contemporary business practices move away from the product-based industrial and manufacturing activities that epitomized the 20th century, a focus has been placed on a "knowledge economy", or what some authors call a "service-centered view" (Vargo et al., 2004). This view contrasts a framework that positions a goods-based, tangibles-focused exchange approach against an approach that recognizes an "exchange of intangibles, specialized skills and knowledge, and processes" (Vargo et al., 2004, p. 2). More so, that all forms of exchange, whether they are goods or services, create a level of value to the customer or client, high or low, and each with its predicted effects. In other words, focusing on the *what* of exchange – whether goods or services – is far less important than focusing on the *outcomes* of exchange; the perceived value to the customer, specifically in terms of the impact on the relationship.

Within this new framework, skills and knowledge can be a key differentiator (Palmatier et al., 2006; Vargo et al., 2004). Interestingly, though a service-focused

approach looks at outcomes in terms of value, these two constructs can have an effect on the relationship as antecedents to building trust within the relationship. Skills and knowledge have been described as the two primary components that together instill a sense of perceived expertise from a customer/client perspective in a seller of goods or services, such as a consultant (Vargo et al., 2004).

Prior research has found that perceived level of expertise can have a positive effect on trust. Doney and Cannon (1997), in a study exploring trust in the buyer-seller relationship involving firms, their salespeople, and their customers, found that customers perception of expertise influences their trust in the firm and salespeople. This view of perceived level of expertise is based on reliability and capability. Reliability in terms of expertise is distinct from reliability in terms of trust. In the former it is a mechanism of high levels of knowledge, thus the information or services transferred have a high probability of being correct. In the latter it is a mechanism of honesty, and has to do with the expectations regarding the likelihood of what has been said or promised will be delivered, and thus is an outcome of past experience.

A study that explored marketing researcher-user relationships, (Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993) also found that expertise is an important antecedent to trust. Perceived expertise is viewed as "perceived knowledge and technical competence" (Moorman et al., 1993, p. 83). The authors differentiate these two components by suggesting that, in terms of an effect on trust, the breaching of these two components have a different impact. An error made in terms of technical competence is often seen as something that can happen honestly, therefore, having an insignificant effect on trust. An

error made in discord with perceived knowledge, however, is viewed as "an error of commission" (Moorman et al., 1993, p. 83), and has a large and negative impact on trust.

Shared values

Shared values play an important role in "defining organizational culture and influence between organizational members" (Huntley, 2006, p. 707). In a study that looked at relationship quality and actual sales intention, Huntley explored value congruity at both the organizational and individual level. From the organizational perspective, value congruence relates to *goals* of the relationship, specifically in terms of being a driver of trust, commitment, and relationship quality. From the individual perspective, value congruence relates to *long-term relationships*, and acts as a moderator on the organizational link between relationship quality and profitable outcomes. The authors found that shared values, as framed through value congruity/goal congruity, did in fact have a postive effect on trust, commitment, and relationship quality.

The key role of shared values was an important finding in a qualitative study of six client-consultant dyads conducted in the management consultancy industry (Karantinou et al., 2001). Importantly, this construct has a powerful effect from both the client and consultant perspectives, as study's participants "emphasized the importance of similarities between the philosophies of the two organizations (consultants and clients) as an important basis for a good relationship" (p. 274).

Interestingly, in a classic work Kelman (1961) offered two descriptions as to what is the driving force behind an individual demonstrating shared values within a social setting. The first is *instrumentation*, whereby an individual, either consciously or sub-

consciously, assesses the cost/benefit, or reward/consequence, or "taking on" the values of a particular social group. Thus, the individual is instrumental in his/her use of demonstrating shared values to obtain some particular benefit, for example, fitting in, approval, etc. The second force behind an individual demonstrating shared values is *internalization*, whereby the individual in actuality "carries" those values. The main point is that in either case, instrumentation or internalization, if the shared values are manifested by observable behavior, in this case by the client, then it is hypothesized that it will have a positive effect on trust.

In the sales literature, the term *similarity* has been used in a parallel way to shared values in describing the salesperson/customer relationship (Leonard, Levine, & Joshi, 2004). In this context, the argument has been made that if a salesperson is perceived by a customer as holding similar characteristics to the customer, for example, through appearance, lifestyle, or socioeconomic status, then the salesperson is more likely to be successful in the salesperson's interactions with their customer.

In the power base theoretical approach (Powers et al., 2007; Ryu et al., 2007), the concept of referent power relates to shared values. The actor with referent power has an ability to nurture the development of identification and approval from other actors. In the power base theoretical approach, this is viewed from the framework of power, and thus the influencing of behaviors, and closely parallels the hypothesis that shared values influence trust, and thus the long-term relationship.

Sharing of meaningful information

Communication is a key construct that has been found to play a pivotal role on trust (Palmatier et al., 2006). Though much of the literature uses the term *communication* to identify this construct, this study uses the term *sharing of meaningful information*. This is done for two reasons; first, the word communication is a very broad term, describing both variations on actual human interaction (e.g., non-verbals, message design, and visual literacy) as well as the breadth of the discipline of communication. Secondly, *sharing of meaningful information* acts a better advance organizer to prepare the reader for the actual intended operationalization of the construct.

This construct has been defined as the formal and informal sharing of meaningful information (Fynes et al., 2006; Wakefield et al., 2004). This is a particularly germane definition in the context of the client-consultant relationship. The consultant has many tasks associated with the client-consultant exchange relationship which can include problem solving, diagnosis, recommendations, implementation of solutions, consensus building, client learning, and improving organizational effectiveness. However, in terms of the extent to which the consultant is *involved* with the client, the sharing of information is the task that requires the most amount of consultant time and energy (Applebaum et al., 2005).

Anderson and Narus (1990) explored the relationship drawn between communication, as the "formal as well as informal sharing of meaningful information" (p. 44), and trust. First, the authors argue that research has been at odds in regards to the direction of the relationship between communication and trust – does trust cause communication, or vice versa? It is argued that exchange relationships are iterative and

dynamic by nature, and that meaningful communication is a necessary ingredient to trust. However, as trust builds it fosters increased communication. Thus, many models represent a cross-sectional description of a fluid process; therefore, it is presented that "at any one point in time, (inherently past) communication causes (present) trust" (Anderson et al., 1990, p. 45).

Empirically, many studies have found the sharing of meaningful information to have a positive effect on trust (Anderson et al., 1990; Fynes et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 1994; Wakefield et al., 2004). Additionally, from a practical perspective, focusing on the meaningful sharing of information is one "of the most effective relationship-building strategies" (Palmatier et al., 2006, p. 150).

Relationship Commitment

Relationship commitment is one of the central variables in buyer-seller relationship studies (Palmatier et al., 2006). One view of relationship commitment is "a lasting or enduring intention to build and maintain a long-term relationship" (Cho, 2006, p. 28). Palmatier et al., (2006) see commitment as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship. This is the result of past experiences, and reflects the desire for continuance. The assumption on both exchange parties is that continuance will bring future value to both. Commitment has also been viewed as "an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it" (Morgan et al., 1994, p. 23). Reinforcing this latter view by reflecting on social entropy theory – that social connections will decay without maintenance (Bailey, 2006) – a successful long-term relationship is more than just

obtaining a certain point in the relationship, or the desire to continue the relationship, but rather requires on-going effort to maintain it.

In a study that proposed and tested a relationship commitment framework, Bantham, Celuch, and Kasouf (2002) incorporate dialectical theory from the marriage literature into a buyer-seller context. The authors suggest that a relationship partner's "awareness of and willingness to address dialectical tensions" (Bantham et al., 2002, p. 269), or *mindset*, is a critical enabler of the relationship. Additionally, a partner's *skillset*, or communication behaviors, are affected by mindset and act to influence the direct antecedents to relationship commitment. These antecedents are interdependent problem solving, satisfaction, and investments, each of which is hypothesized to have a positive effect on relationship commitment. To test this framework, a qualitative approach was utilized by interviewing five manufacturing partnerships. Both buyer and seller were interviewed and the unit of analysis was the dyad. Based on the interviews, the authors offer tentative findings that support these mindset and skillset enablers, the importance of interdependent problem solving, and the proposed antecedents of relationship commitment.

Emden et al. (2004) explored commitment as a mediating variable between competence trust, akin to perceived level of expertise, and both communication and flexibility. The study looked at the context of companies that had recently formed joint ventures or alliances across various industries. Key findings included a significant effect from commitment on communication. This is interesting, as in other studies communication is seen as an antecedent to commitment (Fynes, De Burca, & Voss, 2005; Wakefield et al., 2004). This further suggests the iterative nature of commitment and

other factors as they become more or less active or latent throughout the lifecycle of the relationship.

Power and relative dependence

Dependence, and its outcome, power, are important variables in the relationship (Ryu et al., 2007).   Power exists when an actor has an advantage over the other. When power is utilized to coerce behavior from an exchange partner, it can have negative consequences on the long-term viability of the relationship, and, conversely, where power is equivalent longer-term relationships are more likely (Powers et al., 2007). Power is an important construct in the buyer-seller relationship, generally has a negative effect on trust, and is resultant from dependence of one actor upon the other (Caniels & Gelderman, 2007).

Ryu et al. (2007) explored power asymmetry as a moderating factor in determining long-term relationships. The authors hypothesized that a buyer's power would have a negative moderating effect on the buyer's trust in the seller. Since trust has been found to have a positive effect on long-term orientation in the relationship (Bstieler, 2006), this would have a net effect of lowering that long-term orientation based on level of power exerted on the seller in the relationship. A key finding in this study was that this kind of power does indeed moderate trust and diminish long-term orientation. It is possible that this is a result of the removal of risk as a requirement for the development of trust on the part of the buyer. This could occur, for example, due to an available alternative to switch to in the relationship, which could naturally lead to power asymmetry as the buyer would have less concern over relationship termination.

In another key study, Lusch and Brown (1996) studied the nature of dependency in buyer-seller relationships. Dependency was hypothesized to be reflected in the way contracts are approached in the relationship; *explicit*, or detailed formal contracts, or *normative*, which are implicit or "soft" and delineate "mutual understandings and expectations" (p. 33). The authors argue that in unilateral dependent relationships, in which one partner is dependent on the other, explicit contracts generally exist, and moreover, business performance level is lower in the relationship. Conversely, where there is bilateral mutual dependence between partners in the relationship, normative contracts generally exist and business performance level is higher in the relationship. Participants responded to a mailed survey that measured dependency, contract form, relational behavior and long-term orientation, and business performance. Normative contracts were found to be more prevalent in relationships where bilateral dependency occurred, even where explicit contracts also existed, and as expected business performance was indeed higher. This has interesting implications for the client-consultant relationship in that the existence of normative contracts may indicate a mutual dependency in the relationship, which can have a positive effect on its long-term orientation (a business advantage) and overall performance.

Ganesan (1994) explored dependence in the retailer-vendor relationship and defined it as an actor's need to maintain the relationship to achieve desired goals. There are three primary reasons how dependence of a buyer on a seller can increase (as explained in a retailer-vendor context): when 1) outcomes obtained from the seller are highly valued and high magnitude, 2) outcomes obtained are greater than possible from any potential and available alternative seller (CL_{alt}), and 3) the buyer has a limited or no

alternative choices for exchange. The author further offers several options for a buyer to deal with this kind of asymmetry in the relationship. The first option is simply to maintain the status quo. However, as the relationship progresses over time there is a likelihood that the asymmetry will result in actions that benefit the more powerful actor, e.g., better terms, more profit, or increased requirements to stay in the relationship. The second option is to enact a partial or complete withdrawal from the relationship. However, this assumes availability of alternatives which often is not the case, since the lack of alternatives is indeed the primary cause of the asymmetry in the first place. The third option is formulation of coalitions, which is rarely an option for buyers due to legal and economic restrictions. The fourth option is the extension of the power network, which can be enacted through increasing investments in the relationship and bringing greater value to the other actor; for example, a buyer who develops meaningful relationships in conjunction with a unique identity with the seller's end consumers and thereby becomes the "face" of the seller to the market. The fifth option is enhancing the status of the more powerful actor (making the seller feel important); for example, by investing in infrastructure or resources specific to the seller's products or services. Ganesan (1994) argues that these last two may offer the best methods to reduce asymmetrical dependence of a buyer on a seller.

Social Exchange Theory

The overarching theoretical framework in which this study resides is that of social exchange theory (SET), the literature of which draws primarily from the discipline of social psychology. In a classic work, Homans (1958) reinvigorates the very idea of social

behavior as exchange. This is a key starting point because Homans describes an economic slant to what had otherwise been simply a needs-based interaction. Within a social exchange relationship, each actor measures the benefits gained through the transaction of some *valued resource* against the costs of conducting the transaction. For example, a client in a client-consultant exchange relationship may assess the profit from being engaged in the relationship by weighing the *reward* (say financial forecasts) minus the *costs* (the time spent with the consultant, time spent reviewing consultant deliverables, monetary cost to the organization, etc.). The consultant, on the other hand, engenders a similar assessment by looking at reward (ease of working the relationship, familiarity/expertise with the task, job security, financial gain) against the costs (hours spent working / financial remuneration, difficulty of tasks). This innate measurement continually occurs during the social exchange; each actor tries to maximize one's profits through determining the value of the exchange by estimating their own subjective evaluation of cost, reward, and profit (Homans, 1958). Finally, it is suggested that insight may not only be offered through economic theory, but also behavioral psychology, influence dynamics, and small group structure.

Emerson (1976) further developed the SET theoretical framework by focusing on the dyadic relationship itself as the unit of analysis, as opposed to one or the other actors. This in effect side-stepped the central issue of power as a focal factor within the dyad, by evaluating the quality of *the relationship* as its own entity, and not by looking solely at one or the other actors. The following four components – reward/reinforcement, resource, value, and cost – highlight key social processes within SET and offer conclusions into how they operate.

Reward/reinforcement. The idea of reward comes from the economic theory base, and a reward is generally administered as a result or response to some precursor (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Reinforcement calls to the influence of behaviorism and carries the same meaning in its essence as reward (i.e., stimulus-response-reinforcement).

Resource. A resource is an ability, attribute, or possession of one actor that allows him/her to reward (through its transference) or punish (through its being withheld) another actor in a social exchange relationship (Cropanzano et al., 2005). This introduces the idea of *value*, since any transacted service or product is only a resource if it has value to the other actor. Therefore, strictly speaking, a resource is not in a "possession" of an actor, but rather an attribute of the relationship.

A key consideration in regards to the value of a resource is the tendency of its value to decrease over time. This is similar to the economic theory of diminishing returns and speaks to the natural occurrence of the same resource offering less benefit over time until it reaches a neutral point in the overall cost/benefit value assessment (Williamson, 1998). In regards to SET, this suggests that ultimately there is no such thing a "perpetual social exchange relationship", because even if the actors remain the same over long periods of time the valued resources would change.

Value. The assessment of value is a primary social process of SET. Value has been described as "the magnitude of reinforcement affected by a unit of some resource" (Homans, 1958). Thus, again, of key import is the level of value attributed to any resource by the actor who receives it. Thibaut & Kelley (1986) greatly enhanced the conceptualization of value when they offered the constructs of comparison level (CL) and comparison level of the alternative (CL_{alt}).

CL refers to the overall assessment of an exchange relationship, or aspect of an exchange relationship, in terms of minimum acceptable standards. Thus, it is "the standard against which the member evaluates the 'attractiveness' of the relationship or how satisfactory it is" (Thibaut et al., 1986, p. 21). CL occurs after a series of transactions over a period of time. For example, a child who is paid $1 a week to sweep the kitchen floor every day would feel very different about that $1 at the end of the first week as opposed to several weeks later. After several weeks, the child would have the knowledge of a better understanding of the reward (e.g., what the $1 could buy), as well as the cost (e.g., the labor involved in sweeping). In sum, CL offers a general criterion for a relationship's overall value to an actor within the relationship.

CL_{alt} describes the minimum standard of performance that will be tolerated within a social exchange relationship in relation to alternative available actors (Powers et al., 2007). For example, a person who has retained the services of a financial planner for investing in mutual funds, but finds out that another has been performing much better, may consider ending the relationship to switch to the alternative.

Cost. The SET literature offers two approaches to cost. The first looks at cost in terms of "aversive stimuli encountered in a social transaction" (Emerson, 1976, p. 349). In this case when something "bad" occurs in a social exchange in the perspective of one of the actors, it raises the cost of the relationship, but does not decrease the benefits. The second approach to cost is in terms of "rewards foregone". Furthering the example of a financial planner, if a person stayed with the under-performing financial planner for a period of, say, several years with a 5% annual growth in mutual fund holdings, while the better-performing planner kept up a vigorous pave of 10% annual growth, the cost of

"rewards foregone" would be equal to the difference between the potential growth that would have been gained if he/she had switched to the better-performer versus the lower gains of the under-performer.

A key philosophic position of SET is its assumption that people are rational (West et al., 2007). This rational undercurrent is the process by which comparison levels can be assessed, and a cost-benefit determination of another actor's possession of exchange as a valued asset. One alternative view to SET's assumption of individual rationalization is that held by the sales literature, which often posits that emotional factors are the primary driving force in people's decision-making processes (Mallalieu & Nakamoto, 2008). Another alternative view is that of the psychology literature and the Heuristic-Systematic Model (HSM) of social information processing, in which the rationality described by SET would parallel a *systematic* mode of processing, and that of emotions being paralleled by the *heuristic* mode of processing (Todorov, Chaiken, & Henderson, 2002). HSM argues that both modes occur simultaneously; the relative activity or latency of each is driven by internal and external factors to the individual. Though SET deemphasizes the role of non-rational behavior, other disciplines do call out the role that emotions play in interpersonal relationships.

Many proponents of SET suggest the idea of *reciprocity* (Molm, 2003; Zafirovski, 2005). Gouldner (1960) draws a distinction between reciprocity and *complimentarity*; the former relating to a mutual exchange with mutual value, the latter relating more to what would be considered *duty aspects* or *rights privileges* of one actor against the other. Gouldner further unpacks the notion of reciprocity into the following three categories: reciprocity as mutually beneficial exchange of gratifications, reciprocity as "folk belief",

and finally reciprocity as generalized moral norm. This reciprocity "as mutually beneficial exchange of gratifications" is applicable to this study, as it presupposes a cost/benefit to each of the actors within the client-consultant dyad, functioning within the constraints and balances of CL and CL_{alt}.

Most recent social exchange theory supposes that this type of exchange is generally negotiated, i.e., with well-defined and immediate bi-lateral gratification. Molm (2003) reasserts the position that a significant difference exists between this idea of negotiated exchange and true "reciprocal" exchange in which an actor may act unilaterally and see no immediate return. It is possible that this reciprocal exchange represents a higher level of trust within a dyadic relationship.

An interesting construct at the individual level within the dyad is that of psychological contracts. Kingshot (2005) argues that the presence of psychological contracts within the context of social exchange have a positive impact on the level of trust and relationship commitment in supplier-buyer relationships. These psychological contracts do so because they involve perceived promises, create psychological bonds, and "reflect communications of future intent between them" (Kingshot, 2005, p. 725). Thus, they can act as behavior drivers towards a long-term relationship focus.

Key Mediating Variable Model

Previous research has identified many of the determinants that affect long-term relationships (Kingshot, 2005). The Powers and Reagan (2007) Key Mediating Variable (KMV) model contains 12 variables (see Figure 4). These variables frame the authors' relationship marketing theory, and the factors that influence successful relationships.

This model includes five antecedents, two mediating variables, and five outcomes. As such, the five antecedent variables (relationship termination costs, relationship benefits, shared values, communication, and opportunistic behavior) are independent variables, affecting the two mediating variables (commitment and trust). The two mediating variables play a double-role of dependent variables, in relation to the five antecedents, and independent variables in relation to the five outcome variables (acquiescence, propensity to leave, cooperation, functional conflict, and uncertainty).
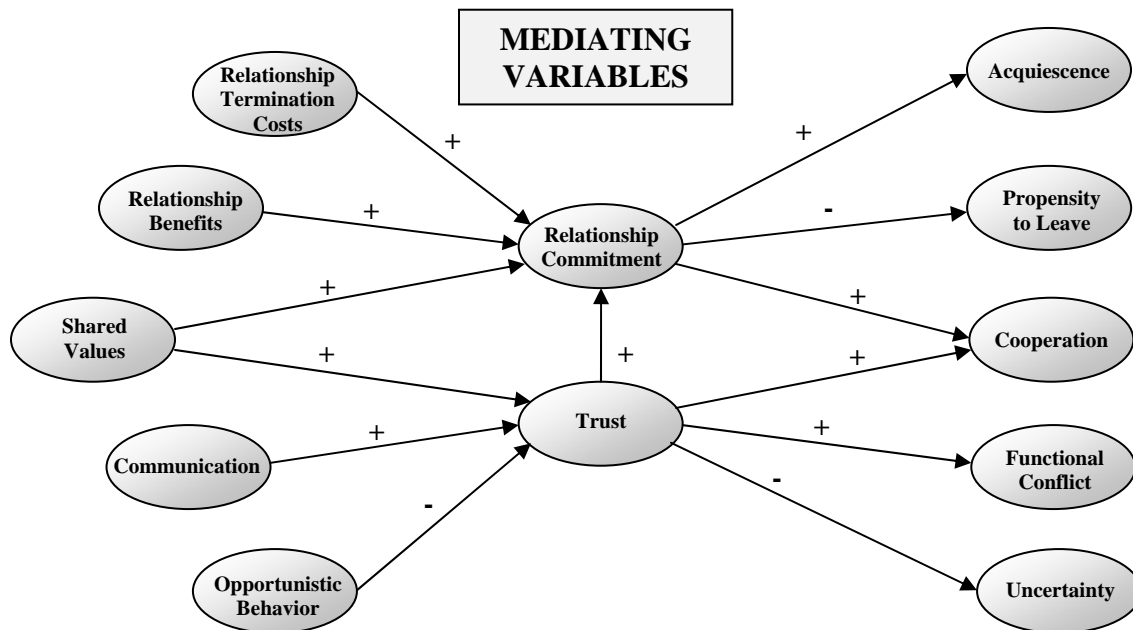
Figure 4. KMV Model: Antecedents, Mediating Variables, and Outcomes

Adapted from Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(3), 20-38.

The authors present several key findings (Table 3). Relationship commitment was found to be positively affected by both relationship termination costs and shared values. In the former, high costs associated with leaving the relationship tend to reinforce

the commitment to keeping it going, or at the least discourage one from leaving it. In the latter, the idea of similarity between exchange actors in terms of shared values enhances the commitment to the relationship. Similarly, shared values also have a positive effect on trust directly. Communication, as the meaningful and timely sharing of information, has a positive effect on trust. Opportunistic behavior, in terms of non-benevolent and/or dishonest behavior has a negative effect on trust. Relationship commitment has a positive effect on both acquiescence and cooperation, while having a negative effect on the propensity to leave the relationship. Trust has a positive effect on relationship commitment, cooperation, and functional conflict; the latter in terms of seeing conflict as a natural occurrence in the relationship. Lastly, trust has a negative effect on uncertainty.

Table 3.
Research Findings of KMV Study

Independent Variable	Effect	Dependent Measure
Relationship termination costs	+	Relationship commitment
Shared values	+	Relationship commitment
Shared values	+	Trust
Communication	+	Trust
Opportunistic behavior	-	Trust
Relationship commitment	+	Acquiescence
Relationship commitment	-	Propensity to leave
Relationship commitment	+	Cooperation
Trust	+	Relationship commitment
Trust	+	Cooperation
Trust	+	Functional conflict
Trust	-	Uncertainty

Stages of the Relationship

Research has suggested models of the stages that occur over time throughout the life-cycle of these relationships. Though the relationship life-cycle is beyond the scope of the current study, many authors contend that attempting to understand the life-cycle of

the buyer-seller dyadic relationship and the variables' relative activation or latency during particular stages can have managerial implications for improving relationship quality and long-term orientation.

One model describing the stages through which a relationship develops is a seven-phase model of management consulting (Applebaum et al., 2005). In the first of which, *entry*, the following components are suggested to be active: the power of the client, the client's readiness to change, and the client's willingness to assume responsibility for the effort and its outcomes. The second phase is *contracting*, in which clarity of communication and relationship expectations are of primary importance. The third phase is *diagnostic*, which manifests through model utilization and access to information on the part of the consultant. The fourth phase is *feedback* whereby meaningful communication is delivered to the client based on the diagnostic phase. Here, the client's confidence plays a large role in relationship success, as does client affirmation of the information. The fifth phase is *planning change*, which is exemplified by pilot activity and flexibility by both parties. Phase six is *intervention* in which the piloted solution is rolled-out organizationally.   Findings suggest that implementation success is correlated to "supporting changes" appending "structural changes", such as reward systems and management style changes. The final phase is *evaluation*, where project outcomes are measured against goals and expectations. Interestingly, it was found that successful projects were more likely to complete project evaluations.

A five-phase process has been utilized in a study that explored the impact of supply chain relationship dynamics on manufacturing performance (Fynes et al., 2006). The first stage is *awareness* in which recognition occurs that another party may be a

feasible exchange partner, though no actual interaction or exchange transpires yet. Unilateral posturing often happens to enhance "attractiveness" to the other actor – though bilateral interaction means the relationship has moved on to the next phase.

The second phase is *exploration* in which the intent is to determine the potential for longer and more meaningful interaction. Five sub-processes exist in the exploration phase: attraction, communication and bargaining, development and exercise of power, norm development, and expectation development. This last sub-process is where trust begins to become active since expectations develop towards the other actor behaving in a certain manner, thus building credibility and the reinforcement to honesty through promises being kept. The five sub-processes are important overall because they act as a litmus test for assessing mutual goals, integrity, and performance outcomes based on the limited and exploratory interaction of this phase.

The third phase is *expansion* which is marked by increasing interdependence and increased obtained benefits. The same five sub-processes just mentioned also apply in the phase, but now with additional risk-taking resultant from increased trust. This leads to greater potentially realized benefits.

The fourth phase is *commitment*. At this stage customer loyalty is achieved through three measureable criteria: inputs, durability, and consistency. Inputs are the resources committed by both parties to the relationship. Durability is represented by the enablers that are based on long-term transactions. For example, an automaker providing purchase incentives or discounts to its dealerships based on annual part purchases is committing to a durable relationship by instituting time-based performance rewards. The last, consistency, is the regularity of the inputs into the relationship. Commitment, i.e.,

customer loyalty, is not a static condition, however. Similar to the decay of physical-chemical bonds, social entropy predicts that on-going maintenance may be necessary and unavoidable to sustain commitment (Bailey, 2006).

The final phase is *dissolution* in which one party assesses the relationship, perhaps in terms of CL or CL_{alt}, and determines that the cost outweighs the benefits. This phase is the least researched and the least understood, and the authors suggest that interpersonal relationship research on relationship dissolution may be applicable.

Another approach to stages in the relationship is offered by Powers and Reagan (2007). The authors offer five stages, the first of which is *partner selection*, in which a potential partner is identified through a process of assessing the quality. CL_{alt} can fulfill this function through an assessment of the perceived benefits of available alternatives as compared to their respective costs. The second stage is *defining purpose* in which a formal organization sanctioning of the relationship occurs. Here also, a common understanding of purpose is agreed upon. *Setting relationship boundaries* is the next stage, wherein both parties define how deeply each organization penetrates into the other. The level of performance satisfaction is determined by the resources committed to the relationship, and by the degree of commitment of those involved. The fourth stage is *creating value*, where value creation is the process by which the competitive abilities of the partners are enhanced by being in the relationship. Value to the relationship occurs when the benefits are mutual. There are many forms of this value, such as technology, market access, information, lower prices and operating costs, or knowledge. The final stage is *relationship maintenance* in which the relationship has developed stability and positive outcomes. There is little empirical research on the maintenance of stable

relationships. However, it is hypothesized that variables such as trust, performance, and satisfaction are latent during this stage because they do not need the active involvement of those who manage the relationship.

Although the literature within the performance improvement and instructional technology field is scant in terms of a recent focus on stages of the relationship, several authors have explored this in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s in the context of an instructional design consultant and subject matter expert (SME). Though "client" and "SME" are not necessarily interchangeable in terms of their roles – often the SME is not a decision-making client – there are instances in practice where a SME would also be a client. An example of such a situation is a physician who hires an instructional design consultant to design and develop patient education modules where the physician supplies expertise in the subject matter. Davies (1975) outlined a three-stage process in the development of a relationship during the consultancy process. These stages are *entering, maintaining,* and *terminating*. Moller (1995) added a fourth stage that occurs prior to these three: *preparation*. Armstrong and Sherman (1988) reflected upon Davies' three stages from the point-of-view of the SME, and listed the activities of SMEs during each stage. Table 4 synthesizes these stages, and offers glimpses from the instructional design consultant and SME perspective into the activities that occur in each stage.

The *preparing stage* is intended to set up the greatest possibility of success by way of initially defining the SME's role, from the consultant's perspective, as well as making friendly and courteous contacts with the SME (Moller, 1995). From the SME's perspective it is a chance to start communication with the consultant prior to the project officially beginning. This stage should be characterized by strong first impressions,

hopefully on both parts, but at least on the part of the SME if the consultant has accomplished this stage effectively.

Table 4
Stages of an instructional design consultant-SME Relationship

Stages of the relationship from the consultant's perspective	Consultant's actions	Stages of the relationship from the SME's perspective	SME actions	Relationship aspects characterized by:
Preparing	Define view of SME role, initial contact with SME, gain confidence	-	Initial contact with consultant	Strong first impressions
Entering	Negotiation of a formal relationship / determine psychological contract roles	*Staging*	Develop a joint contract	Formal contract / Psychological contract / Agendas
Maintaining	Diagnosis / Planning / Action	*Production*	Ensure critical content / confirm consultant's grasp of content / formative evaluation	Intense questioning / commitment to roles / commitment to timelines / commitment of resources
Terminating	Evaluation	*Closing*	Actively involved in evaluation	Partnership in evaluation

Adapted from Davies, 1975; Armstrong and Sherman, 1988; Moller, 1995.

The *entering stage* is the formal beginning of the project. From a business perspective, the formal contract gives each party the ability to confirm in writing the expected roles that each will play. The psychological contract further sets these

expectations and should, if managed effectively, help to clarify roles (Armstrong et al., 1988). This marks the *staging stage* from the perspective of the SME, and should likewise clarify roles and expectations through a joint contract, which is one in which both have input and achieve mutual agreement. These stages are characterized by consensus on the part of the consultant and SME in terms of roles, expectations, and other project-specific issues such as timelines and project plans.

In the *maintaining stage*, there are three activities that occur with the consultant. These are diagnosis, planning (decision-making), and action. It is important to reinforce that these activities relate to the consultant-SME *relationship*, and though it may be tempting to align these to phases of the design process itself (e.g. analysis, design / development, implementation), they are independent of it. Davies (1975) asserts that it is key to "ensure that both task and relationships are managed in such a way that the on-going sets of activity are as comparable as possible" (p. 363). Thus, though they are distinct, they need to be managed in light of each other.

The maintaining stage correlates to the *production stage* for the SME. Here, the SME needs to assure that the critical content has been delivered to the instructional design consultant. So, too, does the consultant need to intensely question the SME to assure that the content is sufficient to accomplish the goals of the instruction (Armstrong et al., 1988). The SME needs to be active in the process and confirm that there is no misunderstanding of the content on the part of the consultant, since it may negatively affect the final product. In effect, this stage requires significant commitment to formative evaluation from the SME, as well as commitment to the defined roles, timelines, and resources.

The final stage is called *terminating*, or *closing* for the SME. At this point, there are multiple possibilities for next steps based on the specific situation. For example, if the consultant is on retainer or bills hourly on an as-needed basis, there may be no formal conclusion to the project as some sort of follow-up is in the future (Davies, 1975). Regardless, this stage involves evaluation on the part of both the consultant and SME. This is evaluation of the *relationship*, not the product, though the results of the product evaluation may not surprisingly have an impact on the relationship.

Discreet and relational transactions

A distinction exists in social exchange based on the levels of trust, duration of the relationship, and past experience or future expectations in the relationship. This distinction is between *discreet transactions* and *relational transactions*. The foundation upon which these concepts are built is the social contract, which exists primarily because of the existence of human society (Liyanto, 2008). Our lack of isolation and the inter-dependencies that arise from non-isolation lead to an inability to be self-sufficient. Similarly, specialization of labor requires that we need products and services from others to survive. As we become aware of this we desire to plan for the future in order to reduce risk and uncertainty, and it is for this reason that the contract is necessary in exchange relationships.

Within this framework of the contract, the discreet transaction can be exemplified as a "one-shot economic exchange" (Liyanto, 2008, p. 316). Most importantly, perhaps, is the utter lack of a past or future in the relationship. These transactions often involve little communication and narrowly defined commodities or services.

Relational exchange, however, is argued to be a key component of a strong relationship (Liyanto, 2008). The relational transaction draws from previous exchanges, relies on trust and efforts of unity to resolve conflicts, often involve noneconomic exchange of valued assets in addition to the possibility of monetary transactions, and are likely to include some sharing of benefits and burdens (Macneil, 1978). According to Dwyer et al. (1987):

> Most important is the fact that relational exchange transpires over time; each transaction must be viewed in terms of its history and its anticipated future. The basis for future collaboration may be supported by implicit and explicit assumptions, trust, and planning. Relational exchange participants can be expected to derive complex, personal, noneconomic satisfactions and engage in *social* exchange (p. 12).

In light of the above description in terms of time, history and future, and the role of trust, the client-consultant relationship by its nature is a relational exchange. However, it should be pointed out that the pure distinction between discreet and relational exchange is a false one. Rather, as noted by Jones (2007), exchange relationships exist on a continuum between these two forms.

Summary

The issues surrounding the role of trust, buyer-seller relationships, and social exchange have been approached from many disciplines, including economics, social psychology, psychology, and marketing. This chapter has discussed several key issues found within the literature that are relevant to this study. The nature of the client-consultant relationship was reviewed both from a performance improvement and instructional design perspective, as well as other perspectives such as management

consulting. Key concepts and constructs within the client-consultant relationship were explored from both an empirical and theoretical base. Social exchange theory was described as a germane theoretical framework to approach the client-consultant relationship. Stages of the client-consultant relationship were reviewed, as was the continuum of discreet and relational exchange.

What has contemporary research determined in the larger framework of buyer-seller relationships? First, that there are myriad variables acting and interacting in a complex way (Palmatier et al., 2006). Trust plays a key role as mediator between several antecedent variables and several outcome variables (Emden et al., 2004; Li et al., 2006; Ryu et al., 2007). Three important antecedents to trust are perceived level of expertise (Eiser et al., 2009; Sen et al., 2006; Tsai et al., 2010), shared values (Athanassopoulou et al., 2009; Huntley, 2006; Karantinou et al., 2001), and the meaningful sharing of information (Fynes et al., 2006; Wakefield et al., 2004). Additionally, trust has an effect on relationship commitment in several contexts, including relationship marketing (Cho, 2006; Emden et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2005) and interpersonal relationships (Bantham et al., 2002; Miller et al., 2004; Wieselquist, 2009).

However, no studies that the author knows of have explored trust as a mediator between perceived level of expertise, shared values, and meaningful sharing of information and commitment as an outcome factor within the context of the client-consultant relationship. This study can offer empirical support to the roles these variables play within the client-consultant relationship and predict how proactive management of them can assist in developing relationships for a consultant in the fields of performance improvement and instructional technology.

III.   Method

The method chapter will describe the research methodology that was used in this study. Initially, after a brief overview of the study, a description of the target population and sample will be described to identify the study's participants, rationale for their selection, and the representativeness of the sample. Following this section will be a description of the research instrument, its design, and its validity and reliability. The next section will describe the step-by-step procedures that will be used to implement the study. Lastly, a section will discuss the statistical analyses that will describe the collected data, highlight the study's limitations, as well as explore the importance of the study's results.

This study attempted to determine the role that trust and its antecedents play within the client-consultant dyadic relationship. It explored several factors hypothesized to have an impact on trust within the dyad, attempted to determine their relative importance, and made recommendations as to how the consultant within the dyad can best leverage knowledge of the functioning of these antecedents to develop trust toward an enhanced client-consultant relationship.

Stated formally, this study tested the following hypotheses:

H_1: Trust mediates the relationship between perceived level of expertise and relationship commitment.

H_2: Trust mediates the relationship between shared values and relationship commitment.

H_3: Trust mediates the relationship between sharing of meaningful information and relationship commitment.

H_4: Perceived level of expertise is positively related to trust.

H_5: Shared values is positively related to trust.

H_6: Sharing of meaningful information is positively related to trust.

H_7: Trust is positively related to relationship commitment.

Participants were randomly assigned into one of eight experimental groups. The independent variables in this study were perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information. Each independent variable was manipulated into two levels – high and low – to ascertain the affect that is engendered upon trust as a mediator, and relationship commitment as an outcome variable.

Description of the Target Population and Sample

Participants were individuals from selected undergraduate level classes at Wayne State University's Department of Communication, and Oakland University in the School of Education during the fall semester of 2010 and winter semester of 2011. Permission was requested from Professors of each class to ask for students' participation in answering a scenario-based questionnaire. Data were collected from 521 participants, including 85 from Pilot 1, 208 from Pilot 2, and 228 from the main study. This sample size is consistent with contemporary SEM methodology, which recommends a sample of 200 to 400 and at least 10 to 15 times as many cases as variables (Lani, 2010). These participants will represent a sample of the overall population.

As mentioned previously, a limitation to this study is the sample chosen. As noted by Babbie (2007), although homogeneity of the sample that is only somewhat representative of the population limits generalizability, it also has the benefit of reducing

sampling error and is appropriate for explanatory research. Further, trust and commitment have been hypothesized to play important roles in all exchange relationships (Ryu et al., 2007). Since being a member of society necessitates exchange relationships for survival, it can be accepted that all participants will play the role of client in a client-consultant relationship at some point in their lives, whether it be with a counselor, attorney, financial planner, accountant, physician, dentist, or others. The scenario that will be used in this study – an exchange relationship with a service advisor at an automotive service and repair facility – can, therefore, be argued to have salience in this study.

Instrument

A scenario-based group administered questionnaire was presented to students who participated in the study. This questionnaire consisted of detailed instructions, a demographic scale, scenario, items measuring the dependent variables with a trust sub-scale and a relationship commitment sub-scale, and sub-scales for controls measuring power, comparison level of the alternative, and ability to trust.

Written instructions were the first part of the questionnaire and contained three sections (Hess, Ganesan, & Klein, 2003): 1) an explanation of the general objectives of the study, 2) a request that the hypothetical scenario be read carefully and answer the questions following it, and 3) a request to read each page and not skip ahead. The instructions are included in Appendix A.

General demographic data were collected from the participants for the purpose of controlling for these variables as well as exploring how they might relate to the

dependent variables of trust and commitment. Specifically, the questionnaire asked to

obtain information from the participants regarding University attended, age, gender, and

ethnicity. These items were obtained from the General Social Survey (Davis, Smith, &

Marsden, 2007) and The Gallup Organization (2001). The demographic scale is shown

as Appendix B.

The questionnaire measured the effect of three manipulated variables – perceived

level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information – on trust as a

mediator to relationship commitment. Items from the questionnaire were obtained from

previous similar research exploring interpersonal and exchange relationships. Of the 11

items measuring trust, seven were obtained from Larzelere and Huston's (1980) dyadic

trust scale. The remaining four items were obtained from Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna's

(1985) trust scale. These two scales were chosen for three reasons: because of their

widespread use in the trust literature, their strong history of psychometric validation, and

their appropriateness to the conceptualization of trust in this study. Of these two scales,

only the items that measure honesty and benevolence – the components of trust as

conceptualized for this study – were selected. Many authors have utilized these scales for

similar recent research (Bansal, Taylor, & St. James, 2005; Finkenauer, Kerkhof,

Righetti, & Branje, 2009; Fynes et al., 2006). Similar to recent instances of use of these

scales, items were slightly modified to be applicable to the current study by substituting

the subject of the statement. For example, an item from the Larzelere and Huston dyadic

trust scale that read "My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me" was modified

to be "The service advisor is perfectly honest and truthful with me". The items obtained

from the Larzelere and Huston scale were measured on a 7-point scale, which is modified

from the original 5-point scale used by the authors. This decision was made to keep the

range a consistent 7-point scale across all items of the survey which simplifies analysis

and increases the validity of the items by increasing response options (Babbie, 2007). All

items on the questionnaire were measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1

("strongly disagree"), through 4 ("neutral"), to 7 ("strongly agree").

Of the eight items measuring relationship commitment, four items were obtained

from Ganesan (1994) and four items were obtained from Morgan and Hunt (1994).

Similar to the two trust scales, these scales have been widely used in recent research,

have a strong history of psychometrics, and the items properly reflect relationship

commitment as operationalized for this study. Items were similarly slightly modified to

be reflective of the current study as to the trust items mentioned above. Many authors

have utilized these scales for similar research (Cho, 2006; Guitierrez, 2006; Jayachandran

et al., 2004). Additionally, the Morgan and Hunt items were measured on a 7-point scale,

which is modified from the original 11-point scale used by the authors. This decision

was made to keep the range a consistent 7-point scale across all items of the survey,

which simplifies analysis and increases the reliability of the items by reducing variance

(Babbie, 2007).   The trust and commitment scales are shown as Appendix F.

Psychometric information from relevant and recent studies utilizing the source scales for

trust and relationship commitment is included as Appendix G.

Though not used in this study, the Bogardus social distance scale provides a way

to measure the willingness of people to participate with specific groups or types of other

people by varying degrees of closeness (Babbie, 2007). A powerful aspect of this scale is

its economy of scaling as a data-reduction device. For example, a participant in the study

could be asked a series of questions about the consultant that represent increasing levels

of closeness or intensity: "Would you be willing to live in the same community as the

consultant?", "Would you be willing to live in the same neighborhood as the

consultant?", "Would you be willing to live next door to the consultant?", and, finally,

"Would you be willing to let your child marry the consultant?". Any "yes" response

assumes a "yes" to all preceding questions, and as such, contains those data in only one

response item. The Bogardus social distance scale has apparent applicability in future

studies of the client-consultant relationship.

Scenario. The use of a scenario brings several advantages - it allows for greater

ease of variable manipulations, provides greater control of difficult to manage variables,

and can reduce the time necessary to complete the experimental condition (Hess et al.,

2003). The challenge of a scenario is to properly set up the independent variables and

manipulate them in a consistent, plausible, and properly aligned way to the

operationalization of each factor (Mietzner & Reger, 2006). Additionally, the scenario

must represent the context of the study appropriately, in this case the client-consultant

relationship. In order to meet these challenges, the author determined to create a scenario

based on an interaction between an automotive service and repair facility advisor (the

consultant), and a customer (the client). This is likely to have good face validity in that it

represents a believable situation that could occur in the participants' lives, and

researchers have argued that the client-consultant relationship can take many forms

(Levitt, 1983).

Although stages of the relationship are outside the scope of this study, these

stages have been studied by many authors (Applebaum et al., 2005; Fynes et al., 2006;

Moller, 1995; Powers et al., 2007). Since this study presents a scenario in which the client does not know the consultant prior to the first meeting, there is no history between them. As such, this study would occur at an early stage of the client-consultant relationship. This idea of buyer-seller "history" has been explored in studies as an antecedent to trust as the construct performance satisfaction (Powers et al., 2007), satisfaction (Bansal et al., 2005), satisfaction with supplier performance (Ryu et al., 2007), relationship satisfaction (Palmatier et al., 2006), and more.

A plausibility scale was used to ensure the believability of the scenario and establish face validity in the two pilot waves (see Appendix D). Additionally, technically accurate automotive repair information on engine problems (Brain, 2010) was used in the scenario to enhance plausibility. The participants were instructed to act as themselves as the customer in the scenario, and as such represented the client in the client-consultant relationship. The independent variables; perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information, were each be manipulated in a high or low presentation in eight different combinations of scenarios. The specific manipulations of the independent variables were aligned specifically to the way each is operationalized (Babbie, 2007). Further, these manipulations allowed for the two dependent variables, trust and relationship commitment, to be measured appropriately. The manipulations and scenario are shown as Appendix C.

Pilot. Validation of the scenario was a primary concern, and a two-step pilot process was used to help validate the scenario to assess construct validity. First, a plausibility scale was used to assess the participants overall feeling about the believability of the scenario. The plausibility scale is shown as Appendix D. Secondly, a semantic

differential (Babbie, 2007; Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) was utilized to both assess that the independent variables which were manipulated were properly representative of the constructs to the participants, as well as to measure the independent variables. This first "manipulation check" purpose of the semantic differential looked at the scenario to ensure it was effectively presenting the variables as they were intended to be presented. For example, a scenario that demonstrates a "high level" of expertise was perceived by the participant as such. To confirm this, the semantic differential was administered as part of the questionnaire to assess the manipulation of the independent variables in the scenario. For each independent variable, three items (in Pilot 1 and Pilot 2) and six items (for the main study) were included in the semantic differential, which is shown as Appendix E.

The pilot occurred in two waves (Pilot 1 N = 85; Pilot 2 N = 208). The first wave presented the pilot participants with the entire instrument in addition to the plausibility scale, semantic differential, hi-low factor manipulation check, and hi-low scenario manipulation check. The hi-low factor manipulation check is a specific set of items to measure the perceived levels of each independent variable (see Appendix I). For example, the perceived level of expertise variable from the scenario will be shown as its "high" level and "low" level together. Items then measure the respondent's perception as to which level reflects a high level of expertise and which a low level of expertise. The hi-low scenario manipulation check measured the perceived levels of the variables overall in the scenario by setting up all of the independent variables in the scenario in two ways, where each is presented in its "high" level, and where each is presented in its "low" level (See Appendix J). Items then measured the participants' perception as to whether

the scenarios reflect a "high" and "low" level, respectively. Feedback (from the plausibility scale) and data analysis were used to revise the questions, scenario, and items as appropriate for the second pilot wave (see Results for a discussion on revisions to the instrument based on pilot results).

Pilot 2 presented participants with the questionnaire and semantic differential only. Its intent was to present the revised items based on Pilot 1 analysis and allow for a final opportunity to refine the instrument prior to the main data collection. Data analysis was used to revise the questions, scenario, and items as appropriate for the study (see Results for a discussion on revisions to the instrument based on pilot results). Table 5 identifies the components of the instruments that were utilized in each phase of the study.

Table 5

Components of the Instrument by Study Phase

Phase	Questionnaire	Plausibility Scale	Semantic Differential	Hi-Low Factor Manipulation Check	Hi-Low Scenario Manipulation Check
Pilot 1 (N = 85)	X	X	X	X	X
Pilot 2 (N = 208)	X		X		
Main Study (N = 228)	X		X		

Reliability and Validity. In order to validate the scales, psychometric properties were determined for unidimensionality, validity, and reliability in the two pilot waves. First, all scale items were tested for unidimensionality of the construct they are intended to measure. This was accomplished by structural equation modeling using the AMOS plug-in to SPSS to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis to determine the number of

factors and the loading of the variables as an analysis of the quality of the measurement fit of the items to the constructs. Cronbach's α was determined as an additional indicator of unidimensionality.

Construct validity was determined by looking at convergent and discriminant validity. If convergent validity is high, and discriminant validity is low, this suggests evidence for construct validity (Trochim, 2006). Convergent validity was determined by calculating the inter-correlations of the scale items to the construct they aim to measure. Conversely, discriminant validity was determined by analyzing and calculating the inter-correlations of the scale items to the construct they do not aim to measure.

Internal consistency reliability, in addition to Cronbach's α, was tested by calculating composite reliability, which is similar to Cronbach's α but considers the actual factor loadings instead of assuming that each item is equally weighted (Li et al., 2006).

Procedures

Pilot. Personal contacts were made via email to Professors in the Department of Communication (Wayne State University) and Professors in the School of Education (Oakland University) asking for their permission to request their undergraduate students participation in the study, visit their classroom during class to introduce the study, and request participation.

Professors were given the options of either having the PI visit their classroom, supply a link to the on-line instrument, or reserve the Italian Room in the General Lectures Building for Wayne State students or the Human Resource Development

computer lab for Oakland University students. Despite the option for an off-site location, all data collection was completed either online or in classrooms. Classes were visited at pre-determined dates and times to introduce the study, reinforce anonymity and voluntariness, request participation, and collect data. For the participants who completed the online instrument, the link was forwarded to them via an email from their Professor to a webpage. This webpage had a built-in functionality which randomly selected the participant into one of the eight possible questionnaires/scenarios at SurveyGizmo.com.

In order to conduct the pilot phase, pre-work was done to code the pilot instruments. Questionnaires were coded in the bottom left corner to identify the manipulation of the variables (i.e the scenarios):

i. "1HLL" = Perceived level of expertise – High, Shared values – Low, Sharing of meaningful information – Low

ii. "2HHL" = Perceived level of expertise – High, Shared values – High, Sharing of meaningful information – Low

iii. "3HHH" = Perceived level of expertise – High, Shared values – High, Sharing of meaningful information – High

iv. "4HLH" = Perceived level of expertise – High, Shared values – Low, Sharing of meaningful information – High

v. "5LLL" = Perceived level of expertise – Low, Shared values – Low, Sharing of meaningful information – Low

vi. "6LHL" = Perceived level of expertise – Low, Shared values – High, Sharing of meaningful information – Low

    vii. "7LHH" = Perceived level of expertise – Low, Shared values –

High, Sharing of meaningful information – High

    viii. "8LLH" = Perceived level of expertise – Low, Shared values –

Low, Sharing of meaningful information – High

Prior to the pilot, questionnaires were organized in a series of eights (for eight versions/groups). As participants were presented with the questionnaires, the information sheets, which were comprised of the first two pages, were pointed out and participants were asked to read the form completely if they were interested in participating in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental groups by receiving the questionnaires in order, so as to repeat (start over) every ninth participant. As participants finished, questionnaires were collected. This process was repeated in each classroom to collect the desired sample for each of the pilot waves and main study data collection.

Main Study (post-Pilot) Data Collection. Similar to the pilot phases, personal contacts were made via email to Professors in the School of Education at Oakland University asking for their permission to request their students' participation in the study, visit their classroom during class to introduce the study, and request participation. Once approval had been granted, the same steps were followed as described above in the pilot phases.

Control variables. Dependence, CL_{alt}, and ability to trust were measured as control variables in this study. The channel marketing research literature has argued that power is an important construct in the buyer-seller relationship, has a negative effect on

trust, and is resultant from dependence of one actor upon the other (Caniels et al., 2007). Accordingly, dependence will be measured in the study to control for this effect. Two questions will be slightly modified to be appropriate for the setting of this study adopted from Lusch and Brown (1996) in that the subject of the items is changed from "major supplier" to "service advisor" (see Appendix H). Four additional questions were added based on these two questions to increase internal consistency and ensure unidimensionality.

Similarly, social exchange theory offers the construct of CL_{alt} to describe the minimum standard of performance that will be tolerated within a social exchange relationship in relation to alternative available actors (Powers et al., 2007). CL_{alt} will be measured to control for the potential effect of a lack of alternatives given in the scenario to the participants, and its resultant effect on trust. Three items selected from the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998) will be used for this construct. The Investment Model Scale has been widely used and tested. Questions will be slightly modified to be appropriate for the setting of this study in that the subject of the items is changed to "service advisor" (see Appendix H).

Social exchange theory generally takes a rational approach to the decision-making process as it relates to relational exchange (West et al., 2007). However, both the sales literature (Crosby & Johnson, 2003) and even more so the social psychology literature (Todorov et al., 2002) also stress the role of emotions, or heuristics, on decision-making. Accordingly, ability to trust will be controlled to account for this potential variation. Five items selected from Rotter's Interpersonal Trust Scale (1967) will be used to measure this construct. The Rotter scale has been widely tested and used, and the items have been

selected that most directly measure ability to trust. Items used to measure ability to trust are also shown in Appendix H.

Statistical Analyses

   Hypothesis Testing.   This study explored the role that trust plays as a mediator between three exogenous variables and relationship commitment. As is consistent with contemporary approaches to assessing mediation, a mediation analysis will be utilized to analyze the data (Preacher et al., 2008). In this analysis, the theoretical model of trust as a mediator between three antecedent (predictor) variables and relationship commitment as an outcome variable was explored as shown in Figure 5.

   In the first frame of the figure, X represents a predictor variable, Y represents an outcome variable, and c represents the *total effect* of X on Y. In the second frame of the figure, $X_{1,2,3}$ represent the three predictor variables of this study: perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information. M represents trust, and Y represents relationship commitment. $a_{1,2,3}$ denote the effect of the respective predictor variables on trust (M), and b represents the effect of trust on relationship commitment relationship commitment (Y). The ↰↴ symbol represents the part of the variables not represented by relationship with the predictor, or mediating, variables (MacKinnon, 2008).

   The *indirect effect* of X on Y is calculated as the product of the two coefficients, ab. The *direct effect*, c', is the effect of X on Y when controlling for M. b is the effect on Y of M, when controlling for X. Generally, the *total effect* is equal to the sum of the *indirect effect* and *direct effect*, or $c = ab + c'$ (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Additionally

(in a sample not limited by lack of power) if a or b were found to be zero, then mediation could not claim to exist in the model. As noted by Klein (2005, p. 130), "statistically significant indirect effects but not direct effects represent the strongest demonstration for a mediator effect, assuming correct directionality specifications".
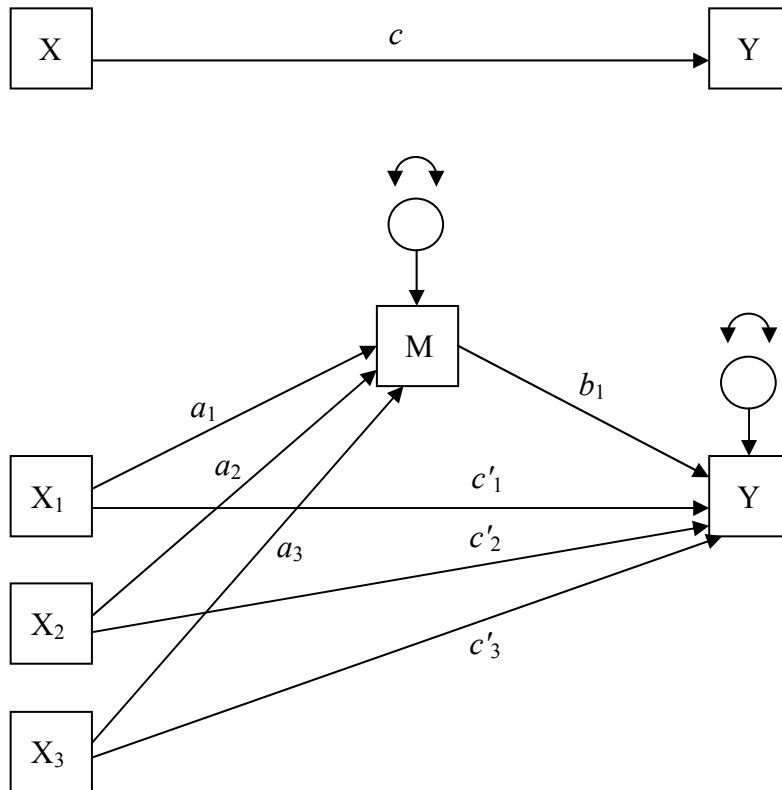
Figure 5. Mediated model of predictors, trust, and relationship commitment

In order to determine mediation, the AMOS Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) plug-in to SPSS was used to test the mediation model a similar two-step process. The first step is to test the model with each of the three predictor variables and outcome variable only to determine how the direct effects perform without the mediator. A second

SEM test was then run with the mediator added and any changes to the direct effects noted, in addition to looking for statistically significant indirect effects.

In SEM, model fit is often of primary importance to test the overall fit of a conceptual model (Cole et al., 2003). Model fit was looked at using AMOS to assess overall model fit. Four methods were used to determine model fit. These were non-significance of the chi-square statistic, which suggests good fit since it means that there is little difference between the hypothesized model covariances and the data covariances, a Comparitive Fit Index (CFI) that is greater than .90, a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) that is less than .05, and a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) statistic that is less than .08 (Kenny, 2010).

Determining the significance of the model's direct and indirect effects is vital to testing the hypotheses. To accomplish this, a bootstrapping procedure was performed using AMOS. Bootstrapping has several advantages: first, it does not assume a normal distribution of the coefficients *ab*, as do other methods, such as the Sobel test (Preacher et al., 2008). It has been noted that the assumption of normality is often incorrect (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russel, 2006). Second, bootstrapping does not require larger sample sizes as do other mediator analysis techniques, nor does it reduce power (Preacher et al., 2008). Bootstrapping works by taking a large number of samples of the complete data set, sampling with replacement (returning the individual case back to the data), and computing the indirect effect for each sample. This is repeated *k* times (the authors recommend 1000 – 5000). The results present an estimate of the indirect effects *ab*, an estimated standard error, and both 95% and 99% confidence intervals for the population value of *ab*.

As mentioned previously, there are some limitations to this study. A primary limitation to this study stems from the cross-sectional design, which means that causality will be less strong than with a longitudinal design (Babbie, 2007). Mediator research literature points out that measuring a mediator variable before the dependent variable does not ensure that changes in the mediator caused changes in the dependent variable, it "makes the inference of causality more tenable" (Preacher et al., 2008, p. 36). Secondly, more confidence in causal inferences can result from experimental manipulation of the independent variables, as opposed to simple observation (Cole et al., 2003). Both of these considerations have been built in to the design of this study to make the inference of causality more tenable. A second limitation is the choice of exogenous variables in the conceptual model. Though the model offers several important variables as antecedents to trust, there may be others that play an important role. One of which is performance satisfaction, which does not play a role in this study since it presents the relationship at an early stage of the relationship, prior to any performance which could be assessed by the consultant. Another potential limitation is that this study explores the client's view of the relationship. A richer view of the dynamic of the dyad could be captured by evaluating the perspective of the consultant as well. The scenario design creates two additional limitations. The first is in regards to the possibility of gender being a confounding variable due to the choice of context for the scenario – an automotive service and repair facility. The second is the sequence of the manipulated independent variables as presented in the scenario may possibly have an effect in itself on trust.

It is hoped that the results of this study will be important in several ways. First, it is hoped it will help in determining the role of trust as a mediator between antecedent

variables and relationship commitment. By focusing on trust, it is possible that managers and performance, instructional design, and training consultants can improve their performance by increasing the quality of the client-consultant relationship. Secondly, it is hoped this study will help in determining if several variables have a positive effect on trust. Similarly, by focusing on these variables within the client-consultant relationship, a manager or consultant can increase trust in the relationship. Finally, it is hoped this study will help in determining the effect that trust has on relationship commitment. Since relationship commitment is a goal of many long-term relationships (Wieselquist, 2009), if trust has a positive effect on relationship commitment both managers and consultants can improve the overall performance of the relationship as measured by relationship commitment.

Summary

This chapter presented the methods to be used in the study, which will attempt to determine the role that trust and its antecedents play within the client-consultant dyadic relationship. A description of the target population and sample, as well as the instrument, was offered. The procedures were described in detail, including the two pilot phases and main data collection phases. The methods and rationale for utilizing mediated statistical analyses were discussed. Finally, the importance of the results of the study to managers and consultants were offered.

IV.   Results

This results chapter will present the findings of the study. Initially, after a brief review of the purpose of the study, the results of the two pilot waves will be reviewed in terms of their samples, an exploratory data analysis of the instrument, and an explanation of the steps taken to purify the scales. Then, the results of the final stage of data collection will be presented, with a report on the sample, an exploratory data analysis of the instrument, model fit, hypothesis testing, a review of additional questions that resulted from an exploratory investigation of the data, and the statistical power of the multiple regression will be presented.

This study attempted to determine the role that trust and its antecedents play within the client-consultant dyadic relationship. It explored several factors – perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information – which were hypothesized to have an impact on trust within the client-consultant relationship. Further, the relationship of trust to relationship commitment was explored. Finally, an attempt was made to determine their relative importance and offer recommendations as to how the consultant within the dyad can best leverage knowledge of the functioning of these antecedents to develop trust toward an enhanced client-consultant relationship.

Pilot Wave 1

Description of the sample. Demographic data collected were Sex, Age, Ethnicity, and University Attended. The data were collected between November, 2010, and January, 2011. Of the sample (N = 85) 63 were female (74%) and 22 were male (26%). Ages ranged from eighteen to 35 (mean = 21, median = 20, mode = 19, range =

17). Table 6 presents the frequency of responses for each of the six possible responses

for ethnicity. Approximately 73% of the sample reported as being white, and

approximately 17% reported being African American or black. 44 respondents attended

Oakland University (52%) and 41 attended Wayne State University (48%).

Table 6
Pilot Wave 1 Sample Ethnicity

Ethnicity	f	%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	3.5
African American or Black	14	16.5
White	62	72.9
Some other race	5	5.9
No Answer	1	1.2
Total	85	100

Exploratory Data Analysis. All scale items were tested for unidimensionality

for the constructs they were intended to measure by conducting a confirmatory factor

analysis using the AMOS plug-in to SPSS. Standardized regression weights for all scale

items for Pilot 1 are shown in Appendix M, Table M1. Three items from the ability to

trust sub-scale had low standardized regression weights (AT2 = .290, AT3 = -.057, AT5

= .342). Additionally, the ability to trust sub-scale showed a low Cronbach's α (.540)

suggesting low reliability. The three items were removed that had both low standardized

regression weights and low inter-item correlation, and four new items were created for

the study based on the two remaining items (see Appendix H).

The dependence sub-scale had a Cronbach's α of .606. Four additional items

were added based on the original two items (see Appendix H). The comparison level of

the alternative (CL$_{alt}$) sub-scale showed good internal reliability (Cronbach's α = .767).

The trust sub-scale also showed good internal reliability (Cronbach's α = .879), as well as

the relationship commitment sub-scale (Cronbach's α = .817). Pilot 1 inter-item

correlation matrices for all scales are shown in Appendix N, Tables N1 through N8.

The three sub-scales that measured the independent variables had mixed results in

terms of internal reliability. The perceived level of expertise sub-scale had good internal

reliability (Cronbach's α = .926). The shared values sub-scale showed a low Cronbach's

α (.262) suggesting low reliability. Lastly, the sharing of meaningful information sub-

scale showed a good internal reliability (Cronbach's α = .718). Table 7 presents the

internal reliability summary for all sub-scales for Pilot 1. Changes to these three sub-

scales are discussed in the Pilot 2 results section below.

Table 7
Internal Reliability of all Scales – Pilot 1

Scale	# of Items	Cronbach's α
Ability to trust	5	.540
Dependence	2	.606
Comparison Level of the Alternative	3	.767
Trust	11	.879
Relationship Commitment	8	.817
Perceived Level of Expertise	3	.926
Shared Values	3	.262
Sharing of Meaningful Information	3	.718

NOTE: N = 85.

Manipulation checks. Three manipulation checks were conducted to measure

the experimental manipulations of the variables and the scenario. Table 8 presents the

results of the manipulation checks. At least 92% of the participants correctly identified

the variable manipulations and scenario manipulations when presented in both their high

and low manipulations, except for shared values of which 89% of participants correctly

identified. Additionally, the perception of the high manipulation of shared values was

found to be not significant ($t = -.824$, $p = .415$) suggesting a possible poor manipulation of that variable.

Table 8
Variable and Scenario Manipulation Checks

Manipulation	%	SD
Variable: Perceived level of expertise	95%	.213
Variable: Shared values	89%	.310
Variable: Sharing of meaningful information	95%	.023
Scenario	93%	.258

NOTE: $N = 85$.

Plausibility. Four open-ended items were included to measure participant perceptions of plausibility. Table 9 presents the percentages and standard deviations of responses. When asked "What could be done to make the scenario more plausible to you?" 13% (10/79) of participants made statements regarding a specific comment made by the advisor (about music taste) in the scenarios that reflected low manipulation of the shared values variable. A new manipulation for shared values was created to better exemplify the operationalization of the independent variable (see Appendix C).

Table 9
Scenario Plausibility Scale Summary – Pilot

Item	n	% Yes	% No	SD
Scenario plausible?	79*	88%	12%	.327
Conversation plausible?	79**	87%	13%	.335
Advisor's actions realistic?	75**	85%	15%	.356

NOTE: * missing data = 6; ** missing data = 10.

Pilot Wave 2

  Description of the sample. The data were collected between January, 2011, and February, 2011. Of the sample (N = 208) 153 were female (74%) and 55 were male (26%). Ages ranged from 20 to 63 (mean = 22, median = 26, mode = 23, range = 43). Table 10 presents the frequency of responses for each of the six possible responses for ethnicity. Approximately 78% of the sample reported as being white, and approximately 15% reported being African American or black. 194 respondents attended Oakland University (93%) and 14 attended Wayne State University (7%).

Table 10
Pilot Wave 2 Sample Ethnicity

Ethnicity	*f*	%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4	1.9
African American or Black	31	14.9
White	163	78.4
Some other race	10	4.8
Total	208	100

  Exploratory Data Analysis. Standardized regression weights for all scale items for Pilot 2 are shown in Appendix M, Table M2. Table 11 presents the internal reliability summary for all sub-scales for Pilot 2. Pilot 2 inter-item correlation matrices for all scales are shown in Appendix N, Tables N9 through N16. The ability to trust sub-scale suggested medium reliability (Cronbach's α = .693). Two items were added based on the two strongest correlating items (see Appendix H). All remaining sub-scales showed good internal reliability, with the exception of the shared values sub-scale (Cronbach's α = .400), and the sharing of meaningful information sub-scale showed (Cronbach's α = .654).

Table 11
Internal Reliability of all Scales – Pilot 2

Scale	# of Items	Cronbach's α
Ability to trust	6	.693
Dependence	6	.803
Comparison Level of the Alternative	3	.859
Trust	11	.885
Relationship Commitment	8	.857
Perceived Level of Expertise	3	.895
Shared Values	3	.400
Sharing of Meaningful Information	3	.654

NOTE: N = 208.

In order to purify these last two sub-scales, items with both low standardized regression weights and low inter-item correlations were dropped. Additional items were added based on the remaining, strongly weighted and correlated, items. In the case of perceived level of expertise, no item was dropped since it had neither items with low standardized regression weights nor low inter-item correlations; however, three new items were added based on the existing three items to increase overall internal reliability. One item was dropped from the shared values sub-scale and four more were added based on the remaining two items. Similarly, one item was dropped from the sharing of meaningful information sub-scale and four more were added based on the remaining two items. These final scale items are shown as Appendix E.

Main Study (post Pilot)

Description of the sample. The data were collected between February, 2011, and April, 2011. Of the sample (N = 228) 196 were female (86%) and 32 were male (14%). Ages ranged from 20 to 66 (mean = 30, median = 26, mode = 24, range = 46). Table 12 presents the frequency of responses for each of the six possible responses for

ethnicity. Approximately 86% of the sample reported as being white, and approximately 7% reported being African American or black. 227 respondents attended Oakland University (99.6%) and one attended Wayne State University (0.4%).

Table 12
Sample Ethnicity

Ethnicity	*f*	%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	.9
African American or Black	16	7.0
White	195	85.5
Some other race	15	6.6
Total	228	100

Missing Values. Across all sub-scales missing data accounted for between .4% to 4.4% of the total sample (N = 228). The data were cleaned by dealing with missing values by using the regression substitution method. SPPS was used to calculate the missing values by regression substitution which regresses the missing value on an index variable scaled 1 to n (228) and replacing based on predicted values for the specific variable. This method is superior to mean substitution since it does not reduce standard error by simply increasing sample size without the addition of new information (Howell, 2009).

Exploratory Data Analysis. Validity and reliability of the scale items were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis, inter-item correlation (Cronbach's α), composite reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity. This section will review the results of these analyses. All scale items were tested for unidimensionality for the constructs they were intended to measure by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis using the AMOS plug-in to SPSS. Table 13 presents the standardized regression weights

by scale item and sub-scale. All items were found to have strong regression weights on

the related construct.

Table 13
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Regression Weights

Item		Scale	Standardized Regression Weight
AT1	<---	Ability to Trust	.627
AT2	<---	Ability to Trust	.630
AT3	<---	Ability to Trust	.725
AT4	<---	Ability to Trust	.688
AT5	<---	Ability to Trust	.586
AT6	<---	Ability to Trust	.529
AT7	<---	Ability to Trust	.549
AT8	<---	Ability to Trust	.732
D1	<---	Dependence	.568
D2	<---	Dependence	.797
D3	<---	Dependence	.718
D4	<---	Dependence	.914
D5	<---	Dependence	.728
D6	<---	Dependence	.669
CL1	<---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.861
CL2	<---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.623
CL3	<---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.912
T1	<---	Trust	.707
T2	<---	Trust	.744
T3	<---	Trust	.727
T4	<---	Trust	.719
T5	<---	Trust	.595
T6	<---	Trust	.633
T7	<---	Trust	.706
T8	<---	Trust	.732
T9	<---	Trust	.688
T10	<---	Trust	.695
T11	<---	Trust	.662
RC1	<---	Relationship Commitment	.639
RC2	<---	Relationship Commitment	.755
RC3	<---	Relationship Commitment	.468
RC4	<---	Relationship Commitment	.684
RC5	<---	Relationship Commitment	.784
RC6	<---	Relationship Commitment	.759

Item		Scale	Standardized Regression Weight
RC7	<---	Relationship Commitment	.778
RC8	<---	Relationship Commitment	.707
PE1	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.799
PE2	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.691
PE3	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.881
PE4	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.740
PE5	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.707
PE6	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.891
SV1	<---	Shared Values	.707
SV2	<---	Shared Values	.408
SV3	<---	Shared Values	.685
SV4	<---	Shared Values	.816
SV5	<---	Shared Values	.725
SV6	<---	Shared Values	.779
MI1	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.707
MI2	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.734
MI3	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.734
MI4	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.771
MI5	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.740
MI6	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.629

Each of the sub-scales was also analyzed for inter-item correlation to determine internal reliability. All sub-scales demonstrated good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha >$ .72). The trust sub-scale had four items that, if deleted from the scale, would increase the scale's internal reliability (items T1, T5, T9, and T10). These four items were dropped from the scale. Similarly, the relationship commitment sub-scale had one item that if deleted would increase the scale internal reliability (item RC3). This item was likewise dropped from the scale. Additionally, the shared values sub-scale had one item that if deleted would increase the scale internal reliability (item SV2). This item was dropped from the scale. Table 14 presents the internal reliability summary for all sub-scales and displays both the original and final Cronbach's α statistics after dropping the scale items.

Table 14
Internal Reliability of all Scales – Main Study

Scale	# of Items	Cronbach's α	# of Items Deleted	Final Cronbach's α
Ability to trust	8	.841	-	.841
Dependence	6	.875	-	.875
Comparison Level of the Alternative	3	.834	-	.834
Trust	11	.914	4	.928
Relationship Commitment	8	.883	1	.909
Perceived Level of Expertise	6	.933	-	.933
Shared Values	6	.786	1	.841
Sharing of Meaningful Information	6	.856	-	.856

NOTE: N = 228.

Table 15 presents the inter-item correlations for the ability to trust sub-scale. The highest inter-item correlations were between items AT1 and AT3 (.573), and the lowest inter-item correlations were between items AT6 and AT7 (.232). The ability to trust sub-scale showed high composite reliability (CR = .932).

Table 15
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Ability to Trust sub-scale

	AT1	AT2	AT3	AT4	AT5	AT6	AT7	AT8
AT1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT2	.304	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT3	.573	.407	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
AT4	.410	.516	.497	1.000	-	-	-	-
AT5	.372	.412	.453	.322	1.000	-	-	-
AT6	.333	.336	.271	.402	.281	1.000	-	-
AT7	.337	.303	.545	.272	.381	.232	1.000	-
AT8	.436	.484	.458	.538	.405	.530	.377	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .841; N = 228.

Table 16 presents the inter-item correlations for the dependence sub-scale. The highest inter-item correlations were between items D3 and D4 (.662), and the lowest inter-item correlations were between items D1 and D6 (.361). The dependence sub-scale showed high composite reliability (CR = .904).

Table 16
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Dependence sub-scale

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
D1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
D2	.394	1.000	-	-	-	-
D3	.377	.537	1.000	-	-	-
D4	.514	.758	.662	1.000	-	-
D5	.609	.562	.494	.642	1.000	-
D6	.361	.517	.590	.583	.487	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .875; N = 228.

Table 17 presents the inter-item correlations for the comparison level of the alternatives sub-scale. The highest inter-item correlations were between items CL1 and CL3 (.786), and the lowest inter-item correlations were between items CL1 and CL2 (.509). The comparison level of the alternatives sub-scale showed high composite reliability (CR = .816).

Table 17
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Comparison Level of the Alternatives sub-scale

	CL1	CL2	CL3
CL1	1.000	-	-
CL2	.509	1.000	-
CL3	.786	.582	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .834; N = 228.

Table 18 presents the inter-item correlations for the trust sub-scale. The highest inter-item correlations were between items T2 and T3 (.816), and the lowest inter-item

correlations were between items T5 and T10 (.279). The trust sub-scale showed high composite reliability (CR = .923).

Table 18
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Trust sub-scale

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
T1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T2	.525	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T3	.527	.816	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T4	.477	.730	.785	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T5	.344	.373	.429	.441	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
T6	.493	.564	.585	.598	.459	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
T7	.487	.709	.699	.692	.484	.667	1.000	-	-	-	-
T8	.494	.612	.688	.645	.445	.595	.721	1.000	-	-	-
T9	.286	.384	.451	.493	.385	.362	.453	.391	1.000	-	-
T10	.378	.383	.473	.406	.279	.359	.432	.430	.445	1.000	-
T11	.433	.575	.585	.641	.420	.557	.598	.605	.319	.333	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .914 with 11 items, Cronbach's α =.928 with items T1, T5, T9, and T10 deleted; N = 228.

Table 19 presents the inter-item correlations for the relationship commitment sub-scale. The highest inter-item correlations were between items RC5 and RC6 (.785), and the lowest inter-item correlations were between items RC3 and RC8 (.181). The relationship commitment sub-scale showed high composite reliability (CR = .921).

Table 20 presents the inter-item correlations for the perceived level of expertise sub-scale. The highest inter-item correlations were between items PE5 and PE6 (.821), and the lowest inter-item correlations were between items PE1 and PE2 (.570). The perceived level of expertise sub-scale showed high composite reliability (CR = .814).

Table 19
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Relationship Commitment sub-scale

	RC1	RC2	RC3	RC4	RC5	RC6	RC7	RC8
RC1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RC2	.599	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
RC3	.189	.294	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
RC4	.582	.661	.181	1.000	-	-	-	-
RC5	.511	.666	.187	.589	1.000	-	-	-
RC6	.477	.696	.184	.641	.785	1.000	-	-
RC7	.453	.549	.245	.466	.660	.700	1.000	-
RC8	.386	.515	.181	.430	.699	.675	.630	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .883 with 8 items, Cronbach's α =.909 with item RC3 deleted; N = 228.

Table 21 presents the inter-item correlations for the shared values sub-scale. The highest inter-item correlations were between items SV3 and SV5 (.588), and the lowest inter-item correlations were between items SV1 and SV2 (.106). The shared values sub-scale showed high composite reliability (CR = .853).

Table 20
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Perceived Level of Expertise sub-scale

	PE1	PE2	PE3	PE4	PE5	PE6
PE1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
PE2	.570	1.000	-	-	-	-
PE3	.764	.704	1.000	-	-	-
PE4	.614	.701	.676	1.000	-	-
PE5	.697	.580	.745	.700	1.000	-
PE6	.806	.587	.826	.679	.821	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .933; N = 228.

Table 21
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Shared Values sub-scale

	SV1	SV2	SV3	SV4	SV5	SV6
SV1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
SV2	.106	1.000	-	-	-	-
SV3	.388	.079	1.000	-	-	-
SV4	.519	.203	.574	1.000	-	-
SV5	.462	.239	.588	.545	1.000	-
SV6	.494	.187	.499	.616	.504	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .786 with 6 items, Cronbach's α =.841 with item SV2 deleted; N = 228.

Table 22 presents the inter-item correlations for the sharing of meaningful information sub-scale. The highest inter-item correlations were between items MI1 and MI3 (.590), and the lowest inter-item correlations were between items MI3 and MI6 (.340). The sharing of meaningful information sub-scale showed high composite reliability (CR = .779).

Table 22
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Sharing of Meaningful Information sub-scale

	MI1	MI2	MI3	MI4	MI5	MI6
MI1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
MI2	.446	1.000	-	-	-	-
MI3	.590	.470	1.000	-	-	-
MI4	.459	.638	.495	1.000	-	-
MI5	.510	.472	.487	.632	1.000	-
MI6	.487	.395	.340	.510	.573	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .856; N = 228.

In order to explore construct validity, all scale items were analyzed by looking at convergent and discriminant validity. If convergent validity is high, and discriminant validity is low, this suggests evidence for construct validity (Trochim, 2006). Convergent validity was determined by calculating the inter-correlations of the scale

items to the construct they aim to measure. All items correlated highly within their sub-scales, as measured by Cronbach's α and composite reliability, as mentioned above, which suggests convergent validity. Discriminant validity was determined by analyzing and calculating the inter-correlations of the scale items to the construct they do not aim to measure. Table 23 presents a summary of item inter-correlations and shows the lowest and highest correlation found within each sub-scale pairing. All items suggest low discriminant validity. Since both criteria of high convergent validity and low discriminant validity have been met, this suggests good construct validity in the scales.

Table 23
Scale Item Inter-Correlations for Discriminant Validity

	2	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*
1 Ability to Trust	-.234/.175	-.023/.248	.058/.35	-.064/.149	-.056/.217	-.024/.261	-.019/.245
2 Dependence	-	-.675/-.217	-.209/.229	-.104/.259	-.071/.118	-.118/.104	-.175/.135
3 Comparative Level of the Alternatives	-	-	.052/.227	-.164/.085	-.067/.104	-.077/.126	-.064/.147
4 Trust	-	-	-	.148/.555	.148/.398	.227/.448	.177/.466
5 Relationship Commitment	-	-	-	-	.092/.315	.098/.436	.012/.328
6 Perceived Expertise	-	-	-	-	-	.163/.458	.169/.602
7 Shared Values	-	-	-	-	-	-	.114/.510

NOTE: Data represents the lowest and highest inter-correlations found within each pair-wise analysis. Low correlation suggests discriminant validity.

Model Fit. Good model fit is suggested by non-significant chi-square, CFI > .90, RMSEA < .05, and SRMR < .08 (Kenny, 2010). However, using structural equation modeling in AMOS of the original model, chi-square was significant, X^2 (6, N = 228) =

185.1, $p < .001$, and model fit was poor (CFI = .49, RMSEA = .36, SRMR = .37). As noted by Kenny (2010), it is common for models with N greater than 200 to be significant simply due to sample size. Modification indices between variables suggested strong alternative paths. Table 24 presents the AMOS modification indices of the original model. These modification indices suggested new paths between perceived level of expertise and sharing of meaningful information, perceived level of expertise and shared values, meaningful information and shared values, and shared values and relationship commitment. Shared values played a more significant role in the revised model; it functioned as both a precursor to trust, but also as a mediator between trust and perceived level of expertise as well as a mediator to sharing of meaningful information and trust. Perceived level of expertise similarly mediated between sharing of meaningful information and shared values.

Table 24
Modification Indices for the Original Model

Variables			Modification Index	Parameter Change
Perceived Expertise	<---	Meaningful Information	68.223	.729
Perceived Expertise	<---	Shared Values	46.641	.768
Meaningful Information	<---	Shared Values	68.080	.698
Relationship Commitment	<---	Shared Values	4.266	.156

The alternative (best fit) model is presented as Figure 6. This model had a non-significant chi-square: X^2 (3, N = 228) = 0.45, p = .923, and very good model fit (CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = 0.0, SRMR = .01).
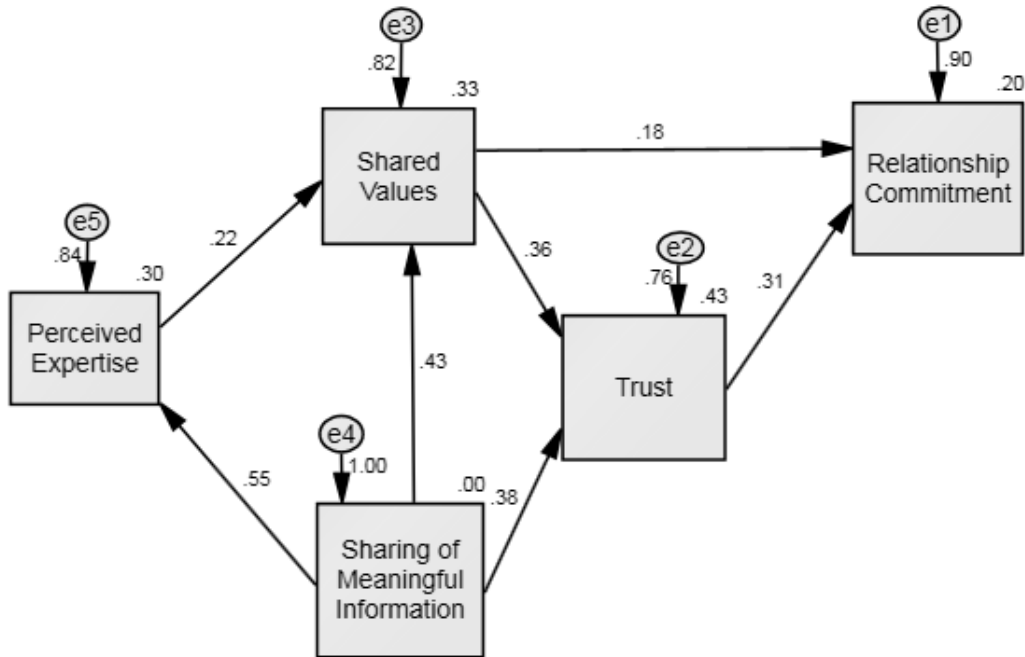
Figure 6. Best Fit Mediated Model of Predictors, Trust, and Relationship Commitment

NOTE: All correlations are statistically significant at $p < .001$, except for shared values and trust which is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

A bootstrapping procedure was utilized to provide a formal test of significance of the indirect effects on the best fit model. Bootstrap samples ($k = 2000$) were run in AMOS at 99% confidence intervals to obtain the two-tailed significance of the standardized indirect effects. Table 25 presents the bootstrap estimates of these indirect effects. Note that all indirect effects were significant at $p = .001$, an important initial step in determining mediation.

Table 25
Best Fit Mediation Model Standardized Indirect Effects and Bootstrap Estimates[ab]

Predictor Variable	Outcome Variable	Standardized Indirect Effect	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	P
Perceived Expertise	---> Shared Values	.234	.049	.123	.381	.001
Perceived Expertise	---> Trust	.373	.054	.255	.498	.001
Perceived Expertise	---> Relationship Commitment	.200	.043	.099	.325	.001
Meaningful Information	---> Trust	.155	.035	.082	.268	< .001
Meaningful Information	---> Relationship Commitment	.246	.056	.114	.379	.001
Shared Values	---> Relationship Commitment	.113	.035	.036	.223	< .001

NOTE:
a. Bootstrap $k = 2000$.
b. Bootstrap approximation obtained by constructing two-sided bias-corrected confidence intervals.

Hypothesis Testing. Table 26 presents correlations and descriptive statistics for the standardized regression of relationship commitment on trust, perceived levels of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information. Note that in the best fit model, three of the correlations were not significant at the $p < .05$ level: relationship commitment and perceived level of expertise, perceived level of expertise and trust, and relationship commitment and sharing of meaningful information.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that trust mediates between perceived level of expertise and relationship commitment. Note that in the best fit model the correlation between relationship commitment and trust is .311. Thus, as trust increases, participants are more likely to be more favorably disposed to relationship commitment. Trust plays a moderate role in predicting relationship commitment. In order to determine mediation, a two-step process was followed using AMOS to first determine the relationship between the

predictor variable, perceived level of expertise, and the outcome variable, relationship

commitment. The second step was to then regress the relationship with trust as a

mediator and note any significance in the indirect effects. Note that in the best fit model,

there is no significant effect of perceived level of expertise on relationship commitment.

Additionally, trust no longer has a path as mediator between perceived level of expertise

and relationship commitment, thus no indirect effect calculation can be made.

Hypothesis 1 is not supported; trust does not mediate between perceived level of

expertise and relationship commitment.

Table 26
*Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Trust, Relationship Commitment,
Perceived Level of Expertise, Shared Values, and Sharing of Meaningful Information*

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Relationship Commitment[a]	1.0	-	-	-	-
2 Trust[a]	.311	1.0	-	-	-
3 Perceived Level of Expertise[b]	.051[c]	.003[d]	1.0	-	-
4 Shared Values[b]	.173[e]	.362	.219	1.0	-
5 Meaningful Information[b]	-.201[f]	.379	.548	.428	1.0
$\overline{X}$	4.41	3.55	.26	.28	.92
S	.97	1.09	1.48	.87	1.11

NOTE: $N = 228$. Relationship commitment is the dependent variable. All correlations
are statistically significant at $p < .001$, except as noted below.
a. Values for trust and relationship commitment range from 1, *strongly disagree*, to 7,
   strongly agree.
b. Values for perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful
   information range from -3 to 3 using a semantic differential.
c. $p = .483$.
d. $p = .956$.
e. $p = .026$.
f. $p = .803$.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that trust mediates between shared values and relationship

commitment. Note, as presented in Table 26, that the correlation between shared values

and trust is .362 ($p < .001$), thus as shared values increases, participants are more likely to be favorably inclined to trust. It is clear that shared values plays a moderate role in predicting trust. As shown in Table 25, the indirect effect of shared values on relationship commitment is significant ($IE = .113$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of shared values on relationship commitment is also significant ($DE = .185$, $p = .032$). Table 27 presents the direct effects and bootstrap estimates of the variables in the best fit model. Thus, trust plays a role as a partial mediator between shared values and relationship commitment. Shared values has a slightly more powerful effect on relationship directly, rather than through trust as a mediator. Overall, the total effect of shared values on relationship commitment is moderate: beta = .298, $p < .001$. Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table 27

Best Fit Mediation Model Standardized Direct Effects and Bootstrap Estimates[ab]

Predictor Variable	Outcome Variable	Standardized Direct Effect	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	P
Perceived Expertise	---> Meaningful Information	.548	.053	.399	.676	.001
Perceived Expertise	---> Shared Values	.219	.078	.009	.395	.006
Meaningful Information	---> Shared Values	.428	.071	.245	.608	.001
Meaningful Information	---> Trust	.381	.066	.220	.552	.001
Shared Values	---> Trust	.363	.064	.203	.526	.001
Shared Values	---> Relationship Commitment	.185	.086	-.034	.414	.032
Trust	---> Relationship Commitment	.312	.084	.078	.514	.001

NOTE:
c. Bootstrap $k = 2000$.
d. Bootstrap approximation obtained by constructing two-sided bias-corrected confidence intervals.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that trust mediates between sharing of meaningful information and relationship commitment. Note, as shown in Table 26, that the correlation between sharing of meaningful information and trust is .379, thus as sharing of meaningful information increases, participants are more likely to be favorably inclined to trust. It is clear that sharing of meaningful information plays a moderate role in predicting trust. The indirect effect of sharing of meaningful information on relationship commitment is significant (*IE* = .246, *p* = .001). The direct effect of sharing of meaningful information on relationship commitment is not significant. Significant indirect effects combined with non-significant direct effects supports strong evidence of mediation using Klein's (2005) guidelines. This suggests trust mediates between sharing of meaningful information and relationship commitment. Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Table 28 presents correlation and regression analysis of the variables predicted in hypotheses 4 through 7 using linear regression in SPSS. Hypothesis 4 predicted that perceived level of expertise is positively related to trust. Note that the correlation between perceived level of expertise and trust is a moderate, positive correlation: beta = .375, $t(226)$ = 6.09, p < .001. As perceived level of expertise increases, participants are more likely to be disposed towards trust. Almost 14% of the variability in trust can be explained by perceived level of expertise. Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that shared values is positively related to trust. The correlation between the two variables is .571, suggesting a strong positive relationship between them: beta = .571, $t(226)$ = 10.46, p < .001. Thus, as shared values increases, participants are more likely to be disposed towards trust. Approximately 33% of the variability in trust can be explained by shared values. Hypothesis 5 is supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that sharing of meaningful information is positively related to trust. The correlation between the two variables is .579, similarly suggesting a strong positive relationship between these two variables: beta = .579, $t(226)$ = 10.68, p < .001. Thus, as sharing of meaningful information increases, participants are more likely to be disposed towards trust. Almost 34% of the variability in trust can be explained by sharing of meaningful information. Hypothesis 6 is supported.

Lastly, Hypothesis 7 predicted that trust is positively related to relationship commitment. The correlation between the two variables is .471, suggesting a moderate to strong positive relationship: beta = .471, $t(226)$ = 6.90, p < .001. Thus, as trust increases, participants are more likely to be disposed to relationship commitment. Approximately 17% of the variability in relationship commitment can be explained by trust. Hypothesis 7 is supported.

Table 28
Regression Analyses of Paired Variables

Variables	R^2	F	B	SE_b	Beta	t	p
Perceived Expertise and Trust	.141	37.04	.247	.041	.375	6.09	< .001
Shared Values and Trust	.326	109.31	.511	.049	.571	10.46	< .001
Meaningful info. and Trust	.335	114.05	.660	.062	.579	10.68	< .001
Trust and Rel. Commitment	.174	47.67	.467	.068	.417	6.90	< .001

NOTE: $F(1, 226)$.

Additional Questions

This section will explore primary questions that resulted from further exploratory investigation of the data. The best fit model offers new paths that can be explored for their role in the model, as well as potential mediation. The first question to be asked is

does shared values mediate between perceived level of expertise and trust? The indirect effect of perceived level of expertise on trust is significant ($IE = .079$, $p < .05$). The direct effect of perceived level of expertise on trust is not significant. Significant indirect effects combined with non-significant direct effects supports strong evidence of mediation using Klein's (2005) guidelines. This suggests shared values mediates between perceived level of expertise and trust.

Similarly, does perceived level of expertise mediate between sharing of meaningful information and shared values? The indirect effect of sharing of meaningful information on shared values is significant ($IE = .120$, $p < .05$). The direct effect of sharing of meaningful information on shared values is also significant ($DE = .428$, $p = .001$). This suggests partial mediation of perceived level of expertise between sharing of meaningful information and shared values.

Additionally, does shared values mediate between sharing of meaningful information and trust? The indirect effect of sharing of meaningful information on trust is significant ($IE = .199$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of sharing of meaningful information on trust is significant ($DE = .381$, $p = .001$). Partial mediation is supported.

Lastly, does shared values mediate between perceived level of expertise and relationship commitment? The indirect effect of perceived level of expertise on relationship commitment is significant ($IE = .065$, $p < .05$). The direct effect of perceived level of expertise on relationship commitment is not significant. Significant indirect effects combined with non-significant direct effects supports strong evidence of mediation using Klein's (2005) guidelines. This suggests that shared values mediates between perceived level of expertise and relationship commitment.

It is also worth exploring what roles the control variables play in the best fit model. A full model with the three control variables measured is presented as Figure 7. This model also demonstrates good fit: X^2 (15, N = 228) = 11.1, p = .745, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = 0.0, SRMR = .04).

The control variables were added to the model one at a time and modification indices were used to determine paths and best fit. Note that ability to trust has two significant paths: to sharing of meaningful information (beta = .211, p = .001), and to trust (beta = .291, p < .001). Further, in conjunction with shared values and sharing of meaningful information, it contributes to explaining almost half of trust's variability (R^2 = .497).

Comparison level of the alternative (CL_{alt}) has only two significant paths in the full model. One from ability to trust (beta = .218, p < .001), and one to dependence (beta = -.727, p < .001). This demonstrates a very strong negative relationship between the perception of not having alternatives and the resultant dependence. The model also suggests that CL_{alt} mediates between ability to trust and dependence. The indirect effect of ability to trust on dependence is significant (IE = -.158, p = .001). The direct effect of ability to trust on dependence is not significant. Again, using Klein's (2005) guidelines, mediation is supported. Additionally, CL_{alt} explains approximately 53% of the variance in dependence (R^2 = .528).
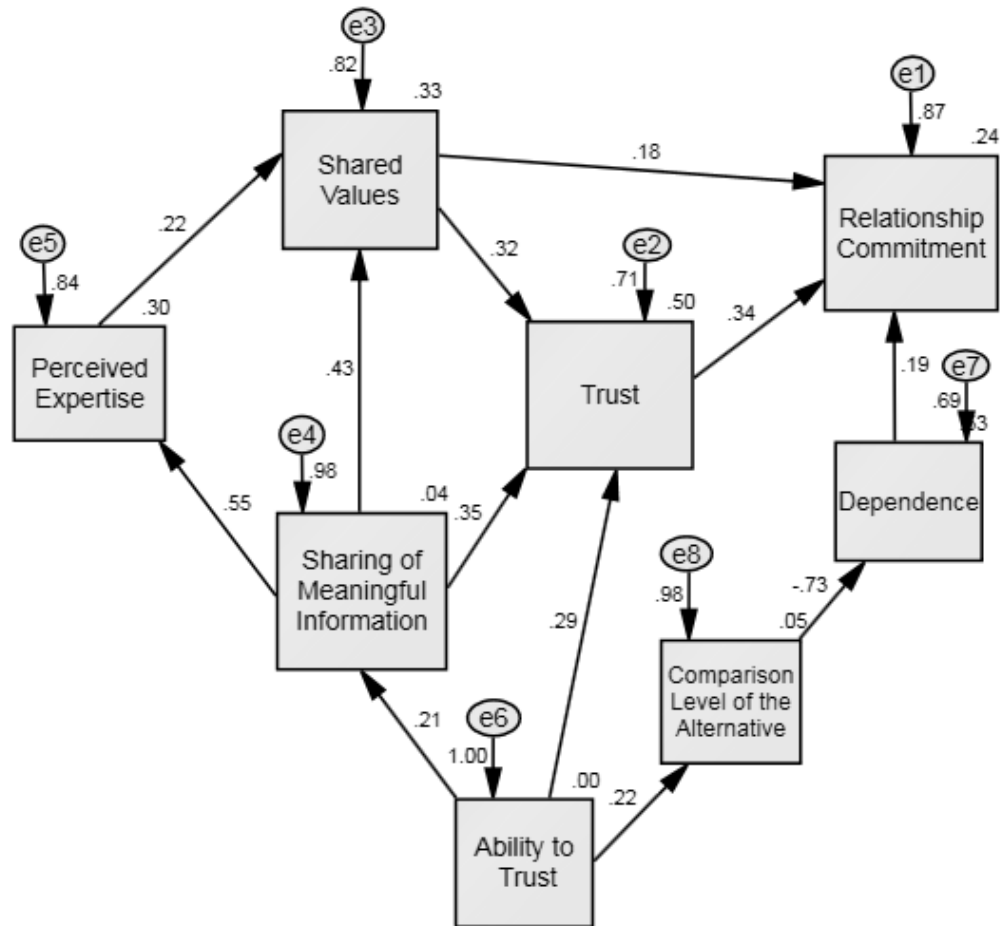
Figure 7. Full Mediated Model of Predictors, Controls, Trust, and Relationship Commitment

NOTE: All correlations are statistically significant at *p* < .001, except for the following which are *p* < .05: perceived level of expertise and ability to trust, sharing of meaningful information and ability to trust, shared values and relationship commitment, and dependence and relationship commitment.

Lastly, dependence is shown to have one significant path, to relationship commitment (beta = .187, *p* < .05). Note that dependence, trust, and shared values explain approximately 24% of the variance in relationship commitment.

Statistical Power

The study was interested in exploring the relationships (correlations) of the independent variables, dependent variables, and mediation within the model, hence a larger sample size was used to reduce the confidence intervals to provide more certainty of the correlations. As such, power was not used to determined sample size a priori, and power was determined post-hoc. Effect sizes for each pair of variables in the multiple regression were calculated using R^2 values from the best fit model and an Effect Size Calculator for Multiple Regression (Soper, 2011). Once the effect sizes were calculated, statistical power was calculated using G*Power (Faul, 2007). The moderately large sample size (N=228) and medium to large effect sizes contributed to high power. Table 29 presents statistical power analysis of the predictor variables, mediator, and outcome variables in the best fit model.

Table 29
Statistical Power

Predictor Variable(s)	Variable	R^2	Effect Size	F	λ	Power	α
Meaningful Information	Perceived Expertise	.301	.431	11.12 (1, 226)	98.27	1	.001
Meaningful Information and Perceived Expertise	Shared Values	.333	.499	7.12 (2, 225)	113.77	1	.001
Meaningful Information and Shared Values	Trust	.427	.745	3.04 (2, 225)	169.86	1	.05
Trust and Shared Values	Relationship Commitment	.197	.245	7.12 (2, 225)	.068	.999	.001

Note: N = 228.

Summary

The results chapter presented the findings of the study. The results of the two pilot waves were reviewed including their demographic data, an exploratory data analysis of the instruments, and an explanation of the steps taken to purify the scales. The findings of the final stage of data collection were then presented. This included a review of the sample, a final exploratory data analysis of the instrument, a review of model fit, a discussion of hypothesis testing, a review of additional questions that resulted from an exploratory investigation of the data, and a presentation of the statistical power.

V.   **Discussion**

The discussion chapter will present the findings of the study in an integrative way to existing theory, research, and practice. Initially, it will present an overview of the significant findings of the study and consider these findings in terms of existing research. Implications of the study towards current theory will be offered, and examination of the findings that failed to support a hypothesis will be discussed, and limitations and delimitations of the study will be reviewed. Lastly, brief recommendations for future research will be shared, as well as a discussion on implications for professional practice.

This study sought to improve the contributions of performance consultants, instructional design consultants, and training consultants by explaining the effect that several variables have on trust as a mediator to relationship commitment within the context of the client-consultant relationship. It also sought to determine the relative importance of these factors, and to offer recommendations as to how the consultant can best leverage knowledge of these factor's roles toward nurturing trust in an enhanced client-consultant relationship.

Significant Findings of the Study

This study looked to determine in essence, two things: the role of trust as a mediating variable in the client-consultant relationship, and the roles the variables in the study play between each other in that relationship.

Trust partially mediates between shared values and relationship commitment. Thus, as a consultant acts to increase feelings of shared values toward him or her on the part of the client, this increases trust, and in turn also relationship commitment. These

findings are consistent with Doney & Cannon's (1997) of a positive relationship between shared values and trust and extends their findings to the context of a client-consultant relationship. However, shared values also directly influences relationship commitment. This supports studies on the impact of shared values on both trust and relationship commitment (Morgan et al., 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006), and similarly extends those findings to the client-consultant relationship.

Additionally, trust partially mediates between sharing of meaningful information and relationship commitment. These are also positive relationships, thus, as consultants focus on the sharing of meaningful information – that is, information that is valued, timely, and quality-driven – this increases the trust within the relationship. This trust, in turn, acts to increase relationship commitment. These findings are consistent with studies of a positive relationship between sharing of meaningful information and trust (Fynes et al., 2006; Wakefield et al., 2004) and also act to extend these findings to the client-consultant dyad. Similarly, these findings augment Palmatier's et al. (Palmatier et al., 2006) of an effect directly on relationship commitment by sharing of meaningful information, but again, extended to the client-consultant relationship.

This study also set out to determine the nature of the relationships between the variables presented in the model, in other words to look at the relative strengths of the variables upon each other and whether those relationships were positive, or negative. The most powerful relationship, excluding control variables, was between the sharing of meaningful information and trust (beta = .579, $p < .001$). This positive relationship means that as sharing of meaningful information increases, so too does trust. To the consultant, this underscores the importance of delivering meaningful, accurate,

information quickly to clients and reinforces that this is one "of the most effective relationship-building strategies" (Palmatier et al., 2006, p. 150).

Similarly, shared values is strongly and positively related to trust. This is the second strongest relationship found in the study (beta = .571, $p < .001$), and speaks to the importance of shared values as a predictor of trust. Thus, as a client feels that his or her values are shared with the consultant, the client is more likely to be disposed to trust the consultant. These findings are consistent with Huntley's (2006) and Karantinou and Hogg's (2001) and extend them to the client-consultant relationship.

Another strong relationship exists between the sharing of meaningful information and perceived level of expertise (beta = .548, $p = < .001$). Thus, as sharing of meaningful information increases, so too does perceived level of expertise. This suggests, again, that a good strategy for a consultant to use to build trust is to share high quality, valued information in a timely fashion with his or her clients. This sharing plays a major role in the perceived level of expertise by the client, and further goes on to build the perception of shared values, trust, and ultimately relationship commitment. Wakefield et al. (2004) presented findings in terms of the effects of communication on trust; this study extends those findings to a further impact on shared values and relationship commitment, and within the client-consultant relationship.

A primary relationship in the model presented in the study is that between trust and relationship commitment. This study found a moderate to strong positive relationship between them (beta = .471, $p < .001$). Thus, as trust increases within the client-consultant relationship, clients are more likely to be disposed to committing to maintaining the professional relationship. This supports findings from Emden et al.

(2004), Morgan & Hunt (1994), and Palmatier et al. (2006) and extends them to the client-consultant context.

The sharing of meaningful information on shared values, mentioned above, had a moderate effect (beta = .428, p = < .001). Thus, as a consultant shares meaningful information with a client, it plays a part in demonstrating the expected patterns of behavior that a client would expect in the relationship from a consultant who has similar values. This supports Applebaum & Steed's (2005) findings of the importance of communication on client perceptions, but extends it to a specific impact on shared values.

Perceived level of expertise has a moderate, positive, effect on trust (beta = .375, p < .001). Thus as perceived level of expertise increases, so too does trust. These findings compliment other studies (Eiser et al., 2009; Sen et al., 2006; Tsai et al., 2010), and extend them to the client-consultant context.

The strongest relationship between variables in the study was that between two control variables, CL_{alt} and dependence (beta = -.727, p < .001). This is a very strong negative correlation, showing that as CL_{alt} increased, that is, as the feeling of having available alternatives to choose from increased, the feeling of dependence on a specific consultant decreased.

Unsupported Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that trust acts as a mediator between perceived levels of expertise and relationship commitment, but this was not supported. Though other studies have supported this relationship (Doney et al., 1997; Moorman et al., 1993; Palmatier et al., 2006), the relationship between perceived level of expertise and trust were not found

to be significant when regressed back to relationship commitment. In other words, the effect was small enough to exist when perceived level of expertise was looked at as only having an effect on trust, but when relationship commitment was added as a third variable, with trust as mediator, the relationship faltered. However, a modification of the original model found that perceived level of expertise acts as a predictor variable to the other two independent variables of the study, shared values and sharing of meaningful information, which in turn then act upon trust. Thus, perceived level of expertise still plays an important role in the model, but not directly upon trust, but trust's direct precursors. The findings suggest that the sharing of meaningful information by a consultant has a strong effect on the perceived level of expertise by the client.

Limitations and Delimitations

This cross-sectional study explored the role of trust as a mediator between three antecedent variables and relationship commitment in the context of the client-consultant relationship. A primary limitation to this study stems from the research design. A cross-sectional design means that causality will be less strong than with a longitudinal design (Babbie, 2007). A primary challenge to the research findings with cross-sectional studies that explore causality is that the direction of the causality can be difficult to determine. Mediator research literature makes two key points on this topic. First, though measuring a mediator variable before the dependent variable does not ensure that changes in the mediator caused changes in the dependent variable, it "makes the inference of causality more tenable" (Preacher et al., 2008, p. 36). Second, more confidence in causal inferences can result from experimental manipulation of the independent variables, as

opposed to simple observation (Cole et al., 2003). Both of these considerations have been built in to the design of this study to make the inference of causality more tenable.

A second limitation is the choice of exogenous variables in the conceptual model. Though the model offers several important variables as antecedents to trust, there may be others that play an important role. One of which is performance satisfaction, which does not play a role in this study since it presents the relationship at an early stage of the relationship, prior to any performance which could be assessed by the consultant. A third potential limitation is that this study explores the client's view of the relationship. A richer view of the dynamic of the dyad could be captured by evaluating the perspective of the consultant as well. The scenario design creates two additional limitations. The first is in regards to the possibility of gender being a confounding variable due to the choice of context for the scenario – an automotive service and repair facility. The second is the sequence of the manipulated independent variables as presented in the scenario may possibly have an effect in itself on trust.

The primary delimitations of this study were resultant of feasibility issues. The first was the design choice of using a convenience sample of students. Though this can act to increase internal validity, it is at the expense of generalizability (Trochim, 2006). However, though using college students for a descriptive study would not be generalizable since they are not representative of the general population, for explanatory research is it acceptable as social patterns and processes of causal relationships are more generalizable and stable than individual levels of a construct (Babbie, 2007). One challenge was in effectively creating the tool such that the student can properly represent the viewpoint of the client in the client-consultant relationship. This was ensured through

feedback and two waves of piloting of the tool prior to data collection, a technique that can strengthen internal validity (Trochim, 2006).

Recommendations for Further Research

There are two primary recommendations for further research based on the findings of this study. The first is to test the application of a practical model that incorporates the key variables from the study. This practical model would ideally be both prescriptive and descriptive in terms of the specific actions consultants could take within a domain-specific client-consultant dyad to enhance the sharing of meaningful information, the perceived level of expertise, shared values, trust, and relationship commitment. For example, if we know that a client's perception of a consultant's level of expertise has an effect on trust, then a consultant can act pro-actively to reinforce and communicate those aspects of expertise that reflect a high level of technical competence and knowledge to the client, thereby increasing trust in the relationship and contributing, in its due measure, to trust and relationship commitment. The outcome would be a practical model that could be customized by field and used by practitioners to enhance trust and relationship commitment with their clients.

The second recommendation is to conduct further studies that broaden the contextual application of these relationship management strategies to include other client-consultant dyads. The first option would be to explore the implication of the variables within a client-*internal* consultant relationship – those that work within the same organization as the client. Due to the different dynamics of *inter*-organizational versus *intra*-organization relationships, this would most likely demonstrate different results than

relationships of clients and external consultants. It has been argued that external consultants have a financial, administrative, political and emotional independence from the client that may not be available to an internal consultant (Applebaum et al., 2005). A second option is to explore other client-*external* consultant relationships. These types additional contexts may also include those relationships that are consultative by definition, but not necessarily seen as such, for example lawyer-client, physician-patient, nurse patient, financial planner-client, physical therapist-patient, counselor-client, and more.

Implications for Professional Practice

Generally, the implications for professional practice from the findings of this study are that several key variables, including perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information, play an important role in developing trust and relationship commitment in the client-consultant relationship. Specifically, the implications are that a performance consultant, instructional designer, or training consultant can potentially improve his or her client relationships by proactively focusing on primary relational factors with his or her client.

This idea of pro-active relationship management can positively enhance professional relationships (Palmatier et al., 2006). For example, by making it a priority to create high quality deliverables of value that are communicated in a timely fashion, and then successfully deliver in that regard, a consultant can have a significant impact on their perceived level of expertise to the client. This reinforces the important role that perceived level of expertise plays in terms of the recognition of knowledge and skills as a

fundamental aspect of exchange in the modern service-based economy, as suggested by Vargo & Lusch (2004). Additionally, this focus not only directly impacts perceived level of expertise, but also directly impacts trust.

Similarly, the findings suggest that a consultant working to understand those things that the client values, aligning them to similar values that the consultant holds, and then effectively communicating those shared values, will positively affect the trust that the client feels toward him or her. Shared values are also positively impacted by the client's perceived level of the consultant's expertise. Thus, ways that a consultant can effectively communicate expertise, i.e., knowledge and skills, makes positive ends toward a feeling of shared values.

Further, by focusing on trust as a core component of the client-consultant relationship and building it through an enhanced client perception of expertise and shared values, a consultant can have a positive impact on the overall commitment of the client to maintain the professional relationship. This idea of relationship commitment is a fundamental goal in many organizations in the 21st century (Reichheld et al., 2000).

There are considerable benefits to relationship commitment. From the perspective of an external consultant, a primary benefit is the on-going nature of continued work. We know that distrust leads to criticism to a friend or colleague of a product or service; whereas, trust leads to recommendations to a friend or colleague (*Edelman Trust Barometer*, 2009). Thus, developing trust and relationship commitment can lead to continued work, more projects, and growth of business through word-of-mouth marketing.

Lastly, though this study focused on the client-consultant relationship within the discipline of instructional technology and the field of performance improvement, it would seem there is a logical application of these findings to other domains of consultancy, for example management consultant-client, lawyer-client, physician-patient, nurse-patient, financial planner-client, physical therapist-patient, counselor-client, and more.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect that perceived level of expertise, shared values, and the sharing of meaningful information have on trust as a mediator to relationship commitment in the dyadic client-consultant relationship. If trust mediates between key antecedent variables and relationship commitment, both managers and consultants can improve the quality and performance within the context of the client-consultant relationship by focusing on the development of trust. This study formulated the following conclusions:

1. Trust does not mediate between perceived level of expertise and relationship commitment.

2. Trust partially mediates between shared values and relationship commitment.

3. Trust partially mediates between sharing of meaningful information and relationship commitment.

4. Trust and relationship commitment have a strong, positive correlation.

5. Shared values mediates between perceived level of expertise and trust.

6. Shared values mediates between perceived level of expertise and relationship commitment.

7. Shared values partially mediates between sharing of meaningful information and trust.

8. Shared values and trust have a strong, positive, correlation.

9. Sharing of meaningful information has a strong, positive, correlation with trust.

10. Sharing of meaningful and perceived level of expertise have a strong, positive, correlation.

11. Perceived level of expertise is positively related to trust.

12. Perceived level of expertise partially mediates between sharing of meaningful information and shared values.

APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUCTIONS

In this research study, we will be exploring the factors that influence a two-person professional relationship, how people interact when meeting for the first time, and their perceptions of each other.

Please read the hypothetical scenario carefully, and answer the questions that follow it.

Please read each page completely, and do not skip ahead.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX B – DEMOGRAPHIC SCALE

(Sources: General Social Survey (GSS) 2007, The Gallup Organization (2001))

University:
- ❑ Oakland University
- ❑ Wayne State University

Sex:
- ❑ Male
- ❑ Female

What year were you born? _____

What is your ethnicity? Indicate one or more ethnicities that you consider yourself to be.
- ❑ White
- ❑ African American or Black
- ❑ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ❑ Native American or American Indian
- ❑ Hispanic
- ❑ Some other race: _____

APPENDIX C – MANIPULATIONS AND SCENARIO

Experimental Manipulations

Perceived level of expertise

High

> Service Advisor: "Oh, I could definitely tell. You know, I can't be totally sure without taking a look at it, but based on my experience with the make and model of your car, it could be a lack of compression. I've seen this quite a few times before with your type of car and its age. I don't know if you're a car person or not, but generally what can happen is a "hole" in a cylinder occurs where the top of the cylinder attaches to the cylinder itself. Generally, the cylinder and the cylinder head bolt together with a thin gasket pressed between them to ensure a good seal. If the gasket breaks down, small holes develop between the cylinder and the cylinder head, and these holes cause leaks. Would you like one of my technicians to take a look at it to get an idea for you?"

Low

> Service Advisor: "Oh, I could definitely tell, but I'm pretty new here and I don't really know much about your car, or cars generally – I'm still learning. Would you like one of my technicians to take a look at it to get an idea for you?"

Shared Values

High

> Service Advisor: "OK, thanks for waiting. By the way, I happened to see you had some sports equipment in the back of your car. My wife and I both play on recreational sports teams and really enjoy it. Our kids are really into soccer right now, they play year-round! I can totally understand how important it is to have a reliable car to get my family back and forth safely."

At this comment, you take a closer look at the service advisor. You notice that the service advisor reminds you of someone you know, but you can't quite put your finger on who it is. In fact, you could easily see yourself having grown up in the same neighborhood, or even living in the same neighborhood as you do now.

Low

> Service Advisor: "OK, thanks for waiting. By the way, I happened to see you had some sports equipment in the back of your car. I like sports too - individual

sports like biking and kayaking, which is convenient because I'm single. My kids are really into soccer, but I don't see many of their games unfortunately. It's funny, actually the last time I went to go mountain biking *my* car broke down – the timing belt finally wore out!"

At this comment, you take a closer look at the service advisor. You notice that the service advisor is considerably different in age than you and you think may be from a different part of the country based on accent. You imagine the service advisor probably lives in a different neighborhood than you do.

Sharing of meaningful information

High

> Service Advisor: "All right, I have pretty good news for you I think. My technician was able to get a good look at what was going and it is a leaky air intake gasket. It's an easy and quick repair – we can get you out of here in an hour for $125 total, parts and labor, with a 12-month warranty. We have all the parts on hand, would you like us to do the work?"

Low

> Service Advisor: "All right, the technician tells me that you need your air intake gasket replaced. Would you like us to do the work?"

Scenario Examples

> **Perceived level of Expertise = High, Shared Values = High, Sharing of Meaningful Information = High**

In the following scenario, we are interested in your reactions to a service experience at an automotive service and repair facility. We will describe this experience and ask you questions about different aspects of it.

You are driving by yourself down a major street in a local city when suddenly your car sputters and becomes very difficult to drive. You quickly pull over to the side of the road and see a service and repair facility just ahead. You decide to drive into the facility and speak to someone there about what just happened to your car, and, perhaps, get it repaired there. As you pull in to the parking lot of the facility, an employee in a uniform notices your trouble with your car, waves to you, then motions for you to pull into an empty service garage bay. You decide that is a good idea and pull in, then step out of your car and speak with the employee, who is a service advisor at the facility.

This is the conversation that follows:

Service Advisor: "Hi there, I can see you're having some trouble with your car."

You: "Yes, it just happened as I was driving down the road. All of a sudden it started to sputter and became really hard to drive."

Service Advisor: "Oh, I could definitely tell. You know, I can't be totally sure without taking a look at it, but based on my experience with the make and model of your car, it could be a lack of compression. I've seen this quite a few times before with your type of car and its age. I don't know if you're a car person or not, but generally what can happen is a "hole" in a cylinder occurs where the top of the cylinder attaches to the cylinder itself. Generally, the cylinder and the cylinder head bolt together with a thin gasket pressed between them to ensure a good seal. If the gasket breaks down, small holes develop between the cylinder and the cylinder head, and these holes cause leaks. Would you like one of my technicians to take a look at it to get an idea for you?"

You: "OK. But I just need to know what's wrong with it and get a quote for now."

Service Advisor: "No problem. We can give it a look right now if you can wait a few minutes."

You: "Sure."

You sit in the waiting area for about 15 minutes when the service advisor returns to speak with you.

Service Advisor: "OK, thanks for waiting. By the way, I heard what was playing in your speakers of your car while it was in back – my technician said it was what you had on. I was listening to exactly the same thing when I drove in to work this morning!"

At this comment, you take a closer look at the service advisor. You notice that the service advisor is about your age, and similar in terms of speech patterns and general behaviors. In fact, you could easily see yourself having gone to the same school at the same time, or even living in the same neighborhood as you do now.

Service Advisor: "All right, I have pretty good news for you I think. When my technician was able to get a good look at what was going on it did turn out to be a lack of compression like I thought. But the good news is it is a different cause than I had mentioned, less common, but also less expensive – it's just a leaky air intake gasket. It's an easy and quick repair – we can get you out of here in an hour for $125 total, parts and labor, with a 12-month warranty. If it was the cylinder gasket like I had mentioned, it would have been considerably

more than that. We have all the parts on hand, would you like us to do the work?"

You take into consideration everything the service advisor has said to you as decide whether or not to get your car repaired at the facility.

Perceived level of Expertise = Low, Shared Values = Low, Sharing of Meaningful Information = Low

In the following scenario, we are interested in your reactions to a service experience at an automotive service and repair facility. We will describe this experience and ask you questions about different aspects of it.

You are driving by yourself down a major street in a local city when suddenly your car sputters and becomes very difficult to drive. You quickly pull over to the side of the road and see a service and repair facility just ahead. You decide to drive into the facility and speak to someone there about what just happened to your car, and, perhaps, get it repaired there. As you pull in to the parking lot of the facility, an employee in a uniform notices your trouble with your car, waves to you, then motions for you to pull into an empty service garage bay. You decide that is a good idea and pull in, then step out of your car and speak with the employee, who is a service advisor at the facility.

This is the conversation that follows:

> Service Advisor: "Hi there, I can see you're having some trouble with your car."
>
> You: "Yes, it just happened as I was driving down the road. All of a sudden it started to sputter and became really hard to drive."
>
> Service Advisor: "Oh, I could definitely tell, but I'm pretty new here and I don't really know much about your car, or cars generally – I'm still learning. Would you like one of my technicians to take a look at it to get an idea for you?"
>
> You: "OK. But I just need to know what's wrong with it and get a quote for now."
>
> Service Advisor: "No problem. We can give it a look right now if you can wait a few minutes."
>
> You: "Sure."

You sit in the waiting area for about 15 minutes when the service advisor returns to speak with you.

> Service Advisor: "OK, thanks for waiting. By the way, I heard what was playing in your speakers of your car while it was in back – my technician said it was

what you had on. I know some people who listen to that and really like it, but it's not really my thing."

At this comment, you take a closer look at the service advisor. You notice that the service advisor is considerably different in age than you and you think may be from a different part of the country. You imagine the service advisor probably lives in a different neighborhood than you do.

   Service Advisor: "All right, the technician tells me that you need your air intake gasket replaced. Would you like us to do the work?"

You take into consideration everything the service advisor has said to you as consider whether or not to get your car repaired at the facility.

APPENDIX D – PLAUSIBILITY SCALE (PILOT 1)

Please answer each of the questions regarding the plausibility of the scenario used in the study.

1. Did you find the automotive service repair facility scenario plausible? Why, or why not?

2. Did you find the conversation between the service advisor and you as the customer believable? Why, or why not?

3. Were the service advisor's actions and/or narrative realistic? Why, or why not?

4. What could be done to make the scenario more plausible to you?

APPENDIX E – SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

Please rate your perceptions about the service advisor in the scenario.

The Service advisor is…								
Alike in my values*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Not alike in my values
Novice	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Expert
Not conveying information	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Conveying information
Typical*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Strange
Knowledgeable*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Ignorant
Willing to share information*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Withholding information
Experienced*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Inexperienced
Different than me	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Similar to me
Uninformative	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Informative
Well-informed*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Uninformed
Not sharing my principles	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Sharing my principles
Open with me*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Not open with me
Unskilled	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Skilled
Not forthcoming	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Forthcoming
Like me*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Unlike me
Rookie	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Professional
Disclosing information*	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Concealing information
Not similar in beliefs to me	——	——	——	——	——	——	——	Similar in beliefs to me

*Reverse scored

APPENDIX F – TRUST AND COMMITMENT SCALE ITEMS

Please respond to statements about the *trustworthiness* of the service advisor on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree"), through 4 ("neutral"), to 7 ("strongly agree").

Based on the conversation I had with the service advisor…

T1.   I feel the service advisor is primarily interested in his/her own welfare. (L&H)*

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

T2.   I feel the service advisor is honest and truthful with me. (L&H)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

T3.   I feel that I can trust the service advisor. (L&H)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

T4.   I feel the service advisor is sincere in his/her promises. (L&H)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

T5.   I feel that the service advisor does not show me enough consideration. (L&H)*

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

T6. I feel the service advisor treats me fairly and justly. (L&H)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

T7. I feel that the service advisor can be counted on to help me. (L&H)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

T8. I feel I can count on the service advisor to be concerned about my welfare. (Rempel)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

T9. I feel very uncomfortable when the service advisor has to make decisions which will affect me personally. (Rempel)*

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

T10. I feel in our relationship I have to keep alert or the service advisor might take advantage of me. (Rempel)*

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

T11. I feel I can rely on the service advisor to keep the promises he/she makes to me. (Rempel)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

Please respond to statements about the *potential long-term nature* of the relationship with the service advisor on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree"), through 4 ("neutral"), to 7 ("strongly agree").

RC1.   I believe that over the long run my relationship with this service advisor will be beneficial. (Ganesan)

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

RC2.   I feel that maintaining a long term relationship with this service advisor is important to me. (Ganesan)

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

RC3.   I am only concerned with my outcomes in this relationship.* (Ganesan)

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

RC4.   I expect to be taking my automotive repair and service business to this service advisor for a long time. (Ganesan)

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

The relationship that I have with this service advisor. . .

RC5.   is very important to me. (M&H)

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly

disagree								agree

RC6.   is something I intend to maintain definitely. (M&H)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

RC7.   is of little significance to me.* (M&H)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

RC8.   is something I really care about. (M&H)

	neutral							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

*reverse

APPENDIX G – ANTECENDENT DEPENDENT MEASURE SCALE

PSYCHOMETRICS

Trust

Larzelere and Huston Scale

1	Bansal 2004	composite reliability = .94
2	Fynes 2006	Cronbach's α = .82
3	Bansal 2005	composite reliability = .9119
4	Wakefield 2004	Cronbach's α = .8983
5	Fynes 2004	Cronbach's α = .82
6	Jones 2004	Cronbach's α = .75
7	Anderson 2006	Cronbach's α = .90
		mean Cronbach's α = .8377, mean composite = .9260

Rempel Scale

1	Miller 2004	Cronbach's α = .88-92
2	Wieselquist 2009	Cronbach's α = .83
3	Greenberg 2010	Cronbach's α = .89
4	Finkenauer 2009	Cronbach's α = .83
5	Zhang 2007	Cronbach's α = .75
6	Yum 2007	Cronbach's α = .77, .91, .87
7	Costa 2009	Cronbach's α = .86
		mean Cronbach's α = .85

Relationship Commitment

Morgan and Hunt Scale

1	Emden 2004	Cronbach's α = .8388
2	Jayachandran 2004	Cronbach's α = .9410
3	Bansal 2004	composite reliability = .94
4	Fynes 2006	Cronbach's α = .76
5	Bansal 2005	composite reliability = .8180
6	Cho 2006	composite reliability = .95/.92
7	Li 2006	composite reliability = .92
		mean Cronbach's α = .8466, mean composite = .9096

Ganesan Scale

1	Lee 2005	Cronbach's α = .86
2	Redondo 2006	Cronbach's α = .9167
3	Gutierrez 2006	Cronbach's α = .7841
4	Bstieler 2008	Cronbach's α = 0.92
5	Beatson 2006	construct reliability = .91
		mean Cronbach's α = .8702

APPENDIX H – CONTROL MEASURES

Please respond to the following statements on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree"), through 4 ("neutral"), to 7 ("strongly agree").

Ability to trust

(Higher = greater ability to trust)

AT1. In dealing with strangers one is better off to be cautious until they have provided evidence that they are trustworthy.*

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

AT2. I feel that despite the economy people are not likely to take advantage of you.

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

AT3. It generally takes some time before someone earns my trust.*

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

AT4. In these competitive times one has to be alert or someone is likely to take advantage of you.*

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

AT5. I feel people I do not know are likely to be trustworthy.

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

AT6. When dealing with strangers it is best not to assume they are being honest with you.*

	1	2	3	neutral 4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

AT7. People generally earn my trust quickly.

	1	2	3	neutral 4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

AT8. It is best to be wary of strangers because they are likely to be looking out for their own self interests.*

	1	2	3	neutral 4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

*reverse scored
Items 1 and 4 from Rotter (1967); others created for study.

Dependence
(Higher = greater dependence)

D1. I am dependent on my current automotive service advisor.

	1	2	3	neutral 4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

D2. I do not feel that my current automotive service advisor would be difficult to replace.*

	1	2	3	neutral 4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

D3.   I feel it would be more expensive to get my vehicle repaired if I replaced my current automotive service advisor.

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

D4.   My current automotive service advisor would be difficult to replace.

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

D5.   I do not feel that I am dependent on my current automotive service advisor.*

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

D6.   If I were to replace my current automotive service advisor I feel it would not cost me more money to get my automobile serviced.*

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

*reverse scored
Items from Lusch and Brown (1996); reverse scored items created for study.

CL_{alt} (Rusbult et al., 1998)

CL1.   If I weren't at this service repair facility, I would do fine - I would find another service advisor.

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	strongly agree

CL2. My alternatives are attractive to me (finding another service advisor, finding another service repair facility, etc.).

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

CL3. My needs for automotive repair could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship.

				neutral				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	strongly agree

APPENDIX I – PILOT 1 HI-LOW FACTOR MANIPULATION CHECK

Please read through each of the two segments marked A and B, and answer the questions that follow.

A. Service Advisor: "Oh, I could definitely tell. You know, I can't be totally sure without taking a look at it, but based on my experience with the make and model of your car, it could be a lack of compression. I've seen this quite a few times before with your type of car and its age. I don't know if you're a car person or not, but what can happen is a "hole" in a cylinder occurs where the top of the cylinder attaches to the cylinder itself. Generally, the cylinder and the cylinder head bolt together with a thin gasket pressed between them to ensure a good seal. If the gasket breaks down, small holes develop between the cylinder and the cylinder head, and these holes cause leaks. Would you like one of my technicians to take a look at it to get an idea for you?"

B. Service Advisor: "Oh, I could definitely tell, but I'm pretty new here and I don't really know much about your car, or cars generally – I'm still learning. Would you like one of my technicians to take a look at it to get an idea for you?"

   1. Which of the previous two examples best represents a **high** level of expertise?

   2. Which of the previous two examples best represents a **low** level of expertise?

A. Service Advisor: "OK, thanks for waiting. By the way, I heard what was playing in your speakers of your car while it was in back – my technician said it was what you had on. I was listening to exactly the same thing when I drove in to work this morning!"

> At this comment, you take a closer look at the service advisor. You notice that the service advisor is about your age, and similar in terms of speech patterns and general behaviors. In fact, you could easily see yourself having gone to the same school at the same time, or even living in the same neighborhood as you do now.

B. Service Advisor: "OK, thanks for waiting. By the way, I heard what was playing in your speakers of your car while it was in back – my technician said it was what you had on. I know some people who listen to that and really like it, but it's not really my thing."

> At this comment, you take a closer look at the service advisor. You notice that the service advisor is considerably different in age than you and you think may be from a different part of the country. You imagine the service advisor probably lives in a different neighborhood

than you do.

3. Which of the previous two examples best represents a **high** level of shared values?

4. Which of the previous two examples best represents a **low** level of shared values?

A. Service Advisor: "All right, I have pretty good news for you I think. My technician was able to get a good look at what was going on and it's a leaky air intake gasket. It's an easy and quick repair – we can get you out of here in an hour for $125 total, parts and labor, with a 12-month warranty. We have all the parts on hand, would you like us to do the work?"

B. Service Advisor: "All right, the technician tells me that you need your air intake gasket replaced. Would you like us to do the work?"

5. Which of the previous two examples best represents a **high** level of sharing of meaningful information?

6. Which of the previous two examples best represents a **low** level of sharing of meaningful information?

APPENDIX J – PILOT 1 HI-LOW SCENARIO MANIPULATION CHECK

Please read through the following two scenario examples then answer the two questions that follow.

Example A.

In the following scenario, we are interested in your reactions to a service experience at an automotive service and repair facility. We will describe this experience and ask you questions about different aspects of it.

You are driving by yourself down a major street in a local city when suddenly your car sputters and becomes very difficult to drive. You quickly pull over to the side of the road and see a service and repair facility just ahead. You decide to drive into the facility and speak to someone there about what just happened to your car, and, perhaps, get it repaired there. As you pull in to the parking lot of the facility, an employee in a uniform notices your trouble with your car, waves to you, then motions for you to pull into an empty service garage bay. You decide that is a good idea and pull in, then step out of your car and speak with the employee, who is a service advisor at the facility.

This is the conversation that follows:

Service Advisor: "Hi there, I can see you're having some trouble with your car."

You: "Yes, it just happened as I was driving down the road. All of a sudden it started to sputter and became really hard to drive."

Service Advisor: "Oh, I could definitely tell. You know, I can't be totally sure without taking a look at it, but based on my experience with the make and model of your car, it could be a lack of compression. I've seen this quite a few times before with your type of car and its age. I don't know if you're a car person or not, but generally what can happen is a "hole" in a cylinder occurs where the top of the cylinder attaches to the cylinder itself. Generally, the cylinder and the cylinder head bolt together with a thin gasket pressed between them to ensure a good seal. If the gasket breaks down, small holes develop between the cylinder and the cylinder head, and these holes cause leaks. Would you like one of my technicians to take a look at it to get an idea for you?"

You: "OK. But I just need to know what's wrong with it and get a quote for now."

Service Advisor: "No problem. We can give it a look right now if you can wait a few minutes."

You: "Sure."

You sit in the waiting area for about 15 minutes when the service advisor returns to speak with you.

> Service Advisor: "OK, thanks for waiting. By the way, I heard what was playing in your speakers of your car while it was in back – my technician said it was what you had on. I was listening to exactly the same thing when I drove in to work this morning!"

At this comment, you take a closer look at the service advisor. You notice that the service advisor is about your age, and similar in terms of speech patterns and general behaviors. In fact, you could easily see yourself having gone to the same school at the same time, or even living in the same neighborhood as you do now.

> Service Advisor: "All right, I have pretty good news for you I think. My technician was able to get a good look at what was going on and it's a leaky air intake gasket. It's an easy and quick repair – we can get you out of here in an hour for $125 total, parts and labor, with a 12-month warranty. We have all the parts on hand, would you like us to do the work?"

You take into consideration everything the service advisor has said to you as decide whether or not to get your car repaired at the facility.

Example B.

In the following scenario, we are interested in your reactions to a service experience at an automotive service and repair facility. We will describe this experience and ask you questions about different aspects of it.

You are driving by yourself down a major street in a local city when suddenly your car sputters and becomes very difficult to drive. You quickly pull over to the side of the road and see a service and repair facility just ahead. You decide to drive into the facility and speak to someone there about what just happened to your car, and, perhaps, get it repaired there. As you pull in to the parking lot of the facility, an employee in a uniform notices your trouble with your car, waves to you, then motions for you to pull into an empty service garage bay. You decide that is a good idea and pull in, then step out of your car and speak with the employee, who is a service advisor at the facility.

This is the conversation that follows:

> Service Advisor: "Hi there, I can see you're having some trouble with your car."

> You: "Yes, it just happened as I was driving down the road. All of a sudden it started to sputter and became really hard to drive."

> Service Advisor: "Oh, I could definitely tell, but I'm pretty new here and I don't really know much about your car, or cars generally – I'm still learning. Would you like one of my technicians to take a look at it to get an idea for you?"

> You: "OK. But I just need to know what's wrong with it and get a quote for now."

> Service Advisor: "No problem. We can give it a look right now if you can wait a few minutes."

> You: "Sure."

You sit in the waiting area for about 15 minutes when the service advisor returns to speak with you.

> Service Advisor: "OK, thanks for waiting. By the way, I heard what was playing in your speakers of your car while it was in back – my technician said it was what you had on. I know some people who listen to that and really like it, but it's not really my thing."

At this comment, you take a closer look at the service advisor. You notice that the service advisor is considerably different in age than you and you think may be from a different part of the country. You imagine the service advisor probably lives in a different neighborhood than you do.

> Service Advisor: "All right, the technician tells me that you need your air intake gasket replaced. Would you like us to do the work?"

You take into consideration everything the service advisor has said to you as consider whether or not to get your car repaired at the facility.

1. Which of the previous two examples represents a **high** level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information?

2. Which of the previous two examples represents a **low** level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information?

APPENDIX K – RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Research Information Sheet

Title of Study: A Mediated Model of Trust and its Antecedents in the Client-Consultant Relationship

Principal Investigator (PI):   Bill Solomonson
College of Education, Administrative and
Organizational Studies Division
248-370-4172 (office)
248-935-5894 (cell)

Purpose: You are being asked to be in a research study that explores the factors that influence a two-person professional relationship, how people interact when meeting for the first time, and their perceptions of each other. This study is being conducted at Wayne State University and Oakland University. The estimated number of study participants to be enrolled at Wayne State University is approximately 300 and the estimated number of study participants to be enrolled at Oakland University is 100. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. In this research study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire will follow a hypothetical scenario that portrays you in the role of a client of a service advisor at an automotive service repair facility. The questionnaire will ask about your feelings and perceptions regarding your experience and interaction with the service advisor.

Study Procedures: If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to complete a packet of surveys in your classroom, visit another room on campus to complete the packet, or complete an online survey. The packet of surveys will ask questions about your feelings and perceptions regarding your experience and interaction with the service advisor. The survey packet may take 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, and you can choose to stop participating in the study at any time. Also, at any point you can choose to skip questions in the survey packet that you prefer not to answer. Your name will not be collected and at no time will your identity by made available with any public or published results of the study. Basic demographic data will be collected, including University attended, sex, age, and ethnicity.

Benefits: As a participant in this research study, there may be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

Risks: There are no known risks at this time to participation in this study.

Costs: There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

Compensation: There is no compensation for taking part in this research study.

Confidentiality: All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept without any identifiers.

Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal: Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. You are free to only answer questions that you want to answer. You are free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. Your decisions will not change any present or future relationship with Wayne State University or its affiliates, Oakland University or its affiliates, or other services you are entitled to receive.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact William L. Solomonson at 248-370-4172. For questions regarding the rights of human subjects in research, you may contact the Oakland University Institutional Review Board, 248-370-2762, or the Wayne State University Human Investigation Committee at 313-577-1628.

Participation: By completing the survey packet you are agreeing to participate in this study.

APPENDIX L – DEBRIEFING SCRIPT

Debriefing Script for

A Mediated Model of Trust and its Antecedents in the

Client-Consultant Relationship

Thank you for your participation in this study. This debriefing page is designed to tell you about the purpose of today's study.

What Happened

You were just asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire followed a hypothetical scenario that portrayed you in the role of a client of a service advisor at an automotive service repair facility. The questionnaire asked about your feelings and perceptions regarding your experience and interaction with the service advisor.

What We Are Investigating

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect that several variables have on trust, and the effect that trust has on relationship commitment. We are investigating whether three variables (perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information) have an effect on trust, whether trust has an effect on relationship commitment, and whether trust mediates the effect of the three variables on relationship commitment.

Overall

The survey you have just completed is a study that focuses upon your perceptions of the relationship between yourself and a service advisor at an automotive service repair facility. Data from this study will be used to measure the relationship of several variables on the client-consultant relationship.

Summary

Hypothesis   We predict that the three precursor variables will have a positive effect on trust, trust will have a positive effect on relationship commitment, and that trust mediates between the three precursor variables and relationship commitment.

Stated formally, this study will test the following hypotheses:
   H_1: Trust mediates the relationship between perceived level of expertise and
   relationship commitment.

H_2: Trust mediates the relationship between shared values and relationship commitment.

H_3: Trust mediates the relationship between sharing of meaningful information and relationship commitment.

H_4: Perceived level of expertise is positively related to trust.

H_5: Shared values is positively related to trust.

H_6: Sharing of meaningful information is positively related to trust.

H_7: Trust is positively related to relationship commitment.

APPENDIX M – PILOT STANDARDIZED ITEM REGRESSION WEIGHTS

Table M1
Pilot 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Regression Weights

Item		Scale	Estimate
AT1	<---	Ability to Trust	.580
AT2	<---	Ability to Trust	.290
AT3	<---	Ability to Trust	-.057
AT4	<---	Ability to Trust	.726
AT5	<---	Ability to Trust	.342
D1	<---	Dependence	.433
D2	<---	Dependence	1.000
CL1	<---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.893
CL2	<---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.499
CL3	<---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.816
PE1	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.799
PE2	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.813
PE3	<---	Perceived Level of Expertise	1.000
SV1	<---	Shared Values	.707
SV2	<---	Shared Values	.746
SV3	<---	Shared Values	.106
MI1	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.707
MI2	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.726
MI3	<---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.767
T1	<---	Trust	.707
T2	<---	Trust	.763
T3	<---	Trust	.732
T4	<---	Trust	.731
T5	<---	Trust	.507
T6	<---	Trust	.611
T7	<---	Trust	.678
T8	<---	Trust	.714
T9	<---	Trust	.515
T10	<---	Trust	.670
T11	<---	Trust	.613
RC8	<---	Relationship Commitment	.707
RC7	<---	Relationship Commitment	.700
RC6	<---	Relationship Commitment	.742
RC5	<---	Relationship Commitment	.747
RC4	<---	Relationship Commitment	.665
RC3	<---	Relationship Commitment	.355
RC2	<---	Relationship Commitment	.722

Item	Scale	Estimate
RC1 <--- Relationship Commitment		.489

Table M2.
Pilot 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Regression Weights

Item	Scale	Estimate
AT1 <---	Ability to Trust	.539
AT2 <---	Ability to Trust	.400
AT3 <---	Ability to Trust	.591
AT4 <---	Ability to Trust	.751
AT5 <---	Ability to Trust	.415
AT6 <---	Ability to Trust	.467
D1 <---	Dependence	.473
D2 <---	Dependence	.606
D3 <---	Dependence	.669
D4 <---	Dependence	.822
D5 <---	Dependence	.604
D6 <---	Dependence	.595
CL1 <---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.802
CL2 <---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.761
CL3 <---	Comparison Level of the Alternative	.901
PE1 <---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.833
PE2 <---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.791
PE3 <---	Perceived Level of Expertise	.917
SV1 <---	Shared Values	.707
SV2 <---	Shared Values	.450
SV3 <---	Shared Values	.293
MI1 <---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.707
MI2 <---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.743
MI3 <---	Sharing of Meaningful Information	.744
T1 <---	Trust	.707
T2 <---	Trust	.752
T3 <---	Trust	.735
T4 <---	Trust	.729
T5 <---	Trust	.644
T6 <---	Trust	.667
T7 <---	Trust	.740
T8 <---	Trust	.754
T9 <---	Trust	.433
T10 <---	Trust	.588
T11 <---	Trust	.747
RC1 <---	Relationship Commitment	.595

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Item	Scale	Estimate
RC2 <---	Relationship Commitment	.749
RC3 <---	Relationship Commitment	.356
RC4 <---	Relationship Commitment	.693
RC5 <---	Relationship Commitment	.776
RC6 <---	Relationship Commitment	.768
RC7 <---	Relationship Commitment	.780
RC8 <---	Relationship Commitment	.707

APPENDIX N – PILOT INTER-ITEM CORRECLATION TABLES

Table N1
Pilot 1 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Ability to Trust sub-scale

	AT1	AT2	AT3	AT4	AT5
AT1	1.000	-	-	-	-
AT2	.200	1.000	-	-	-
AT3	-.067	.075	1.000	-	-
AT4	.425	.176	-.070	1.000	-
AT5	.145	.182	.112	.268	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .435; N = 85.

Table N2
Pilot 1 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Dependence sub-scale

	D1	D2
D1	1.000	-
D2	.394	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .604; N = 85.

Table N3
Pilot 1 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Comparison Level of the Alternatives sub-scale

	CL1	CL2	CL3
CL1	1.000	-	-
CL2	.477	1.000	-
CL3	.710	.372	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .768; N = 85.

Table N4

Pilot 1 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Trust sub-scale

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
T1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T2	.410	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T3	.493	.827	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T4	.392	.765	.763	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T5	.152	.208	.178	.203	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
T6	.371	.507	.513	.440	.534	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
T7	.355	.595	.602	.660	.520	.657	1.000	-	-	-	-
T8	.338	.517	.495	.570	.276	.516	.711	1.000	-	-	-
T9	.265	.258	.300	.295	.107	.130	.221	.272	1.000	-	-
T10	.295	.507	.485	.451	.114	.251	.304	.361	.318	1.000	-
T11	.179	.587	.551	.618	.235	.490	.540	.459	.171	.332	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α =.879; N = 85.

Table N5

Pilot 1 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Relationship Commitment sub-scale

	RC1	RC2	RC3	RC4	RC5	RC6	RC7	RC8
RC1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RC2	.554	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
RC3	.183	-.010	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
RC4	.565	.698	.229	1.000	-	-	-	-
RC5	.303	.449	.116	.296	1.000	-	-	-
RC6	.467	.636	.180	.635	.656	1.000	-	-
RC7	.119	.300	.160	.267	.612	.449	1.000	-
RC8	.158	.411	.111	.301	.532	.506	.461	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .817; N = 85.

Table N6

Pilot 1 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Perceived Level of Expertise sub-scale

	PE1	PE2	PE3
PE1	1.000	-	-
PE2	.758	1.000	-
PE3	.793	.883	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .926; N = 85.

Table N7
Pilot 1 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Shared Values sub-scale

	SV1	SV2	SV3
SV1	1.000	-	-
SV2	.139	1.000	-
SV3	.139	.041	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .262; N = 85.

Table N8
Pilot 1 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Sharing of Meaningful Information sub-scale

	MI1	MI2	MI3
MI1	1.000	-	-
MI2	.365	1.000	-
MI3	.434	.598	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .718; N = 85.

Table N9
Pilot 2 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Ability to Trust sub-scale

	AT1	AT2	AT3	AT4	AT5	AT6
AT1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
AT2	.102	1.000	-	-	-	-
AT3	.402	.253	1.000	-	-	-
AT4	.393	.337	.420	1.000	-	-
AT5	.233	.217	.241	.298	1.000	-
AT6	.236	.160	.225	.390	.190	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .691; N = 208.

Table N10
Pilot 2 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Dependence sub-scale

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
D1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
D2	.277	1.000	-	-	-	-
D3	.321	.316	1.000	-	-	-
D4	.365	.517	.625	1.000	-	-
D5	.472	.358	.373	.455	1.000	-
D6	.304	.373	.354	.447	.398	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .799; N = 208.

Table N11
Pilot 2 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Comparison Level of the Alternatives sub-scale

	CL1	CL2	CL3
CL1	1.000	-	-
CL2	.595	1.000	-
CL3	.736	.676	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .859; N = 208.

Table N12
Pilot 2 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Trust sub-scale

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11
T1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T2	.353	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T3	.390	.760	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T4	.360	.684	.726	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T5	.324	.441	.392	.383	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
T6	.357	.581	.544	.615	.501	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
T7	.391	.646	.691	.669	.487	.738	1.000	-	-	-	-
T8	.381	.567	.630	.710	.354	.591	.676	1.000	-	-	-
T9	.061	.166	.187	.180	.158	.133	.199	.134	1.000	-	-
T10	.156	.156	.334	.314	.237	.178	.310	.342	.281	1.000	-
T11	.355	.355	.646	.667	.356	.542	.695	.648	.251	.378	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .885; N = 208.

Table N13
Pilot 2 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Relationship Commitment sub-scale

	RC1	RC2	RC3	RC4	RC5	RC6	RC7	RC8
RC1	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RC2	.605	1.000	-	-	-	-	-	-
RC3	.142	.054	1.000	-	-	-	-	-
RC4	.503	.620	.056	1.000	-	-	-	-
RC5	.421	.595	.049	.577	1.000	-	-	-
RC6	.477	.668	.192	.634	.712	1.000	-	-
RC7	.367	.457	.263	.517	.589	.595	1.000	-
RC8	.307	.499	.157	.544	.675	.637	.542	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .857; N = 208.

Table N14
Pilot 2 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Perceived Level of Expertise sub-scale

	PE1	PE2	PE3
PE1	1.000	-	-
PE2	.717	1.000	-
PE3	.755	.770	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .895; N = 208.

Table N15
Pilot 2 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Shared Values sub-scale

	SV1	SV2	SV3
SV1	1.000	-	-
SV2	.137	1.000	-
SV3	.216	.192	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .400; N = 208.

Table N16
Pilot 2 Inter-Item Correlation Matrix – Sharing of Meaningful Information sub-scale

	MI1	MI2	MI3
MI1	1.000	-	-
MI2	.356	1.000	-
MI3	.247	.558	1.000

NOTE: Cronbach's α = .654; N = 208.

APPENDIX O – INSTITUTIONAL APPROVALS

**Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects**

Rochester, Michigan 48309-4401
(248) 370-4898 Fax: (248) 370-2973

September 29, 2010

Professor William Solomonson
School of Education and Human Services

Reference: IRB application #4533, "A Mediated Model of Trust and its Antecedents in the Client-Consultant Relationship"

Dear Professor Solomonson:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB), responsible for the review of research involving human subjects has reviewed the original proposal, noted the revisions provided by you upon IRB request, and determined that **the project, as currently described, is exempt from federal regulation as defined in 45CFR46.101(b)(2). Your application will be kept in our active file for three years.** Prior to the end of the third year, you will be receiving an Exempt Application Status Update Form to complete and return back to us.

This exemption is made with the understanding that NO changes may be made in the procedures to be followed until after such modifications have been submitted to the IRB for review and approval. Do not collect data while the modified application is being reviewed. Data collected during this time can not be used.

If a consent form is required for your project, researchers must retain a copy of the informed consent form in their files for three years and must provide a copy of the consent form to the subject.

Any unanticipated problems involving risks to human subjects or serious adverse effects must be promptly reported to the IRB.

When project is completed, please down load the **Exempt IRB Application Completion Form** from the Human Subjects site at the Research webpage, complete and email it to me so that I can change the status of the application. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Judette Haddad

Judette Haddad, PhD, CIP
Regulatory Compliance Coordinator

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

HUMAN INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE
87 East Canfield, Second Floor
Detroit, Michigan 48201
Phone: (313) 577-1628
FAX: (313) 993-7122
http://hic.wayne.edu

Full
AAHRPP
Accreditation

CONCURRENCE OF EXEMPTION

To: William Solomonson
College of Education

From: Dr. Scott Millis
Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3)

Date: October 15, 2010

RE: HIC #: 102310B3X

Protocol Title: A Mediated Model of Trust and Its Antecedents in the Client-Consultant Relationship

Sponsor:

Protocol #: 1010008890

The above-referenced protocol has been reviewed and found to qualify for **Exemption** according to paragraph #2 of the Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations [45 CFR 46.101(b)].

- Dissertation/Prospectus and Revised Protocol Summary Form (received in the HIC Office 10/13/10)
- Letters of Support (1) Oakland University IRB, (2) WSU Dean of Students Letter
- Research Information Sheet (dated August 20, 2010)
- Debriefing Script
- Instrument/Questionnaire

This proposal has not been evaluated for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human subjects in relation to the potential benefits.

- Exempt protocols do not require annual review by the IRB.
- All changes or amendments to the above-referenced protocol require review and approval by the HIC **BEFORE** implementation.
- Adverse Reactions/Unexpected Events (AR/UE) must be submitted on the appropriate form within the timeframe specified in the HIC Policy (http://www.hic.wayne.edu/hicpol.html).

NOTE:

1. Forms should be downloaded from the HIC website at each use.
2. Submit a Closure Form to the HIC Office upon completion of the study.

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ABSTRACT

**A MEDIATED MODEL OF TRUST AND ITS ANTECEDENTS IN THE
CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP**

by

WILLIAM L. SOLOMONSON

August 2011

Advisor: Ingrid Guerra-López, PhD

Major: Instructional Technology

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

This study seeks to improve the contributions of performance consultants, instructional design consultants, and training consultants by explaining the effect that several variables have on trust as a mediator to relationship commitment within the context of the client-consultant relationship. The participants were 521 college students from two 4-year universities. Participants were randomly assigned to one of eight scenario-based questionnaires which measured the effect of three manipulated variables – perceived level of expertise, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information – on trust as a mediator to relationship commitment. The ability to trust, the comparison level of the alternative, and dependence were measured as control variables. Both structural equation modeling and multiple linear regression were utilized to determine variable relationships. Trust was found to partially mediate between sharing of meaningful information and relationship commitment, as well as between shared values and relationship commitment. Perceived level of expertise was not found to be a predictor or trust, but rather, a

predictor of shared values which partially mediates between perceived level of expertise and trust. Shared values was found to be a core construct that mediates between perceived level of expertise and relationship commitment and sharing of meaningful information and trust. Sharing of meaningful information was similarly found to be a key factor that affected perceived level of expertise, shared values, and trust. Perceived level of expertise partially mediates between sharing of meaningful information and shared values. The data suggest that trust covaries strongly with relationship commitment, shared values, and sharing of meaningful information in the client-consultant context. Sharing of meaningful and perceived level of expertise have a strong, positive, correlation. The findings suggest that consultants can pro-actively manage the relationships with their clients by focusing on the key factors that influence trust and thus ultimately affect overall relationship commitment.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

William L. Solomonson is Assistant Professor of Education in the Department of Human Resource Development at Oakland University in Rochester, MI. Since 2002, he has been actively involved in enterprise learning solutions including e-learning design and development, distance education, and stand-up training. He has authored several articles and has consulted with several Fortune 50 organizations. He has taught courses in E-Learning Design, E-Learning Development, Human Resource Information Systems, Human Resources, and Social Science Research Methods. His research interests include the role of trust in the client-consultant relationship, multi-media learning theory, the development of meta-cognitive learning skills, and organizational performance improvement. He is an active member of the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) and is a Certified Performance Technologist (CPT). He is a CPT certification reviewer as well as a track reviewer for ISPI international conferences.