



Initiating Trust in a Hostile Environment: A Case Study of Leaders Forging a New Transnational Partnership in Iraq

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Transnational or global partnerships and intercultural strategic alliances require organizational leaders who will proactively engage risk and establish initial trust at the earliest stage of the emerging new relationship, especially where the prospective partnership must overcome a hostile external environment in which risk is high. Recent models of trust have emphasized the importance of trusting behavior that occurs early in the relationship. The model proposed by Jarvenpaa, Knoll, and Leidner (1998) refers to such early behavior as *trusting action*. Trusting action resembles a form of emergent trust or trust *ex ante*, similar to swift trust. This case study considers a new transnational partnership between two faith-based nonprofit charitable organizations—one in Iraq and the other in the United States. The study reports how risk-taking behavior and trusting action by leaders overcame a hostile, low-trust environment to create the intercultural relationship of trust essential to forming a strategic alliance. The findings support Jarvenpaa et al.'s proposition that initial trusting action functions both directly as a nontraditional antecedent of trust and indirectly by enhancing other antecedents. A need remains for additional case studies on how leadership initiatives can strategically employ mechanisms and interactions of early trusting behaviors to expedite such partnerships and alliances.

Transnational or global partnerships and intercultural strategic alliances require organizational leaders who will proactively engage risk and establish initial trust at the earliest stage of the emerging new relationship. This is especially so where the prospective partnership must overcome a hostile external environment in which risk is high. One of the most critical and complex aspects on which an international strategic alliance's performance and effectiveness depend is the relationship of trust that underlies the alliance (Nielsen, 2001). The need for behavior that manifests trust in an emerging international relationship often arises in difficult circumstances while the organizational leaders still lack sufficient facts to make a decision about the trustworthiness of the other party (see Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

This article¹ presents a case study of a transnational or global partnership or international strategic alliance initiated in Iraq during 2003 and 2004. The study examines a specific case involving the creation of an emerging transnational partnership or international strategic alliance. The transnational partners are two Christian organizations—one chartered in Iraq and the other in the United States—working interculturally together for nonprofit charitable outreach and development. The case study reports how these two organizations operating in a hostile, low-trust environment were able to overcome the significant obstacles to an intercultural relationship of trust. By employing initial trusting action and proactive risk-taking behavior from the outset, the prospective partnering organizations were able to achieve a potential new partnership or alliance. The study contributes to our understanding of how organizational leaders' trusting action in the earliest stage of the process of developing a relationship of trust can precede the traditional antecedents of trust and how trusting action initially functions as an emergent or inchoate form of organizational trust to form such a transnational or global partnership or international strategic alliance.

In this article, the word *global*, and the more precise words *transnational* or *international*, refer to relationships and activities spanning two or more nations. The terms *intercultural* or *cross-cultural* refer to relationships and activities involving people from two or more ethnic groups having distinctive sociocultural characteristics. *Partnership* and *alliance* refer to two or more autonomous organizations associating either formally or informally. Thus, for the purposes of this article, the references to *transnational partnerships* and to *international strategic alliances* are essentially interchangeable.

Research Question

In March 2003, a coalition of military forces led by the U. S. entered Iraq and overthrew the authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein. In the years prior to 2003, Hussein's regime in Iraq had become well-known for crushing internal political opposition and for oppressing, sometimes brutally, political opponents and also ethnic and religious minorities. Due to international pressure, the regime became isolated diplomatically and economic sanctions contributed to the impoverishment of many Iraqi people (Johnstone & Mandryk, 2001). Minorities in Iraq, including Christians and Kurds, constitute at least 10% of the Iraqi population (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, 2006). According to Johnstone and Mandryk, Christians comprise only 2.5% of the population within this predominantly Muslim Arab nation and consequently suffered even more than the general population. Seeking to provide assistance to Christians and others in the postwar recovery, Pioneers-USA began exploring opportunities in Iraq to form partnerships and alliances with one or more indigenous Christian ministries or nonprofit community development organizations. In late 2003, Pioneers-USA commissioned a small team of its organizational leaders to travel to Iraq to assess the prospects for a transnational partnership in Iraq and, if possible, to identify and make initial contact with one or more Iraqi charitable organizations as potential transnational partners. Within a short time after arriving in Baghdad, the Pioneers-USA team located and made contact with Iraqi pastors and leaders serving among Baghdad's Christian evangelical community. These included contacts with the

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leaders of two charitable organizations in Baghdad that are affiliated with each other—an Iraqi association of Christian evangelical churches and a related nonprofit development organization known as the Center for Community Development (CDC). The key contact for Pioneers-USA was the director of these two Iraqi Christian charitable organizations, an ordained Iraqi pastor named Henan (not that pseudonyms have been employed for the safety of the individuals and organizations in Iraq). Within a few months, Pioneers-USA and the CDC were able to initiate an intercultural relationship of trust and move toward a transnational partnership.

A fundamental practical question that underlies the study is one posed by Macy and Skovretz (1998): “Not all strangers are dishonest, nor are all cultures reluctant to do business with ‘outsiders.’ Why not?” (p. 639). Cross-cultural research on sociocultural distance establishes that the “earliest trust rule” that societies communicate to its members is that they can trust “neighbors” but must distrust “strangers” (Macy & Skovretz, 1998, p. 651; see also Buchan, Croson, & Dawes, 2002). According to Strong and Weber (1998), a need exists for further research to assess the validity of culturally embedded dimensions of trust and to identify any differences in trust between cultures. This study reports how two prospective organizational partners from different national cultures were able to overcome a natural sociocultural bias against strangers and, thus, open the door to a transnational partnership or international strategic alliance.

Researchers from various disciplines have sought to identify and explain the cognitive and affective elements and the active behaviors that promote trust at the individual, group, and organizational levels. From a meta-analysis of the literature on trust; Dirks and Ferrin (2002) concluded that various studies have reflected multiple operational definitions of trust, including different subdimensions of trust. According to Dirks and Ferrin, the different views of the antecedents and determinants of trust derive from differences in the perspectives of various referents. Dirks and Ferrin concluded that this suggests a need for additional research, *inter alia*, on how various trust practices or actions ultimately translate into different trust outcomes for different referents. The present study takes into account that the two organizations began from very different cultural perspectives but may have followed a similar structural process by which the two organizations moved toward a relationship of trust.

Notable among the models that describe the dimensions and processes of trust are the models proposed by Mayer et al. (1995) and by Jarvenpaa et al. (1998). Mayer et al. presented a model of organizational trust that integrated research from multiple disciplines and distilled from the literature the major requisites or traditional antecedents of trust: ability, benevolence, integrity, and propensity to trust. Mayer et al. also observed that “the need for *trusting behavior* [italics added] often arises” (p. 730) while the decision maker still lacks sufficient facts about the other party in regard to one or more of the major requisites or antecedents of trust. Subsequently, Jarvenpaa et al. conducted a study of trust antecedents affecting global virtual teams and proposed a model that identified a kind of action that manifests early in the process of developing trust. The concept of trusting behavior is sufficiently substantial and meaningful, therefore Jarvenpaa et al. extended Mayer et al.’s model by including a factor identified as *trusting action* alongside the more familiar, traditional antecedents of trust. Jarvenpaa et al. described trusting action as a factor that promotes the emergence of a relationship of trust even before the traditional antecedents have emerged. Mayer et al. did not identify trusting behavior as a separate factor within their model, but they mentioned it as one example of why the process by which trust develops still needs further study. Similarly, Jarvenpaa et al. acknowledged that

additional research is needed to examine in further depth the relationship between trusting behavior and other requisites or antecedents of trust.

The present case study addresses the expressed need for further study on the role of trusting behavior in the process by which trust develops. This study focuses on Jarvenpaa et al.'s (1998) model that expressly identifies trusting action as an antecedent to trust. The primary purpose of the study is to examine the transnational partnership that emerged in Iraq to determine whether the organizational leadership initiatives and other early and purposeful activities exhibited by the two organizations were consistent with the theoretical concept of initial trusting action. The central research question, therefore, asks the following: how does initial trusting action affect an intercultural relationship of trust between organizations in the process of initiating a transnational partnership or international strategic alliance?

Theoretical Foundations

Trust's Importance in Forming Partnerships and Strategic Alliances

Trust carries enormous importance in forming the types of relationships on which the conduct of human affairs ultimately depends (Hosmer, 1995; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Shaw, 1997). Hosmer described the relationship of trust as mutual reliance on a voluntarily accepted duty toward others who are engaged in a joint endeavor or economic exchange. Mayer et al. (1995) emphasized the positive expectations of the parties and their willingness to take risks in the relationship and be vulnerable. Strong and Weber (1998) contended that trust must be described relatively, because the focus of trust is a particular relationship. The formation of trust is dependent on a complex set of variables idiosyncratic to that relationship.

Trust between partnering organizations is one of the most critical factors in the success of strategic alliances between organizations (Nielsen, 2001; see also Doney, Cannon, & Mullen, 1998). The kind of trust that is held mutually or aggregately by the members of an organization is *collective trust* (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996). The collective trust of a group or organization involves multiple persons having different attributes (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). The need for trust within a group or organization arises from the increasing interdependence among the members according to what the group or organization is trying to achieve (see Stewart, Manz, & Sims, 1999). The importance of trust in relationships increases in proportion to the degree of dependence on others (Shaw, 1997). Trust is fundamentally a social phenomenon that occurs between the individuals within an organization, rather than between organizations as such (Howarth, Gillin, & Bailey, 1995, as cited in Nielson, 2001).

Organizations frequently seek collaboration through partnerships, strategic alliances, and joint ventures with other organizations as ways to bridge gaps in knowledge and capacity (Walker & Johannes, 2003). The willingness to act jointly with another organization in pursuit of mutually compatible interests of the partners in the alliance, rather than to act opportunistically, constitutes the essential nature of strategic interorganizational collaboration (Doz, 1996). The degree of trust between organizations engaging in partnership is a critical factor determining alliance performance (Nielsen, 2001). Relationships of trust hold significant potential benefits for organizations including increased confidence and security in its relationships with partners, reduced transactional costs, and better information exchange (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). Global or transnational partnerships and international strategic alliances between organizations serve as examples of how organizations in different nations can expand their effectiveness (see Nielsen).

Leadership in the organizations plays a decisive role in the success or failure of these strategic alliances (Ellis, 1996). In the context of building relationships of trust, it is crucial that organizational leaders strive to “encourage and manage trust” (Shaw, 1997, p. 17) within their organizations (see also Atwater, 1988; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). In the present case, the actions of the leaders of the organizations should manifest a willingness by the leaders to recognize the potential advantages of partnership, accept vulnerability to one another, and take steps toward interdependence between the organizations. This would constitute evidence of collective trust emerging among the leaders of the respective organizations and even aggregately among the organizations’ members.

Defining Organizational Trust as an Operational Concept

According to the integrative model of organizational trust by Mayer et al. (1995), the perceived trustworthiness of a party involves three primary components that must precede a relationship of trust: ability, integrity, and benevolence. These three factors are generally accepted as traditional antecedents of trust (Mayer et al.; see also Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). While various writers on trust may use different terms, the concepts essentially are the same. For example, Shaw (1997) referred to these trust antecedents using the terms *results*, *integrity*, and *concern*. Paralleling these traditional trust antecedents are the three kinds of trust that Berquist, Betwee, and Meuel (1995) identified as necessary in forming a partnership: competency, perspectives, and intentions. Ability, integrity, and benevolence must all be manifested by both parties for a transnational partnership to fully develop (Rickett, 2002).

In analyzing the development of a trust relationship, Mayer et al. (1995) emphasized the importance of being clear about the referents (i.e., the person who is deciding to trust or the one who is being trusted). Mayer et al. distinguished between two different perspectives: “a trusting party (trustor) and a party to be trusted (trustee)” (p. 711). Thus, an additional commonly recognized antecedent to a relationship of trust originates from an entirely different perspective than the first three. This fourth traditional antecedent, propensity to trust, comes from the perspective of the party who is deciding whether to trust. Employing the labels used by Mayer et al. and adopted by other writers on trust (e.g., Gill, Boies, Finegan, & McNally, 2005; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998), the propensity to trust is an antecedent that describes a *trustor* rather than a *trustee*. Propensity or disposition to trust is a person’s general willingness to become vulnerable to or depend on others (Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004; Mayer et al.). Sitkin and Pablo (1992) defined propensity to trust as “the tendency of a decision maker either to take or avoid risks” (p. 12). Propensity directly affects trust formation because it determines how vulnerable a person is willing to become prior to acquiring adequate data about the other’s trustworthiness (Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa; Mayer et al.). Propensity to trust is highly relevant to the formation of intercultural partnerships (Buchan et al., 2002). In sum, according to Mayer et al., a proper understanding of antecedents of the trust relationship requires one to consider “both the trustor’s propensity to trust and the trustor’s perceptions of the trustee’s ability, benevolence, and integrity” (p. 724).

Beyond the traditional antecedents, which essentially are cognitive or affective factors, Mayer et al. (1995) and Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) both recognized the relevance of behaviors or actions impacting or manifesting the relationship of trust. Mayer et al. and Jarvenpaa et al. respectively referred to these additional factors as *trusting behavior* and *trusting action*. Trusting behavior and trusting action reflect the kind of overt actions that can manifest the presence of

trust or the emergence of trust through the stages by which a relationship of trust develops. For Mayer et al., risk is inherent in the behavioral manifestation of a person's willingness to be vulnerable to another. "One does not need to risk anything in order to trust; however, one must take a risk in order to engage in trusting action" (Mayer et al., p. 724). Mayer et al., therefore, referred to "risk taking in relationship" (p. 724); the form of which will depend on the parties and the situation. Actions and behaviors manifested early in a relationship can promote or predict the emergence of trust.

These actions and behaviors manifested early in the process may impact trust indirectly through the behavior's effect on the antecedents of trust (Mayer et al., 1995) or may function directly as one of the antecedents of trust (Boyle & Bonacich, 1970, as cited in Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). What essentially distinguishes the model of trust by Jarvenpaa et al. from the model by Mayer et al. is that Jarvenpaa et al. posited trusting action as a trust antecedent that precedes the traditional antecedents. A specific objective of this study is to evaluate Jarvenpaa et al.'s proposition that initial trusting action functions in the trust development process both directly as a nontraditional antecedent of trust and also indirectly by enhancing the impact of the other, traditional antecedents of trust. In view of Jarvenpaa et al.'s proposition that initial trusting action is an antecedent of trust, one should be able to see evidence in the transnational partnership reported in this case that one or both parties were engaging in proactive trusting action (i.e., trust initiatives toward trust) and by early risk taking in the relationship to stimulate and move toward a relationship of trust.

The process of developing a relationship of trust is also dynamic (Nielsen, 2001). Over time, actions and behaviors can impact or manifest trust at any stage of the relationship. Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) focused on trusting action that impacts the earliest stage of the relationship, a feature they reinforced by employing the term *initial trusting action*. The present study adopts the term *initial trusting action* to emphasize trusting action that manifests in the earliest stage of initiating a new partnership or alliance and to distinguish the action or behavior from that which continues to affect trust after the trusting relationship has been established.

Consistent with the concept of initial trusting action, Nielsen (2001) divided the dynamic process of developing a relationship of trust into two sequential parts. The first stage involves *initial relational trust* which occurs at the outset of a relationship and depends on the degree to which prospective partners engage each other in a trusting way to negotiate and build an alliance. The second stage is *continuous relational trust* which continues to develop throughout the duration of the alliance. This study relates mainly to the stage described by Nielsen as initial relational trust.

Overcoming Cultural Obstacles to Trust and a Prospective Transnational Partnership

A person's general expectation of how trusting one ought to be is influenced by, among other factors, the person's sociocultural background (see Hofstede, 1980; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Mayer et al., 1995). Because societies communicate to people a sociocultural norm that they can trust *neighbors* but must distance themselves from *strangers* (Macy & Skvoretz, 1998), people naturally tend to trust those who share the perspectives we have and who see the world the way we do; conversely, most people find it difficult to trust those who do not share our basic beliefs and values (Rickett, 2002). Through repeated contacts over time, people have opportunities to evaluate strangers and choose whether to permit them to become neighbors (Buchan et al., 2002; Macy & Skvoretz). Fukuyama (2000) referred to this social dynamic as extending the radius of

trust. How much the sociocultural factors influence a person's expectations about trust and whether the factors produce significant differences among cultures in how trust develops are questions that remain open to debate. For example, Strong and Weber (1998) surveyed 122 executives from 28 countries representing four distinct cultures (see Hofstede, 1980) to test the idea that trust varies between countries and cultures. The results of Strong and Weber's study failed to show significant differences in trust between cultures, at least where trust is defined along dimensions of positive beliefs in others and of self-interested versus other-interested behavior. But, at least initially, the sociocultural bias against strangers and the lack of opportunity for prior contacts on which to base a decision to extend the social radius of trust present major obstacles to creating trust in an intercultural context. Thus, a related issue to consider in this case study is the extent to which each partner's propensity to trust and to take risks may have made it easier to establish a relationship.

Another inherent dilemma in forming new strategic alliances is that trust often must begin with crucial gaps of information and from a starting point that has not yet afforded an accumulation of reliable experiences with the other party (Shaw, 1997). This is especially the case where an organization is reaching out across international borders and bridging significantly different national cultures. In addition to cultural differences; the global environment also presents significant challenges relating to differences in time and distance, all of which tend to reduce face-to-face interactions with strangers and thus reinforce the anonymity of the electronic communications on which geographically dispersed people must rely (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; see also O'Hara-Devereaux & Johansen, 1994). For a variety of reasons, the parties in a global environment have fewer face-to-face contacts and less opportunity to develop trust in the more traditional gradual and cumulative fashion (Jarvenpaa et al.; see also Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996).

Swift Trust's Role as an Emergent Form of Trust

Unexpected global opportunities may arise for trusting action that achieves or reinforces emergent forms of trust. *Swift trust* is an initial or emergent form of trust that characteristically occurs early and facilitates establishing trust even before sufficient data becomes available for the traditional trust antecedents to predict or determine outcomes (Buchan et al., 2002; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Meyerson et al., 1996). Swift trust is enthusiastic, proactive, and generative (Meyerson et al.). It enables organizational members "to take action . . . and deal with uncertainty, ambiguity, and vulnerability while working on complex interdependent tasks with strangers" (Jarvenpaa et al., p. 56). Swift trust enhances freely flowing communication by enabling members of a global or temporary team to act as if trust already exists (Jarvenpaa et al.) In Jarvenpaa et al.'s study involving the formation of global virtual teams, traces of initiative and trustful actions seemed to exist *ex ante* to trust. This was true even in the teams that ultimately proved to be low-trust teams, at least until lack of action and initiative and overt signs of a lack of trust began to manifest in the teams. According to Jarvenpaa et al., the high-trust team members more clearly exhibited swift trust, acting as if trust existed from the start of the team.

Swift trust has been described variously as either a form of action or a byproduct of action (see Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Meyerson et al., 1996). Indeed, one notable limitation of the Jarvenpaa et al. study is that it failed to clearly resolve the question of whether a meaningful distinction exists between swift trust and initial trusting action. Jarvenpaa et al.'s model depicts swift trust and action as two separate components. The model therefore shows swift trust as the

first factor, immediately preceding initial trusting action (labeled in the model as initiative/action/result toward a task goal). Accordingly, swift trust and initial trusting action are both factors tied to active behavior that precedes the traditional antecedents of trust. For purposes of the present study, however, both swift trust and initial trusting action involve trusting behavior occurring at an early stage of the process of building the trusting relationship. Both relate to or involve an emergent or inchoate form of initial trust and reinforce each other in moving the parties toward initial relational trust (see Nielsen, 2001).

Organizations seeking to initiate new transnational partnerships and international strategic alliances may benefit by purposefully adopting approaches that stimulate initial trust (Buchan et al., 2002). Leaders of such organizations should recognize the value of demonstrating trusting action and acting as if trust is present right from the start (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). In doing so, each party must be willing to be vulnerable to the other and must take action that demonstrates to the other at least some minimal degree of risk-taking in relationship, even before information is fully known about the other's trustworthiness (Jarvenpaa et al.; Mayer et al., 1995). In the context of this case study, we may expect to find evidence of the prospective partners communicating freely, becoming involved with each other, and engaging complex tasks despite ambiguous circumstances and uncertain outcomes.

Research Design and Method

Method

The present use of a case study approach responds to an expressed need for more case studies on international strategic alliances (see Nielsen, 2001). Case studies reporting on "direct involvement in organizations" provide a better understanding of "the highly complex nature of trust as it relates to [forming] international strategic alliances" (Nielsen, p. 25). The case study approach thus serves well in the present context because it can capture more fully the important sociocultural factors and interpersonal dynamics relating specifically to initiating trust and taking risk in relationship to form partnerships or strategic alliances in international and intercultural arenas. Yin (2003) stated that case studies constitute the preferred strategy under a combination of circumstances in which the research problem presents *how* or *why* questions, when the researcher has little or no control over events, and when the study investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context. Therefore, the case study approach is well-suited to address the central question: how does trusting action affect an intercultural relationship of trust between organizations in the process of initiating a transnational partnership or international strategic alliance?

The present case study tests theories about the traditional and nontraditional antecedents of trust, specifically that part of the model by Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) relating to trusting action as an antecedent of trust. This study also seeks to better understand the interaction of trusting behavior and risk taking in relationship as a complex social phenomenon (see de Vaus, 2001). The study involves an ideographic approach because it attempts to interpret human behavior and interaction by studying and understanding them in the context of culture (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). The case study approach achieves the goals of testing Jarvenpaa et al.'s model and enhancing an understanding of trusting action. It does so, first, by developing and providing more complete contextual information about the nature of the particular relationship of trust that emerged in the present alliance. Second, the case study achieves these particular goals by

providing an analysis of the underlying causal processes at work in the trusting action (see de Vaus) and risk-taking behavior that has proved crucial in the earliest stages of initiating the relationship of trust.

To address the central research question, this case study first looked at Pioneers-USA and assessed whether the organization reflects characteristics of an organization that seeks to establish a positive organizational context for encouraging trusting action and reasonable risk taking toward organizationally strategic objectives. Next, the study looked at the efforts by Pioneers-USA in Iraq as a current example of how Pioneers-USA has initiated trust and engaged in risk taking as a means of forming a new transnational partnership for outreach and community development in Iraq.

Data Collection

This study employed multiple methods of data collection to derive relevant information from several sources. The data on which this analysis relied came from the following sources: (a) written surveys, (b) participant observations, (c) open-ended personal interviews, and (d) various written sources. The collection methods for this study, therefore, yielded triangulated data from four types of information sources.

One source of data was a written survey developed to assess organizational attitudes and behaviors toward learning and risk taking within a particular learning organization. This source consisted of an organizational diagnostic survey offered to individuals having organizational leadership responsibilities within Pioneers-USA. Pioneers-USA is the U.S. component of a larger, international affiliation of entities identified by the name Pioneers that operates jointly under a written international agreement. References to Pioneers in this study relate to the broader affiliation, including Pioneers-USA and the other affiliated entities.

Because the scope of this paper focuses narrowly on initial trusting action and the risk-taking behavior that occurs in the earliest stage of initiating a global partnership, the survey data extracted for this study relate to items and results descriptive of organizational risk taking. The instrument used for the survey is a diagnostic assessment inventory developed by Kline and Saunders (1998) known as the Learning Organization Assessment.² According to Kline and Saunders, the 13 assessment items used here relate to an organization finding ways to encourage intelligent and informed risk taking. At the time of the survey, most of the respondents were leaders of Pioneers-USA teams varying in size. All respondents held responsibility for the oversight of multiple persons within the organization. Ten leaders voluntarily agreed to participate. Although a small number, the group who responded to the survey comprised nearly all of the persons in positions of leadership within Pioneers-USA at that time. All respondents were serving at the Pioneers-USA headquarters and offices in Orlando, Florida. The written survey ended with an open-ended question affording the respondents an opportunity to explain any of their numerical responses.

² The Kline and Saunders' (1998) assessment consists of statements categorized according to 10 major organizational dimensions. Participants responded by scoring on a 5-point Likert scale. The inventory is tied to a matrix that keys each survey item to one or more of the 10 organizational traits. Whereas the enhanced version of the assessment contains 68 items, this study employed only the 13 assessment items that the matrix identifies as indicating the organizational characteristic of risk taking.

In addition, I collected data specifically on Pioneers-USA's proposed new transnational partnership in Iraq by relying on participant observations, interviews, and documentary sources. The participant observations for this study occurred on-site in Iraq and in the United States during the process of Pioneers-USA members making cross-cultural contacts to initiate and form a new transnational partnership. Participant observations are commonly used in qualitative research as part of an approach that combines direct participation, observation, interviews, and introspection (Flick, 2002). Observations by multiple participants occurred in Baghdad from August 17-19, 2003; March 14-16, 2004 (including observations made by the author); and June 5-20, 2004.

A third source of data for this study consisted of open-ended personal interviews and dialogues relating to the initiatives by Pioneers-USA in evaluating and developing prospects for a transnational partnership in Iraq. The interviews and dialogues occurred in person at various locations on March 14-16, June 27, and July 2, 2004. Additional interviews and dialogues occurred by phone on June 26 and 30 and July 5 and 30, 2004. I also conducted interviews and engaged in substantive dialogues with five leaders and members of the two closely affiliated Iraqi organizations. In addition, I interviewed and engaged in dialogues with at least six Americans who are current leaders or members of Pioneers and who have been directly involved in efforts on-site in Iraq to initiate and form the new transnational partnership. The Americans who are organizational leaders within Pioneers included the president of Pioneers-USA, Stephen Richardson. Richardson also was a member of the first team Pioneers-USA commissioned to go into Iraq for the purpose of assessing the situation and evaluating the prospects for a new transnational partnership. The interviews and dialogues also included three other organizational leaders: the executive vice president of Pioneers-USA, the mobilization director of Pioneers-USA, and a Pioneers regional leader who is an American living outside the United States.

The fourth and final data source was the various written sources available in this case. Various documents proved relevant to an understanding of the factors involved in the process of initiating a relationship of trust and forming a transnational partnership between the two organizations. These documents included e-mail messages between various participants in the partnership process; interviews in news media reports, including interviews granted by Henan in his capacity as an Iraqi pastor and as the director of the CDC; and an article written by Richardson for a Pioneers-USA publication.

Findings

Organizational Attitudes Toward Engaging Reasonable Risk

Responding to the Learning Organization Assessment (Kline & Saunders, 1998), the leaders surveyed within Pioneers-USA described a safe organizational environment for engaging risk. The scores on organizational risk taking substantially exceeded the midpoint and approached a score of 4 out of a maximum possible score of 5 points, reflecting a strongly positive risk-taking environment. The statement about Pioneers-USA that gained the highest support among all the respondents is highly relevant to making adjustments in collaboration with organizational partners: "There is willingness to break old patterns in order to experiment with different ways of organizing and managing daily work." This is a positive statement in the survey that the respondents, in their aggregated responses, said applies "to a great extent."

The open-ended responses produced comments that reinforce the picture of Pioneers-USA as a safe organizational environment for creative thinking and engaging risk. One respondent stated the following: “One of the main reasons we felt led to this ministry is the cutting edge character of the leadership. They are not afraid to try something new and seek to be trendsetters in the mission community.” Balancing this view, however, is the following observation that another respondent made: “Many good opportunities and developmental activities get swept aside in the excitement and fast pace of all that is going on.”

Additionally, statements identified in documents published by the organization also demonstrate Pioneers-USA’s commitment to risk taking in a strategic way. For example, among Pioneers-USA’s written core values are innovation and flexibility (Richardson, 2002). Similarly, Richardson also suggested that one of the organizational benefits of being open to partnership would be to answer the question: “what can you learn from the experience of others?” (p. 17). Findings from other documentary sources have shown that Pioneers-USA also has a fairly well-defined strategic planning process that includes planning and budgeting to form transnational partnerships which Pioneers-USA normally refers to as *global partnerships*.

Risk-Taking for a New Transnational Partnership

After the Hussein regime’s overthrow, a team consisting of several key organizational leaders within Pioneers-USA traveled in August 2003 to Iraq’s capital, Baghdad. Among other members of Pioneers-USA; the first team included the organization’s founder, the president, and the executive vice president. In Baghdad, the team made contact in person with Christian Iraqi ministry leaders whose identity and locations were known to the leaders of Pioneers-USA. The leaders from Pioneers-USA also went there to initially assess prospects for forming a partnership or alliance with indigenous Christian leaders and their organizations to conduct community outreach and development as part of Iraq’s anticipated post-war recovery. And, indeed, we can see in the actions of both prospective partners that this kind of initial trusting action did occur between the two organizations and specifically between their respective key organizational leaders, Henan and Richardson.

Pioneers-USA commissioned in March 2004 a four-member team to return to Baghdad to follow up on the earlier contacts and to begin taking steps toward actually forming a partnership or alliance. As the director of global partnerships for Pioneers-USA, I was one of the four members of the second team. We were inside Iraq for 4 days, including 3 days in Baghdad. The time proved sufficient to locate Henan, to interact in person with him, along with various Iraqi leaders and members of the CDC, and to visit the CDC offices and some of the Iraqi churches. Henan and the other Iraqis connected with the CDC warmly welcomed this team, as they had the earlier team, displaying as much hospitality as the time and circumstances permitted. Henan is fluent in Arabic and Aramaic and speaks some English. Henan spoke to us sincerely and passionately about his concern for the physical, economic, and spiritual welfare of the Iraqi people; describing in detail numerous examples of the many needs of the people in his country. Henan’s long-range vision is to help meet those needs by creating a series of centers providing community development in Iraq through a combination of training job skills, initiating microbusinesses, and teaching English language classes. The centers will serve as sites for outreach and relief in the various neighborhoods where they are located and will also provide opportunities to demonstrate Christian relational values and moral principles. Henan is personally familiar with this outreach model, having already used the model to establish six

centers in Jordan during his earlier years in exile from Iraq. Some of these earlier centers had been developed in partnership with one or more Western charitable organizations other than Pioneers-USA.

Henan also demonstrated a genuine openness to new partnerships. According to a published interview given later during his first visit to the U. S., “[Henan] wants missionaries trained in peacemaking sent to Iraq to help build a strong church that can take a leading role in Iraqi society, and help to transform it” (Smith, 2004). Early on, Henan personally had expressed similar desires to our teams in our various face-to-face dialogues with him. During Henan’s discussions with the second team in 2003, he articulated the importance of genuine mutuality in the relationship and of being clear about the expectations of each other in the prospective partnership. While Henan was open to the new partnership, it was also evident that he was being cautious based on his prior experiences. He was transparent with us in explaining that he felt that a Western partner in a previous transnational partnership had taken advantage of a relatively stronger position of power in taking over resources that had been jointly contributed to the partnership.

Since the two teams went into Baghdad, Pioneers-USA has continued active efforts to develop the initial relational trust by continuing contacts with the CDC through Henan and, as much as adverse external circumstances allow, increasing interdependence between the organizations. In early June 2004, after the team had visited with Henan the previous March, Pioneers-USA sponsored a young man to move to Baghdad and work with Henan. He is an American serving with Pioneers who had been studying Arabic. Pioneers-USA took this initial step with the idea of sending additional field workers later, as a means of beginning to provide trained personnel in support of the CDC’s community development project and Henan’s outreach work. Within 9 months of the initial contact with Henan and the CDC by the first Pioneers-USA team, the transnational partners already had advanced their emerging relationship of trust to the point of collaborating and working on a development project in Iraq that they had jointly planned. This work was being performed in Baghdad by a combination of Iraqi CDC employees and Pioneers American field workers. Meanwhile, other Pioneers members in the U. S. and in the Middle East continued from outside Iraq to maintain direct contact with Pastor Henan, mainly through e-mail but also by phone and in person whenever possible.

Notwithstanding the trust being established between these partners, unanticipated events external to the relationship have interfered with a fully productive transnational partnership in Iraq. A dramatic upsurge in violence and instability in Iraq began in March 2004, coincident with a sharp upswing in attacks against expatriates and Iraqis by insurgents and militia who sought to disrupt democratic elections and the subsequent transfer of government at the end of June 2004. Ambushes, bombings, and kidnappings by insurgents increased in various parts of Iraq including Baghdad. Even today; indiscriminant violent attacks by insurgents, militias, and terrorists continue unabated in many parts of Iraq; according to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (2006). At the point when the threat to security and safety became much more acute especially for Americans and other Westerners who were living and working outside of militarily secured compounds, the partners made a mutual decision to suspend most of their joint on-site work inside the country until the security conditions improved.

In July 2004, by special arrangement of some American churches, Henan made his first trip to the United States. His trip was quite timely and afforded two additional opportunities for me to meet with him in person. One small but specific accomplishment both practically and symbolically was that Pioneers-USA was able to modestly support the communications and

administrative needs of the CDC by providing Henan with a computer with software applications in Arabic. Pioneers-USA also provided related technical assistance by arrangement with a skilled volunteer who drove to Henan's location in the U. S. and devoted considerable time helping Henan learn to use the new hardware and software. Even these small efforts were symbolically quite significant to Henan and the CDC because the acts constituted behavior by Pioneers-USA that was consistent with trusting action manifested by increasing interdependence and resource sharing in support of mutually agreed goals.

The Iraqi people still are suffering through military conflict and experiencing very high levels of societal instability and violence. The physical risk for everyone in Iraq, nationals and expatriates alike, remains very high (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, 2006). Security conditions in the country continued to deteriorate. Because of continuing patterns of religious persecution including threats, killings, and bombings; many Christian families from Baghdad and other parts of Iraq have had to relocate to safer areas or flee the country (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq). Henan sent his family to northern Iraq and eventually left Baghdad to join them. Henan and his family, as well as many other Iraqis, are now displaced until they can safely return to Baghdad. Even so, the transnational partners intend to continue building the alliance and undertaking the joint project for community development in Baghdad and other parts of Iraq as soon as the work in Iraq can resume.

Discussion

In the global context, trust is pivotal to establishing intercultural working relationships (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). A variety of complexities, such as geographic separation and cultural distance, make building global relationships of trust more difficult and the key ingredients take longer to emerge (see Marquardt & Horvath, 2001; Rickett, 2002). The two organizations began in this case from very different national situations and cultural perspectives. The differences in their referent perspectives proved relevant in the process of developing the new relationship of trust (see Mayer et al., 1995). Despite such referent differences, the two organizations shared a common structural process by which each moved toward the relationship of trust. The more specific focus of the study, however, remains on whether leadership initiatives and purposeful activities consistent with initial trusting action facilitated progress toward a relationship of trust that was essential in forming a transnational partnership. In view of the necessity of trust in forming transnational partnerships, one might expect to observe in this study that initial trusting actions by the leaders and members of both organizations (especially trusting behaviors demonstrated early by the key organizational leaders) had a positive impact on forming the relationship of trust and thus the transnational partnership itself.

Risk-Taking to Overcome Obstacles to the Prospective Transnational Partnership

An amazing aspect of the initiative toward transnational partnership between Pioneers-USA and the CDC as an Iraqi organization is that the partnership has been developing within what appears to be a hostile, low-trust external environment in the aftermath of the war in 2003 between Americans and Iraqis (see Johnstone & Mandryk, 2001). During Henan's 2004 visit to the U. S., reporters for local newspapers and a TV news station interviewed him. As reported, Henan (as cited in Lindsey, 2004) described the conditions experienced by Iraqis living in Iraq: "After the war, we had no security force, no police and nothing to replace them. We felt naked

and vulnerable, and fear reigns in the country. . . . People's nerves are always tense" (p. 1). In such a post-war situation, inherent difficulties and unusual complexities arise in trying to discern who is actually worthy of trust versus those who may be mere opportunists taking advantage of an unstable environment. Viewing the partnership decision from the CDC's perspective, it was a crucial point of vulnerability to enter into a new partnership with the leaders of an organization from the country that had militarily invaded and still occupies Iraq. At the very least, a proposed partnership under such circumstances held the potential disadvantage of locking the CDC into an inferior position of power relative to the American organization. Yet, Henan remained open to risk taking in view of the possibility of building a mutually beneficial partnership based on genuine equality in the relationship.

Viewing the transnational partnership decision from Pioneers-USA's perspective, the findings of this case study take into account that fairly soon after the U.S. invasion and during the subsequent military occupation, Pioneers-USA initiated action to explore prospects for a transnational partnership. Pioneers-USA was proactive in sending two separate teams into Iraq to seek out Henan in Baghdad. Henan and the other CDC leaders responded warmly by welcoming both teams and reciprocating with trusting behaviors of their own, manifested by engaging in collaborative planning and joint work with Pioneers. And, as previously noted, within a few weeks after the visit by the second team, Pioneers sent to the CDC an American field worker who was learning Arabic and who voluntarily moved to Baghdad. The CDC provided the necessary living accommodations. Pioneers sent this first field worker, with others to arrive later, to assist Henan in developing the CDC and to serve in Baghdad alongside the CDC's Iraqi staff. Pioneers-USA also continued to manifest trusting action by continuing the personal contacts and visible practical help to Henan and the CDC in support of the partnership's purposes by whatever means possible, even from outside of Iraq. Through these initiatives by Pioneers-USA leaders and the positive reactions by Henan and the CDC, both prospective partners demonstrated at the earliest time possible a willingness to take risks in the relationship by placing themselves in a situation of vulnerability and to become interdependent by sharing valuable personnel and material resources for the sake of the partnership's success. Therefore, the process advanced mainly by the leaders of one organization initiating most of the early trusting action and the leaders of the other party reacting positively to those initiatives and affirming by word and by behavior the prospect of a new partnership. The actions of both organizations were consistent with behavior manifesting risk in relationship during the very early stage of a trusting relationship (see Mayer et al., 1995). This kind of behavior also functioned as initial trusting action in the manner described by Jarvenpaa et al. (1998).

Initial Trusting Action Moving Toward Initial Relational Trust

Each instance of trusting action in which Pioneers-USA and the CDC engaged at the early stage generated momentum toward the initial relational trust that, in turn, would serve as the foundation for a new transnational partnership and a potentially long-term trusting relationship. Participant observations in this study indicated that much of the trusting action displayed by the leaders and members of Pioneers-USA and the CDC occurred by means of them purposefully initiating and engaging in face-to-face interactions and communicating freely with each other. The prospective partners also followed up by pursuing mutually supportive contacts with each other. A key leader of Pioneers-USA and a member of its initial contact team had the following favorable comment regarding the developing relationship with Henan and his

organization: “I think he will especially appreciate the warmth and personal touch of his relationship with [Pioneers]” (S. Richardson, personal communication, July 1, 2004). Participatory experience provided additional evidence that the face-to-face interactions and the accompanying supportive activity initiated an organizational relationship of trust even before the traditional antecedents could predict or determine such a relationship.

In addition, as noted earlier, the essence of strategic interorganizational collaboration is the willingness of the people of one organization to trust and act jointly with the people of another organization to pursue the mutually compatible interests of the partners in the alliance (Doz, 1996). Consequently, as one would also expect to find in this case, there exists substantial evidence of collective trust held mutually and aggregately among the members of the two organizations in the alliance, as manifested by a willingness to accept interdependence and vulnerability to one another.

Impact of Shared Mission and Moral Values on the Trust Antecedents

One can also see in this case that the two Christian organizations imported into the relationship of trust strong expectations about organizational mission and values. These expectations related to their strong commonality of belief in their faith-based moral values and their shared worldview. The initial trusting action by Pioneers-USA and the CDC enabled them, as already shown, to move quickly toward an initial trusting relationship. At a certain point, however, the prospective partners had to address and overcome some initial reluctance to engage whatever vulnerability might be created by pursuing organizational interdependence. This came in the course of some very candid initial dialogues with each other during the second visit by a Pioneers-USA team. What helped the parties most at this point in their face-to-face dialogue was that they affirmed and achieved clarity about their mutual goals and common mission. Pioneers-USA and the CDC have a shared mission as well as closely aligned organizational purposes. Each has a strong commitment to a vision for faith-based community development and Christian ministry outreach. This particular finding in the present case study is consistent with the view that patterns of trusting behavior can arise early in a group's life by homogenous members importing and sharing the same a priori expectations of appropriate behavior (Gersick & Hackman, 1990; see also Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). From the personal interviews and dialogues with Henan and also from his public statements, Pioneers-USA discerned Henan's obvious desire to help the people of Iraq through the development of jobs and microbusinesses that will improve the meager living standards of the families and indirectly strengthen the local Christian community and its ministries for conducting further compassionate outreach.

It is also significant that Pioneers-USA and the CDC as Christian organizations have in common a shared mission that involves communicating a message expressly grounded in trust. This is an important point to emphasize regarding the relationship of trust in the present case because in this hostile external environment, trusting action alone might prove insufficient to keep the parties moving toward initial relational trust if not reinforced in the process by positive perceptions relating to other antecedents of trust. While organizations approaching each other as prospective partners may share common goals, many organizations will not have the further advantage of sharing deeply-held core values. In this case, however, the overarching concept of trust embedded in the prospective partners' shared faith proved to be an important asset. Their commonality of moral values derives from a strong sense of God's benevolent sovereignty over external circumstances, God's ultimate trustworthiness, and mankind's duty to trust God in all

things (see Proverbs 3:5a, for example). Henan has stated the following about his concept of trust: “Fear is a lack of trust in God. . . . So, when I hold onto an experience of trust, looking back on how the hand of God has moved – whether it is personal experience, family, community or in international relations – I can build a hope for the future” (as cited in Smith, 2004, p. 1). Christian ethical teachings by the Apostle Paul emphasize the overriding universal effectiveness and cross-cultural identification that arises from a profession of faith in Jesus Christ: “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him” (Romans 10:12, New International Version). These shared beliefs about the foundations of trust greatly accelerated early progress toward the initial relational trust between Pioneers-USA and the CDC.

As previously discussed, the traditional antecedents or requisites of trust include integrity, benevolent intent (or concern for others), and an ability or capacity to perform or deliver (see Mayer et al., 1995; Shaw, 1998). As also noted before, a party’s perception of these antecedents involve mainly cognitive and affective processes rather than behavioral processes. But, at least to a limited extent, just by Pioneers-USA taking the initiative and investing the resources to be present in Iraq afforded the CDC the opportunity to observe and perceive benevolent intent and capacity to perform in the initial trusting action of Pioneers-USA. To this same extent, we can see evidence in this case that trusting action was indirectly impacting trust through the antecedents of benevolent intent and capacity to perform.

Likewise, shared values and initial trusting action also impacted the partners’ perceptions of integrity as an antecedent of organizational trust. Integrity is a party’s adherence to a set of principles morally acceptable to the one who trusts another (McFall, 1987). This is the form of integrity that McFall referred to as *moral integrity*. From the outset of this case, the moral principles of Pioneers-USA and the CDC were readily acceptable to each other as like-minded, faith-based charitable organizations. Richardson (2002) has expressed the following as being integral to Pioneers-USA’s core values: “Pioneers strives to proclaim Biblical truth, evidenced by integrity in lifestyle and relationships. . . . We want to trust and honor Him [God] in everything we do” (p. 3). For these reasons, it is clear that these two Christian organizations imported strong expectations about integrity into the relationship of trust based on their strong commonality of belief in their faith-based moral values and their shared worldview, which became very important in creating initial trust in the early stage of forming the partnership.

Timing also plays a role in regards to how trusting action affects the traditional antecedents of trust. Because parties form their perceptions of integrity early in the relationship, Mayer et al. (1995) contended that integrity should play a more important role in generating trust than demonstrations of benevolent intent (i.e., concern for the welfare of others). Conversely, according to Jarvenpaa et al. (1998), it normally takes more time for benevolence to affect trust. If these dynamics are true, then they may partly explain the observation by Meyerson et al. (1996) that efforts at supporting or demonstrating care for group members become less relevant in the specific context of establishing swift trust. However, in the present case, Pioneers-USA was proactively seeking a transnational partnership with the explicit and demonstrated purpose of finding opportunities for outreach and assistance to Iraqis in the post-war recovery. So, the CDC could readily and reasonably infer benevolent intent from Pioneers-USA having traveled to Baghdad and initiated contact with the CDC. This is consistent with the conclusion by Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) that member-care (benevolence) and swift trust do seem to complement each other. On the other hand, the findings of this case do not seem consistent with the prediction by Jarvenpaa et al. that manifestations of integrity would likely play a more important role in

generating trust than demonstrations of benevolence. The evidence here is inconclusive as to whether the CDC inferred integrity through any of the initial trusting action by Pioneers-USA. It appears that integrity was more difficult for Pioneers-USA to overtly demonstrate than benevolence or ability, especially in such a short time. So, in this case, the most obvious explanation is that reciprocal trusting actions moved the parties along a process so quickly that integrity manifested through trusting action probably could not clearly emerge fast enough to have an early impact. This explains why moral integrity perceived cognitively through shared mission and common values likely had more effect here than integrity perceived through the initial trusting action by Pioneers-USA.

Other evidence in this case suggests, however, that as more time passed; the CDC could observe integrity through behavior manifested by Pioneers-USA through leadership style. Pioneers-USA's core value emphasizing servant leadership presupposes that whatever the individual leader's style, genuine concern for others is something that members of an organization can readily discern. Indeed, according to Richardson (2002), "this is the bottom line in Christian leadership" (pp. 21-22). Values such as these expressed by one of the key organizational leaders, and as manifested through the actions of the organization's leaders, will strengthen perceived integrity as a requisite of the trusting relationship. Ultimately, the leaders reinforce and prove the words through demonstrated leadership behavior manifested to a partner.

In sum, the affirmation of shared mission and values held by the two parties in this case reinforced the accuracy of the inferences they were reasonably drawing from each other's initial trusting action. The findings in this case underscore the importance of how initial trusting action can and does affect directly the relationship of trust. But, this case also shows how the parties were able to make reasonable inferences from each other's trusting action and develop perceptions about the other's integrity, caring concern for others, and ability to follow through on commitments in the partnership. Thus, the findings also highlight how initial trusting action operates indirectly through the parties' perceptions about the traditional antecedents of trust. Initial trusting action by a party and the traditional ingredients of a party's perceived trustworthiness were present and operative in this case as antecedents in generating the initial relational trust that was essential to achieving the transnational partnership.

Limitations and Implications for Future Studies

A limitation of this study exists in regards to the survey data on organizational risk taking by Pioneers-USA. Kline and Saunders (1998) have not validated their instrument as a means of isolating and measuring discreet variables. Rather, they designed it for the broader diagnostic purpose of identifying organizational attitudes and dynamics including risk taking. However, this study's use of the survey was consistent with the instrument's intended diagnostic purpose and also elicited useful information about Pioneers-USA leaders' favorable subjective views on risk taking. A further limitation is that this study surveyed only organizational leaders within Pioneers-USA, a population that is a subset of the much larger population of organizational leaders in Pioneers internationally. On the other hand, Pioneers-USA is the specific organization that initiated and established the transnational partnership with the CDC. Also, by surveying the smaller population of Pioneers-USA leaders, the study was able to include nearly all of the leaders within the organization that actually formed the alliance with the CDC. These limitations, therefore, did not affect those findings and conclusions that are relevant to the central research question in the study.

A further limitation of this study is that it reports a single case on the process of initiating and forming one international strategic alliance. Additional case studies would provide further insight on the issue of how trusting action impacts organizations' ability to initiate new intercultural relationships of trust and successfully create new international strategic alliances. Further case studies and other research would also help to address the expressed need for more data on additional mechanisms involved in the process of initiating and forming alliances, as well as for more data explaining various mechanisms of how initial trusting action and risk-taking impact the antecedents of trust. Future studies could determine how organizations initiating alliances might learn to embrace swift trust from the outset or to trigger early the processes that can generate swift trust as an emergent but inchoate form of trust. In this regard, further research should also examine whether initial trusting action and swift trust are distinct from each other, as Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) depicted these concepts in their model. Finally, additional research could further illuminate how initial trusting action and risk taking in relationship affect the long-term relationships of trust and how experiences in trusting action and risk taking eventually feed back into a cycle to affect future attempts to initiate transnational partnerships and international strategic alliances.

Conclusion

This article has presented the findings of a case study that focused on how, in the earliest stage of initiating a transnational or global partnership or an international strategic alliance, the initial trusting action of the leaders and members of the partnering organizations opened the way for an intercultural relationship of trust. This study achieves the goal of adding to an understanding of the importance of initial trusting action in building an initial relational trust between prospective transnational partners. From the outset, Pioneers-USA was proactive in initiating an international and intercultural relationship of trust that became the basis for a transnational partnership. Pioneers-USA and the CDC both manifested initial trusting action through early risk-taking behaviors and resource sharing that displayed a willingness to be vulnerable and interdependent. This case therefore supports the conclusion that initial trusting action between organizations plays a crucial role in overcoming the major obstacles to organizational trust and proved indispensable to the parties moving quickly into the initial relational trust they achieved.

The facts of this case illustrate the importance of organizational leaders engaging purposefully and proactively in demonstrating initial trusting action and engaging risk taking in relationship at the earliest possible stage of the emerging alliance (see Mayer et al., 1995). The proactive initiatives and direct involvement of leaders in both organizations were integral to the initial trusting action that provided momentum toward achieving an initial relational trust (see Nielsen, 2001). The respective organizational leaders facilitated and even accelerated the process by encouraging and guiding initial trusting action toward an organizational relationship of trust. The leaders also served as catalysts for risk taking early in the relationship and reciprocated trusting action in response to initial trusting action exhibited by the other party. Without the initial trusting action and the reciprocal risk taking in relationship that was manifested by the organizations and encouraged by the organizational leaders, the significant external obstacles the parties confronted in a hostile environment might have completely blocked a new transnational partnership.

A further objective of this study was to determine whether initial trusting action by two prospective transnational partners functioned as an antecedent of trust. The findings of this case are consistent with the traditional antecedents of organizational trust identified by Mayer et al. (1995). The findings are also consistent with the model proposed by Jarvenpaa et al. (1998), which adopted the traditional antecedents but further identified initial trusting action as an additional antecedent of organizational trust. So, another key conclusion of this case study is that the initial trusting action by Pioneers-USA and the CDC functioned as a distinct and crucial antecedent to the relationship of trust, even before the mostly cognitive and affective traditional antecedents of trust could adequately develop. As the dynamic process of building organizational trust continued between Pioneers-USA and the CDC, the prospective partners were developing and adjusting their perceptions about each other's integrity, benevolence (caring concern), and ability to perform in a partnership. The evidence shows that the prospective partners' initial trusting action remained consistent with their expectations about shared mission and moral values. The parties' mutual affirmation of their shared mission and values as faith-based charitable organizations reinforced the accuracy of their perceptions as they observed each other's initial trusting action consistent with those values. The mechanisms one sees at work in this case, therefore, support Jarvenpaa et al.'s proposition that trusting action functions both directly as a nontraditional antecedent of trust and indirectly by enhancing the parties' early perceptions regarding the other's integrity, caring concern for others, and ability to follow through on commitments.

Within the dynamic process of developing an intercultural relationship of trust, initial trusting action displayed early in the process by the parties provided the momentum needed to surmount significant impediments to a trusting relationship including geographic distance, cross-cultural difference, and military conflict. Through proactive and reciprocal trusting action; the parties overcame the distrust that was inherent within a hostile, low-trust external environment. Initial trusting action, therefore, proved to be a crucial component by which the two organizations rapidly achieved initial relational trust and ultimately created a new transnational partnership.

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