Trusting as a 'Leap of Faith':

Trust-Building Practices in Client-Consultant Relationships

Abstract

Successful client-consultant relationships depend on trust, but trusting is difficult in the non-routine, high-stake context of consulting. Based on a sample of 15 clients and 16 consultants in Australia, we develop a grounded model that explains the process of trust granting in the context of client-consultant relationships. Our model builds upon two influential research streams on trust in the literature, the ABI model (Mayer et al., 1995) and Zucker's (1986) generic modes of trust, and combines their insights with a process perspective on trusting as proposed by Möllering (2001). By acknowledging the process nature of trust as a leap of faith resulting from socio-cognitive (-emotional) interactions we move away from the passive evaluation of trustworthiness. Our findings suggest that trusting is a process that involves three social practices: (1) signaling ability and integrity; (2) demonstrating benevolence; and (3) establishing an emotional connection. Our study contributes to the trust literature on consulting and to trust research more generally by advancing a process approach and emphasizing the social, not merely mental, nature of trusting as involving a leap of faith.

Keywords: trust, management consultancy, client-consultant relationship, social practices, field study

Introduction

Trust is "essential to commercial transactions that are not fully controlled by either legal constraints of contracts or the economic forces of markets" (Oakes 1990: 674). Consulting services are a good example of such transactions because they are characterized by high ambiguity, complexity and interdependency of actors engaged in the production and consumption of the service. Building trust in client-consultant relationships is challenging because the high institutional uncertainty of the consulting market, meaning that there is no professional certification and accreditation of consultants, increases clients' uncertainty und vulnerability when choosing consultants (Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003). Understanding how trust develops in client-consultant relationships can therefore provide important insights towards understanding trust granting in complex and ambiguous business-to-business relationships.

Although some research on trust building in client-consultant relationships exists, important gaps remain. Currently, there is limited research in the consulting literature on *how* clients and consultants can build trust, i.e. the actual practices they engage in. For instance, according to Glückler and Armbrüster (2003) trust in client-consultant relationships is based either on market reputation, direct client experience or is communicated through a network of trusting acquaintances. Others explore the antecedents for developing trust in client-consultant relationships, such as the consultant's credibility, reputation, experience and capacity for caring (Joni, 2005; May, 2004; Robinson and Robinson, 2006), which is in line with the generic 'ABI' model of perceived trustworthiness dimensions. This research suggests that trust is based on the perception of ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995).

However, little is known how clients and consultants actually create and maintain trusting relations and how they try to actively enhance perceptions of trustworthiness. It is the aim of this study to give answers to these questions. Prior conceptual work on the leap of faith in trust

2

(see Möllering, 2001) looks beyond indicators of trustworthiness and suggests a process perspective on trusting in the face of vulnerability and uncertainty. Our study adopts this theoretical stance and makes two contributions. First, we develop a grounded model based on an empirical study of clients and consultants in Australia, which explains clients' and consultants' perceptions of the process of granting trust to consultants. We focus on clients' and consultants' reflections on the selection process of consultants and the role of social interaction in this process. Our study shows that the creation of trust is constituted by three social practices: (1) signaling ability and integrity; (2) demonstrating benevolence; and (3) establishing an emotional connection. This entails not just the clients' detached perception but the co-creation of cognitive and affective trust bases for the relationship (Beckert, 2006). Second, by emphasizing client-consultant interaction our findings also contribute to the general debate in the trust literature that calls for a process approach to trust (Möllering, 2013; Nooteboom, 2002) and extends earlier work on the element of suspension in trust by showing the ongoing social practices that support positive expectations and the leap of faith in client-consultant relationships (see also Näslund, 2012).

The paper is organized as follows: first, we develop our theoretical framework. We review existing research on trust, how it has been reflected in consulting literature, and outline shortcomings of existing research followed by the discussion of a process perspective on trust as our theoretical framework. In the next section, we describe our research design and present the main findings of our study. Based on insights from the literature and on our empirical research, we develop a conceptual framework of three trust-building practices. We conclude the paper by summarizing our main findings and outlining directions for future research.

Theoretical Framework: Good Reasons and the Leap of Faith

Trust research in organizational contexts has largely converged on defining trust as "a

psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau et al., 1998: 395). In turn, this definition builds on Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) seminal article in which they highlight the "willingness … to be vulnerable" (p. 712) as a defining element of trust and develop a model of three main antecedents of perceived trustworthiness that enable trust: ability, benevolence and integrity (ABI). In this section, we argue that this is a good starting point and prior research on trust in client-consultant relationships has actually used very similar categories. However, both the ABI model and prior research on consulting do not capture appropriately that trust involves a leap of faith and is (re)produced in ongoing processes of trusting (Möllering, 2001). Our theoretical framework builds on prior conceptual work on the leap of faith in trust and adopts a process perspective on trusting as involving social practices that support positive expectations in the face of vulnerability and uncertainty.

Prior literature has demonstrated the importance of trust for successful client-consultant relationships (e.g. Kumar et al., 2000; Robinson and Robinson, 2006), either on its own or in combination with other mechanisms such as contracts (e.g. Bennett and Robson, 2004). The three characteristics of a trustworthy consultant identified by May (2004) and Joni (2005) respectively can be interpreted as variations of Mayer et al.'s (1995) ability, benevolence and integrity. Competence (May, 2004) and expertise (Joni, 2005) match ability; caring (May, 2004) and personal commitment (Joni, 2005) suggest benevolence; and integrity is very similar to consistency (May, 2004) and structural loyalty (Joni, 2005).

Another influential study on trust in consulting by Glückler and Armbrüster (2003) overlooks the ABI-model but also identifies three sources of trust – market reputation, direct experience and networked reputation – that can be traced back, liberally, to Zucker's (1986) generic modes of characteristics-based, process-based and institutional-based trust. We may reconcile the generic models (Mayer et al., 1995; Zucker, 1986) and the consulting-specific ones

4

(Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003; Joni, 2005; May, 2004) by adopting ABI as the main labels of trustworthiness that have a more specific meaning in consulting contexts and by recognizing that the sources of information regarding ABI may be internal (trustor), external (trustee) and contextual (third parties).

However, such a meta-model of perceived trustworthiness indicators with multiple sources of information tends to obscure the fact that information about the trustee's trustworthiness is often imperfect, inconclusive and, possibly, flawed (Bacharach and Gambetta, 2001; Möllering, 2009). While we expect that trustworthiness indicators will matter to consultants and their clients, we seek to understand how they are co-created and developed during social interactions between consultants and clients when they accept vulnerability, uncertainty and the open-ended nature of their ongoing relationships beyond the cues that clients may assess independently in advance. For this part of our framework, we need to draw on a very different area of trust research that addresses the leap of faith and focuses on processes of trusting.

This literature goes back to a few seminal ideas in the work of Georg Simmel (see Möllering, 2001; Simmel, 1950 [1908], 1990 [1907]). Simmel describes trust as related to knowledge but, at the same time, "both less and more than knowledge" as it entails "a further element of socio-psychological quasi-religious faith" (Simmel, 1990 [1907]: 179) and "some additional affective, even mystical, 'faith' of man in man" (Simmel, 1950 [1908]: 318). This Simmelian notion of trust is used prominently by Giddens (1990) but it is mostly in the background when authors mention casually that trust involves a leap of faith. Since Möllering (2001, 2006), however, Simmel's ideas have been rediscovered and used for theory building and empirical research (e.g. Brownlie and Howson, 2005; Frederiksen, 2012; see Lewis and Weigert, 2012). The "mystical" element of faith has been linked to the "as if"-nature of trust that Lewis and Weigert (1985) suggested earlier on; it has been described as an idiosyncratic, largely emotional accomplishment (Barbalet, 2009; Jones, 1996) that is nevertheless socially

5

embedded (Brownlie and Howson, 2005).

One important conceptual outcome of this work is the move toward a process perspective. Trusting can be described as a process of interpretation that leads to expectation supported by a leap of faith ('suspension', Möllering, 2001). While it is conceptually convincing that trust always needs to go beyond "good reasons", little research has been done to show what this means empirically. As we apply abstract concepts to the practical level of consulting, it is important not to take the leap-of-faith image too literally. Certainly, we should not have in mind dramatic and disturbing biblical situations like the one discussed by Kierkegaard (1985 [1843]) where Abraham's faith in God is tested in terms of his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. The "gravity and intensity of Abraham's leap of faith is extraordinary and untypical for most practical situations" (Möllering, 2006: 118). It also reduces trust to an active singular decision at a specific point in time. In practical empirical applications such as consulting relationships, we are interested in lower stakes and dynamic suspension of uncertainty. Nevertheless, the question remains how trust is co-produced by the actors beyond "good reasons".

Part of the answer that we explore in this paper rests on the idea that trust is not only a *mental* process of the trustor but also a *social* process involving the interaction of trustor and trustee with each other and with their social context (see Möllering, 2013). In this way, suspension is not the burden an individual has to carry alone but an ongoing construction of mutual expectations and rules (Sydow, 1998, 2006). Trust emerges from socio-cognitive (- emotional) interactions of trustees and trustors. Trustworthiness dimensions such as ability, benevolence and integrity are (merely) heuristics that clients and consultants may refer to in the process of co-creating the bases of a trustful relationship.

Despite a number of calls for a process perspective of trust (e.g. Nooteboom, 2002) and some dynamic models (e.g. Lewicki and Bunker, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Zand, 1972), little research has developed this further (Khodyakov, 2007) and empirical investigations

6

are scarce. Notable exceptions include, for example, Maguire, Phillips and Hardy's (2001) analysis of trust development between pharmaceutical companies and HIV/AIDS community organizations in Canada, research on the evolution of trust in alliances (Adobor, 2005) and joint ventures (Inkpen and Currall, 2004), a processual analysis of the relationship between trust and contract by Klein Woolthuis, Hillebrand and Nooteboom (2005), and Brownlie and Howson's (2005) study of parents and MMR vaccination.

Despite these important contributions, trusting as a process is still understudied and has generally been less ambitious ontologically and epistemologically than theoretical developments in the literature on process views of organizing (e.g. Hernes, 2008; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). While there are notable exceptions such as Dibben's (2000) Whiteheadian approach to trust, most research on trust dynamics would have to be classified as applying a "weak" process view as opposed to a "strong" one (see Bakken and Hernes, 2006). Few researchers would disagree that trust has a temporal dimension; it connects past, present and future; and it should best be studied longitudinally. However, only a few scholars have provided more radical conceptualizations of trust as a matter of ongoing social construction (Wright and Ehnert, 2010), structuration (Sydow, 1998; Sydow and Windeler, 2003) or practices (Mizrachi, Drori and Anspach 2007) that would connect more easily with advanced process theories.

While the topic of our study can thus be seen as a special subcategory of process research in organization studies, we retain our focus on trust in consulting and connect mainly with prior notions of process in trust research (see Möllering, 2013), including stronger and weaker ones. At the weaker end, the authors of the influential ABI model on trust acknowledge that future research still needs to establish the *process* in which each of the ABI variables contributes to trust (Schoorman et al., 2007). The process referred to here can be thought of mainly as a learning process, which is particularly interesting in the sense of "learning to trust and trusting to learn" (Coopey, 1998). For example, in cases when the trustor has had no or not enough

interaction with the trustee for a given type of project, as is often the case in consulting, there is a lack of experience regarding the trustee's ability, integrity and benevolence. This is particularly relevant for benevolence, as benevolence judgments take longer to develop (Mayer et al., 1995). How does the trustor, i.e. the client, develop trust in the trustee, i.e. the consultant, in such cases of imperfect and incomplete information about the trustee's trustworthiness?

In this paper, we aim to shed light on the process of trust development by outlining the practices that clients as trustors and consultants as trustees engage in to enable the leap of faith in the sense of a confident suspension of uncertainty within the context of a newly forming relationship. Acknowledging the process nature of trust as a leap of faith resulting from socio-cognitive (-emotional) interactions and moving away from the passive evaluation of trustworthiness means that our focus is on 'active trust' (Giddens, 1994) and the decision-making process around hiring a consultant (see also Näslund, 2012). Our conceptualization of trusting as a process rests on the idea that some practices actually reduce the need for trust while other practices enable trust and both kinds of practice need to work together over time. Specifically, clients may routinely look for some evidence of the consultants' ability and at the same time may accept that asking for conclusive evidence is often impossible and inappropriate in developing relationships. Instead of maximizing factual information, actors may engage in affective bonding as a basis for their joint leap of faith.

Methods

Sampling and data collection

The purpose of this study is to understand clients' and consultants' trust creation. Based on a qualitative research design, we studied how clients and consultants perceived and interpreted trust granting practices. We choose individual consultants (sole practitioners) and consultants working in boutique, general management consultancies; they are particularly interesting for our

study because without the brand and public reputation of a large consulting firm, clients face higher uncertainty when choosing a consultant, while winning client's trust is even more critical for consultants' survival and success (Gallouj, 1997). Our sampling strategy of interviewees was based on a combination of convenience and purposeful sampling (Morse, 2007) and followed a two stage process. First, we approached consultants in Australia whom we knew through our personal networks and asked those that agreed to participate in the research project to refer us to some of their recent clients. We selected five groups of paired consultants and clients as represented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Second, in order to account for a possible bias in the selection of the first group, we recruited four clients and another nine consultants unrelated to the convenient sample. In total, we interviewed 15 clients and 16 consultants. Recruiting acquainted instead of unfamiliar interviewees facilitated a more honest and reflective assessment of the trust building process since we as interviewers could build on a trustworthy relationship, which is particularly important in trust research (Lyon, 2012). Data collection took place between July and December 2008.

Client interviewees were all in an executive or general management position and were responsible for the selection and engagement of consultants. Since clients from public organizations need to go through a tender process when engaging consultants (in the majority of cases), we included clients from both public and private organizations in our sample. This allowed us to explore different consulting contexts for trust creation.

We adopted a qualitative, open-ended interview-based methodology (Kvale, 2007; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). This allowed us to gain deeper insights into clients' and consultants' perceptions of the trust granting process and reflect upon different angles of the research context

9

and process. To ensure that interpretations were grounded in first-hand experience, we asked clients and consultants to talk about recent actual, rather than hypothetical, client-consultant relationships. The topics discussed included: selection criteria for consultants, successful and unsuccessful instances of trust formation, contributions to the development of trusting relationships and instances of breach of trust. The face-to-face interviews lasted approximately one hour each and were fully recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Data analysis

In a first step, we followed Corbin and Strauss' (2008) grounded theory framework and adopted an open-ended coding to identify emerging themes related to trust granting practices using the qualitative software QSR NVivo. We used in vivo codes (i.e. first-order concepts comprised of language used by interviewees) or short phrases if an in vivo code was not available. These first-order concepts offered general insights into factors that contributed to trust development as described by our interviewees. In the next step of data analysis we adopted an iterative approach moving back and forth between data and analysis (Orton 1997). We searched for links between and among the first-order concepts, which facilitated grouping them together into second-order themes and compared these second-order concepts with the existing trust and consulting literature. In this process, we compared the perceptions of clients working in different contexts, i.e. public versus private organizations, and the perceptions of the paired as well as unrelated consultants and clients in relation to the identified codes. No substantial differences in the perceptions of these groups of interviewees were found. These multiple accounts and comparisons helped us develop a deeper appreciation for the main themes that were emerging from the data since some of the interviewees stressed different aspects when discussing instances of trusting relationships. We then abstracted three emerging themes which we labelled trust granting practices. Figure 1 summarizes the emergent typology of practices.

Empirical Findings

Trust, we argue, is achieved by forming a social relationship between clients and consultants leading to the development of a shared social space that enables the leap of faith to take place. In this, trust is much more than a mental decision taken independently by clients. In the following, we investigate social practices contributing to the creation of trust in client-consultant relations.

Signaling credibility and a positive track record

Referrals, references, reputation, past experience and the possession of specialized expertise were considered critical by both clients and consultants for the granting of trust. Clients stressed the importance of credentials when selecting consultants and would not consider a particular candidate without such credentials. Expertise-based credentials such as examples of previous engagements, successful reference projects, training qualifications or knowledge of a specific domain helped to assess whether the consultants have access to a specific set of knowledge and skills relevant for this client. They demonstrated the ability of consultants to provide high quality work in a specific domain:

"We selected the one that we felt had the most experience and knowledge within the area. It's quite a specific niche field so it was relatively easy to find the one that sort of stood out."

In addition, reputation and referrals from credible third parties also signaled that third parties judged the work of consultants in a positive light. Clients often sought referrals from colleagues, former colleagues or friends they trust when looking for consultants. As one client illustrated:

"For example, recently I had a recommendation from a friend of mine, and former work

colleague who's in the environment sector. He does quite good work, and he gave me a recommendation of a potential consultant who he thought was very good."

The recommendations of such trusted third parties signaled clients' experiences with the work of a consultant:

"When I choose a consultant or when we go to market, we will always ask for referees. Because I want to know what previous work has the consultant done, and how has that experience been."

General reputation can play a similar role, although in our sample this was less relevant in reducing client's uncertainty than referrals through trusted third parties. This underlines that credentials relating to the specific needs of a client (e.g. experience in a relevant sector) are more useful than generic credentials (e.g. age or publicity of consulting firm) and that such information is actively sought via specific channels (e.g. known third parties).

Mirroring the views of the clients, consultants stressed the importance of credentials for winning new clients. All consultants confirmed that the majority of their work comes through network relations and repeat business, as illustrated by the following quote: "All of our work has been through word of mouth so we haven't had to advertise for anything." Additionally, having specific expertise and experience is critical to being asked to do a project: "The other way [of getting new clients] is the fact that the track record is extremely strong within work that has already been delivered." Consultants signal their trustworthiness to new clients to a considerable degree via existing clients.

Credentials, referrals and reputation represent bases for trust; they allow clients to form positive interpretations of a potential interaction with a consultant as they signal the ability and integrity of the consultant. Establishing the bases for trust is an important first step in the trust granting process, as explained by one client: "If I didn't think somebody was reliable or professional, [] it wouldn't go very far." However, credentials, referrals and reputation do not

eliminate clients' uncertainty regarding the quality of the outcomes they will achieve when working with a consultant. As one client stated, "it is a big leap of faith to use somebody you haven't used before, even if they have the necessary credentials and referrals." This is because working with a new consulting organization without an established relationship represents a "reputation risk": if something goes wrong with the project, the reputation and standing of the person who selected the consultants will also suffer. Taking such a risk involves a faith element as it can easily lead to mistakes, as explained by another client:

> "We have to take it on faith that we'll make an assessment at an interview and then it's up to them [the consultants] to deliver. [] Through my experience with the trial and error process I've probably been disappointed as many times as I've been impressed and my trust has been found to be misplaced a number of times."

Therefore, the practice of establishing credibility and positive track record is an important first step in the process of trust creation; this practice reduces the knowledge gap that the leap of faith needs to cross (Möllering 2001) because, (a) it demonstrates consultant's ability to address the clients' issue, i.e. the consultant has relevant knowledge and experience, and (b) it provides evidence on the consultant's integrity and professionalism as judged by trusted third parties. However, clients still face uncertainty associated with their inability to assess how a consultant will perform in a particular project. For understanding what triggers the suspension of clients' remaining uncertainty, we need to identify what practice(s) support the leap itself, i.e. what makes clients' remaining vulnerability and uncertainty tolerable.

Clarifying expectations

Both clients and consultants viewed clarifying expectations as a crucial step for the development of trusting client-consultant relationships. As one client argued, if clients' expectations are not clear, the risk that a consulting project will be unsuccessful increases significantly:

"The most successful [] arrangements are probably the ones where we've been a bit clearer ourselves in the first place about both the processes, and the outcomes. [] So clarifying the relationship as well as the goal of the work is important."

When clients' expectations were discussed and negotiated early on, clients developed a sense of shared expectations that gave them some comfort and security, and made their vulnerability and uncertainty tolerable, as expressed by another client:

"It's a comfort factor that you just, you get a certain stage where they [the consultants] understand what your expectations are, and you know [] that they understand what you want."

When considering the role of expectations in the trust granting process, we found an important difference between work-process expectations and work-outcome expectations. The "process" of trusting and the "work-process" within a project should not be confused, though they are related: by finding out *how* the work shall be conducted, trust is also established. (Work-) process expectations are related to the working style of consultants (e.g. nature and timing of communications) and the consultant's role (intensity of interaction with the client) while (work-) outcome expectations refer to the value of the project and the project outcomes.

Aligning process expectations. The nature of the problem as well as the preferences of the client had an impact on the interaction approach most suitable in a particular project. There was not a one-size-fits-all-approach; rather, consultants needed to be flexible and responsive to clients' process expectations, which included expectations on working style and project roles that are relevant for creating trust. One consultant elaborated this,

"It's really about synchronizing how you work with how they [your clients] like to work. It makes the life of the client easier; it makes your life easier because then you are able to work on this 'no surprises' principle []."

A miss-match between clients' and consultants' process expectations led to conflicts and had a negative impact on the outcomes, too, as one client recalled:

"In those cases [where there is an expectation gap], we find that projects are doomed to fail or they go severely over time and budget and there are frustrations on both sides of the fence."

Consultants engaged in three interrelated sub-practices in order to demonstrate alignment to clients' process expectations: creating an image of being easy to deal with, aligning to clients' working style and adjusting to clients' role expectations.

Clients preferred consultants who were easy to deal with and would do the job without wasting clients' time and effort and who allowed them to concentrate on their other responsibilities. Being seen as easy to work with involved a number of different things, such as keeping the clients up-to-date with the project progress, anticipating clients' priorities and restrictions, engaging in regular and appropriate communication including open communication about any issues arising, being proactive in addressing issues as well as acting appropriately with regard to other stakeholders and organizational members. Consultants who were regarded as easy to deal with were perceived as less risky for the client who engaged them. In other words, this type of behavior provided clients with a feeling of being safe in their ongoing relationship with a consultant, as one consultant argued, "Being easy to work with for them, it saves them time. It saves them a headache, they feel like their risk is being managed, and they can get on and do something else."

Matching clients' working style gave the client confidence that things were going to go right. Clients felt less of a risk and adopted the as-if mode of trust when engaging consultants: working together as if uncertainty is unproblematic in a state of safe dependency. A shared working style created the impression of being less different; it had the important function of guiding, coordinating, and integrating clients' and consultants' activities and efforts towards the

15

project objectives. As one consultant stressed, aligning client and consultant working style is

"a matter of negotiating your conversation, whether or not the two of you sort of align in

terms of your approach, the way in which you deal with problems, the way in which you do

decision making, whether you're collaborative or prescriptive."

As the consultant further elaborated, such an alignment requires social interaction and

contributes to the development of trust between the client and the consultant:

"There's a negotiation period that takes place and then you just build on that and building

on that is really about small successes and those small successes don't have to be complete

agreement but they have to be situations where you've both come to a position [] and it just

forms the groundwork and the steps of progress."

This points to the dynamic co-creation of trust bases as opposed to a comprehensive ex-ante

assessment of trustworthiness.

Nevertheless, clients often had pre-established beliefs about the role and intensity of

interaction they and the consultants should follow in the consulting process and were more

likely to react negatively if the consultant failed to meet their preconceived role expectation.

This became particularly clear when we talked to a consultant who specializes in a niche type of

consulting based on scenario planning. Due to the specific nature of this consulting method,

which requires clients to assume a much more active role in the consulting process, the

consultant found it very hard to "win" clients who did not understand the scenario planning

technique. Scenario planning engages clients in the development and discussion of potential

future scenarios and how these might influence their organization. The method does not lead to

the creation of specific outcomes that will lead to the improvement of the client organization at

the present point of time. Such projects require clients to relinquish control of the process and

assume a vulnerable role, and for some clients, this uncertainty is considered too high. This

example illustrates that role expectations often exist prior to an encounter with a particular

consultant (see also Nikolova et al., 2009). Some clients preferred a sporadic interaction process with a few meetings in which they were informed about the progress and next steps and without being involved intensively in the day-to-day work of the client-consulting team. This was quite typical for big, corporate clients in our sample who often preferred to have a very structured relationship and a very formal interaction process, as one consultant suggested:

"So then, if you would involve that client heavily and talk to them about the details and the process etc., they might feel they're wasting their time []".

Other clients preferred much more intensive interaction with the consultants; they wished to be part of the problem solving process, to be involved in all steps and to be fully integrated in the consulting team. Some clients saw such a project as an opportunity to learn from the consultants; for others, it was a way of ensuring that client-specific knowledge was properly shared with the consultants. Given these large differences in the preferred role of clients and consultants, "role clarification is very important in any sort of process", as one consultant pointed out, because aligned role expectations create a sense of shared understanding regarding the project structure and processes. This finding underlines that whether a consultant is trustworthy is not an objective fact but emerges from a unique assessment that clients develop in relation to their own needs and by clarifying expectations with the consultant.

Aligning outcome expectations. In addition to clarifying process expectations, clients stressed the importance of developing a sense that the consultant cared for their needs and that their outcome expectations were understood. As one client argued, the key to a trusting relationship is the delivery of added value to the client organization:

"The key, and I suppose in [] building confidence in someone, is delivering on that value proposition for us. That they actually if they come in and say they're going to do something, they do it []."

17

Since consulting projects are characterized by a number of uncertainties, clients faced substantial difficulties in specifying the exact outcomes of consulting projects at the start of a project and in assessing the quality of the outcomes (Clark, 1995). As a result, differently situated clients interpreted and assessed the same service differently. As one consultant stressed:

"I think what's quite important here is its perceived value []. Some client might actually see the same product or perceive that as higher value than others. It could be exactly the same service, exactly the same product, so it's very much about the perceived value of the product. [] So something that is really important for one party might be totally irrelevant at this point of time for another party."

It was therefore difficult for consultants to provide tangible evidence that clients' outcome expectations would be met before the project had even commenced. The relevant question for us was, then, how do clients build a positive value perception of the future outcomes from a consulting project? Given how hard it is to assess the future outcomes, what is it that allows clients to develop trust that a consultant will deliver value? In their interaction with consultants, clients looked for consultants' understanding of organizational needs and the agendas of other relevant stakeholders, consultants' understanding of client needs, and consultants' flexibility and responsiveness to clients' views and changing needs. As one consultant explained: "What that requires is, in conversation and when you meet these people, to understand what their issues are and what they want to achieve []."

Clients expected consultants to understand the outcome expectations of a number of stakeholders, some of which might not even participate in the consulting project. As one client suggested, it is important that the consultant

"understands how the organization works and what we do and the types of issues that are important to us, and building up relationships within the organization, not only with me, but with my Chief Executive and anyone else in the organization that he has to work with."

In other words, consultants needed to show an ability to grasp the political climate surrounding a consulting project and to establish positive expectations with key clients in the organization. As another client explained, even if one senior executive from an organization believed that a consulting team hadn't finished "a piece of work to the liking of [this] individual" then the whole consulting organization was tarnished and it became harder for them to get another chance of working with this client. Therefore, clients looked for consultant's ability and willingness to invest in the development of an in-depth understanding of the organization as a whole as well as of political agendas and issues. Some clues that clients used when assessing a particular consultant included whether the consultant was willing to spend additional time on familiarizing themselves with the views and interests of different stakeholders, to clarify how these might influence the project and demonstrate the ability to navigate differences and achieve a compromise. Once again, this points to a trust-building process that is not one-sided and detached but relational and developmental.

Showing an understanding for the clients' specific needs was crucial for the granting of trust, as suggested by one client, "there is an X factor which makes you a good consultant and that X factor is how good you are at relating to your clients' needs."

This included demonstrating the potential for shared thinking and mentality, enabling effective communication and problem solving. Clients had learnt that if there is no shared understanding, there was an increased risk of disagreements about solution paths and methods later on; a risk they were not willing to take given the earlier discussed consequences for their reputation and standing within the organization if a project went wrong. Clients were concerned not only about the quality of the project outcomes but also about "how would that particular relationship impact my presence in the organization", as one client stated. For clients it was very important that the consultant was able to demonstrate that they can make the client look good; that the job will be done well. Giving the client a sense of shared understanding created a

feeling that they were being "looked after", that their goals were congruent and this reduced

clients' uncertainty regarding the consultants and their work. In contrast, failing to demonstrate

shared understanding diminished clients' feeling of security, as argued by one consultant: "The

minute you go outside the boundaries [the client has set for the project] you lose trust."

Clients not only expected consultants to take their needs into account but also to be flexible

to adjust to changing client needs, circumstances or priorities. This gave clients certainty that

when they engage consultants, they would adjust their work and the project brief if needed. As

one client suggested, good relationships develop when "you can be confident that what they [the

consultants] deliver will be what you want and that they are amenable to change that might

occur during the process."

Moreover, clients expected a trusted advisor to be proactive in adjusting to changed clients'

needs, demonstrating to the client that the consultant was there to help and assist them and that

the clients' needs and interests were the focus of consultants' work, which further strengthened

clients' sense of shared understanding.

Our data shows that through aligning process and outcome expectations during their early

interactions with clients, consultants demonstrate that they are well-intentioned towards their

clients. Aligned process and outcome expectations demonstrate consultants' willingness to

adjust to clients working style and role expectations and to place clients' needs and interests

first. Social interactions guided by shared expectations lead to the creation of a shared social

space (see also Maguire et al. 2001), which represents the social backbone for the joint project

work. A shared social space creates a sense of shared interests, goals and preferences making

clients' irreducible vulnerability and uncertainty related to the client-consultant interaction

acceptable. As one client summarizes,

> "Throughout sort of interaction discussions, even interviews with different lead key people
>
> within the consultant firm, [you] sort of get that feel in terms of whether those are people

you could collaborate with and get along with."

Demonstrating likability and personal fit

Clients choose to work with consultants who they find likeable. Clients used a number of terms to describe this aspect. For some clients, it was associated with being good to work with, as illustrated by the following quote:

"I wouldn't subject my colleagues to somebody whose overall style and presence is something I have a problem with. So there's that element which has to be there. Some people call it a hygiene factor."

As a "hygiene factor", demonstrating personal fit was important but not sufficient to explain why clients select a particular consultant; no client chose a consultant purely based on a personal fit if they were not feeling confident that the consultant could deliver a good result. At the same time, however, clients pointed out that they would not choose to work with a consultant they do not like, even if this person is very knowledgeable:

"it's hard to admit but actually chemistry does matter and if you come across a person who is very, very knowledgeable but you don't seem to get along or his or her interpersonal skills are weak, then that no doubt, that influences the relationship. And very often you end up declining that particular person and then going to someone else because of that."

In the words of one of the clients: "They [the consultants] have to be compatible personalities. I don't think you can actually trust someone who you don't really like."

Consultants too confirmed the importance of establishing a personal connection when meeting a potential client for the first time, as illustrated by the following quote: "When you meet people, it's not your background or your experience that's the driving force initially. There's something in chemistry." As another consultant put it, "The other thing is that people need to trust you. To do that you need to be accessible and part of it is just chemistry and

building a relationship with them." Consultants further explained that establishing a personal connection to the client makes the selection process much quicker:

"I think that there are some clients, or potential clients, that I meet where there's just an instant connection and where there's that instant connection that within the first time that you're meeting each other you feel really comfortable, chatting away about things, then almost, it suddenly, it just speeds up that process."

Clients and consultants both stressed that this personal connection is the result of their social interaction:

"[I]t's as an intrinsic thing that comes out when you start to interact with the people that you're employing that comes out, that you realize that there's an affinity there, and that affinity means that they will work well with your staff."

This personal fit or emotional connection is not a universal, biologically rooted likability but depends on the specific client, as stressed by one consultant:

"It's extremely, extremely important, but it's no particular type of personality. What's important is that you have the personality, or you've adopted a personality, that is in line with what your client is looking for."

As another consultant put it,

"You'll be judged on the personal characteristics that you demonstrate in working with this client and keeping the client happy and managing the client through this process. That's really where, I guess, the perceived value comes in and it comes literally down to, oh, I worked with this person, I love this person."

Such an emotional connection between clients and consultants is the outcome of social processes (see also Barbalet 2001). A positive emotional connection contributes to the reduction of clients' uncertainty when engaging consultants and making clients' vulnerability more

tolerable. It is important to note that "chemistry" requires interaction; the initial emotional bond that may form does not happen by itself but needs to be co-created by clients and consultants.

Discussion

Management and professional service scholars have argued for some time that trust plays a crucial role in understanding and managing business relationships with clients and customers. Yet few have studied empirically how trust is actually created or produced in business relations, what practices are specifically accountable for the granting of trust in these relationships and the role of social interaction. Following earlier calls for process approaches in trust research (Möllering, 2006: 77-103; Nooteboom, 2002: 84 -101), we analyzed clients' and consultants' perceptions of the trust granting process, and were particularly concerned with how clients deal with the uncertainty when engaging an unknown consultant. Our analysis suggests that trusting in client-consultant relationships involves three social practices – (1) signaling credibility, professionalism and positive track record, (2) aligning process and outcome expectations, and (3) demonstrating likability and personal fit. Signaling credibility, professionalism and positive track record is a first step towards developing trust as it demonstrates consultants' ability and integrity. However, ability and integrity demonstrated in the past or in other projects is not a guarantee that a consultant will work well with the client and meet clients' expectations. Clients need additional reassurance that they can trust a consultant. As we showed, when consultants align their actions and behavior to clients' process and outcome expectations, clients perceive this as a demonstration that the consultant cares for and will protect clients' welfare. According to Williams (2007), such behavior is perceived as threat-reducing and signals benevolence. The feeling of safe dependency is further reinforced when clients and consultants develop an emotional connection, which is based on personal fit and likeability. Aligning cognitive expectations and building a shared emotional connection contribute to the development of a

shared social space that gives clients a feeling of safety and connectedness to the consultant (see also Adobor 2005) (see Figure 2). This is in line with Higgins (2000: 21) who argues that a social space can be conceptualized more broadly "as not only beliefs, attitudes, and opinions anchored in others sharing the reality but also as any knowledge or feeling that is formed or transformed by taking others into account."

Insert Figure 2 About Here

Our findings contribute to two partly overlapping bodies of literature: first, research on the role of trust in professional services and management consultancy, and second, the general research on trust creation.

Contribution to trusting in management consulting

In this paper, we develop an empirically grounded model of trust creation in consulting relationships (see Figure 2). Building upon and extending prior research, we identify three trust building practices that explain trust building in client-consultant relationships.

The first practice, *signaling ability and integrity*, consistent with existing literature (Clark, 1995; Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003), is critical for the decision of clients to work with a consultant whom they have not worked with before. By scrutinizing consultants' reputation, referrals, expertise as well as a range of other skills relevant for a specific advisory project, the client builds a favorable judgment of consultants' skills, expertise and professionalism. Such credentials represent "good reasons" to trust a consultant (e.g. Glückler and Armbrüster, 2003). Whereas existing research claims that this practice leads to the development of trust, we argue in line with Möllering (2001; see also Näslund, 2012) that the practice of providing good reasons to trust is not sufficient to explain the trust granting process as it tells us very little about the second element in this process, the suspension of remaining uncertainty.

The second practice we identified is *defining, negotiating and aligning to clients'*
expectations to demonstrate benevolence. Following previous research, consultancy work
consists not merely of communicative actions but is also shaped by expectation structures which
give meaning to the consultancy process and outcome (Avakian et al., 2010; Nikolova et al.,
2009). Shared cognitive expectations, we argue, reduce clients' perceived vulnerability and
enable the leap of faith.

Process or role expectations are directed towards the requirements associated with clients'
and consultants' occupational roles in their work with each other (Beard, 1999). As Andersen et
al. (2009: 816) argue, these expectations "form the governance backbone of the relationship"
(see also Kramer, 1999; Meyerson et al., 1996) and "are comprised of the rights and privileges,
the duties and obligations … in the social structure" (Sarbin and Allen 1968: 497). Role
enactment is social action that influences sense making and judgment in accordance with
defined/experienced role functions. Research on newly formed teams has shown that team
members' behavior expectations are a reflection of their previous experience (Bettenhausen and
Murnighan, 1985; Walsh and Fahey, 1986). In client-consultant teams, where team members
have different experiences with teamwork and have not previously worked together, consultants
are often uncertain about clients' expected working style and roles, which can lead to
misalignment of activities and conflict, and can cause the destruction of trust (Avakian et al.,
2010; Beard, 1999). Confirming Higgins' (2000: 23) argument that "successful role enactment
requires taking into account the normative expectations and standards of others" (Higgins 2000:
23), our study shows that during interaction with clients, consultants import clients' role/process
expectations. They do so in order to create a sense of shared expectations of appropriate
behavior (see also Jarvenpaa and Leidner 1999). This leads to perceptions of reduced threat;
aligning process expectations generates "more cooperative behavior, new perceptions of
increased trustworthiness, and new feelings of ease and reduced anxiety" (Williams 2007: 604).

Previous research (McKnight et al., 1998; Meyerson et al., 1996) supports our findings that when roles are clearly articulated at the start of social interactions and take on the form of (socially) accepted roles, trustors' uncertainty regarding the interaction process and the behavior of the trustee decreases. However, even when roles are not clear at the start of the social interactions, trustors can create a sense of shared role/process expectations by importing the trustee's expectation of appropriate behavior (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Panteli and Duncan, 2004).

While process expectations are based on socially shared views and practices of consulting, clients also have unique beliefs and expectations towards the outcomes of consulting projects (Andersen et al., 2009). Our study shows that consultants demonstrated commitment to meeting clients' needs, for instance, by making the client look good in internal presentations. By adjusting to organizational expectations, what Williams (2007) refers to as perspective taking, consultants created a feeling of comfort and confidence that the consultant is putting the client's goals and welfare ahead of their own. This helped clients build positive judgments of consultants' benevolence and contributes to the development of shared instrumentality beliefs (Vroom 1964). In contrast, if the client expects that the engagement of a consultant could result in an image risk or identity damage, it is likely that they will negatively judge the benevolence of the consultants and will therefore not work with them (see also Williams, 2007). Having shared outcome expectations does not mean that the outcomes are specified in every detail in advance. Especially for innovative projects this would be impossible. Rather, the point is that the client believes the consultant is committed to deliver on clients' expectations.

The third practice, *demonstrating likability and personal fit,* contributes to the development of trusting relationships as discussed in the consulting literature (e.g. Karantinou and Hogg, 2001; Mitchell, 1994). Studies on buyer-seller relationships have shown that similarity/personal fit with a seller fosters trust because the buyer feels better able to predict seller's intentions

(Doney and Cannon, 1997) and develops positive emotive feelings towards the seller

(McFarland et al., 2006). Treating demonstrating personal fit as a practice emphasizes that an

emotional connection is developed through the interaction between clients and consultants. As

Higgins argues (2000: 22), "people will use the behavior of others in the immediate situation

even to identify which emotion they are experiencing." Accordingly, emotions are "social

objects, formed by a social process, generated by actors and groups who have rendered people's

feelings and 'emotional lives' of social significance" (McCarthy, 1989: 65). For clients,

personal feelings towards consultants are socially significant because positive feelings and an

emotional connection with the consultants reduce clients' perceived uncertainty and

vulnerability, making the leap of faith possible.

Contribution to a process theory of trust

By focusing attention on the processes that lead to the production of trust, our study expands our

understanding of the social practices that constitute trust. We demonstrate how trustors who do

not know the potential trustees from previous relationships build judgments about the trustee's

benevolence by emphasizing the role of shared cognitive (role and outcome) expectations.

Confirming Beckert's (2006) abstract analysis with empirical evidence from our interviews, this

process is characterized by the social interaction between trustors and trustee during which

trustees can influence the trustors' evaluation of their benevolence. As expectations provide

some measure of certainty (Adobor 2005), aligned expectations help trustors to take the leap of

faith despite some remaining uncertainty.

In this paper, we provide further evidence of the role of emotions in the trust granting

process. McAllister (1995) distinguished cognition-based and affect-based trust and found them

to be closely related empirically. Earlier, Lewis and Weigert (1985) argued that trust combines

reason and emotion – it is "a mix of feeling and rational thinking" (p. 972) – but little has been

known about how this mix is realized in practice (see also Möllering, 2006: 44-46). We are able to partly clarify this and argue that developing an affective connection to the trustee is a practice that supports the leap of faith by reducing the trustors' *perception* of their vulnerability. This is in line with Näslund (2012: 23) who points out , "interpretation and expectation are largely based on cognition, while the leap of faith relies more on the affective aspect". As our study indicated, no leap of faith, and consequently, trust, is possible without a degree of emotional connection between the trustor and the trustee. This substantiates prior conceptual arguments by Jones (1996), who defined trust as an affectively loaded way of seeing the one trusted, as well as Barbarlet (2009), who theorized that trust is ultimately an emotional accomplishment. It is the emotional bond that does not eliminate vulnerability but makes it tolerable in the sense of a willingness to be vulnerable that is not to be confused with a willingness to be hurt (Möllering, 2006: 8-9). An affective personal connection develops during social interactions between a client and a consultant when clients develop a feeling that consultant's personality matches their needs (Turner 2009).

It is important to note that consultants and clients have to live up to the positive expectations and emotions they co-create and which are always to some extent "fictional" (Beckert, 2006). The dark side to the practices we identified is that consultants might be faking their trustworthiness in order to secure a deal on which they might then underperform deliberately or unintentionally. Indeed, as Möllering (2009) argues, the element of faith in trust opens the door to deception – it facilitates the con artist's job (e.g. Mitnick and Simon, 2002: 41) – but trust also prevents betrayal the more it becomes valued in itself as the relationship deepens. Evidently, the co-creation of a trustful relationship is fragile, unless the partners stay authentic and true to themselves; they need to maintain their own integrity while also adapting to the other. This supports research on trust as a process of becoming (see Möllering, 2013) which revolves around identity, identification and identity work (e.g. Maguire et al., 2001).

Ultimately and unsurprisingly, consultants are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy if serving the client is genuinely part of their professional identity and integrity, and not just part of their acquisition rhetoric.

In summary, in contrast to past research that regards "trust development as a relatively passive process of gathering data about other people's trustworthiness by watching their behavior in various situations over time [] or by using information from proxy sources" (Williams 2007: 595; see also Dietz, 2011), we conceptualize trust development as a socio-cognitive-emotional process consisting of three interrelated practices that further research can take on and investigate beyond the client-consultant context.

Conclusion

By highlighting practices that, on the one hand, reduce uncertainty and vulnerability and, on the other, make remaining levels of uncertainty and vulnerability acceptable, we provide much-needed empirical contributions to a theory of trust that entails two key elements that prior trust research has acknowledged but not come to terms with yet: the leap of faith and the socio-cognitive-emotional process of trusting. We go beyond Möllering's (2001, 2006) original conceptualization that emphasizes the leap of faith mainly as a *mental* process on the part of the trustor, with only limited recognition of the *social* processes enabling this kind of trust.

Several directions for future research are suggested. First, empirical work on a larger scale studying relational expectations in client-consultant relationships would be an important contribution to the literature on consulting. As we propose that trust is an evolving process, longitudinal studies of how trust develops, evolves and vanishes appear particularly warranted. Second, more research is needed on what categories enable the leap of faith in different contexts. While our study showed the importance of process and outcome expectations, and personal fit, others have pointed out to the relevance of shared culture (Avakian et al., 2010), or

a shared habitus (Näslund, 2012) for the development of trust in client-consultant relationships. As Meyerson et al. (1996) argue, a number of different categories (roles, industry recipes, cultural cues, and occupational- and identity-based stereotypes) can be invoked to speed up the development of trust in different contexts (see also Dietz, 2011; Dietz et al., 2010). Third, the results of our study raise important questions for future research on the relation between authenticity and trust work. Indeed, one important finding was that consultants in our study were aware of and skilled in trust production practices and aligned their behavior to client expectations. For most consultants trusting was a process that was deliberately shaped by impression management tactics. This finding is in line with the critical consulting literature picturing consulting work as "systems of persuasion" (Alvesson, 1993: 1011) engaged in image creation (Alvesson, 2001). While these practices helped to increase the willingness of the client to be vulnerable and take the leap of faith, they undermine the authenticity of consultants' behavior in the sense of being "true to oneself" (Harter, 2002). Even if we accept that, necessarily, "trust rests on illusion" (Luhmann, 1979: 32), there is a tension between the genuine co-creation of a trust basis and the manipulative impression management on both sides.

Furthermore, the results raise an important moral question. The practices of impression management and image creation easily create a social situation in which trust may be gained in the short run to execute a business transaction. However, a manipulative approach that views trust simply as a tool to be used to advance one's own personal interests may not be acceptable. Again, there is a tension because trust is "the key to deception" (Mitnick and Simon, 2002: 41) but also the key to successful cooperation. We showed how trust can be built; how it is used or abused is a different, though related, question that concerns the identity and integrity of the clients and consultants involved.

Understanding what happens behind the closed doors of client-consultant interactions will continue to be a significant topic within the consulting literature. We hope that this systematic

examination of the trust granting process in client-consultant relationships will contribute to
future theoretical and empirical research aimed at increasing our understanding of trust in
business-to-business relationships. In a nutshell, it shall encourage practitioners as well as
theorists to move away from check-list accounts of trustworthiness and towards a relational and
dynamic understanding of trust as a "leap of faith."

References

Adobor, H. (2005). Trust as sensemaking: The microdynamics of trust in interfirm alliances. *Journal of Business Research,* 58(3): 330-337.

Alvesson, M. (1993). Organizations as rhetoric: Knowledge-intensive firms and the struggle with ambiguity. *Journal of Management Studies,* 30(6): 997-1022.

Alvesson, M. (2001). Knowledge work: Ambiguity, image and identity. *Human Relations,* 54(7): 863-893.

Andersen, P. H., Christensen, P. R., & Damgaard, T. (2009). Diverging expectations in buyer–seller relationships: Institutional contexts and relationship norms. *Industrial Marketing Management,* 38(7): 814-824.

Avakian, S., Clark, T., & Roberts, J. (2010). Examining the relationship between trust and culture in the consultant-client relationship. In M. Saunders, S. D., G. Dietz, N. Gillespie, & R. J. Lewicki (Eds.), *Organizational trust. A cultural perspective* (pp. 129-155. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bacharach, M., & Gambetta, D. 2001. Trust in signs. In K. S. Cook (Ed.), *Trust in Society*: 148-184. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Bakken, T., & Hernes, T. (2006). Organizing is both a verb and a noun: Weick meets Whitehead. *Organization Studies,* 27(11): 1599-1616.

Barbalet, J. M. (2001). *Emotion, social theory, and social structure: A macrosociological approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Barbalet, J. (2009). A characterization of trust, and its consequences. *Theoretical Sociology,* 38: 367-382.

Beard, F. K. (1999). Client role ambiguity and satisfaction in client-ad agency relationships. *Journal of Advertising Research,* 39(2): 69-78.

Beckert, J. (2006). Trust and markets. In R. Bachmann, & A. Zaheer (Eds.). *Handbook of trust research* (pp. 318-331). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Bennett, R. J., & Robson, J. A. (2004). The role of trust and contract in the supply of business advice. *Cambridge Journal of Economics,* 28(4): 471-488.

Bettenhausen, K., & Murnighan, J. K. (1985). The emergence of norms in competitive decision-making groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 30(3): 350–372.

Brownlie, J., & Howson, A. (2005). 'Leaps of faith' and MMR: An empirical study. *Sociology,* 39(2): 221-239.

Clark, T. (1995). *Managing consultants: Consultancy as the management of impressions*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Colquitt, J., Scott, B., & LePine, J. (2007). Trust, trustworthiness, and trust propensity: A meta-analytic test of their unique relationships with risk taking and job performance. *Journal*

of Applied Psychology, 92(4): 909-927.

Coopey, J. (1998). Learning to trust and trusting to learn: A role for radical theatre. *Management Learning,* 29(3): 365-382.

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Dibben, M. R. (2000). *Exploring interpersonal trust in the entrepreneurial venture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Dietz, G. (2011). Going back to the source: Why do people trust each other? *Journal of Trust Research,* 1(2): 215-222.

Dietz, G., Gillespie, N., & Chao, G. (2010). Introduction: Unravelling the complexities of trust and culture. In M. Saunders, D. Skinner, G. Dietz, N. Gillespie, & R. J. Lewicki (Eds.), *Organizational trust: A cultural perspective* (pp. 3-41). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Doney, P. M., & Cannon, J. P. (1997). An examination of the nature of trust in buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing,* 61(2): 35-51.

Frederiksen, M. (2012). Suspending the unknown: The foundations, limits, and variability of intersubjective trust. Copenhagen: Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen.

Gallouj, C. (1997). Asymmetry of information and the service relationship: selection and evaluation of the service provider. *International Journal of Service Industry Management,* 8(1): 42-52.

Giddens, A. (1990) *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Giddens, A. (1994). Risk, trust, reflexivity. In U. Beck, A. Giddens, & S. Lash (Eds.), *Reflexive modernization* (pp. 184-197). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory; strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Glückler, J. & Armbrüster, T. (2003). Bridging uncertainty in management consulting: The mechanisms of trust and networked reputation. *Organization Studies,* 24(2): 269-274.

Groß, C., & Kieser, A. (2006). Are consultants moving towards professionalization? *Research in the Sociology of Organizations,* 24: 69-100.

Harter, S. (2002). Authenticity. In C. R. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 382-394). London: Oxford University Press.

Hernes, T. (2008). *Understanding organization as process: Theory for a tangled world*. London: Routledge.

Higgins, T. E. (2000). Social cognition: Learning about what matters in the social world. *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 30(1): 3-39.

Inkpen, A. C., & Currall, S. C. (2004). The coevolution of trust, control, and learning in joint ventures. *Organization Science,* 15(5): 586-599.

Jones, K. (1996). Trust as an affective attitude. *Ethics,* 107(1): 4-25.

Joni, S. N. (2005). Trust and the third opinion. *Consulting to Management,* 16(1): 16.

Karantinou, K. M., & Hogg, M. K. (2001). Exploring relationship management in professional services: a study of management consultancy. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 17(3-4): 263-286.

Khodyakov, D. (2007). Trust as a process: A three-dimensional approach. *Sociology,* 41(1): 115-132.

Kierkegaard, S. (1985 [1843]). *Fear and trembling*. London: Penguin.

Klein Woolthuis, R., Hillebrand, B., & Nooteboom, B. (2005). Trust, contract and relationship development. *Organization Studies,* 26(6): 813–840.

Kramer, R. (1999). Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging perspectives, enduring questions. *Annual Review of Psychology,* 50: 569-598.

Kumar, V., Simon, A., & Kimberley, N. (2000). Strategic capabilities which lead to management consulting success. *Management Decision,* 38(1/2): 24-35.

Kvale, S. (2007) *Doing interviews*. London: SAGE.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009) *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing.* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Lewicki, R. J., & Bunker, B. B. (1996). Developing and maintaining trust in work relationships. In R. M. Kramer, & T. R .Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations* (pp. 114-139). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Lewis, J. D., & Weigert, A. (1985). Trust as a social reality. *Social Forces,* 63(4): 967-985.

Lewis, J. D., & Weigert, A. (2012). The social dynamics of trust: Theoretical and empirical research, 1985-2012. *Social Forces,* 91(1): 25-31.

Luhmann, N. (1979). *Trust and power: Two works by Niklas Luhmann*. Chichester: Wiley.

Lyon, F. (2012). Access and non-probability sampling in qualitative research on trust. In F. Lyon, G. Möllering, & M. N. K. Saunders (Eds.), *Handbook of Research Methods on Trust* (pp. 85-93). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Maguire, S. P., Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (2001). When 'silence = death', keep talking: Trust, control and the discursive construction of identity in the Canadian HIV/AIDS treatment domain. *Organization Studies,* 22(2): 285-310.

May, M. (2004). From consultant to courtier. *Consulting to Management,* 15(4): 17-34.

Mayer, R., Davis, J., & Schoorman, F. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review,* 20(3): 709-734.

McAllister, D. J. (1995). Affect- and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38: 24-59.

McCarthy, E. D. (1989). Emotions are social things: An essay in the sociology of emotions. *Sociology Faculty Publications.* Paper 5.

McFarland, R. G., Challagalla, G. N., & Shevani, T. A. (2006). Influence tactics for effective aptive selling. *Journal of Marketing,* 70(4): 103-117.

McKnight, D., Cummings, L., & Chervany, N. (1998) Initial trust formation in new organizational relationships. *Academy of Management Review,* 23(3): 473-490.

Meyerson, D., Weick, K. E., & Kramer, R. M. (1996). Swift trust and temporary groups. In R. M. Kramer, & T. R. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research* (pp. 166-195). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Micklethwait, J., & Wooldridge, A, (1996) *The witch doctors: Making sense of the management gurus*. New York: Random House.

Mitchell, V. W. (1994). Problems and risks in the purchasing of consultancy services. *The Service Industries Journal,* 14(3): 315-339.

Mitnick, K. D., & Simon, W. L. (2002). *The art of deception: Controlling the human element of security*. Indianapolis: Wiley.

Mizrachi, N., Drori, I., & Anspach, R. R. (2007). Repertoires of trust: The practice of trust in a multinational organization amid political conflict. *American Sociological Review,* 72(1): 143-165.

Möllering, G. (2001). The nature of trust: From Georg Simmel to a theory of expectation, interpretation and suspension. *Sociology,* 35(2): 403-420.

Möllering, G. (2006). *Trust: Reason, routine, reflexivity*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Möllering, G. 2009. Leaps and Lapses of Faith: Exploring the Relationship between Trust and Deception. In: Harrington, B. (Ed.): Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 137-153.

Möllering, G. (2013). Process views of trusting and crises. In R. Bachmann, & A. Zaheer (Eds.), *Handbook of Advances in Trust Research* (pp. 285-305). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Morse, J. M. (2007). Sampling in grounded theory. In A. Bryant, & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp. 229-244). London.

Näslund, L. (2012). *The leap of faith: Creating trust on professional service markets*. Doctoral Dissertation, Stockholm School of Economics.

Nikolova, N., Reihlen, M., & Schlapfner, J.-F. (2009). Client and consultant interaction: Capturing social practices of professionl service production. *Scandinavian Journal of Management,* 25: 289-298.

Nooteboom, B. (2002). *Trust: Forms, foundations, functions, failures and figures*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Oakes, G. (1990). The sales process and the paradox of trust. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 9: 671-679.

Orton, J. D. (1997). From inductive to iterative grounded theory: zipping the gap between process theory and process data. *Scandinavian journal of management,* 13(4): 419-438.

O'Reilly, K., Paper, D., & Marx, S. (2012). Demystifying Grounded Theory for business research. *Organizational Research Methods,* 15(2): 247-262.

Ring, P. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (1994). Development processes of cooperative interorganizational relationships. *Academy of Management Review,* 19(1): 90-118.

Robinson, D. G., & Robinson, C. (2006). Performance consulting: The art and the science. *Performance Improvement,* 45(4): 5-11.

Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: a cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of Management Review,* 23(3): 393-404.

Sarbin T.R., & Allen V.L. (1968). Role theory. In G. Lindzey, & E. Aronson (Eds.) *Handbook of social psychology* (2nd ed, Vol. 1) (pp. 488-567). Addison-Wesley: Reading, MA.

Schoorman, F. D., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (2007). An integrative model of organizational trust: Past, present and future. *Academy of Management Review,* 32(2): 344-354.

Simmel, G. (1950 [1908]). *The sociology of Georg Simmel*. New York: Free Press.

Simmel, G. (1990 [1907]). *The philosophy of money*. (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998) *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Sydow, J. (1998). Understanding the constitution of inter-organizational trust. In C. Lane, & R. Bachmann (Eds.). T*rust within and between organizations* (pp. 31–63). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sydow, J. (2006). How can systems trust systems? A structuration perspective on trust-building in inter-organizational relations. In R. Bachmann, & A. Zaheer (Eds.), *Handbook of Trust Research* (pp. 377–392). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Sydow, J. & Windeler, A. (2003). Knowledge, trust, and control: Managing tensions and contradictions in a regional network of service firms. *International Studies of Management and Organization,* 33(2): 69-99.

Tsoukas, H. & Chia, R. (2002). On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. *Organization Science,* 13(5): 567-582.

Turner, J. H. (2009). The sociology of emotions: Basic theoretical arguments. *Emotion Review,* 1(4): 340-354.

Vroom, V. (1964). *Work and motivation*. New York: Wiley.

Walsh, J. & Fahey, L. (1986). The role of negotiated belief structures in strategy making. *Journal of Management,* 12(3): 325-338.

Williams, M. (2007). Building genuine trust through interpersonal emotion management: A threat regulation model of trust and collaboration across boundaries. *Academy of Management Review,* 32(2): 595-621.

Wright, A. & Ehnert, I. (2010). Making sense of trust across cultural contexts. In M. N. K.

Saunders, D. Skinner, G. Dietz, N. Gillespie, & R. J. Lewicki (Eds.), *Organizational trust: A cultural perspective* (pp. 107-126). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zand, D. E. (1972). Trust and managerial problem solving. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 17(2): 229-239.

Zucker, L. G. (1986). Production of trust: Institutional sources of economic structure, 1840-1920. *Research in Organizational Behavior,* 8: 53-111.

Table 1: List of interviewees

Dual client-consultant relationships			
Consultant Interviewee	**Characteristics of consultant company**	**Client Interviewee**	**Characteristics of client organization**
Consultant, 10+ years of experience	Sole practitioner, general management consulting	Partner	Small law firm
Consultant, 10+ years of experience	Sole practitioner, general management consulting	Executive manager Executive manager Executive director	State public agency A State public agency B State public agency C
Partner, 10+ years of experience	Small general management consultancy	Executive manager Executive manager Executive manager Executive director	Federal public agency A Federal public agency B State public agency B Medium-sized medical company
Senior consultant, 10+ years of experience	Medium-sized general management consultancy	Executive manager	Major Bank D
Consultant, 7+ years of experience	Sole practitioner, general management consulting	Executive manager Executive manager	State public agency C Major mobile telecommunications company
Unrelated consultants and clients			
Interviewee	**Characteristics of organization**		
Consultant, 20+ years of experience	Sole practitioner, general management consulting		
Consultant, 18+ years of experience	Sole practitioner, general management consulting		
Partner, 15+ years of experience	Small general management consultancy		
Partner, 15+ years of experience	Medium-sized general management consultancy		
Principal, 15+ years of experience	Medium-sized general management consultancy		
Partner, 10+ years of experience	Small specialized communications consultancy		
Consultant, 10+ years of experience	Sole practitioner, general management consulting		
Partner, 7+ years of experience	Medium-sized general management consultancy		
Consultant, 5+ years of experience	Large international HR consultancy; previously worked for a small general management consultancy		
Senior consultant, 5+ years of experience	Large international HR consultancy; previously worked for a small general management consultancy		
Senior consultant, 3+ years of experience	Large international general management consultancy		
Executive manager	Major bank A		
Executive manager	Major bank B		
Executive manager	Major bank C		
Executive manager	Major city council		

Figure 1: Coding schema

1st Order Concepts

2nd Order Themes

Aggregate Themes

| references, referrals, reputation, specific expertise, past experience | → | Signaling credibility, professionalism and positive track record | → | Signaling **ability** and **integrity** |

• being easy to deal with
• synchronizing working style
• adjusting intensity of interaction/ consultant's role
→ Aligning process expectations

• understanding the organizational needs/ other stakeholders' needs
• listening to client/ shared understanding
• flexibility to adjust to changes in clients' needs
→ Aligning outcome expectations

Demonstrating **benevolence**

good to work with, chemistry, vibe, empathy, positive first impression, compatible personalities
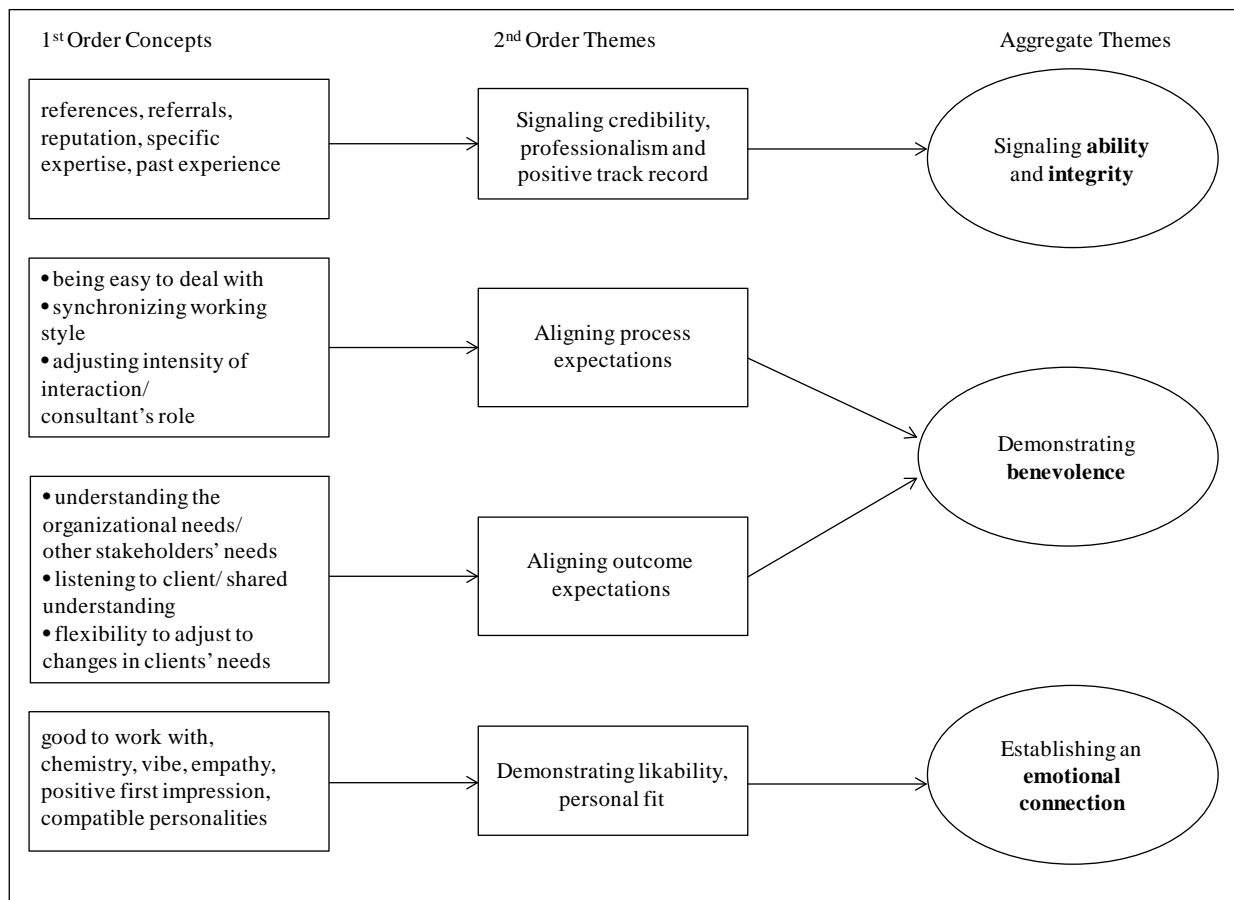→ Demonstrating likability, personal fit
→ Establishing an **emotional connection**

Figure 2: The process of trust development

Signaling ability

Demonstrating benevolence

Practices providing good reasons to trust—developing a favorable interpretation of the interaction

Trust

Practices supporting the leap of faith—developing shared cognitive and emotional expectations

Signaling integrity

Establishing an emotional connection