TRUST IN THE PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare
in the School of Social Work

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
1988

D.S.W. converted to
Ph.D. in 2011
ABSTRACT

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This study explored trust in the professional relationship from the perspective of social workers employed in a large voluntary mental health agency. Its purpose was to provide a systematic understanding of social workers' judgments of the function of trust in the professional helping process. Barber's (1983) theoretical formulations provided the framework within which this study examined social workers' understanding of the significance of trust in the professional relationship and the relative importance of professional competence and commitment to serving clients' best interests in the development of trust.

The study's questionnaire was completed by 118 social workers in 18 community-based programs, with supplemental information gathered by interviews with 25 social workers in these and other settings. Variables of interest included demographic and agency practice data as well as social workers' judgments about various components of trust as measured by a series of Likert scale response items.

Findings indicated that social workers judged professional commitment to serving clients' best interests
to be significantly more important than competence in three aspects of the helping process: development of client trust, client cooperation with workers' suggestions or recommendations, and client decisions regarding transfers to other professionals.

A factor analysis of data resulted in the identification of four trust-related factors: match, or fit, between client and worker; clients' emotional/attitudinal system; case status; and, political/economic conditions.

A one-way analysis of variance indicated no significant differences in social workers' judgments of the importance of competence and commitment in relation to workers' agency practices. Correlational analysis of data also indicated weak relationships among variables.

Findings suggest that social workers perceive trust development as related to the interplay among client, worker, agency, and public policy variables. Although workers may see themselves, to some extent, as active agents in the generation of trust, they emphasize the importance of client-centered factors, such as, clinical diagnosis, in the development of trust in the professional relationship.

Further research is needed to compare respondents' judgments about the development of trust with perceptions held by clients, social workers in other fields of practice, and/or professionals in other disciplines.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEDICATION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### I RESEARCH STATEMENT

- Purpose of the Study .............................................. 1
- Research Questions .............................................. 2
- Rationale for the Study ......................................... 3
- Significance of the Study ...................................... 5
- Definitions of Concepts .................................... 8

### II THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RELATED LITERATURE

- Conceptual Framework ........................................ 11
  - Erikson: Basic Trust ...................................... 12
  - Barber: Professional Trust .............................. 14
  - Lewis: Morality of Trust ................................... 21
- Trust, Professionalism, and Social Work Competence .......... 24
- Related Literature on Professionalism ....................... 24
- Social Work Competence ..................................... 30
- Trust and Social Work Ethics .................................... 31
- The Working Alliance: An Ecological Systems Perspective on Trust ........................................... 36
- Trust and Relationship Building ................................... 38
- Social Workers and Clients .................................. 40
- Summary .......................................................... 42

### III RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

- Background ..................................................... 44
- Study Design .................................................. 45
- Variables ........................................................ 47
- Research Instruments .......................................... 51
  - Questionnaire ................................................ 52
  - Pre-test of Questionnaire .................................. 54
  - Interview Schedule ......................................... 56
  - Pre-test of Interview ...................................... 58
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method of Data Collection</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Site</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure for Data Collection</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Data</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Analysis</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Analysis</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV STUDY RESPONDENTS</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Workers</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Profile</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Workers' Agency Practice</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V FINDINGS: PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENTS ON TRUST</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Trust</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences on Development of Client Trust</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Agency Practice and Public Policies on Trust</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Competence and Commitment to Clients' Interests</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Trust Factors</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlational Analysis of Trust Factors and Worker Descriptive Variables</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating Trust in the Client-Worker Relationship</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlational Analysis of Rank Order Data and Worker Descriptive Variables</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Practices and Differences in Judgments of Competence and Commitment: One-Way Analysis of Variance</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI WORKERS' ANECDOITAL VIEWS ON THE CONCEPT OF TRUST</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Trust</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems of Trust</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients With No Basic Trust</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients With 'Too Much' Trust</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients Whom Workers Do Not Trust</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work Competencies</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Workers' Commitment to Clients' Best Interests</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Image of Social Work</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Rational Distrust&quot;</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Trustworthiness</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VII CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions ........................................... 131
Implications of the Study ........................................... 140
Practice Implications ................................................ 140
Implications Related to Professional Concerns .................... 145
Possible Future Research ............................................ 147
Recommendations ........................................................ 149

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................... 152
APPENDIX A: Questionnaire .......................................... 158
APPENDIX B: Interview Questions .................................... 174
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Age Range of Study Respondents</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Categories of Client Problems Mentioned</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Categories of Social Work Services Mentioned</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Types of Program Services</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Professional Judgments of the Extent to Which Client Capacity to Trust in the Helping Process is Related to Clinical Diagnosis and Presenting Problem(s)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Professional Judgments of the Importance of Agency Practice and Public Policies on the Development of Client Trust</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Professional Judgments of Differences in Importance of Competence and Commitment in Five Situations Within the Client-Worker Relationship</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Correlations Between Worker Descriptive Variables and Four Trust Factors</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rank Order Data on Social Workers' Judgments of the Importance of Worker Competence and Commitment in the Generation of Trust in the Client-Worker Relationship</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rank Order Data on Social Workers' Judgments of Specific Worker Activities That Build Client Trust in their Professional Competence</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Rank Order Data on Social Workers' Judgments of the Importance of Specific Client Characteristics in the Development of Positive Helping Relationships</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rank Order Data on Social Workers' Judgments of the Importance of Specific Agency Practices That Influence the Development of Client Trust in the Professional Relationship</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE</td>
<td>Correlations Between Worker Descriptive Variables and Social Work Variables</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Analysis of Variance Summaries for Five Difference Scores By Amount of Agency Time Spent in Direct Client Contact</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Analysis of Variance Summaries for Five Difference Scores By Program Type in Which Social Workers Provided Services</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to the following people for their support and guidance throughout this dissertation process:

Professor Brenda McGowan, my advisor, for her conscientious review of my work;

Professor Bernard Barber, for his theory of trust which became the framework of this study;

Sheri Franklyn, who handled the administrative details of this process with patience and enthusiasm.

My appreciation extends to the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. I thank Rena Schulman, M.S., for first directing me to the proper channels for agency research, and Dr. Bruce Grellong, for arranging for program participation in the data collection process of my study.

My love extends to my mother for her enduring devotion; to my brother for always encouraging me to pursue my ambitions; to my sister-in-law for showing that she cared when I most needed it; to my Aunt Mary who has always been a special friend.

And, finally, to Essie Bailey who is warmly remembered as an anchor of support and encouragement throughout my doctoral studies.

vi
In memory of my father

John Francis Rohde

whose love of life and joy in learning

have always remained close within my heart
CHAPTER I

RESEARCH STATEMENT

Purpose of the Study

This research study was designed to provide an empirically based, systematic understanding of social workers' judgments of the function of trust in the professional helping relationship. The purpose of this exploratory study was to clarify how the concept of trust is understood and used by social workers in clinical practice. This study examined trust in the professional helping relationship from the perspective of 118 social workers engaged in direct services to clients in a large voluntary mental health agency, with supplemental information on trust provided by 25 social workers in other settings.

Research objectives of the study were:

- to explore social workers' judgments of the importance of client trust in the professional helping process;

- to explore and examine social workers' judgments of the importance of professional competence and the commitment to serving clients' best interests, within the theoretical framework of Barber (1983);

- to identify factors which, in the judgments of social workers, influence the development of client trust; and,
- to investigate social workers' judgments of the relationship between the development of client trust and the course, or perceived outcome, of social work intervention.

Further research activity was directed toward an exploration of the ways in which agency-based social workers generate client trust.

**Research Questions**

The study was guided by research questions which evolved out of the purpose of the study and were formulated within the study's conceptual, or theoretical, framework on trust. They became, in essence, the core, or central organization, of the study's research activity, and presented a condition typical of exploratory research studies which "are primarily concerned with generating ideas or hypotheses rather than actually testing them in any way" (Williamson, Karp, & Dalphin, 1977, p. 20).

These research questions are:

1. How important is client trust in the professional relationship?

2. What influences the development of client trust in the professional helping process?

3. What factors are associated with the development of client trust?

4. How important are professional competence and the commitment to serving clients' best interests in the development of trust?

5. How do social workers generate client trust in the helping process?
6. How does client trust affect the course, or perceived outcome, of the professional helping process?

7. What worker traits and agency practice activities are associated with trust in professional helping relationships?

Rationale for the Study

This study evolved out of a growing awareness of the importance of trust to the professional helping relationship. In much the same way that Erikson (1959) describes the sense of trust as basic to healthy human development, Barber (1983) emphasizes that trust is most significant in the development of the professional relationship. In social work, Lewis (1972) affirms that the professional relationship requires trust; its absence leads to a sense of uncertainty for both professional and client, and a genuine questioning of the professional's motives. He states that the moral aspect of social work lies in the efforts of social workers to generate, in their relationships with clients, a sense of trust and justice. The issue becomes one of how social workers engage clients so as to foster the sense of trust in the helping process.

Although Simon (1970) describes the professional relationship as the foundation of the helping process, client-worker relationships vary in intensity, duration, and focus. The relationships social workers establish to help clients cope with crises differ significantly from
those established in the more long-term psychosocial approach to practice (Roberts & Nee, 1970). Regardless of the approach to practice, the theme of trust-building is evidenced in the writings of social work practitioners, educators, and theorists. Schulman (1982) states that social workers need to create a "climate of trust" with their clients for a successful helping transaction. Bandler (1967) contends that it is only when a relationship of trust is established that social workers can help clients. Scherz (1970) attributes even greater significance to the role of trust in social work practice with families, making the following distinction between the therapeutic alliance and the contract:

By therapeutic alliance is meant the establishment of trust; trust on the part of the family that the worker wishes to help and trust on the part of the worker that the family wants help. . . . The therapeutic alliance is largely unspoken and develops from the process between family and worker. It is different from a treatment contract in that the latter is a conscious agreement between family and worker to work in certain ways toward certain goals. The treatment contract is ineffective unless preceded by a therapeutic alliance. (p. 237)

Although trust is thus clearly defined as a very important component of the professional relationship, there have been few efforts to study what is meant by this concept. Empirical verification is needed to enhance social workers' knowledge base on the development of trust.

This study, with a focus on social workers' professional judgments of the importance of trust, was conceived
of as a preliminary step in the profession's knowledge-building efforts, and the subsequent organization of knowledge. With little empirical research on the function of trust, this research offers a potential for laying the groundwork for an understanding of how trust operates in the actual practice of social workers. Its rationale comes from two sources: the proposition that trust is a significant variable in the professional relationship; and, the lack of previous empirical research on the function of trust in the client-worker relationship.

The professional relationship is transactional in nature (Meyer, 1976; Germain & Gitterman, 1980). Social workers enter professional relationships with a set of principles guided by knowledge, values, and skills. Since their participation in this transaction impacts upon the development of client trust, the more that social workers can enhance their knowledge of trust-building activities, the better able they should be to actively engage clients in trusting relationships. Therefore, for purposes of this study, trust development was examined from the perspective of social workers.

Significance of the Study

This study on trust in the professional relationship is significant to social work in three different areas of professional concern.
First, this research brings the trust component of the helping relationship to a level of awareness for study and use by social workers and other helping professionals. Although trust has been theorized as an important variable, its significance and use in the professional relationship have not been empirically examined. Social workers have grown increasingly aware of the need to analyze empirically the theories and practices upon which social work interventions are based, and to measure the effectiveness of various techniques and interventions (Jayartne & Levy, 1979; Fischer, 1978). Therefore, this study is significant to social workers in that it contributes to the profession's efforts to identify and enhance its base of knowledge. Social work knowledge and skill in the use of the professional relationship is generic to the community of social work practitioners, regardless of their fields of specialization. Although client-worker transactions vary in purpose, duration, and depth, literature suggests that client trust is important in the various kinds of professional relationships. In much the same way that empathy, warmth, and genuineness have been identified as core conditions of the helping relationship (Truax & Carkhuff, 1967; Fischer, 1978), this research was an attempt to understand the condition of trust in the professional relationship, and, thus, represents a contribution to social work's body of knowledge.
Second, this research is significant to social work in that it lends itself to the recent efforts to train social workers for effective practice. Having identified the core conditions of the helping relationship, Truax and Carkhuff (1967) developed methods for training professionals in empathy, warmth, and genuineness. In a similar way, an understanding of the importance of trust, together with a knowledge of skills developed by social workers to generate client trust, can serve as the basis for training social workers in the establishment of professional relationships based on trust. This research is a first step in the process of training social workers to work more effectively in building client trust.

The study of trust is significant to social work in that it identifies, for the professional social worker, an important condition that bears on the professional's abilities to help people-in-need. Together with an awareness of the issue of trust, this study carries importance in its capacity to generate knowledge on how social workers practice in ways that engage clients through trust. If, indeed, trust is an important variable in social work practice, problems of trust may be expressed by clients turning to other helping professionals where the sense of trust may be greater, or by the decisions of clients to completely withdraw from services. The purpose of this research was to examine the issue of trust, its problems
as they relate to social work, and the ways in which social workers can enhance trust in the professional relationship.

Third, this research was conceptualized within the theoretical framework of Barber (1983). Its significance to social work lay in its potential contribution to the profession's efforts to strengthen, and develop, its own unique body of abstract, conceptual knowledge. Turner (1979) defines theory as the "logical explanation of the interrelatedness of a set of facts that have been empirically verified or are capable of being verified" (p. 2). The empirical investigation of trust, within the context of Barber's conceptual formulation of trust, provides the beginning of a verifiable body of information that would lend itself to gradual theory building.

**Definitions of Concepts**

**Client Trust**

Client trust is the sense of confidence that the professional will provide the services, or help, that the client needs, or requests. This confidence is founded on the client's beliefs that the professional is competent to offer help, and is committed to serving client's best interests.

**Competence**

Competence refers to the expertise of the professional within a defined area of practice. It includes the
professional's specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities. Barber (1983) refers to this concept as the technical competence of the professional.

Commitment to Client's Best Interests

This refers to the professional's responsibility to place the needs of clients above his or her own. Barber (1983) uses the term "fiduciary obligation" to refer to this phenomenon.

Client Mistrust

Client mistrust, or distrust, refers to the client's lack of confidence that the professional will provide the services, or help, that the client needs, or requests.

Social Worker

The professional social worker is an individual who has earned a master's degree in social work, and who has responsibility for providing direct services to clients.

Professional Judgment

Professional judgment is the expert ability of the professional to assess a situation, problem, or condition; to identify its significant characteristics; and, to intervene appropriately. Professional judgment is founded on professional knowledge, skill, values, and experience.
Professional Relationship

Professional relationships involve the dynamic interaction between the professional social worker and the client. Its purpose is to provide a social service, or help clients cope with problems in living. Professional relationships vary in intensity, duration, and focus.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RELATED LITERATURE

This research was an empirical investigation of trust in the professional relationship, formulated within the theoretical framework of Barber (1983). The study assumed a "high level of connectedness between theory and practice" (Turner, 1979, p. 1), and was firmly grounded in the theories, concepts, and related literature on trust. The purpose of this review is to present the theoretical framework within which the study was created, and to discuss ideas and constructs generated by theoreticians and practitioners on trust as a personal, social, and professional experience. In addition, this review examines the impact of trust on social work practice, implications of professional or semi-professional status on the trustworthiness of social work, and ethical considerations of trust.

Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework of trust represented a synthesis of three theories, or approaches, to the understanding of trust. It included the works of Erikson (1959) who explained the development of trust as
basic in a series of epigenetic stages of life; Barber (1983) who analyzed trust as the foundation to the professional relationship; and, Lewis (1972) who emphasized trust as a moral principle inherent in the mission and purpose of social work.

**Erikson: Basic Trust**

A major contribution to our understanding of trust is the work of Erikson (1959) in his analysis of the stages of healthy human development. Trust is the primary task to be accomplished in the first year of life; it is the "cornerstone of a healthy personality" (p. 56); and, it sets the groundwork for successive developmental tasks. Erikson conceptualized human development as a process that followed an epigenetic principle of growth.

This principle states that anything that grows has a ground plan, and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole. (p. 52)

The development of trust serves as the foundation for future development and progression. Erikson refers to trust as a basic sense that pervades consciousness as well as unconsciousness, and is reflected in personal and social behavior. Although Erikson describes trust as critical to the healthy development of the individual, the transactional nature of trust development is recognized in his formulations. Trust develops as the infant learns that parental
figures, or their substitutes, can be depended upon to provide the care that the infant needs or demands; thus, the infant's trust depends on the trustworthiness of parental, or other nurturing, figures. Erikson continues to say that, in addition, the infant gradually develops a sense of trust in himself and in his own trustworthiness to be able to cope with his own impulses and bodily urges. When the parental figure denies the infant the care he, or she, needs or demands, is unreliable in providing care, or does not have a sense of his own trustworthiness, a basic sense of mistrust develops in the infant. The establishment of a sense of basic trust or mistrust is the first developmental task which sets the stage for personality patterns that will endure throughout life. Erikson notes that there needs to be a balance of trust over mistrust for healthy development to occur, and that the assurance of this balance can come only through the quality of the parent-child relationship. Erikson adds:

Mothers create a sense of trust in their children . . . which in its quality combines sensitive care of the baby's individual needs and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness within the trusted framework of their community's life style. (p. 63)

Although Erikson speaks of trust and mistrust in the personal sense, environmental factors are recognized as major influential forces on the balance of trust and mistrust. The environment can mean parental figures, significant others, community, and other relevant outside
factors. It is important to note that Erikson speaks of a 'balance' of trust over mistrust, and that trust development is not an absolute entity, but rather a quality which individuals accomplish in varying degrees of personal and social growth, or development. Despite the psychological orientation of Erikson's theory and analysis, trust is conceptualized as an interactive, or transactional, process. It is this social quality of trust that lends itself to further examination by social workers and sociologists.

In summary, the personal and social significance of trust emanates from the work of Erikson, and from the recognition of mutual trust as the basis for social relations built on cooperation and communication (Loomis, 1959). Trust has, essentially, been described as the binding force in human interaction; in the absence of trust, it would appear that social relationships, on the order of simple, ordinary exchanges, or the more intense familial, or professional, ties, would show signs of distress (Barber, 1983; Blau, 1964).

**Barber: Professional Trust**

One of the important contributions to our understanding of trust is the sociological analysis of Barber (1983). Barber examines trust as a social problem that is related to the interactions between individuals and several of the major social institutions, including the family, the political system, the voluntary sector, and the professions.
Unlike the work of Erikson (1959) with the focus on a personal sense of trust, Barber directs his analysis to the collective sense of trust or distrust in American society.

Despite differences between the psychological approach to the study of trust by Erikson (1959) and the sociological analysis of Barber (1983), three themes are common throughout both theories of trust, and serve as the means for incorporating these theoretical approaches in the conceptual framework of this study. These are:

1. Trust is basic and essential to the social interactions between individuals and their social environments;

2. Trust always involves a pattern of reciprocity and mutuality; and,

3. Trust is not a static condition, and is always in the process of developing and changing.

As Erikson (1959) speaks of the need for a balance of trust over mistrust in our life patterns, Barber (1983) directs our attention to the dynamic quality of trust. In fact, it is this dynamic quality of trust that contributes significantly to the importance of studying trust. As recognition of the factors important to the development of trust become known, individuals and groups are in better positions to strengthen the balance of trust over mistrust. Individual, or public, distrust is not a static condition, according to Barber (1983), and, as such, can be changed.
through the demonstration of trustworthiness and the practice of skills and behaviors that promote, or enhance, trust.

An overview of Barber's (1983) theoretical formulations on trust indicates an analysis of the meaning of trust. Trust is identified with the expectations people have of each other, and of the social institutions with which they interact. Barber emphasizes that: "all social interaction is an endless process of acting upon expectations, which are part cognitive, part emotional, and part moral" (p. 9). This definition of trust considers elements beyond those described by Luhmann (1979) as a "reduction of complexity through trust" and the significance of this condition "in an increasingly organized social structure" (p. 25). The attribute of trust is, therefore, critical to the maintenance of social order, social control, and power relations. As Lewis and Weigert (1985) state: "Trust is functionally necessary for the continuance of harmonious social relationships" (p. 969).

In engaging the task of analyzing trust, Barber (1983) addresses definitional problems through a set of specific expectations that individuals have of each other in social transactions. They are:

1. expectations of regularity, persistence, and order in the world;
2. expectations of technical competence, which includes knowledge and skill; and,

3. expectations of fiduciary obligation and responsibility, which is the moral imperative that, in specific kinds of social interactions, the interests of others are placed above one's own.

Barber (1983) maintains that these three conditions, or expectations, are internalized by all persons, and are demonstrated in the ways in which individuals conduct their lives, formulate decisions, and make choices. Barber's hypothesis offers the theoretical explanation for earlier experimental studies conducted by Deutsch (1958) in which pairs of prisoners made the decision to confess to a crime on the basis of their expectations of their partner's behavior. The conceptualization of trust as an interactive, or social, experience is confirmed in the work of Lewis and Weigert (1985) who emphasize that "trust is applicable to the relations among people rather than to their psychological states taken individually" (p. 968).

Given the meaning of trust as the expectation itself, and the recognition of trust as a sociological concept, Barber (1983) formulates a theoretical framework within which the professional relationship can be understood. Assuming the perspective of the client, or consumer, Barber defines trust as:
1. expectations that the professional will be technically competent in defined areas of expertise; and,

2. expectations that the professional will act with fiduciary obligation in placing the interests of clients above his own.

He states that trust is a critical element in the professional relationship, and that "trust is ideally the primary mode of control in the relations between professionals and the client" (p. 131). It is the failure of professionals to fulfill these client expectations that has led to what Barber (1983) describes as the social problem of "rational distrust" in the professions on the parts of individual consumers and the public. Barber points to the growing numbers of malpractice suits against professionals as possible indications of the failures of professionals to meet client needs and expectations. He adds that external societal control of the professions may be a necessary action in the fact of professional incompetency and unethical behavior. Barber emphatically states:

If self-regulation worked very well in the professions, it would produce high standards of trustworthiness with respect to technically competent performance and fiduciary obligation and responsibility. At present, however, the professions seem to be failing to meet public expectations. (p. 139)

In an earlier article, the observation was made that the excessive power, the lack of satisfactory self-regulation, and the public irresponsibility of the professions is one of our new "social problems." (Barber, 1978, p. 600)
The "rational distrust" of professionals on the part of the client, or consumer, is identified as a sense that expectations for competence and fiduciary responsibility will not be met. It is not a paranoia on the part of the American people, but rather a realistically founded belief based on the failures of professionals to fulfill those expectations. Barber (1983) suggests, in his theoretical considerations on trust, that external controls and regulatory bodies are critical as supplements to the assurance of technical competence and fiduciary obligation on the part of professionals.

Barber notes that in all interrelationships, including those that occur between professionals and clients, the development of trust indicates that "common goals and values have brought and keep them together" (p. 21). With some similarity to Erikson's (1959) position that trust is not an absolute, Barber maintains the conviction that "trust is never wholly realized in social relationships; maintaining it is a reciprocal and endless task for all" (p. 21).

With specific regard to the professional helping relationships, it is clear that both clients and professionals participate in the development of trust and distrust. Barber (1983) states that clients come to the professional relationship with a greater consumer awareness, more education, and a knowledge of his or her rights in that relationship. The professional, on the other hand, has
acquired a sophisticated body of knowledge, and is in the position of making decisions that greatly affect the lives of clients. Therefore, the professional-client interface has changed dramatically over the course of time in its mutual expectations, boundaries, and responsibilities. Although Barber's formulations add insight into the trust relations between professional and client, his focus is on the expectations of clients, with some need for consideration of the perspective of the professional. Given the transactional nature of the professional-client relationship, recognition of the professional's expectations of clients, as well as of themselves, represents an additional and important tool in our understanding of professional trust relations. It was with this goal in mind that this research study on trust in the professional relationship was conducted from the perspective of agency-based social workers.

In social work, trust relations become even more complex as its status as a profession remains the focus of controversy among social workers and sociologists as well. Barber states that the helping professions, such as social work, share in the principles of trust and "rational distrust" that pervade professional relationships. At the same time, social work struggles to establish itself as a profession, or semi-profession, able to identify and assert its own special areas of knowledge and domain of
practice (Meyer, 1976; Bartlett, 1970; Rosenfeld, 1983). It is uncertain whether the issues of social work's status and its concerns for autonomy within the organizational settings of practice influence trust relations between social workers and clients. In examining trust from the perspective of the helping professional, it may be possible to explore how these factors influence the ways in which social workers build client trust.

**Lewis: Morality of Trust**

Trust relations in social work occupy a position of importance in the array of professional practices. The vulnerability of clients, their willingness to accept help, and the profession's value system based on equality and justice reflect the significance of trust both in theory and in practice. In his analysis of trust in social work, Lewis (1972) identifies the generation of client trust as the moral aspect of the profession, and proposes that social workers engage in active efforts aimed at building client trust. Lewis defines trust as the "organizing device" in the helping relationship, facilitating the interventive process, and depending on the professional's view of what constitutes trustworthy behavior. Lewis addresses the issue of potential conflicts between the professional's commitment to the needs of the client and the demands of the organization, and maintains that social workers must demonstrate, both in attitude and behavior, that their
primary commitment is with the client. In this sense, Lewis takes a position that is, to some degree, different from that of Barber (1983). While Lewis holds that client trust is more an issue of the professional's commitment to placing the interests of clients above his or her own, and not the professional's competence, Barber maintains that client trust and distrust are dependent on the professional's capability to meet expectations for both competence and fiduciary obligation, or the demonstration of a concern for other's interests above one's own.

Lewis describes how client distrust can develop as a result of circumstances that are beyond the control of the helping professional. When resources are scarce, or when public policies deny benefits and opportunities, the helping professional is powerless to provide the needed services to clients. The result is a sense of distrust of the helping professional on the part of individual clients as well as the public. Lewis concludes that client trust can best develop in an atmosphere of availability of services and freedom of choice. In what Lewis describes as the "moral crisis" of our times, the social negotiation of trust between social workers and their clients becomes an issue of serious concern.

The unique position of the social worker, as a professional who practices within the agency, or organizational, setting adds new dimensions to the establishment
of trust, considered by Lewis as an issue of morality within the profession:

Siporin (1983) distinguishes between morality and ethics:

Morality is defined here as a set of values, attitudes, norms, standards, and principles about right and wrong conduct. ... By ethics, we mean that part of a morality that concerns the duties and obligations for good, right conduct in relationships between people. (p. 11)

Siporin summarizes that "professional social work ethics refer to social work conduct that is good and right in helping role relationships with clients, colleagues, and others" (p. 11). He notes that social workers must make choices, and decisions, in serving the interests of their clients. For Lewis (1972), the social worker's ability to make choices or decisions on behalf of his or her clients is limited if the services requested, or social resources needed, are not available in the context of societal or political systems. Lewis emphasizes the moral imperatives in social work practice, and states:

Commitment ... is a matter of trusting the other's intentions, not his competence. It depends on factors affecting, but extending far beyond the relationship. Thus, in a society where social practice and policies evidence a lack of regard for distributive justice and privacy, trust is the earliest victim. (p. 405)

Within the context of Siporin's considerations of the distinction between morality and ethics, it would appear that Lewis' (1972) position on trust and commitment has
implications relevant to both the profession's moral foundations and its ethical principles of practice.

**Trust, Professionalism, and Social Work Competence**

For social work, the problem of trust has even greater implications because its struggles to establish itself as a profession, with the rights and responsibilities incumbent on that status, are evidenced throughout its history. Barber (1983) observes that despite their concern for public and social welfare, the helping professions, including social work, are not immune to the social dilemma of distrust. The distrust pervades "both the competence and the fiduciary responsibility of various types of institutions and persons holding positions of power" (p. 162).

**Related Literature on Professionalism**

By definition, professional recognition means the attainment of a systematic body of knowledge that is, largely, theoretical and abstract in nature; a service ideal, or collectivity orientation, in its relationship to society; and, a considerable degree of autonomy in service delivery (Goode, 1960; Larson, 1977; Barber, 1963). With the achievement of professional status, there is commonly a greater public recognition of expertise, enhanced power, and social control, to a greater or lesser extent,
over a particular segment of service delivery (Goode, 1960; Larson, 1977; Barber, 1978). Although it may be assumed that professional status is associated with positive consequences and rewards, Meyer (1981) cautions us to be alert to potential negative results. In this context, Meyer explores the emergence of self-help groups in areas previously serviced by professionals, and concludes:

It seems a self-help group springs up for every area of professional expertise. Why? Is it from a lack of confidence in professional help? Is it a way of seeking intimacy? Is it a reaction to bureaucratization? (p. 71)

In the ideal, professionalism is intended as a means of assuring the public as well as individual consumers of professional competence and the commitment to working on behalf of clients' best interests. On the other hand, professional status is not without its problems; for example, failures of professionals can often be difficult or impossible to confront, or even correct; and, professionals may not respond adequately to present, or newly emerging, individual and societal needs, and, so, the emergence of such groups, as those that are self-help in nature.

Problems of trust pervade both the full-fledged profession as well as the helping profession (Barber, 1983). For social work, the issue may be one of its uncertain professional status, and its struggles to define its domain of practice (Meyer, 1973; Rosenfeld, 1983). Social workers search to identify for themselves the areas in which they
can claim expertise; sociologists engaged in the study of professions have not been convinced that social work has sufficiently developed a system of abstract, theoretical knowledge; and, the public maintains some confusion about the role of social workers.

The history of social work's struggles with its status dates back to 1915 when Abraham Flexner addressed the question, "Is Social Work a Profession?" in his presentation to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections. Flexner identified six criteria which defined professional status:

Professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility; they derive their own raw material from science and learning; this material they work up to a practical and definite end; they possess an educational communicable technique; they tend to self-organization; they are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation. (p. 10)

As a result of the mediating role undertaken by social workers in their organizations, and, even more importantly, social work's lack of a systematic body of knowledge to which only its members could claim expertise, Flexner (1915) concluded that social work had not earned professional status. His conclusions laid the groundwork for social work's insecurity about its status in society for years to come. In addition, Flexner's definition of professionalism was highly influential in the development of theories on the professions, with the degree of professionalization of any
group being determined by its comparison with characteristics of more established professions, namely, the medical profession.

Of those who have classified social work as a semi-profession, Carr-Saunders (1955) described the pressures placed on social workers in their organizational settings as a major constraint to professional autonomy. Given the importance of autonomy in the designation of professional status, Carr-Saunders concluded that social work was a semi-profession. In 1972, Toren argued, in agreement with Carr-Saunders, that social work had not achieved full-fledged professionalism, but directed attention to social work's lack of theoretical knowledge.

Literature on the subject of professions refers to what has been described as the process of professionalization. Goode (1960) states that "an industrializing society is a professionalizing society" (p. 902). The implication is that occupations evolve through a predictable sequence of stages, the culmination of which is the attainment of professional attributes of knowledge, autonomy, and public responsibility (Vollmer & Mills, 1966). In this schema, the classifications of full-fledged profession, semi-profession, and occupation have less relevance to the case of social work than some measurement of the degree to which social work meets each of the criteria of full professionalization.
To some extent, the work of Greenwood (1957) approaches this model of professionalization. Greenwood identified five distinguishing attributes of a profession, and designated this constellation as the "ideal type" against which all professions could be compared. Through this process, social work was evaluated as having already achieved professionalism. In 1980, Greenwood reconsidered his earlier paper on professionalization, and instead of five attributes of a profession, conceptualized three. These were: (1) a systematic body of abstract, communicable theory; (2) a service, or community, orientation; (3) a monopolistic component, or exclusiveness, of professional practice.

In conceptualizing a scale of professionalism, Goode (1960) states that the pattern of professionalism that exists today differs from the kind of profession that dominated societies in the early twentieth century. One might take the case of autonomy as a prime example of how the nature of professions has changed. Goode explains that as societies become more industrialized, professional work is more likely to occur in bureaucratic structures. The implication of Goode's observation is that work within the organizational context is not, in and of itself, an indication of constraints on professional autonomy. A clearer definition of autonomous practice in the world of professionalism and bureaucratization is needed. In light
of this argument, Carr-Saunders' (1955) earlier exclusion of social work from the ranks of the professions based on its organizational base of operation would not be valid.

Unlike the debate over the degree to which autonomous practice can occur in the organizational context, sociologists agree that knowledge is a key factor in the process of professionalization. Knowledge that is abstract, systematic, and organized characterizes the full profession organization. The more concrete and less systematic the foundation of knowledge, the more likely the designation of semi-profession or occupation (Barber, 1983; Etzioni, 1969; Toren, 1972). Within the profession, knowledge is created, whereas in the semi-profession knowledge is primarily communicated. As indicated earlier in this section, several classifications of social work as a semi-profession have been made on the basis of a weak theoretical foundation of knowledge (Etzioni, 1969; Toren, 1972).

The question of the professionalism of social work represents an historical dimension in the study of trust, from the perspective of agency-based social workers. It provides a background against which the examination of present-day dilemmas of trust might be understood. Although the review of literature demonstrated concern regarding the knowledge base of social work, there would appear to be throughout social work's history a recognition of its strong code of ethics and its sense of public responsibility (Lubove, 1977; Toren, 1972).
Social Work Competence

Within the theoretical framework for this study, trust is the expectation for professional competence (Barber, 1983). More specifically, it is technical competence that is expected, or demanded, including both the knowledge and skills of the professional. In much the same way that professional judgments vary on the status of social work as a profession or semi-profession, so too does the concept of social work competence vary in the judgments of social workers. Germain (1980) confirms that "professional competence is rooted in knowledge and skill, and guided by the social purpose and values of social work" (p. 1). Professional competency has also been described as "a complex, multi-dimensional concept encompassing a variety of work or profession-related attitudes and behavior" (Kim, Boo & Wheeler, 1979, p. 51). Perspectives may vary in the determination of professional competence, and can involve objective measurements, or professional self-assessments. Examples include studies conducted for the purpose of evaluating worker competency in demonstrating empathy, warmth, and genuineness, for which objective measurement scales were employed (Truax & Carkhuff, 1967; Fischer, 1978); and, a study conducted for the purpose of determining the relationship of professional competency and autonomy to job satisfaction among rural social workers, for
which subjective evaluations of social workers' competence were obtained (Kim, et al., 1979).

This study of trust in the professional relationship was conducted from the perspectives of agency-based social workers, and employed subjective evaluations of professional competence.

**Trust and Social Work Ethics**

The ethical foundations of social work are related to the nature of the relationship between social workers and their clients. Levy (1979) states:

*The fiduciary relation . . . is an ethics-generating concept, and the translation of the social worker-client relationship into a fiduciary relation makes the basis for and content of social work ethics especially evident.* (p. 58)

The fiduciary relationship between social worker and client emerges out of the nature, and extent, of the risks involved in seeking help, as well as in the dependencies that accompany the helping relationship. Levy refers to potential losses of money, independence, and personal privacy on the parts of clients who either willingly or unwillingly engage in professional helping relationships. For those who enter into the helping process as mandated, or unwilling participants, the sense of loss and the potential threats to individual freedom to make decisions and life choices may be even more severe. Meyeroff (1972) describes the risk of this kind as "a leap into the unknown" (p. 21).
From an ethical as well as practice perspective, the fiduciary relationship is a transactional one which makes different demands on clients and workers. Levy (1979) describes the nature of this transaction:

... a client is expected to reveal himself to obtain the social worker's service—a demand of the social service situation, not the invention of clients—the worker is obliged to maintain confidentiality. (p. 51)

In essence, the client trusts that what is revealed will be used in a manner that is helpful to the client, and in his or her best interests. The social worker, then, is expected to perform competently, and with a commitment to serving the client's best interests above his or her own. In this transaction, client trust may be readily given, or, in the case of the unwilling client, may be withheld, tested, or perhaps given out of a sense that no viable alternative exists. As Lewis and Weigert (1985) noted in describing the nature of trust in the professional relationship, "trusting behavior may be motivated primarily by strong positive affect for the object of trust or by 'good rational reasons' why the object of trust merits trust, or, more usually, some combination of both" (p. 972). In any case, it is clear that client trust is "emotionally charged to a degree that is proportionate to the urgency of the client's need, his own condition as a person, and his perception of the practitioner's authority with regard to meeting his need" (Levy, 1979, p. 66).
The trust of the client in the fiduciary relationship is met with the authority, expertise, and power of the social worker. For this reason, the technical competence of the worker, including the knowledge, skills, and special capabilities of the worker, is not all that is necessary for the professional relationship. Barber (1983) states that trust, in and of itself, is not sufficient for effective monitoring of professional expertise. Levy (1979) maintains that what is needed to assure clients of trustworthy performance is the protection afforded them through the profession's development and incorporation of social work ethics. Social work ethics respond to responsibilities, obligations, and conduct of the social worker. Levy concludes that:

The social worker (not unlike other human service practitioners) is therefore faced with the pressure to perform competently his service function and fulfill ethically his commitments as a fiduciary. (p. 67)

Social workers practice with a code of ethics that guides professional relations with clients, colleagues, employers and employing organizations, the social work profession, and society; have a primary responsibility to clients; and, demonstrate a concern for practice as well as policy imperatives in their work with clients (Wells & Masch, 1986). As a result, trust development is a complex process which operates on a variety of levels, including individual and family systems, worker ability to inspire trust, agency systems, and social, or political, forces.
The opportunities for conflicts in values, needs, and preferences are numerous, and the potential for ethical dilemmas is always present.

Reamer (1982) states that trust is necessary to the professional relationship, but maintains that conflicts of interest are an integral part of those relationships. He emphasizes that relationships between social workers and clients, colleagues, and employers do in fact depend on trust. However, a relationship which is founded on an assumption that a worker will never, under any circumstances, consider the interests of another individual more pressing is to some extent blind to the exigencies of life. (p. 106)

On the issue of confidentiality, Reamer describes how trust can best develop when it is based on realistic beliefs about the demands on professional conduct that would be deemed proper in a given situation. What is preferred to the assumption that confidential information would never be revealed is the client's recognition of the complexity of such demands, and a belief in the professional judgment of the worker when such decisions regarding conflicts of interest have to be made (Reamer, 1982). Reamer concludes that "social workers periodically must make choices among individuals, organizations, or values to which they are loyal" (p. 579). The setting of professional priorities and the practice of making choices of an ethical nature are necessary in social work where the client-worker transaction is affected by various other micro- and macro-systems.
The nature of conflict is such that it may, at times, exist at the core of the professional relationship. Rees (1979) refers to conflicts between social workers and clients as a result of disparity between the judgments of workers in deciding what is needed in a given client situation, and the wishes of the client. Various other types of conflicts can develop as a result of limitations in resources available to meet client needs. Rees describes conflicts of this nature as characteristic of the differences in the perspectives of social workers and clients, as well as distinctions made in the value orientations of professionals and clients. For example, clients come to the helping relationship with feelings about needing, and asking for, help; workers consider their role demands within the agency context, resources available, and agency purpose. In the delivery of services, value judgments are made which impact on the development of trust in the professional relationship, the agency, and social system that are expected to respond to client need.

In essence, the establishment of trust in the professional relationship involves the recognition of factors beyond those that are limited to the interface between client and worker. Trust development, from an ethical perspective, must address the moral foundations of social work (Rhodes, 1985; Goldstein, 1987). It has been noted that social workers need to appreciate that the domains of knowledge and skill and of values, morals, and
ethics are not separable; in fact, the former is barren without the infusion of the latter. (Goldstein, 1987, p. 186)

The ethical and moral imperatives in social work practice are strongly intertwined with professional competence. Although distinction is made among these elements of professional character, their impact on trust may be more one of an integration of knowledge, skill, and commitment to the best interests of clients.

The Working Alliance

The working alliance between social workers and clients is a means through which services are provided and needs are met. In examining trust in the professional relationship, this study is directed toward a review of the ecological systems perspective, relationship-building, and the interface between workers and clients.

An Ecological Systems Perspective on Trust

In considering the theory and literature on trust, several variables have been identified as potentially influential in the development of client trust. With general systems theory (Laszlo, 1972) providing the framework for analysis, each of the variables presented as influential in the development of trust are conceptualized as systems and subsystems. The systems that may play a role in the development of trust include the social service delivery
system, the organizational context of practice, and the system of professional practices. The interface between client and worker occurs at the point at which the client needs or requests a service that the professional can provide, and reflects the point at which various systems and subsystems overlap. It is within the boundaries of this interface, or professional-client relationship, that the development of trust can be observed, and the influence of various systems evaluated.

Although the nature of the professional helping relationship has undergone changes throughout the history of social work, it has remained an important tool for social work intervention (Simon, 1970). Social workers' use of the professional relationship in helping clients is founded on a broad base of knowledge of human development, social systems, and social interactions (Imre, 1984). The ecological systems approach to practice directs social workers' attention to the differences that exist in the kinds of professional relationships that are established with clients. Meyer (1976) tells us that it is not sufficient for social workers to develop professional relationships with clients that only attend to the psychological needs of the clients. A whole host of interactive possibilities are presented to the social worker who seeks to help the client, and, for this reason, social workers are increasingly developing skills required to help clients through
the use of relationships that vary in their problem focus, length of time, and intensity. The question of trust is one that has relevance for the various kinds of professional relationships that social workers develop with their clients. Like the variations in the kinds of professional relationships with clients, the trust relations between professionals and clients would appear to be altered in strength, intensity, and expression as the nature of that relationship changes.

Trust and Relationship-Building

Trust develops in a slow and gradual process; it is only through social interaction that feelings of trust can be generated; and, the degree of trust required in a given social transaction depends on the extent of the risk involved in that interaction (Blau, 1964; Levy, 1979). Trust develops as individuals prove themselves trustworthy in their social interactions. In the literature and research on the components of the professional relationship, little attention is directed to the establishment of trust. It would appear that trust may be assumed to exist once the professional relationship is established. Gordon Hamilton (1970) commented:

... as professional competence has increasingly developed skill in the interviewing process, the client tends to yield himself fully, trusting in the worker's understanding and skill to help him. (p. 39)
Truax and Carkhuff (1967) identified the core conditions of the professional helping relationship as empathy, warmth, and genuineness. Rogers (1961) included an attitude of unconditional positive regard for the client as an important element in the development of the professional relationship, and in the professional's ability to help the client. Other principles that have been described as important to the development of a positive working relationship with clients are principles of acceptance, individualization, and a nonjudgmental attitude (Biestek, 1957; Hamilton, 1970; Hollis, 1972). Germain and Gitterman (1980) point out that the professional relationship is a function of the quality of the work done between the social worker and client, and, to the extent that the work has been successful, the relationship itself becomes the means through which subsequent work can continue. Germain and Gitterman add the condition of professional competence and effectiveness in helping clients to the list of attitudinal qualities that have been identified as important to the work of the helping professional. This condition of competence is more supportive of the position of Barber (1983) who contends that trust in the professional relationship is directly related to the competence of the professional. Frank (1961) contends that the crucial variable in the professional's ability to help clients is the capacity to build confidence on the part of the client that the professional can provide
the help that the client needs. Perlman (1979) maintains the position that it is primarily through the development of the professional relationship itself that social workers can inspire that confidence, and, can most effectively influence the client's personal and social development. If client trust is, indeed, an important condition in the professional helping process, the effectiveness of social work practice rests, to some extent, on the profession's knowledge of the factors that are associated with the development of trust, and the ways in which professional social workers are most likely to generate client trust.

**Social Workers and Clients**

Rees and Wallace (1982) examined the perspectives of social workers and clients in assessing the successes and failures of the social work profession. Judgments of social worker competence and evaluations of client satisfaction served as the basis for an evaluation of the profession. On the issue of professional competence, clients expected social workers to demonstrate expert knowledge, have experience in the practice of social work, and use power in appropriately helpful ways. On the question of client satisfaction, there appears to be significant complexity, with clients often perceiving the 'helpfulness' of social workers as a phenomenon not distinct from the 'helpfulness' of the social services received, or from the 'usefulness' of the outcomes of social work intervention.
In examining the relations between social workers and clients, consideration of phenomena other than evaluation measures are useful. On a more unconscious level, the transference experience is one which has relevance to clients' trust in, and satisfaction with, social work performance. Sands (1983) describes the concept of transference as a useful one in understanding clients' reactions to social work interventions. Sands describes the transference reactions of clients as "displacements or projections of feelings, fantasies, and behaviors from one context to another" (p. 27). In this context, consideration of trust as a transference reaction to the social worker may direct attention to earlier developmental stages when trust was primary (Erikson, 1959). Ego development would become a major concern in the analysis of trust as a transference reaction.

The perspective of social workers on trust in the professional relationship assumes a more systems view with a consideration of trust as a multi-dimensional concept, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Barber, 1983; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Trust has been conceptualized as an interactive phenomenon, not necessarily wholly within the domain of the unconscious, but rather the result of positive social transactions.
Summary

Trust is a concept that is broad and comprehensive. The study of trust needs to assume, to some degree, a synthesis of theories, perspectives, and ideas that serve to operationalize its content and define its boundaries. Erikson (1959) states that trust is basic to human development; that trust is experienced as 'a sense of.' Barber (1983) defines trust as the expectations that maintain social interactions, or relationships; professional trust means the expectations for technical competence and fiduciary obligations. Germain (1979) describes human transactions as dynamic, mutual, and reciprocal; 'a sense of' trust that develops in a social relationship shares these properties; trust is not static. Meyer (1976) conceptualizes an ecological systems perspective as a framework for social work practice; trust in social work is the culmination of a series of transactions with various systems and subsystems, such as, the political, economic, social, and familial systems, all of which interact with the profession of social work to some extent.

The conceptualization of trust assumes in all perspectives cognitive and emotional components; it is founded on a rational assessment of how expectations are fulfilled; and yet, the experience of trust is a personal, attitudinal one. It would appear that trust requires a mutuality, and demands that a social transaction take place between people.
For any given personal or professional transaction, the sense of trust is the result of 'experiences in trust,' both past and present.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Background

Social work has been characterized as a profession in which the relationship between its practitioners and researchers has been an uneasy one. In its early historical development, social work adopted interventive practices and methods for which there was little empirical evidence of effectiveness (Blythe & Briar, 1985). More recently, the profession has demonstrated a recognition of the need for practice that is based on, and directed by, a knowledge base that is more scientific, less intuitive, in nature (Bloom, 1978).

Despite social work's mission for research that strives toward "enhancing professional skills" (Fanshel, 1980), there remains the need to develop research strategies that can, specifically, respond to the uniqueness of the client-worker relationship. Fanshel notes that "such research is scarce and apparently not easy to carry out" (p. 15).

Practice research is confronted with problems on a number of levels. First, research methods that offer the greatest potential for reliability and validity, such as
the experimental design, have only limited use in the field of social research (Finestone & Kahn, 1975). Second, ethical considerations for research in social work are paramount, with the practitioner's primary responsibility to serving the best interests of the client (Jenkins, 1975; Finestone & Kahn, 1975; Jayaratne & Levy, 1979). Third, the practitioner-researcher is often faced with the task of translating abstract concepts into measurable, quantifiable entities, and of specifying interpersonal phenomena in operational terms; both representing research tasks of considerable difficulty.

Though problematic, practice research is essential to the professional development of social work. In essence, it requires the selection, and development, of appropriate research designs that meet standards for rigorous scientific inquiry, yet respect and create an arena for the study of problems that are, largely, qualitative and interpersonal in nature.

**Study Design**

The study design employed in this research was a combined exploratory-descriptive one. The rationale for this study design was founded on the classification of research designs for use in the field of social work as outlined by Finestone and Kahn (1975) who state that the exploratory study in social work research is appropriate
for the examination of problems, questions, or issues in relatively undeveloped areas. Finestone and Kahn state that, in exploratory studies, research is directed toward the development of "the conceptual definition of variables and ways to measure them, the search for useful hypotheses, the development of methodological approaches, and the investigation of the feasibility of research" (p. 61).

Although theoretical formulations on trust provided a context within which this study could be conceptualized, the lack of previous empirical research provided support for this researcher's position that this study was being conducted in a 'relatively undeveloped area.' Among its purposes and aims, this research intended to clarify the concept of trust for social workers, and to provide basic preliminary information that would have value in the planning of subsequent more rigorous research. Thus, this research on trust was designed as an exploratory study that met criteria defined by Finestone and Kahn (1975) for research, the nature of which was "to prepare for more systematic research in an undeveloped field" (p. 61).

The exploratory nature of this study was complemented by its descriptive component, the purpose of which was to describe characteristics of, and trends in, the professional judgments of agency-based social workers on issues of trust in the client-worker relationship. Typologies, or classifications, of research designs identify a variety of
combined designs which, when appropriately applied, enable the researcher to more fully respond to the specific purposes and objectives of a study (Fellin, Tripodi, & Meyer, 1969; Finestone & Kahn, 1975). It has been noted that "combined exploratory-descriptive studies are those exploratory studies which seek to thoroughly describe a particular phenomenon (Fellin et al., 1969, p. 256). The combined exploratory-descriptive study design provided a framework within which this study could accomplish its objectives, including the formulation of hypotheses that might become the basis for future research on trust.

Variables

Three clusters of variables were identified as significant to this exploration and examination of trust in the professional relationship. Although no causal relationships were hypothesized among the variables, it was the intent of this research to identify relationships, among variables, that were associational in nature.

Two sets of background variables were identified:

1. Description of Workers. This cluster of variables included a list of features, or dimensions, which described workers who participated in this study. Variables of interest within this category of background information were:
a) **Age.** The ages of social workers who participated in the study were indicated in questionnaire item 30. Age ranges were then set, based on specific ages reported by social workers.

b) **Sex.** Social workers were asked to indicate their sex in questionnaire item 31.

c) **Race/Ethnicity.** Social workers were asked to indicate their racial or ethnic background in questionnaire item 32. Racial or ethnic backgrounds were identified as Black, Caucasian, Hispanic, Oriental, or other, for which social workers were asked to specify race/ethnicity.

d) **Years since graduation.** Social workers were asked to indicate the year of their graduation with a master's degree in social work in questionnaire item 34. The number of years since graduation was determined by subtracting the year of graduation from the year in which data were collected. Ranges of the number of years since graduation were established for the purpose of reporting data.

e) **Years employed at agency.** Social workers were asked to indicate the number of years worked at the agency in which data were collected. Ranges of the number of years worked were established for the purpose of reporting data.
2. Description of Workers' Agency Practice. This cluster of variables included two features, or dimensions, of the workers' practice with clients in the agency setting. Variables of interest included:

a) **Amount of time in direct client contact.** Social workers were asked to indicate how much of their work time was spent in direct client contact in questionnaire item 40. The scale of measurement was ≤ 25%, 26% to 50%, 51% to 75%, and 76% +.

b) **Agency program type.** Social workers who participated in the study provided mental health services in one of the agency's community-based programs. Four types of programs were identified for participation in this study: counseling programs, court-related mental health and social work services, services to homeless populations, and social work services to parents of children with emotional, social, or physical disabilities. The type of program service was noted at the end of questionnaire completion at each staff meeting where there was participation in this study.

The third cluster of variables was defined, and described, as **professional judgments about trust in the client-worker relationship.** The variables in this cluster included:
a) **Importance of trust.** The importance of trust in the client-worker relationship was explored in questionnaire item 1, measured by a closed-ended questionnaire item of five choices; and questionnaire item 28, measured by a rank order scale of one to five.

b) **Importance of competence.** The importance of competence to the development of trust in the client-worker relationship was examined in questionnaire item 2, measured by a closed-ended question of five choices; and questionnaire item 26, measured by a rank order scale of one to three.

c) **Importance of commitment.** The importance of commitment to serving clients' best interests in the development of trust was explored in questionnaire item 3, measured by a closed-ended question of five choices; and a questionnaire item 26, measured by a rank order scale of one to three.

d) **Importance of competence to other aspects of the helping process.** Questionnaire items 4, 6, 8, and 10 measured the importance of competence to other aspects of the helping process, utilizing closed-ended questions of five choices.

e) **Importance of commitment to other aspects of the helping process.** Questionnaire items 5, 7, 9, and 11 measured the importance of commitment to other
aspects of the helping process, utilizing closed-ended questions of five choices.

f) **Important influences on the development of trust.** Questionnaire items 12, 13, 14, and 15, measured through closed-ended questions of five choices.

g) **Factors important to the development of trust.** The factors important to the development of trust were explored through questionnaire items 16 to 25, measured by a Likert scaling of one to seven.

h) **Generation of trust.** Questionnaire items 26, 27, and 29, measured through sets of rank orders.

### Research Instruments

A major task in this research process was the development of instruments that had the capability to explore and examine professional judgments of social workers on the issue of trust in the client-worker relationship. This task required that study purpose and objectives be translated into research instrumentation that, more specifically, addressed the study's research questions. To accomplish this task, a structured, closed-ended questionnaire was developed; with questionnaire items responding to the study's research questions; and, interview questions were developed to provide supplemental information. It has been noted that questionnaires and interviews are common devices for data collection in exploratory and descriptive
studies (Finestone & Kahn, 1975). Fellin et al. (1969) further indicate that "combined exploratory-descriptive studies employ both quantitative and qualitative descriptions of a particular phenomenon" (p. 256). The structured questionnaire allowed for the measurement of the more quantifiable components of trust-related issues, while the interview schedule provided an arena for the expression of more qualitative aspects of social workers' experiences with trust.

**Questionnaire**

The design of this instrument was characterized by organization into four sections of questionnaire items. Several factors were considered significant in the development of each section. These factors were:

1. research questions addressed in each section;
2. different formats of response categories for each section; and,
3. nature of study variables under investigation in the research.

An analysis of the structured, closed-ended questionnaire that was developed by this researcher for the specific purposes of this study follows.

**Section I.** These questionnaire items concerned the importance of client trust; significance of professional competence and commitment to clients' best interests; and,
the relationship of these factors to other aspects of the helping process.

The format of questions included five closed-ended response categories for each question.

This section was directed toward the cluster of variables on professional judgments of trust in the client-worker relationship.

Section II. This section was concerned with the identification of factors that are associated with the development of client trust in the professional relationship.

The format of questions was a Likert scale of seven responses that ranged from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly."

This section was directed toward the cluster of variables on professional judgments of trust in the client-worker relationship.

Section III. This section was concerned with social workers' rankings of the relative importance of trust in the professional relationship; rank orderings of professional competence and commitment to clients' best interests; and, the rankings of ways in which social workers generate client trust.

The format of questions was a series of rank orders that represented response sets.
This section was directed toward the cluster of variables on professional judgments of trust in the client-worker relationship.

**Section IV.** These questionnaire items addressed the study's two clusters of background variables, including worker traits and agency practice characteristics.

The format of this section included both open-ended response categories and closed-ended response categories.

The questionnaire (Appendix A) was submitted to social work respondents with an introductory letter which described the nature of this study, its purposes, and the agency support of this study.

**Pre-test of Questionnaire**

Based on social work knowledge and theoretical considerations on trust, an initial questionnaire was prepared and administered for pre-test evaluation and recommendations. The purposes of questionnaire pre-test were: to provide the assurance of clarity in questions and response categories; to confirm that response categories were mutually exclusive and exhaustive (Babbie, 1973, p. 141); and, to enlist the feedback of respondents on any difficulties which they encountered in completing the pre-test questionnaire.

The pre-test questionnaire was administered to 14 social workers employed at the agency which served as the
site for data collection. Social workers who completed the pre-test questionnaire were not included in the final sample for data collection, once the questionnaire was in its finalized form. The pre-test was administered during a staff meeting which was attended by this researcher. Staff were informed that their participation was requested in the development of a research instrument for this study on trust in the professional relationship. Following the completion of the pre-test questionnaire, program staff participated in a discussion of issues, questions, and problems raised by the content and form of the pre-test questionnaire.

The theme of trust in the professional relationship, as determined by response to the pre-test questionnaire, was met with enthusiasm and professional interest. The discussion which followed completion of the pre-test questionnaire indicated that a number of practice issues and concerns had been raised to awareness through participation in the pre-test. Recommendations for changes in the pre-test questionnaire were made, primarily, in three areas: first, the need for greater clarity in the wording, or phrasing, of some questions; second, a reduction in the complexity of some questions presented in the questionnaire; and, third, some revisions in the format of questions. Few, if any, recommendations for change were made for Sections III and IV.

In response to the suggestions and recommendations for change, the pre-test questionnaire was reviewed by this
researcher. The pre-test questionnaire was revised, and greater specification in working and format of questions in Sections I and II. Given the constraints in staff time, and the wish on the part of this researcher not to exhaust the numbers of social workers available for final data collection, it was not feasible to re-submit the questionnaire to the same group of original respondents. Eight certified social workers, who were affiliated with agencies providing services of the same nature as those provided by the agency that served as the site for data collection, were enlisted for the purpose of completing the revised pre-test questionnaire. Upon completion of this process, a finalized questionnaire was submitted to the research review committee for additional recommendations for changes, and, subsequently, for approval of its use in data collection within the agency site. The result was the final questionnaire and cover letter (Appendix A).

**Interview Schedule**

Interview questions provided supplemental information on trust. The interview schedule included ten open-ended questions to which social workers were asked to respond based on their experiences as practitioners. The information collected was descriptive in nature, and served as a supplement to data gathered on the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted by this researcher with each of the 25 social workers who participated.
A description of the open-ended questions follows:

**Interview Question #1** addressed the issue of the definition, or concept, of client trust in the professional relationship.

**Interview Questions #2, 3, 4, and 5** asked that social workers describe their professional experiences with clients on the issues of "too little" and "too much" trust, as well as social workers' own feelings of lack of trust with specific clients or client populations.

**Interview Questions #6 and 7** addressed social workers' assessments of their own professional competence and commitment to serving clients' best interests.

**Interview Questions #8, 9, and 10** were concerned with social workers' experiences with the public image of the profession; professional experiences with the phenomenon that has been described as consumer, or client, "rational distrust" of professionals; and, identification of ways in which social workers can become more trustworthy as individual practitioners and as a professional body.

The Interview Schedule (Appendix B) served to guide data collection of open-ended responses to questions that were structured in the same order for all respondents, and asked in the same manner by this researcher.
**Pre-test of Interview Schedule**

The interview schedule was subjected to a pre-test, for the purpose of determining the extent to which social workers could respond to unstructured, open-ended questions concerning trust, in meaningful and relevant ways.

The first three interviews conducted with social workers were carried out as a pre-test activity, with social workers being asked to respond to the interview experience; and, pre-test interview data not included in the final analysis of data. The pre-test interviews served as the basis for a re-arrangement of questions, with omission of two questions which required too detailed a response, and which appeared upon review of the pre-test interview schedule to be, largely, repetitive of questions asked in the structured questionnaire. Of the three interviews that were conducted as pre-tests of this research instrument, two were social workers who volunteered from the agency site where questionnaires were distributed; one interview was a social worker not from the agency site.

**Method of Data Collection**

**Agency Site**

The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services served as the agency site for data collection. It is a leading social service agency providing a network of
community-based mental health programs, residential services, and day treatment interventions. The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services joined with the Columbia University School of Social Work in an effort to implement the profession's research mission. Although the agency site for data collection has been named, the identity of specific programs participating in this study has been held confidential.

Through the joint efforts of this researcher and the research review committee of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, a selection of 20 community-based programs was made. Selection was made on the basis of:

- number of social work personnel available for participation in this research;
- feasibility of program participation, given program commitment to other projects; and,
- nature of services provided by individual programs, with as much effort as possible for representation of various types of services provided by community-based programs.

During the process of data collection, it was necessary to eliminate two of the original 20 programs selected for participation in this study. Unanticipated circumstances in agency priorities made it unfeasible to include those two programs. The final number of programs in which staff participated in data collection was 18.
Procedure for Data Collection

Each of the 18 programs which were selected for participation in this study were notified of this action by the research review committee of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. Following this initial notification of program selection for participation in this study, this researcher contacted program directors, or administrators, in each of the 18 programs. The purpose of this contact was to confirm participation in the study, and to make arrangements for data collection.

A plan was developed for collecting data on both the structured questionnaire and interview schedule that served to accomplish the objectives of this study as well as to accommodate constraints in agency staff time. Program directors notified staff of program selection for participation in the study and requested the voluntary participation of staff in data collection processes. This researcher then contacted program directors, or administrators, to make arrangements for this researcher to attend a staff meeting during which time would be allocated to staff completion of the structured, closed-ended questionnaire. Upon completion of questionnaire forms, the request was made for social workers willing to participate in an individual interview conducted by this researcher. In most cases, individual interviews were conducted immediately following the staff meeting, except in those cases where staff
scheduling was such that an interview appointment had to be arranged for a later date.

It is important to note that the plans for data collection through the use of interviews required some modifications as the process evolved. Due to constraints in staff time at the agency site, it was not possible to achieve the goal of a total 25 interviews, with 11 interviews conducted at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. As a result, it was necessary to search for social workers who held a master's degree in social work, and who provided direct services to adult clients. Fourteen interviews were conducted with social workers who were affiliated with various other social service agencies or organizations, but were not employed at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services.

Sample

This study utilized the creation of two samples of social workers for data collection: first, a sample of social workers who would complete the structured questionnaire, and, thus, provide the study with quantitative data; and, second, a sample of social workers who would take part in individual interviews conducted by this researcher, and, thus, provide the study with qualitative data. Sample selection for quantitative data collection was based on three criteria:

- social workers who held a master's degree;
- social workers who provided direct services to adult clients; and,
- social workers who provided services within an agency, or organizational, context of practice.

Within the context of this study's combined exploratory-descriptive design, a non-probability sampling method was adopted, which resulted in what is best described as a sample of convenience. Finestone and Kahn (1975) indicate that exploratory studies frequently employ "small samples, not rigorously representative" and methods that are "flexible and informal" (p. 61). A sample of convenience was drawn from the 18 programs which participated in this study. A total of 118 social workers participated in the completion of structured questionnaires, and, thus, contributed to the collection of quantitative data. Given the procedure for data collection during staff meetings, staff members of professional disciplines other than social work also completed questionnaire forms, resulting in a total of 147 questionnaires. In addition to 118 social workers, six M.D.s, eight Ph.D.s or Ed.D.s, seven B.S.W.s or B.A.s, and eight M.A.s in areas of study other than social work attended staff meetings and completed questionnaires. The 29 non-social work respondents to questionnaires were not included in the final analysis of quantitative data as they did not meet the criteria for sample selection for this study.
A sample of 25 social workers participated in individual interviews conducted by this researcher. All were volunteers; 11 social workers were from the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services; 14 social workers were affiliated with other social service agencies, or organizations, in various social work roles. The study became known to the 14 other social workers through a process of networking among professional social workers.

In summary, the sampling method in this study was a sample of convenience, with voluntary participation, and with what was expressed as an interest in the question of trust. For this reason, the sample of convenience was the method of sampling, with some qualities of the purposive or judgment sample. It appeared that social workers who volunteered for participation in the study did so with the belief that they had 'something to say,' and, perhaps, a sense that they might have something to contribute on this subject. Yeakel and Ganter (1975) state:

In early stages of knowledge development, when insights that lead to the discovery of variables or to hypothesis formulation are the intent, purposive sampling may be employed. . . . in such research, the position is taken that the sample's representativeness is not an issue. (p. 105)
Analysis of Data

Quantitative Analysis

In its analysis of data, the study aimed to provide descriptive and analytic information concerning attributes, qualities, and conditions of professional trust.

The descriptive statistics that were employed in this research included:

- frequency distributions and percentages;
- rank orders, or sets of ranks;
- measures of central tendency, including means, modes, and medians; and,
- measures of variability, including the range, variance, and standard deviation.

A descriptive analysis was carried out on data which related to the study's three clusters of variables under investigation: worker descriptive traits; agency practice characteristics; and, professional judgments about trust in the professional relationship.

A research question of this study was directed toward the analysis of factors that were associated with the development of trust in the client-worker relationship. In response to this question, Section II of the structured questionnaire was designed as a set of ten items that would lend themselves to statistical analysis, the purpose of
which was to identify significant trust-related factors.
A factor analysis of data was employed.

The purpose and use of this approach to the statistical analysis of data are described in the following statement:

Factor analysis is used to discover patterns among the variations in values of several variables. This is done essentially through the generation of artificial dimensions (factors) that correlate highly with several of the real variables and that are independent of one another. (Babbie, 1979, p. 327)

The identification of factors that are associated with the development of trust in the professional relationship, together with the factor loadings that represent the correlations between factors and variables, are reported in Chapter V of this study.

Parametric statistical tests were employed in this research for their analytical, rather than inferential, power in the statistical analysis of data. While some researchers employ parametric statistics only in the analysis of interval scale data, other researchers maintain that parametric tests offer a strength in interpretation of data that is not evident in nonparametric analogs; and, therefore, parametric statistics are preferable in almost any social research endeavor (Huck, Cormier, & Bounds, 1974). Huck, Cormier, and Bounds describe the principles that, most often, guide the use of parametric statistics:
Generally, it is agreed that unless there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the population is extremely non-normal and that the variances are heterogeneous, parametric tests should be used because of their additional power. (p. 197)

Given the absence of any evidence for skewness in population distribution, this research was conducted with the assumption that sample selection was made from a population of agency-based social workers that was normally distributed; and, that the use of parametric statistics was indicated. For the purpose of examining correlational relationships among the study's variables of interests, categorical data were converted to continuous variables through the creation, and utilization, of "dummy" variables.

A series of tests were employed in the quantitative analysis of data. The first of these statistical procedures was the paired t test, also known as the matched t test, correlated samples t test, or, correlated t test. The paired t test is a statistical procedure in which the same sample is measured twice on a specific variable, or set of variables, and then tested for significance in the differences between mean scores for each of the two measurements. In this research, the paired t test was used to analyze differences in social workers' responses to pairs of items presented in Section I of the structured questionnaire; namely, items numbered 2 through 11. This set of questions included five pairs of items which asked
social workers to judge the importance of professional competence and professional commitment to serving clients' best interests in each of the following five practice situations:

- development of client trust in the client-worker relationship;
- client cooperation with workers' suggestions;
- client decisions to transfer to practitioners of other professional disciplines;
- client decisions to leave treatment completely; and,
- client likelihood to achieve treatment goals.

Through a process of matching a social worker's response on one item of the pair of questions with the same social worker's response on the other item of the pair, it was possible to compute five difference scores. These difference scores represented differences between the means on the paired sets of data. A final step in this statistical procedure was a test of significance. Chapter V of this study reports mean difference scores and the results of significance tests in which statistical significance had a \( p \) value of less than, or equal to, .05.

The second test that was employed in this research was the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, \( r \). This test is a statistical technique which measures the strength, and direction, of relationships between two...
variables. In light of the exploratory-descriptive purposes of this research, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to explore the nature of relationships between social workers' descriptive traits, or characteristics, and their judgments on the substantive, or structural, trust-related issues.

The final test employed in this research was the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The one-way analysis of variance is a statistical procedure which is used to determine if the differences among a number of sample means are statistically significant. Although similar to the t test in its measurement of mean differences, the one-way analysis has the greater capacity for measuring mean differences for more than two sample groups. In this research, the statistical procedures of the one-way analysis of variance were applied to two situations. First, a one-way analysis of variance was employed to determine if significant differences existed between the means of two variables: the percentage of social workers' time spent in direct client contact (namely, ≤25%, 26%-50%, 51%-75%, 76%+); and, the difference scores, or professional judgments of importance of competence and commitment to clients' best interests. A second one-way analysis of variance was also used to determine significant differences in scores on professional competence and professional commitment to clients' best interests in the type of agency program in which services were
provided (namely, counseling services, court-related social work services, services to homeless populations, and social work services to parents of children with emotional or social difficulties). Data collected in Sections I and IV of the structured questionnaires were used in these analyses of variances.

In preparation for the quantitative analysis of data, all data were coded, and the computer program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (Nie, 1975), was employed.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative component of this research provided a structure within which the richness in social workers' thoughts, experiences, and reflections on trust in the professional relationship could be reported and analyzed. The analysis aimed to identify social workers' experiences in trust, and to develop a preliminary understanding of the kinds, and qualities, of those professional experiences. The responses to each question were reviewed to identify categories of responses and collapsed with special attention given to similarities and differences in the experiences and attitudes reported. The findings from this analysis are reported, solely, as supplemental information of an anecdotal nature.
Limitations of the Study

As a new field of empirical investigation, the study required the development of a research instrument that was appropriate to its purpose and specifically related to its theoretical framework. The lack of a standardized research instrument for the exploration and measurement of trust variables became a limitation of the study that was also related to the newness of this area of investigation within social work.

Data were collected within a single agency setting, utilizing a sample of convenience consisting of 118 social workers in 18 program sites. Although the use of a single agency setting for data collection offered the advantage of uniformity and consistency in sampling and methodological approaches, it served also as a limitation of the study, primarily, on the issue of the extent to which findings could be generalized.

The study was an examination of social workers' judgments on trust, and did not include a comparative group. This presented itself as a limitation. Although data were collected at staff meetings, the total number of professionals of other disciplines was 29, and, as such, did not provide substantial numbers for a comparative analysis.

Supplemental information was collected through interviews, providing descriptive, anecdotal data. Although this supplemented the quantitative data, and enriched the
study's investigation of trust, interview data were gathered from a diverse group of social workers who carried different roles within their agency settings. Thus, their responses reflected a greater number of uncontrollable factors than would have been present had it been possible to complete all of the interviews within the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, as originally planned.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conceptualized as an investigation of issues and questions that had special relevance within the field of social work practice research. Jayaratne and Levy (1979) make the statement: "The primary responsibility for conducting an ethical clinical research intervention lies squarely on the shoulders of the individual clinician-researcher" (p. 317). Ethical considerations maintained a position of significant importance throughout the research process of this study. This researcher undertook specific practices for the protection of human subjects, which were implemented during all phases of the research process. Social workers who were selected for participation in the pilot study, or in the actual data collection process, were informed of the purpose of the study, its relationship to the completion of a dissertation at the Columbia University School of Social Work, and their specific part in the research process. Social workers were informed that their
participation in this research was voluntary. Confidentiality of responses to the structured questionnaire forms and interview response sets was assured by maintaining data collection form in locked files.

Questionnaire item 39 on the structured questionnaire was eliminated when, during the process of data collection, the issue was raised in one program that the number of staff members in specific job titles may be limited, and the possibility for identifying a respondent could be at risk. For this reason, this item was omitted from the quantitative analysis of data, and respondents who completed the structured questionnaire following the recognition of this ethical dilemma were asked not to complete item 39. For all those who had completed this item prior to the recognition of this threat to confidentiality, item 39 was blacked out by this researcher. This was an issue not raised during the pilot study, and not anticipated by this researcher.
Chapter IV

STUDY RESPONDENTS

A sample of 118 social workers responded to the structured, closed-ended questionnaire. These respondents were employed at 18 programs of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services located in four boroughs of New York City, including Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens, and served a client population defined by both program purpose and geographic boundaries of the catchment areas being served. The agency's total population of social workers in these programs approximated 215 at the time of data collection.¹

Description of Workers

Social workers who responded to the structured questionnaire ranged in age from 24 to 69, with a mean age of 38.0, and the modal age of 32.0. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the age range for study respondents.

¹Data were collected during the period of April through October 1986. The estimate of 215 social workers employed at the agency was provided by Harry Blumenfeld, Assistant Director, Support Services, Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. This figure includes the total number of full- and part-time staff social workers.
### TABLE 1

**AGE RANGE OF STUDY RESPONDENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Number of Social Workers</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 - 29 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39 &quot;</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49 &quot;</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59 &quot;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69 &quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong>&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Six respondents did not complete the questionnaire item on age.

Eighty-nine of the respondents were female (76.1%), while 28 were male (23.9%), with one respondent omitting the item on sex.

In regard to racial, or ethnic background, 106 social workers described themselves Caucasian (89.9%), 1 black (7.6%), 1 Hispanic (.8%), and 2 Oriental (1.7%).

**Professional Profile**

Social work respondents were asked to indicate the year in which they graduated with a master's degree in
social work. Master's degrees were reported to have been earned from 1938 to 1986, with the median year of graduation 1978. Over four-fifths of the sample (87.6%) earned master's degrees in social work after 1970; six, or 5.3%, graduated between 1960 and 1969; seven, or 6.2%, graduated between 1950 and 1959; and, one, or .9%, earned a master's degree in social work before 1949.

Although the year of graduation with a master's degree in social work does not accurately reflect the number of years of social work experience, it provided an estimate of the length of time in which respondents had been members of the profession of social work, even though periods may exist in which respondents were not actively practicing their profession. In summary, five social work respondents (4.4%) had been professional social workers for less than one year by the time data collection for this study was underway; 25, or 22.1%, had been members of the social work profession from one to three years; 23, or 20.3%, from four to six years; 9, or 8.0%, from seven to nine years; 39, or 34.5%, had been social workers for periods between ten and nineteen years; and, 12 respondents had been members of the profession for more than twenty years (10.7% of the total sample).

The number of years in which social workers had been employed at the agency ranged from less than 1 year to 26 years. The mean number of years of employment with the
agency was 5.4 years; the median number was 4.0 years.

During the period of their employment at the agency, social workers may have provided services to various client populations. In the effort to develop a profile of the professional social worker who responded to this study's questionnaire, social workers were asked to identify, or list, categories of client problems with which they currently worked. Table 2 summarizes the findings of this inquiry, indicating categories of client problems listed and the order in which various categories were mentioned by respondents.

Social workers described various presenting problems for which professional services were provided. For the purpose of presenting data, a classification system of five broad categories was developed by this researcher. Although the categorization of problems could be approached in diverse ways, an attempt was made to classify client problems according to the ways in which client problems most overtly manifested themselves. For example, the category of psychiatric/emotional problems included individual clients who presented severe psychiatric diagnosis, personal adjustment difficulties, stress reactions. Examples of family problems included marital difficulties and parenting problems; the social category included homelessness and court-related problems; and, economic problems included income-related complaints.
### TABLE 2
CATEGORIES OF CLIENT PROBLEMS MENTIONED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Problems</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>5th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric/Emotional</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral/Substance Abuse</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/Homelessness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>99.7</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* The total sample of 118 social workers mentioned at least 1 category of client problems with which they worked.

*b* A total of 113 mentioned at least 2 categories of problems.

*c* A total of 85 mentioned at least 3 categories of problems.

*d* A total of 28 mentioned at least 4 categories of problems.

*e* 3 social workers mentioned 5 client problems.
Following from the categorization of client problems, social workers described a range of professional social work services which responded to problems presented by clients. Table 3 describes the categories of client services provided by social work respondents, in the rank order that they were mentioned.

A process of categorizing services to clients was undertaken by this researcher in a manner similar to the classification of client problems. In the classification of services, individual therapy included crisis intervention, individual psychotherapy; examples of services to families included family therapy, marital/couple counseling, parent education, and support services to parents of children with emotional, social, or physical disabilities. Assessment services included evaluations, psychosocial assessments, referrals, and consultation; and the category of mediation services included such services as divorce mediation and counseling in child custody problems.

Social workers who participated in this study described their primary theoretical orientation in one of six ways, despite this researcher's presentation of eleven selections. Thirty, or 25.4%, described their primary theoretical orientation as psychoanalytic; 40, or 33.9%, described their orientation as, primarily, ego psychology; 24, or 20.3%, indicated an orientation toward systems theory/ ecological/ life model of practice; 3, or 2.5%,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Services</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>4th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
<td>N %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Therapy</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Services</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Therapy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Services</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>118</td>
<td>99.7</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[^a\] The total sample of 118 social workers mentioned at least 1 category of services provided to clients.

\[^b\] A total of 114 social workers mentioned at least 2 categories of services.

\[^c\] A total of 97 social workers mentioned at least 3 categories of services.

\[^d\] A total of 33 social workers mentioned at least 4 categories of services.
described themselves as Gestalt in their theoretical approach to practice; 5, or 4.2%, described themselves as interpersonal/Sullivanian; and 16, or 13.6%, described their theoretical orientations as eclectic.

Description of Workers' Agency Practice

The respondents of this study provided services to client populations within the context of agency setting and professional orientation. Both agency mission and organizational structure determined, to an extent, the nature of services provided. Although all could be broadly categorized mental health services, four areas of specialized services were observed, namely, counseling, court-related social work services, services to homeless populations, and social work services to parents of children with emotional, social, or physical disabilities. Table 4 describes the frequencies and percentages of social work respondents who provided services to clients within the context of the four general types of program services.

Social workers were asked to describe the extent to which their present position within the agency allowed for, or required, direct contact with clients. Sixteen, or 13.6%, indicated that their positions with the agency were structured so that they spent less than 25% of their time in direct client contact; 24, or 20.3%, spent between 26 and 50% of their time in direct client contact; 52, or
44.1%, of the social workers who responded to the questionnaire described 51-75% of their agency work time spent in direct client contact; and, 26, or 22.0%, stated that they spent over 76% of their agency work time in direct contact with clients.
The respondents were also asked to describe the length of time they provided services to various populations-in-need. They indicated that the demand for social work services is so great that most clients are seen for periods of one year or less. Eighty-two, or 69.5%, of social work respondents described the average length of time in which services were provided as one year; 7, or 5.9%, described the average length of treatment as nine months; 22, or 18.6%, described six months as the average length of treatment; and, 7, or 5.9%, described average length of treatment as three months, or less.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS: PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENTS ON TRUST

Social workers made judgments on trust in the professional relationship, and responded to questionnaire items concerning the importance of trust, factors that influenced the development of client trust, and activities associated with the generation of trust.

Importance of Trust

Social workers were asked to make professional judgments on the importance of client trust in the professional helping process, for which structured responses ranged from "the most important factor in the helping process" to "not absolutely essential." Over three-fourths (76.3%) of the sample of social workers who responded to the study's questionnaire indicated that the development of client trust was either "the most important factor" (27.1%), or a "very important factor" (49.2%) in the professional helping process. In addition, 13.6% described the development of client trust as "important," while only 5.9% indicated that "other factors are more important in the helping process." Of the total sample of 118 social workers, five,
or 4.2%, made the judgment that the development of client trust was "not absolutely essential in the helping process."

On average, social workers attributed a value to the development of client trust that closely approximated a weight of "very important." The sample mean was 3.89, in which "not absolutely essential" was assigned a value of "1," and "most important factor" was assigned a value of "5." The modal, or most frequently indicated, judgment described the development of client trust as "very important" in the professional helping process (49.2%).

Influences on Development of Client Trust

Social workers were asked to make professional judgments on the extent to which client capacity to trust in the helping process was influenced by two conditions: (1) clinical diagnosis, and (2) the client's presenting problem. In assessing the extent to which clinical diagnosis influenced client capacity to trust in the helping process, 56 (47.5%) of the sample indicated that clinical diagnosis was "very much related" to client capacity to trust in the helping process. In comparison, 34 (28.8%) of the sample believed that the particular problem(s) that brought the client in for help were "very much related" to client capacity to trust in the helping process. Forty-five (38.1%) described clinical diagnosis and client
capacity to trust in the helping process as "somewhat related," while 59 (50%) described the particular problems that brought the client in for help and client capacity to trust in the helping process as "somewhat related."

Only five social workers, or 4.2% of the sample, described the relationship between clinical diagnosis and client capacity to trust in the helping process as "slight," whereas 18 social workers, or 15.3% of the sample, described the relationship between the particular problems that brought the client in for help and client capacity to trust in the helping process as "slight." Twelve social workers (10.1%) made the judgment that clinical diagnosis and client capacity to trust were either "not at all related," or they did not know the extent to which clinical diagnosis influenced client capacity to trust. Seven (5.9%) indicated that the particular problems that brought clients in for help and client capacity to trust were either "not at all related," or they did not know the extent to which particular problems influenced client capacity to trust.

On average, social workers judged the relationship between clinical diagnosis and capacity to trust in the helping process as slightly stronger than "somewhat related." The sample mean was 4.2, in which "very much related" was assigned a value of "5," and "not at all" was assigned a value of "1." The modal, or most frequently
indicated, judgment of the relationship between clinical diagnosis and client capacity to trust in the helping process was "very much related" (47.5%).

In contrast, social workers judged the relationship between particular problems that brought the client in for help and client capacity to trust in the helping process to be, on average, 3.9, or "somewhat related." This mean value is less than the mean value of the relationship between clinical diagnosis and client capacity to trust ($\bar{x} = 4.2$). The modal, or most frequently indicated, judgment of the relationship between particular problems that brought the client in for help and client capacity to trust in the helping process was "somewhat related."

Table 5 presents a comparative analysis of data on the relationship between client capacity to trust in the helping process and clinical diagnosis versus particular problems that brought the client in for help.

**Impact of Agency Practice and Public Policies on Trust**

Social workers were asked how important the agency context of practice was to the development of client trust in the professional helping process. Eighty-one (68.6%) indicated that the agency context of practice was either "very important" (23.7%) or "important" (44.9%). Twenty-four (20.3%) social workers described the agency context
### TABLE 5

PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENTS OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH
CLIENT CAPACITY TO TRUST IN THE HELPING PROCESS
IS RELATED TO CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS AND PRESENTING PROBLEM(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Relationship</th>
<th>Clinical Diagnosis&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Presenting Problem(s)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very much (5)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (4)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know (3)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly (2)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all (1)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>118</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> $\bar{x} = 4.2$

mode = 5

median = 4

S.D. = 1.1

<sup>b</sup> $\bar{x} = 3.9$

mode = 4

median = 4

S.D. = 1.1
of practice as "slightly important," while six (5.1%) of the sample made the judgment that the agency context of practice was "not at all important." Seven (5.9%) stated that they did not know how important agency practice was in the development of client trust.

The sample mean was 3.6, which approximates a judgment of slightly less than "important," within a range of items from "not at all" with a value of "1," to "very important" with a value of "5." The modal, or most frequently indicated, judgment was 4.0, or "important."

Social workers were asked how important public policies and government programs in the social services were to the development of client trust in the professional helping process. Of the total sample of social workers, 74 (62.7%) indicated that public policies and government programs in the social services were either "very important" (22.9%) or "important" (39.8%) to the development of client trust in the professional helping process. Twenty-eight (23.7%) described public policies and government programs as "slightly important," while nine (7.6%) of the sample made the judgment that public policies and government programs were "not at all important" to the development of client trust. Seven (5.9%) indicated that they did not know how important public policies and government programs were in the development of client trust.
The sample mean was 3.5, which is somewhat less than the value of "important." The modal, or most frequently indicated, judgment was 4.0, or "important."

Table 6 presents data on the comparative importance of the agency context of practice and public policies on the development of client trust. The findings indicated that social workers' judgments of the relative importance of agency context of practice and public policies attribute approximate equal value to both agency practice and public policies.

**Professional Competence and Commitment to Clients' Interests**

One of the study's research questions directed attention to the importance of professional competence and commitment to serving clients' best interests in the development of client trust. In response to research questions concerning this issue, a series of ten questionnaire items were included in Section I of the structured questionnaire, and presented to the sample for their responses. Social workers were asked to make professional judgments, using a 1-5 Likert scale, on the relative importance of professional competence and commitment to serving clients' best interests for each of five practice situations. As indicated in Chapter III, the five practice situations included:
TABLE 6

PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENTS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF AGENCY PRACTICE AND PUBLIC POLICIES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLIENT TRUST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Importance</th>
<th>Agency Practice</th>
<th>Public Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important (5)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important (4)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know (3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly important (2)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important (1)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \bar{x}_a = 3.6 \]
\[ \text{mode } = 4.0 \]
\[ \text{median } = 4.0 \]
\[ \text{S.D. } = 1.2 \]

\[ \bar{x}_b = 3.5 \]
\[ \text{mode } = 4.0 \]
\[ \text{median } = 4.0 \]
\[ \text{S.D. } = 1.3 \]
- development of client trust in the client-worker relationship;
- client cooperation with workers' suggestions;
- client decisions to transfer to practitioners of other professional disciplines;
- client decisions to leave treatment completely;
and,
- client likelihood to achieve treatment goals.

In order to determine the extent to which social workers' judgments of professional competence and commitment to serving clients' best interests differed, the statistical procedure of the paired t test was employed. Table 7 presents the results of the paired t test on social workers' judgments of professional competence and commitment to serving clients' best interests.

More specifically, the mean difference scores between professional competence and commitment to serving clients' best interests were: -.35 (development of client trust); -.19 (client cooperation with workers' suggestions or recommendations); .51 (client decisions to transfer to practitioners of other professional disciplines); -.09 (client decisions to leave treatment completely); and, -.02 (client likelihood to achieve treatment goals). Data indicated that social work respondents to the questionnaire believed that client confidence in their commitment to serving clients' best interests was more important to the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Situations</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Standard Deviations</th>
<th>T-Values</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence/Client Trust</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>-4.29</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment/Client Trust</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence/Client Cooperation</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>-2.70</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.008*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment/Client Cooperation</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence/Client Transfers</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment/Client Transfers</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence/Leave Treatment</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment/Leave Treatment</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence/Achieve Goals</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>0.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment/Achieve Goals</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the .01 level
development of client trust than client confidence in their professional competence; that clients who were confident in their commitment to serving clients' best interests were more likely to cooperate with their suggestions or follow through with their recommendations; and, that clients who had confidence in their commitment to serving clients' best interests were less likely to transfer to practitioners of other professional disciplines. The questionnaire item concerning client decisions to transfer to practitioners of other disciplines was presented in the reverse, i.e., client decisions to transfer to practitioners of other disciplines was related to a lack of confidence in the social worker's competence or commitment. Data indicated that lack of confidence in social workers' commitment was a less frequent reason for client decisions to transfer. In the analysis of data on the issues of clients' decisions to completely leave treatment, and clients' likelihood to achieve treatment goals, social work respondents indicated no significant differences between professional competence and commitment.

The results of the paired t test, therefore, indicate significant differences in social workers' judgments of the importance of competence and commitment for three of the five practice situations. For each of the following three practice situations within the client-worker relationship, social workers indicated that 'commitment to serving clients'
best interests' was more important than professional competence:

- development of client trust in the client-worker relationship;
- client cooperation with workers' suggestions; and,
- client decisions regarding transfers to practitioners of other professional disciplines.

For each of the following two practice situations within the client-worker relationship, data indicated no significant differences in social workers' judgments of the importance of professional competence and commitment:

- client decisions to leave treatment completely; and,
- client likelihood to achieve treatment goals.

**Analysis of Trust Factors**

Research activity was directed toward the analysis of factors that influence, or are associated with, the development of client trust in the professional relationship. Section II of the structured questionnaire was developed for the purpose of analyzing factors that might emerge out of the ten items, designed with Likert-scale response categories. The statistical procedure of factor analysis was computed, utilizing a varimax rotation. The factor analysis resulted in the identification of four factors:
1. "Match, or fit, between client and worker."

This factor emerged out of four questionnaire items which concerned the issue of client-worker match in age, race or ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. Questionnaire items 21, 22, 23, and 24 provided data on social workers' judgments of the extent to which the development of trust is enhanced or diminished by similarities and/or differences on these variables. The questionnaire items are:

21. There is a greater likelihood that problems of trust will develop when older clients are assigned to workers who are much younger than they are.

22. Clients of minority racial/ethnic backgrounds are better able to develop trust in professionals who are the same race or ethnicity.

23. There is a greater likelihood that religiously observant clients will experience difficulty in the development of trust when they are assigned to non-religious professionals.

24. There is a greater likelihood for problems of trust to develop when homosexual clients have been assigned to heterosexual professionals.

The factor loadings, or correlations, of questionnaire items with the factor were: age, or item #21 (.56); race or ethnicity, or item #22 (.72); religion, or item #23 (.68); and, sexual orientation, or item #24 (.61).

A substantive examination of the specific items out of which the factor evolved indicated the following mean values for age ($\bar{x} = 3.76$); race or ethnicity ($\bar{x} = 4.26$); religion ($\bar{x} = 4.37$); and, sexual orientation ($\bar{x} = 4.06$).
Mean values were calculated on Likert-response categories with a range from "1" (disagree strongly) to "7" (agree strongly).

2. "Client-centered emotional/attitudinal system."
This factor emerged out of two questionnaire items which concerned the issue of the impact of client attitudes and the severity of clients' emotional problems on the development of client trust in the professional relationship. Questionnaire items 19 and 20 provided data on social workers' judgments of the extent to which these client-centered attitudes and the degree of emotional difficulty influenced trust development. The questionnaire items were:

19. The development of client trust in the professional helping process is more a function of attitudes the client brings to the professional relationship than anything the professional can do.

20. The more severe the client's emotional problems, the more difficult it is to build client trust in the professional helping process.

The factor loadings of these items with the factor were: client attitudes, or item #19 (.34); and, severity of emotional problems, or item #20 (.70).

The substantive examination of specific items which formed the factor indicated the following mean values: client attitudes (\( \bar{x} = 4.12 \)), and severity of emotional problems (\( \bar{x} = 4.53 \)). As indicated earlier, mean values were calculated on Likert-response categories with a range of "1" (disagree strongly) to "7" (agree strongly). Mean
values indicated that social workers made judgments on the importance of "attitudes the client brings to the professional relationship" and "severity of clients' emotional problems" that ranged from slightly above "neutral" to somewhat below "agree slightly." More specifically, social workers were asked to indicate the extent to which trust was more a function of attitudes the client brings to the professional relationship than anything the professional can do; and, the extent to which the development of client trust in the professional helping process was more difficult, the more severe the client's emotional problems. To each of these questions, social workers responded more on the side of agreement than disagreement. In addition, it would appear that the higher factor loading of "severity of emotional problems" (.70) indicates a strong correlation with this trust factor, and is indicative of social workers' judgments that clinical, or emotional, client-centered characteristics bear a significant role in the development of client trust.

3. "Case Status." This factor emerged from one variable, or item. Questionnaire item 25 follows:

25. It is most difficult for professionals to build client trust with clients who are mandated for service.

Its factor loading was .46; its substantive content was related to the extent to which professionals build trust with clients who are mandated for service. The mean value,
computed within the range of "1" (disagree strongly) to "7" (agree strongly), was 5.44, or between "agree slightly" and "agree fairly much." It would appear that involuntary case status is significant in the development of client trust in the professional helping process, and that case status represents an important factor in the trust development process.

4. "Political/Economic Conditions." This factor emerged from one variable, or item. Questionnaire item 18 follows:

18. As a result of government cutbacks in social programs and benefits, it is difficult for social workers to build client trust in their professional competence to provide the services their clients need.

This item became its own factor, and had a factor loading of .93, indicating a very strong correlation with the factor that was conceptaulized as "political/economic conditions" which bear significance in the delivery of social services. A substantive analysis of item 18 indicated a mean value of 3.81, or approximately "neutral."

In the final analysis of trust factors, the identification, and conceptualization, of factors that are associated with, or influence, the development of client trust demonstrate that, as perceived by workers, the development of trust is a multi-dimensional process. The various systems, or layers, that social workers judged important to the development of client trust, and mistrust,
included client-centered attitudes and emotional difficulties on a micro-systems level; interactive properties of the fit between social worker and client; and macro-level systems of agency case status and political/economic conditions that impact on the availability of social services as well as the manner, or freedom, with which those services are sought, received, or rejected.

Data analysis indicates that the development of trust in the professional relationship is a complex process, for which a multitude of dimensions demand consideration. The analysis of trust factors in this research provided a structure within which the development of trust in the professional relationship could be systematically understood.

**Correlational Analysis of Trust Factors and Worker Descriptive Variables**

In an effort to identify and explain potentially meaningfully relationships among the cluster of variables related to the description of workers who responded to the questionnaire, and the four trust factors, as perceived by respondents, a correlational analysis of data was computed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Worker-descriptive variables included: age, sex, race or ethnicity, number of years since graduation with a master's degree in social work, and the number of
years employed at the agency. The four trust factors which were analyzed on the basis of the professional judgments of social workers included: client-worker match, or fit; client-centered emotional, or attitudinal, factors; case status; and, political/economic factors. As indicated in Chapter III, the Pearson product-moment correlational analysis is a statistical technique which uses continuous data. Nominal categorical data were represented as "dummy" variables. In addition, in preparation for the computation of the Pearson correlation technique, data from the variable, race, were converted from four categories of Caucasian, Black, Hispanic, and Oriental, to two categories of Caucasian and other, this procedure having been employed due to the difficulty in identifying correlational relationships for the small numbers of study respondents in each of the categories other than Caucasian. In an effort to explore correlations of race, this variable was categorized as Caucasian (89.8%, or 106 respondents) and other (10.2%, or 12 respondents).

Table 8 presents the results of the analysis of worker descriptive variables and the four trust factors. The results indicate very weak correlations between worker descriptive variables and the trust factors. Although it was believed that the correlational analysis of data might reveal potentially meaningful relationships, no statistically significant relationships were identified.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust Factors</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of years since MSW</th>
<th>Number of years employed at agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Match, or fit, between client and worker</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client-centered emotional, or attitudinal, system</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case status</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political/economic conditions</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 indicates that the strongest correlation that was identified for worker descriptive variables and trust factors was the relationship between "number of years employed at the agency" and "political/economic factors" ($r = -0.22$). This relationship remains a weak negative correlation, indicating that the greater the number of years that social workers are employed at the agency, the less value they attribute to "political/economic conditions" as a factor which influences, or is associated with, the development of client trust. Generally, the Pearson correlation coefficients for trust factors and worker descriptive variables indicated very weak relationships.

**Generating Trust in the Client-Worker Relationship**

In its conceptual framework, this study explored and examined the development of client trust from the perspective of social workers. In research activity that focused on the ways in which trust is, in the judgments of agency-based social workers, generated throughout the professional helping process, attention was directed toward the various systems of worker activities, client attributes, and agency practices. Given that various behaviors and practices of workers, clients, and agencies are manifested in the process of helping, this study asked...
social workers to consider sets of items related to each of the three systems, and to rank them in their order of importance to the development of trust in the professional relationship.

The following sets of rank order, or ordinal, data describe social workers' judgments of the ways in which the various dimensions within the worker, client, and agency systems impact on the generation of trust in the professional relationship.

**Worker Activities**

Social workers were asked to make professional judgments on the kinds of professional activities that would be effective in building client trust in the professional helping process. Respondents were directed to rank order a set of three items from "1" to "3," in which a value of "1" was assigned to the "most effective" worker activity, and "3" was assigned to the "least effective" worker activity. Table 9 presents the findings according to the order of mean rank values.

Data indicate that social workers made the judgment that "interacting with clients in ways that illustrate that you are reliable, consistent, and predictable" was the most effective professional activity in building client trust; "demonstrating to clients that you are competent by providing the services the client needs or requests" was
judged the next most effective professional activity; and, "communicating to clients that you can be counted on to place their best interests above your own" was the least effective professional activity in building client trust.

### TABLE 9

**RANK ORDER DATA ON SOCIAL WORKERS' JUDGMENTS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKER COMPETENCE AND COMMITMENT IN THE GENERATION OF TRUST IN THE CLIENT-WORKER RELATIONSHIP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker Activity</th>
<th>Mean Rank Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being reliable, consistent, and predictable</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating the competence to provide services clients need or request</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating a commitment to placing clients' best interests above workers' own</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second set of worker activities, or behaviors, was presented to social workers for their consideration and rank ordering. Social workers were asked to rank order five worker behaviors in their importance to building client trust in the worker's professional competence. Table 10 presents the rank sets of mean rank values, for which a value of "1" indicates a worker behavior that is "most likely" to build trust, and a value of "5" which indicates a worker behavior that is "least likely" to build trust.
## TABLE 10

RANK ORDER DATA ON SOCIAL WORKERS' JUDGMENTS OF SPECIFIC WORKER ACTIVITIES THAT BUILD CLIENT TRUST IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker Activity</th>
<th>Mean Rank Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Express warmth, empathy, and genuineness to your clients</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as client advocate with outside agencies</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer clients' questions about your training</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about past successes you have had with clients who have come to you with similar problems</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display degrees, certificates, and awards</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social workers made the judgment that the worker activity most likely to build client trust in professional competence was to "express warmth, empathy, and genuineness to your clients." It would appear that the feeling, or affective component, of social work practice is judged by social workers to be the most important element in the client-worker relationship, and is ranked of greater value in building client trust than are social work activities, such as advocating on behalf of clients, communicating
professional training or past successes with clients, and
displaying formal symbols of professional status.

Client Attributes

Social workers were asked to make professional
judgments on several dimensions of client behavior that are
important to the development of a positive helping relation-
ship. Respondents were directed to rank order a set of
five items from "1" to "5," for which a value of "1" was
to be assigned to the "most important" dimension of client
behavior, and on through "5," or the "least important"
dimension in client behavior. Table 11 presents the find-
ings, according to the order of mean rank values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Attributes</th>
<th>Mean Rank Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client's motivation for help</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client's ability and willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client's trust that the professional is working in the client's best interests</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client's trust in the professional's competence</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client's cooperation with the worker's suggestions</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this analysis of data, "client's motivation for help" and the "client's ability and willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings" were ranked as more important than client trust in professional competence or commitment to working in the best interests of the client. It would appear that, from the workers' perspective, when the components of the positive helping relationship include client trust among other attributes, the importance of such characteristics as motivation and ability to communicate thoughts and feelings outweigh the dimensions of client trust in competence and/or commitment. Eighty (67.8%) of the sample ranked "client's motivation for help" as the most important dimension in the development of a positive helping relationship; 16 (13.6%) indicated that "client's trust that the professional is working in the client's best interests" was the most important client characteristic in the development of a positive helping relationship; 13 (11.0%) indicated that "client's ability and willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings to the worker" was most important; 6 (5.1%) indicated that "client's trust in the worker's competence" was most important; and 3 (2.5%) indicated that "client's cooperation with the worker's suggestions" was most important to the development of a positive helping relationship.
Agency Practices

Social workers were asked to make professional judgments of agency practices that positively influence workers' efforts in building client trust. Respondents were directed to rank order a set of four items from "1" to "4," in which "1" indicated the item that was most important to the generation of client trust in the professional relationship, and on to "4" which indicated the item that was least important to the generation of client trust. Table 12 presents the findings, according to the order of mean rank values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency Practices</th>
<th>Mean Rank Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency commitment to confidentiality</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short waiting lists</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency policy for fairness for fee-setting</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team approach to serving the needs of clients</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this rank set, social workers attributed the most importance to "agency commitment to confidentiality," which would appear to be the agency manifestation of professionals' commitment to serving clients' best interests above one's own. Over half of the social work respondents (55.9%) made the judgment that "agency commitment to confidentiality" was most important to the generation of trust, whereas, 28.0% believed that "short waiting lists" were the most important agency practice in workers' efforts to build client trust; 11.9% indicated that the "team approach to serving the needs of clients was most important, and 4.2% indicated that "agency policy for fairness in fee-setting" was most important.

**Correlational Analysis of Rank Order Data and Worker Descriptive Variables**

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed in an effort to determine the strength and direction of relationships between worker descriptive variables and the rank order data on worker, client, and agency characteristics in the development of trust in the professional relationship. Table 13 presents the results of the correlational analysis of these data. The computed $r$ values indicate that there are no systematic relationships among variables. As indicated in the previous discussion on correlational analysis between worker descriptive variables
TABLE 13

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN WORKER DESCRIPTIVE VARIABLES AND SOCIAL WORK VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Work Variables</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of years since MSW</th>
<th>Number of years employed at agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence/Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reliable, consistent, and predictable</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demonstrate competence</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Communicate commitment</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Express warmth, empathy, and genuineness</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Act as client advocate</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Answer questions about worker training</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Talk about past successes with clients</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Display degrees, certificates, awards</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 13 (continued)

**CORRELATIONS BETWEEN WORKER DESCRIPTIVE VARIABLES AND SOCIAL WORK VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Work Variables</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of years since MSW</th>
<th>Number of years employed at agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Client Attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client motivation</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability/willingness to communicate</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in commitment</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in competence</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to confidentiality</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short waiting lists</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness in fee-setting</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team approach</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and the four trust factors, it would appear that the
development of trust in the professional relationship is
perceived as more related to qualities idiosyncratic to
individual workers, clients and situations.

**Agency Practices and Differences in**
**Judgments of Competence and Commitment:**
**One-way Analysis of Variance**

In an effort to explore the nature of relationships
among the study's variables, a one-way analysis of variance
was used to analyze the five *difference scores* for compe-
tence and commitment by the two agency practice variables.
The difference scores indicated the mean differences in
social workers' judgments of the importance of professional
competence and commitment to clients' best interests in
five practice situations. The difference scores were as
follows:

**Difference Score 1** - Mean differences in social
workers' judgments of the importance of competence
and commitment in the development of client trust.

**Difference Score 2** - Mean differences in social
workers' judgments of the importance of competence
and commitment to client cooperation with workers' 
suggestions or recommendations.

**Difference Score 3** - Mean differences in social
workers' judgments of the importance of competence
and commitment to client decisions to transfer to practitioners of other professional disciplines.

**Difference Score 4** - Mean differences in social workers' judgments of the importance of competence and commitment to client decisions to leave treatment completely.

**Difference Score 5** - Mean differences in social workers' judgments of the importance of competence and commitment to client likelihood to achieve treatment goals.

The two agency practice variables were: time spent in direct client contact and program type. Direct client contact had four values: ≤25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, and 76+. Program type had the following categories: counseling services; court-related social work services; services to homeless individuals and families; and, social services to parents of children with emotional, social, or physical disabilities.

Table 14 summarizes the results of the one-way analysis of variance that analyzed difference scores by time spent in direct client contact. The calculation of F values indicated that the mean differences between difference scores and direct client contact failed to reach a level of significance.
Table 14
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE SUMMARIES FOR FIVE DIFFERENCE SCORES
BY AMOUNT OF AGENCY TIME SPENT IN DIRECT CLIENT CONTACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difference Score 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>88.18</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference Score 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>62.82</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference Score 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>151.12</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference Score 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>193.67</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference Score 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>68.20</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 summarizes the results of the one-way analysis of variance that analyzed difference scores by program type. The calculation of F values indicated that the mean differences between difference scores and program type also did not reach a level of significance.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difference Score 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>87.48</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difference Score 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>61.29</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difference Score 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>149.72</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difference Score 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>9.77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>181.79</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difference Score 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>68.02</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the results of the one-way analyses of variance indicated that there were no significant mean differences among social workers with different amounts of direct client contact, or in the program context of practice, in terms of the degree to which they emphasize competence as opposed to commitment in the development of client trust.
CHAPTER VI

WORKERS' ANECDOTAL VIEWS ON THE CONCEPT OF TRUST

The supplementary worker interviews were designed to gather anecdotal data that might help with the interpretation of quantitative findings. Interviews were structured as open-ended questions, intended to engage social workers in a dialogue with this researcher. Interviews included ten questions, aimed at encouraging social workers' expression of thoughts, ideas, and experiences on trust development with clients. Supplemental information was gathered from a diverse group of social workers. Eleven social workers who participated in interviews were from the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, and completed the questionnaire prior to the interview; 14 had professional affiliations with other agencies, or organizations, functioning in a variety of roles such as, direct practitioners, supervisors, or consultants. Although social workers who participated in interviews met the study's criteria for sample inclusion, their agency affiliations ranged from mental health programs, or services, medical hospitals, to schools. The latter group did not complete the written questionnaire.
The descriptive analysis of qualitative findings was aimed at developing and categorizing, where possible, the thoughts and experiences of social workers on the question of trust in the professional relationship. Essentially, the summary of findings represents the stories told by 25 social workers who reflected on their professional practices, and who described, with considerable candor, their successes and failures in the development of client trust.

**Concept of Trust**

In an effort to clarify the concept of trust, the interview process was initiated by directing social workers' attention to the phenomenon of client trust in the professional relationship. Social workers who participated in individual interviews were asked to describe their thoughts on the experience of client trust, and to identify traits, or characteristics, which would commonly be associated with trust in the client-worker relationship.

The findings were best understood within the framework of an ecological systems perspective. Social workers' responses addressed the issue of trust from the various systems of client, worker, the interface between client and worker, and the element of time.

From the worker's perspective, trust was conceptualized as an experience that resulted from the interplay of four dynamics:
Worker behavior. Workers play a significant role in the development of client trust. The most important worker practices were described as non-judgmental attitudes, honesty, acceptance, and conveying a non-threatening position in relationships with clients. One social worker indicated that worker competence was not a primary issue in trust relations between client and worker. This respondent stated:

Competence is not an issue in gaining a client's trust. We have workers who never lose a client, and whose clients keep every appointment. But, everyone knows that the worker is not competent. Their clients seem to trust them anyway.

On the issue of the worker's commitment to serving the client's best interests, one social worker indicated:

... it is imperative that social workers give clients the feeling that the worker is there for no other reason than to help the client.

Client trust. Social workers described client trust as a 'feeling of safety,' a 'sense of security in a relationship,' and a feeling that no harm will come to 'either' person in the relationship. Social workers described trust in the client-worker relationship as the client's feeling that he or she can entrust certain thoughts and feelings to one person, but not another. It was, in essence, a sense of security that was very much related to a specific client-worker relationship, and, perhaps, not another.
Interface between client and worker. Social workers addressed the issue of the mutuality of trust. Some workers described trust as "chemistry," or the 'fit' between worker and client. One worker expressed the judgment that client trust in the professional relationship was, essentially,

the worker's belief in his or her own knowledge and competence to help . . . and the client's belief that the worker can, and will, help to solve his or her problems.

Another worker described the dynamic of client-worker interface as

giving up control about what happens, and believing that someone is there to help.

Several respondents commented:

Trust allows for intimacy. Trust tells us that it's safe to let someone else get to know who we really are.

In describing the trust relations between client and worker, one social worker who participated in an interview summarized that

developing trust is the goal of therapy. It is really an issue of judgment. Trust is the therapeutic alliance itself.

Time factor. Social workers indicated that the development of client trust in the professional helping relationship was a long-term process. Only one dissimilar response was elicited by a worker who stated that 'clients come into the professional relationship either trusting or mistrusting.' This same worker further indicated that
trust could be something basic and developmental. Some people simply have more trust than others. Or, trust could be something built up from positive experiences with the social worker. It's hard to be certain.

Problems of Trust

Social workers who participated in individual interviews were asked to describe problems of trust in their work with clients. Given the diversity in agency, or organizational, affiliations, some problems of trust appeared specific to that setting, whereas others tended to be common to agency work, in general. These differences have been indicated to the extent that workers identified these unique problems.

Problems of trust, for most social workers, were attributed to specific client diagnostic classifications, such as, the borderline personality, substance abusers, or paranoid clients. Nevertheless, social workers emphasized that, in their agency work with clients, problems of trust repeatedly arose in regard to the source of their referral to the agency and the client's perception of the manner in which referral was made, that is, whether referral for service was considered mandatory or punitive by the client. In addition, the history of systems 'letting clients down' was considered by social workers to be a very significant condition on a macro-systems level.
that created problems of trust. For one worker who served a homeless population, the comment was made, once again, that worker competence was not important when resources were so limited, and the system has failed the client repeatedly.

For three workers in a medical hospital, the most significant problems of trust were attributed to the short-term nature of service delivery, and the threats to confidentiality in practice on the multi-disciplinary team. One worker in the medical setting indicated that she carried a copy of the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers to help her in making difficult judgment decisions each day, regarding whether she should share information that might help a physician better understand a client's reaction to illness.

For three workers in the school setting, problems of trust were related to racial and ethnic differences between clients and workers, and to the organizational dilemmas faced when clients are referred for help, and who risk disciplinary action for the very behavior for which they have been referred for help. One social worker said that he always felt that he was in a position of taking sides, as though clients were asking if he were on the side of the school or of the client. Another school social worker described the need to always prove herself by being effective in resolving problems. For school social workers, the problems
associated with the school system, or organization itself, seemed to lead to difficulties in developing trust with clients on an individual basis.

In general, it was commented that 'agency reputation influences client trust,' in that agencies with favorable reputations in the community are successful in enlisting clients who enter the agency with an already preconceived notion of trust in the agency.

**Clients with No Basic Trust**

Social workers were asked to consider the client who has no basic trust, and how one might work with a client who presents a significant trust problem. As an initial reaction, one worker stated:

Anyone who's in therapy doesn't have basic trust.

Upon reflection, another worker examined what it meant to have no basic trust, and concluded:

No basic trust means 'I have problems in accepting myself.' It means that someone never knows when another person will come around and criticize him or her.

Most workers agreed that it was indeed possible to work with clients of little, or no, trust by being "reliable, consistent, accepting of where the client is, and giving feedback." One social worker assumed a very different position
on the question of working with clients who have little basic trust, and concluded:

It is unlikely that much could be accomplished in working with clients of no basic trust.

Clients with 'Too Much' Trust

When considering the question of clients who trust 'too much,' social workers frequently directed their attention to the categories of clients for whom this condition would present itself. Some workers described these clients as having boundary problems, that this situation was not really an issue of trust. Others described the problem of 'too much' trust as a problem of dependency, a passive personality, merging, helplessness, or, simply, bad judgment. On the other side, some workers indicated that 'no one can trust too much,' and that this was really a contradiction in terms.

In responding to this question, the perspective of workers and clients was considered. From the worker's point of intervention, it was indicated that workers may need to talk more to clients of this nature, ask more frequently what things mean, be less directive with clients, and encourage clients to think things through. From the perspective of clients, workers believed that it was not appropriate for clients to trust a worker in the first interview, and that the issue may be more one of the extent
to which an individual trusts in authority figures.

Clients Whom Workers Do Not Trust

Social workers' judgments on this issue were sharply divided, with strong feelings on both sides. Some workers stated that it was not possible to work with clients whom they did not trust, but added that it was really more an issue of 'liking' a client, and more an issue of the worker's feeling in 'potential danger.' One worker indicated that she had never worked with clients she did not like, and concluded that, in searching for a job, she had become aware that she had avoided populations with whom she did not like to work. Another worker indicated that agency philosophy can help in working with clients we do not trust, or like, in that the agency 'mission' is to help 'everyone.' This comment, although expressed to some degree by all social workers who participated in interviews, was most strongly verbalized by a number of workers employed by the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. One worker commented:

... the worker's task is to find something within the client with which we can have rapport.

Some workers indicated that it was not necessary to trust a client in order to work with that client. One worker stated:

We don't need to trust our clients. It is an unequal relationship. It really doesn't bother me
so much if a client lies, or has psychopathic tendencies. My real concern, though, is that treatment may have little effect on these people.

Social Work Competencies

Social workers were asked to describe areas of social work competence for which they would consider themselves worthy of client trust, or confidence. A descriptive summary of those areas follows:

- relationship-building, including contracting, empathy, and listening;
- individual, group, and family interventions;
- psychosocial assessments;
- concrete services;
- resource-building;
- advocacy;
- ecological systems perspective in understanding the life situations of clients;
- help with environmental stresses; and,
- a broad knowledge base.

Social workers judged the profession to be one in which 'social work professionals can be counted on to always try to learn more about how to best serve clients.' One worker described social work as a 'blessed profession' in that it has a way in which it can integrate knowledge from other professions.
Social Workers' Commitment to Clients' Best Interests

Social workers were asked if, in their judgment, the profession of social work could be compared with other helping professions on the question of commitment to clients' best interests. Social workers' judgments were divided. A proportion of workers indicated that the question of commitment, or ethics, was an individual issue, and could not be generalized to a profession as a whole. Other social workers indicated that social workers demonstrated a greater commitment to serving clients as a result of the profession's value orientation. One worker stated that social workers are more likely to extend themselves to helping clients for longer periods of time than other helping professionals who give up on them. Another indicated that social workers "must have a greater commitment to their clients, because there are so few other rewards, such as financial rewards, and so, helping must be the issue."

Public Image of Social Work

Social workers were asked if the public image of the profession, often described as a negative one, had any impact on trust relations in actual client-worker relationships. Social workers, for the most part, stated that the public image of the profession did not influence client-worker trust, and if a negative public image had any impact
at all, it would change to a positive image after good experiences. One worker described the problem of image as more related to working with professionals of other disciplines. For clients, workers believed that the need for help outweighed any negative influence from public image problems. One worker re-stated the issue:

Really, it's a balance of respect vs. intimidation. People say things to social workers they won't say to a doctor because we have less professional prestige. In this respect, social work may lose something if we become full-fledged professionals.

"Rational Distrust"

Social workers were presented with the proposition that distrust in the professions may be based more on a rational sense that the expectations of the client, or consumer, will not be fulfilled, rather than irrational beliefs. Social workers who participated in individual interviews were asked for their reactions to a phenomenon termed "rational distrust." A range of responses were elicited, from social workers' sense that an increase in malpractice suits was indicative of a "rational distrust," to the feelings that it was a "good idea for clients to question professionals." One worker summarized this attitude by saying:

The capacity for rational distrust is probably healthier than most clients who come for treatment.
Another worker indicated that "rational distrust" may be an issue of special significance to the poor:

The poor usually get poor services. As a result, the poor have less trust, and it's most likely 'rational' when based on previous experiences. It's irrational if based on maladaptive psychological mechanisms. At times, though, it may be too difficult to distinguish one from the other.

Some workers felt that social workers were likely to be the recipients of client distrust because social workers are often in distrustful roles, exemplified in social workers who have the power to take children out of their homes. Other workers indicated that the issue was really one of "rational distrust" of larger systems that have failed them. In describing situations in which "rational distrust" was a consideration, workers made reference to cultural factors in which strong in- and out-group factors were at play, such as, differences in racial or ethnic groups. One worker reflected on the differences between new graduates from social work school and graduates of years ago. This worker stated:

It's really an issue of competence and responsibility. Old-timers questioned their competence, whereas new graduates from social work school feel such confidence that they go into private practice right after graduation.

Enhancing Trustworthiness

When asked how social workers might enhance their trustworthiness, a number of creative responses were
A list of responses follows:

- Education for social workers should be upgraded, with higher admissions standards, and post-master's training;
- Knowledge-building activities need greater participation from individual social workers; more writing; greater publication activities;
- Enhanced sense of professionalism through educating the community on what social workers can do; good supervision; attempts to counterbalance the negative impact of para-professionals;
- Greater community involvement; more political activism;
- Better image of social work in the media, arts;
- Work toward earning greater respect from other professionals; and,
- Adopt a consumerism perspective; recognize the client as a whole person; develop greater respect for other supports in our clients' lives, such as, religion.

One social worker made an interesting comment that social workers should be pictured in children's books, so that little children might say, "I'd like to grow up to be a social worker." Another worker stated that social workers needed a greater sense of humility in their work, that is, workers should not always think that they know what a client needs better than the client himself knows. One worker commented:

Therapy doesn't work for everyone. For most, it's simply not enough. We need to recognize the limitations of therapeutic interventions, and help clients reach out to other areas of life.
As a final comment made by an enthusiastic social worker who participated in an interview for this study:

We need to put our enthusiasm to work for ourselves. . . . We need to show our success.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

This research was an exploratory study of trust in the professional relationship, from the perspective of social workers. Its purpose was to examine the judgments of social workers on various issues related to the development of trust in the client-worker relationship. The study was conducted at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, with supplementary interviews with workers from other settings. Eighteen programs were selected for participation in the study; these programs provided a range of mental health services which included counseling, court-related social work services, services to homeless populations, and services to parents of children with emotional, social, or physical disabilities.

A sample of 118 social workers responded to the structured questionnaire which was designed for the purpose of this study, pre-tested, and administered by this researcher during staff meetings at each of the 18 programs. Of the respondents, 76.1% were female, 23.9% were
male; the median age was 35.0; and, the median number of years employed at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services was 4.0 years. Of the sample, 89.9% were Caucasian, 7.6% were Black, 18% were Hispanic, and 1.7% were Oriental.

The study's findings provided information on social workers' judgments, or understanding, of the - importance of trust in the professional relationship;
- relative importance of professional competence and commitment to clients' best interests;
- factors associated with trust development;
- relationship between client trust and other aspects of the professional helping process; and,
- activities, or practices, associated with the development of trust in the client-worker relationship.

Questionnaire responses indicated that 27.1% of the sample of social workers believed that trust was the "most important" factor in the professional helping process, while 49.2% believed that trust was "very important." The modal, or most frequently indicated, judgment was that the development of trust was "very important" in the professional helping process.
In evaluating the influences on client capacity to trust in the professional relationship, social workers responded, most frequently, that clients' clinical diagnostic classifications were "very much related" to the capacity to trust. On the other hand, the relationship between presenting problem(s) of clients and the capacity to trust was described by social workers, most frequently, as "somewhat related."

Professional judgments of the influence of agency practices on the development of client trust in the helping process indicated that social workers, most frequently, described agency practices as "important" to trust development. Similarly, when social workers were asked to make judgments on the influence of public policies on the development of client trust, the most frequently indicated response was that public policies were "important" to trust development.

A paired t test was used to analyze data regarding the relative importance assigned to professional competence and professional commitment to working in the best interests of clients in the development of trust. The study's findings indicated that social workers judged the commitment to working in clients' best interests to be significantly more important than professional competence in three aspects of the helping process, namely, the development of client trust, client cooperation with workers'
suggestions or recommendations, and client decisions regarding transfer to practitioners of other disciplines. Social workers did not judge commitment to be significantly more important than competence in relation to the two other aspects of the helping process, namely, client decisions to leave treatment completely, and client likelihood to achieve treatment goals.

Four factors were identified that could be associated with the development of client trust in the professional relationship. They were conceptualized as:

- match, or fit, between client and worker;
- client-centered emotional/attitudinal system; 
- case status; and,
- political/economic conditions.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength of relationships between the four trust factors, and the worker descriptive variables, including worker age, sex, race/ethnicity, number of years since a master's degree in social work was earned, and, number of years worker was employed at the agency. In addition, Pearson r's were calculated to determine relationships among worker descriptive variables, and the social work variables under consideration in the rank order sets. In conclusion, data analysis indicated that the correlations among these variables were weak, and suggests that the development of trust in the
professional relationship was not a function of worker
descriptive variables or the agency practice variables.

The results of a one-way analysis of variance indi-
cated that there were no significant differences in social
workers' judgments of the importance of professional compe-
tence and commitment to working in clients' best interests
when considered in relation to the amount of workers' time
in direct client contact, or, to the type of program in
which services were provided.

Rank order data provided information on social work-
ers' judgments of the activities, or practices, associated
with the generation of trust. Professional judgments of
the effectiveness of worker activities in building client
trust in the professional helping process resulted in the
following rank set, ordered from most to least effective:
being reliable, consistent, and predictable; demonstrating
competence to provide services clients need or request;
communicating a commitment to placing clients' best inter-
est above workers' own. Rank order data on social work-
ers' judgments of the relative importance of professional
competence and commitment indicated differences from the
results of the paired t test. When social workers were
asked to consider the relative importance of professional
competence and commitment to specific aspects of
the client-worker relationship, social workers judged that commitment was more significant than competence in three aspects of the helping process. When social workers were asked to rank order the general categories of professional competence and commitment to clients' best interests, with the additional category of worker reliability, consistency, and predictability, professional competence was judged to be more important than commitment to clients' best interests, and 'interacting with clients in ways that illustrate that you are reliable, consistent, and predictable' was considered most important to building client trust.

Rank order data on social workers' judgments of worker activities that build client trust in professional competence resulted in the following rank set, from most to least effective: express warmth, empathy, and genuineness; act as client advocate; answer clients' questions about worker's training; talk about past successes; and, display degrees, certificates, and awards. Findings suggest that workers judged the affective component of professional competence to be the most important skill in building client trust; advocacy skills to be less in importance; and, formal symbols, such as the display of degrees, certificates, and awards, to be the least important.

Rank order data on the importance of agency practices in generating client trust resulted in the following rank set, from most to least important: agency commitment to
confidentiality; short waiting lists; fairness in fee-setting; team approach to serving the needs of clients.

Rank order data on social workers' judgments of several dimensions of client behavior in their degree of importance to the development of a positive helping relationship resulted in the following rank set, ordered from most important to least important: client motivation for help; client ability and willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings; client trust that the professional is working in the client's best interests; client trust in the professional's competence; client cooperation with worker suggestions.

Questionnaire findings were supplemented with interview responses that were provided by 25 social workers from various settings. Social workers provided information related to the concept of trust, and defined client trust in the professional relationship as a 'feeling of safety,' and a sense that no harm would come to either client or worker. The mutuality, or transactional nature, of trust development was identified, and described as specific to the interactions between individual clients and workers. On the part of workers, the commitment to serving clients' best interests was described as more important than professional competence. This supported quantitative findings which indicated that professional commitment was judged, for some aspects of the helping process, to be more important than professional competence.
Trust development was described, largely, as a long-term process which was influenced by the clinical picture of the client, agency reputation, and larger social systems that have failed to meet the needs of clients. This supported quantitative findings which identified 'political/economic conditions' and 'client-centered emotional/attitudinal systems' as factors that influence the development of trust in the professional relationship. Questionnaire responses indicated, also, that agency practices were important to the development of trust.

On the issue of the influence of public image on the development of trust, social workers indicated, largely, that public image had little impact on trust development, and that client need for help was more influential in the development of the professional relationship.

Social workers reacted to the concept of a "rational distrust" of professionals with a sense of enthusiasm, indicating that it would be healthy for clients to react to their workers with a sense of rational distrust. Workers noted that it was important to separate distrust that was unrealistic from distrust that was based on experiences in which expectations have not been fulfilled.

Social workers described areas of competence that were related to expertise in relationship-building, methodologies, and a broad base of knowledge. On the issue of commitment, social workers were divided in that while some described
social workers' commitment to clients' best interests as 
an individual matter; others indicated that social workers 
had a strong commitment to clients that was based on social 
work ethics and its value orientation.

Finally, social workers described ways in which 
they might enhance professional trustworthiness and identified the need to engage, more actively, in knowledge-
building endeavors, upgrading education, and greater community involvement.

The limits of the study's findings were related to its 
small sample size, single agency for data collection, and the 
lack of a standardized research instrument for which reliability and validity measures were obtained. The study examined trust through the development of a research instrument that addressed issues within the study's conceptual framework on trust in the professional relationship. This instrument did not tap other phenomena that may be related to trust; although supplemental interviews with social workers provided an opportunity for the suggestion of other potentially related phenomena. The study was limited, also, in its lack of a comparison group, namely, a group of professionals other than social workers for whom trust may be a significant issue, or, a group of social workers in a field of specialization other than mental health services.
Implications of the Study

The study's findings suggest implications for social work practice, professional concerns, and possible future research. Although the review of literature indicated social workers' belief that trust is a key component in the helping relationship, the theme of trust has traditionally received little attention as a subject of scholarly inquiry. Throughout the study process, it was evident also that the lack of empirical research presented limitations in social workers' understanding and use of trust in the professional helping process. In consideration of this study's finding that trust, as understood by social workers, is an important variable in the helping process, continued work in this area may represent a contribution to the theory and practice of social work. Professional knowledge-building efforts may need to promote and encourage scholarly writings and empirical research on trust-related issues, concerns, and questions. The task, then, would become one of translating this knowledge into principles of practice that could be used in the training of social workers for effective trust development in the client-worker relationship.

Practice Implications

The study's implications for practice range from heightening social workers' awareness of the importance
of trust in the professional relationship to deepening their understanding of the variables that influence trust development. The findings suggest that social workers may need to become more aware of how trust impacts on the professional helping process. Social workers may need to address the issue of trust in their service delivery to clients as well as explore and examine problems of trust in relation to the conditions that influence trust development. Practitioners should consider the impact of worker competence and commitment to clients' best interests when clients evidence inadequate trust, and make conscious efforts to demonstrate professional competence and communicate more directly their commitment to serving the best interests of clients.

It is important for practitioners to understand the interplay of various systems that impact on trust in the professional relationship. Findings suggest that trust is perceived by social workers as a multidimensional phenomenon related, in varying degrees of importance, to client, worker, agency, and public policy influences. Problems of trust, or failures in trust development between workers and clients, may require examination within a systems perspective, and an identification of the system within which difficulties exist. Literature suggests the impact of dilemmas within various systems that may influence the development of trust. Barber (1983) identified problems
of trust that are related to the failures of professionals to live up to clients' expectations for professional competence and fiduciary responsibility. Lewis (1972) described problems of trust that develop when social service resources that are needed to help clients are either limited, or not available. Erikson (1959) looked to difficulties of trust that develop during the first year of life as a result of the individual's transactions with his or her environment.

The study's findings suggest that, as understood by social workers, both worker and client systems are important to the development of trust. Within the worker system, Barber's (1983) theoretical formulations direct attention to the significance of worker competence and commitment to clients' best interests in the development of trust. This suggests that social workers have the capability to serve as active agents in the generation of client trust in the helping process. The implication is that social workers may need to develop professional self-images that incorporate the principle that workers are active facilitators of trust development, as well as to acquire skills in demonstrating competence and commitment to clients.

Within the client system, the study's findings suggest that workers place an emphasis on client-centered
factors in the development of trust in the client-worker relationship. The identification of 'client-centered emotional/attitudinal system' as a factor in the development of trust, and the importance attributed to clinical diagnostic classification by social workers, may suggest an emphasis on client-centered influences, when the development of trust is examined from the perspective of workers, and not clients. Barber's (1983) theoretical framework on trust considered the perspective of the client, with an emphasis on client expectations for professional competence and commitment to clients' best interests. The study's findings suggest the significance of the issue of perspective in the understanding and the development of trust.

Although findings indicated that workers judged professional competence and commitment to clients' best interests to be important in the development of trust, trust was conceptualized by social workers who participated in interviews as the client's 'feeling of safety,' a sense that no harm would come. From the perspective of workers, trust is defined as a client-centered quality, of an affective, or emotional, nature. Although consideration is given to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components of trust (Barber, 1983; Lewis and Weigert, 1985), the study's findings suggest that, from the perspective of workers, the emotional or feeling qualities of client trust
may be especially important. The implication is that social workers may need to be aware of the range of client factors that may impact on trust development. If client-centered factors are, indeed, significant to the development of trust, social workers may need to consider client capacity to trust in the helping process, according to specific criteria, such as, clinical diagnosis.

In essence, the transactional, or relational, nature of trust development may require special consideration of the interface between worker and client systems. Within the framework of this study, findings suggest that trust development may be a function of the interaction between workers' demonstration of professional competence and commitment to clients' best interests, and clients' differing capacities to trust in the professional relationship. Social workers who participated in interviews described trust development as specific to the interactions between individual clients and workers. Findings also indicated that the 'match, or fit, between client and worker' was a factor in the development of trust. The implication for social work practice is that the trust experience is a complex one, and that the development of trust may be more transactional in nature for social work as a helping profession than for other professions because relationship-building is used as a tool in the therapeutic process itself (Perlman, 1969, 1974).
Implications Related to Professional Concerns

The study's findings suggest implications that may be related to social work in its process of professionalization. The respondents judged the commitment to clients' best interests to be more significant than competence in several aspects of the helping process. Yet, the social workers who participated in interviews described a need for continued professional activity in the area of knowledge-building when asked how they might enhance their trustworthiness. It may be that in the helping professions that rely on "soft" knowledge and have a knowledge base that is less technical than in the full-fledged profession, commitment to serving clients' best interests is believed to be more solidly based, and, thus, attributed greater significance in the development of trust. This finding is consistent with the position of those who define social work as a semi-profession and suggests that, in the process of professionalization, the greater attention must be given to the organization and development of social work's knowledge base.

The study has implications for social work, within the context of Barber's (1983) theoretical framework, that are related to the social problem of trust in the professional relationship. Problems of trust in individual client-worker relationships may need to be considered as
reflections on societal dilemmas of trust as well as perceptions of the trustworthiness of social work as a whole. Findings indicated that social workers who participated in interviews described a sense of 'rational distrust,' or a questioning of professional competence and commitment, on the part of their clients as a positive attribute. This suggests a contradiction, to some degree, with Barber's concern that is related to the 'rational distrust' that develops when professionals fail to meet clients' expectations for competence and commitment. Barber is essentially assuming a societal view on 'rational distrust,' whereas social workers who participated in interviews would appear to have taken an individual perspective. The finding that social workers view 'rational distrust' as a positive may, then, be in keeping with workers' emphasis on 'client-centered emotional/attitudinal factors' in the capacity to develop trust. The suggestion is that the client who can demonstrate the capacity for 'rational distrust' may, indeed, have a higher level of ego development, be better able to judge the trustworthiness of individual professionals, and have a greater capacity to trust in appropriate ways. For social workers in the mental health field of practice, there remains also the need to view problems of distrust as reflections, in part, of social and professional dilemmas of trust in American society.
Possible Future Research

This study's exploration of trust in the professional relationship suggests implications for possible future research. Additional research may need to consider the use of a larger sample, data collection from various social service agencies, and alternative research methods, such as longitudinal designs, single subject research, and field investigations. The purpose of these variations in research would be to increase the generalizability of findings. Also, social workers have applied process research methods to the study of the "transactions that routinely take place between social work practitioners, their clients, and relevant social institutions" (Fanshel, 1980, p. 11). Process research could be used as a way to study the idiosyncratic nature of trust development between individual clients and workers. The subject of trust may, upon further investigation, lend itself to one or several of these approaches.

The study's findings suggest that additional research should consider the question of the significance of perspective, and how differences in the relative positions of clients and workers may have an impact on the development of trust. This study explored trust from the perspective of workers, but future research should consider the perspective of clients. One purpose in assuming the client perspective would be a further investigation of Barber's
(1983) theoretical framework of trust in which client expectations for professional competence and commitment are understood as the basis for trust.

This study of trust was conducted with social workers who provided community-based support services in a field of specialization that was, largely, mental health in nature. The study's findings suggest that social workers in the field of mental health specialization attribute significance to 'client-centered emotional/attitudinal factors' in the development of trust in the professional relationship. This poses a question about whether those in other fields of practice would place similar importance to client-centered factors. Research is needed to determine the generalizability of these findings.

Future research on trust in the professional relationship might also consider a comparative analysis of social work with other professions, and an exploration of those components of the trust relationship that may be unique to social work. Is it that "soft" knowledge makes a difference in judgments of the significance of competence and commitment in the development of trust? Is there something unique about social work as a helping profession engaged in service delivery that is, largely, conducted within agencies or organizations?
In summary, it would appear that social workers who participated in this study described trust as a concept and experience that is shaped by a variety of dimensions. The interplay of client, worker, agency, and public policy variables may be significant in social workers' understanding, and use, of trust in the practice situation. The implications of a systems perspective on trust extend into suggestions for future research that might consider the impact of perceptions of the trustworthiness of larger social, agency, and professional systems on individual client-worker relationships. A final note on possible implications of the study of trust concerns the question of trust development within social systems of differing political ideologies that may range from social democracies to totalitarian political structures. Although this study has not considered a policy perspective on trust, future research in this area may contribute another dimension to our understanding of trust in the professional relationship.

Recommendations

This study of trust in the professional relationship confirmed the importance of trust development in social work practice. Given research findings on the importance of commitment to serving clients' best interests, as
understood by social workers, the profession should continue to address ethical issues and moral foundations of social work in its education and practice. It is suggested that case examples be provided in field assignments that require student training in dealing with situations involving the conflicting value orientations of clients, workers, agencies, and the larger social system.

It is recommended that social work education consider the implication of this study that workers have the ability to serve as active agents of trust development. In the development of curricula, it is suggested that social workers be trained specifically to demonstrate professional competence and to communicate commitment to serving clients' best interests in the development of trust, and that they be taught to assume active roles in building client trust.

It is recommended that social work professional organizations continue to provide direction in the development of professional standards that assure ethics in practice, and that the issue of trust development in social work be addressed within the context of possible social problems of trust. Also, these organizations should encourage social workers to place greater emphasis on competence skills and to continue work on the development of social work knowledge, values, and skills.
Finally, it is suggested that social workers engaged in efforts to build professional knowledge consider integrating the principles of a competence-oriented practice into their repertoire of skills. As social workers have moved more fully toward an ecological systems perspective on practice, there has been increased utilization of models that direct attention to the strengths of clients, their competence in coping, and the enhanced sense of self-esteem that emerges from successful transactions with the social environment. Similarly, it has been suggested that competence-oriented practice not only provides a service to clients, but may also "help us to enhance our own competence as social workers" (Maluccio, 1981, p. 23).

In conclusion, this study of trust provides an initial empirical base for understanding a phenomenon that has been the subject of repeated theoretical and ideological attention. With enhanced knowledge of the theory and practice of trust-building activities, social workers should be better prepared to engage clients in professional relationships that are founded on rationally-based trust.
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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
Dear Participant:

Trust in the professional relationship is a principle with which we are all familiar. The purpose of this study is to better understand the function of trust in the context of the professional relationship. Its objectives are to explore and examine professionals' judgments of the importance of client trust to the helping process, and to identify the factors that influence the development of trust in the professional relationship.

The questionnaire which follows is divided into four (4) sections. In the first three (3) sections, you are asked to make professional judgments on issues related to client trust in the professional relationship. In the final section, you will be asked for information concerning your training and experience. To assure the confidentiality of your responses during all phases of this research, your name and program affiliation will not be recorded at any time.

This study is being conducted to complete a doctoral dissertation at the Columbia University School of Social Work. A pilot study has been conducted in one (1) program of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. At that time, the pre-test of this questionnaire indicated that it takes approximately twenty (20) minutes to complete.

I wish to extend to each participant a very personal note of gratitude for your assistance in this project. Your participation, today, is also greatly appreciated for the impact it will, hopefully, have on professional practice.

Sincerely yours,

Jean Rohde, CSW, ACSW
Doctoral Candidate
FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, PLEASE PLACE AN X AT YOUR SELECTED RESPONSE.

1. How important is the development of client trust in the professional helping process?

   a. ____ it is the most important factor in the helping process
   b. ____ it is a very important factor in the helping process
   c. ____ it is an important factor in the helping process
   d. ____ other factors are more important in the helping process
   e. ____ it is not absolutely essential in the helping process

2. In the development of client trust, how important is it for clients to feel confident in your professional competence?

   a. ____ it is the most important factor in the development of client trust
   b. ____ it is a very important factor in the development of client trust
   c. ____ it is an important factor in the development of client trust
   d. ____ other factors are more important in the development of client trust
   e. ____ it is not absolutely essential in the development of client trust
3. In the development of client trust, how important is it for clients to feel confident in your commitment to serving their best interests?

a. ___ it is the most important factor in the development of client trust
b. ___ it is a very important factor in the development of client trust
c. ___ it is an important factor in the development of client trust
d. ___ other factors are more important in the development of client trust
e. ___ it is not absolutely essential in the development of client trust

4. Have clients who were confident in your professional competence been more likely to cooperate with your suggestions or follow through with your recommendations?

a. ___ yes, most of the time
b. ___ yes, a good deal of the time
c. ___ about half of the time
d. ___ occasionally
e. ___ no, seldom

5. Have clients who were confident in your commitment to serving their best interests been more likely to cooperate with your suggestions or follow through with your recommendations?

a. ___ yes, most of the time
b. ___ yes, a good deal of the time
c. ___ about half of the time
d. ___ occasionally
e. ___ no, seldom
6. Are client decisions to transfer to practitioners of other professional disciplines related to a lack of confidence in your profession's competence?

a. ___ yes, most of the time
b. ___ yes, a good deal of the time
c. ___ about half of the time
d. ___ occasionally
e. ___ no, seldom

7. Are client decisions to transfer to practitioners of other professional disciplines related to a lack of confidence in your profession's commitment to serving the best interests of clients?

a. ___ yes, most of the time
b. ___ yes, a good deal of the time
c. ___ about half of the time
d. ___ occasionally
e. ___ no, seldom

8. To what extent are client decisions to completely leave treatment related to their lack of confidence in a professional's competence?

a. ___ very much related
b. ___ somewhat related
c. ___ slightly related
d. ___ not at all related
e. ___ don't know
9. To what extent are client decisions to completely leave treatment related to their lack of confidence in a professional's commitment to serving the best interests of clients?

a. ____ very much related
b. ____ somewhat related
c. ____ slightly related
d. ____ not at all related
e. ____ don't know

10. Have clients who were confident in your professional competence been better able to achieve their treatment goals?

a. ____ yes, most of the time
b. ____ yes, a good deal of the time
c. ____ about half of the time
d. ____ occasionally
e. ____ no, seldom

11. Have clients who were confident in your commitment to serving their best interests been better able to achieve their treatment goals?

a. ____ yes, most of the time
b. ____ yes, a good deal of the time
c. ____ about half of the time
d. ____ occasionally
e. ____ no, seldom
12. To what extent is the client's capacity to trust in the professional helping process related to his/her clinical diagnosis?

a. ___ very much related
b. ___ somewhat related
c. ___ slightly related
d. ___ not at all related
e. ___ don't know

13. To what extent is the client's capacity to trust in the professional helping process related to the particular problems that brought the client in for help?

a. ___ very much related
b. ___ somewhat related
c. ___ slightly related
d. ___ not at all related
e. ___ don't know

14. In your professional judgment, how important is the agency context of practice to the development of client trust in the professional helping process?

a. ___ very important
b. ___ important
c. ___ slightly important
d. ___ not at all important
e. ___ don't know
15. In your professional judgment, how important are public policies and government programs in the social services to the development of client trust in the professional helping process?

a. ___ very important
b. ___ important
c. ___ slightly important
d. ___ not at all important
e. ___ don't know
SECTION II (page 7)

IN THIS SECTION, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO "AGREE STRONGLY," "AGREE FAIRLY MUCH," "AGREE SLIGHTLY," "NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE," "DISAGREE SLIGHTLY," "DISAGREE FAIRLY MUCH," OR "DISAGREE STRONGLY" WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.

FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS, PLEASE CIRCLE THE WORDS AFTER EACH STATEMENT WHICH BEST DESCRIBE YOUR OPINION.

16. Although professional competence is important, client trust is most strongly influenced by the professional's commitment to serving the best interests of clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strongly</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>nor</td>
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<tr>
<td>fairly</td>
<td>much</td>
<td>disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>strongly</td>
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</table>

17. In general, people who seek professional help have greater confidence in the professional competence of psychiatrists and psychologists than of social workers.

<table>
<thead>
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</table>

18. As a result of government cutbacks in social programs and benefits, it is difficult for social workers to build client trust in their professional competence to provide the services their clients need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</table>
19. The development of client trust in the professional helping process is more a function of attitudes the client brings to the professional relationship than anything the professional can do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
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<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>disagree</td>
<td>slightly</td>
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</table>

20. The more severe the client's emotional problems, the more difficult it is to build client trust in the professional helping process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
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<th>Neither</th>
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</tr>
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<td>slightly</td>
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<td>slightly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. There is a greater likelihood that problems of trust will develop when older clients are assigned to workers who are much younger than they are.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
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<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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</table>

22. Clients of minority racial/ethnic backgrounds are better able to develop trust in professionals who are the same race or ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Agree</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. There is a greater likelihood that religiously observant clients will experience difficulty in the development of trust when they are assigned to non-religious professionals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Agree fairly</th>
<th>Agree slighty</th>
<th>Neither agree</th>
<th>Disagree slightly</th>
<th>Disagree much</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

24. There is a greater likelihood for problems of trust to develop when homosexual clients have been assigned to heterosexual professionals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Agree fairly</th>
<th>Agree slighty</th>
<th>Neither agree</th>
<th>Disagree slightly</th>
<th>Disagree much</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

25. It is most difficult for professionals to build client trust with clients who are mandated for service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Agree fairly</th>
<th>Agree slighty</th>
<th>Neither agree</th>
<th>Disagree slightly</th>
<th>Disagree much</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
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</table>
SECTION III (page 10)

PLEASE CONSIDER THE ITEMS LISTED AFTER EACH QUESTION, AND RANK THEM IN THEIR ORDER OF IMPORTANCE TO THE QUESTION ASKED.

26. What kinds of professional activities would you judge to be the most effective in building client trust in the professional helping process?

INSTRUCTIONS: Please place a "1" before the item that, in your judgment, is the most effective in building client trust; a "2" before the item that, in your judgment, is less effective than "1" in building client trust; and, a "3" before the item that is the least effective in building client trust.

_____ demonstrating to clients that you are competent by providing the services the client needs or requests

_____ interacting with clients in ways that illustrate that you are reliable, consistent, and predictable

_____ communicating to clients that you can be counted on to place their best interests above your own

27. What specifically can you do to build client trust in your professional competence?

INSTRUCTIONS: Please place a "1" before the item that is most likely to build client trust in your competence; a "2" before the item that is less likely than "1" to build trust in your competence; a "3" before the item less likely than "2" to build trust in your competence; a "4" before the item less likely than "3" to build trust; and, a "5" before the item that is least likely.
display degrees, certificates, and awards

- talk about past successes you have had with clients who have come to you with similar problems

- answer clients' questions about your training

- express warmth, empathy, and genuineness to your clients

- act as client advocate with outside agencies

28. Several dimensions of client behavior have been identified as important to the helping process.

How would you rate each of the following client characteristics in their degree of importance to the development of a positive helping relationship?

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please place a "1" before the item that is most important in developing a positive helping relationship; a "2" before the item that is less important than "1" in developing a positive helping relationship; and, so on, to "5" placed before the item that is the least important item.

- client's ability and willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings to the professional
- client's motivation for help
- client's trust in the professional's competence
- client's cooperation with the professional worker's suggestions
- client's trust that the professional is working in the client's best interests

29. Which agency practices might positively influence your efforts to build client trust?

How would you rate each of the following typical agency practices in their degree of importance to your efforts to build client trust?
INSTRUCTIONS: Please place a "1" before the item that is most important to professionals' efforts to build client trust; a "2" before the item less important than "1" in building client trust; and, so on, to "4" which is the least important in building client trust.

- agency commitment to confidentiality
- short waiting lists
- team approach to serving the needs of clients
- agency policy for fairness in fee-setting
30. Age: ____

31. Sex: ____ male
     ____ female

32. Race/ethnicity: ____ black
     ____ caucasian
     ____ hispanic
     ____ oriental
     ____ other (please specify) ____

33. Do you have a master's degree in social work? ____ yes
     ____ no

34. Year graduated with master's degree in social work: ____

35. Highest degree earned: ____

36. Year earned: ____

37. Major Area of Study for highest degree earned: ____

38. Years worked at JBFCS: ____

39. Current job title: ____________________________

40. In your judgment, how much of your work time is spent in direct client contact?
     ____ under 25%
     ____ 25% to 50%
     ____ 50% to 75%
     ____ above 75%
41. How would you describe your primary theoretical orientation to clients?
   (Please check only one)
   ——— psychoanalytic/Freudian
   ——— ego psychology
   ——— behaviorist
   ——— systems/ecological/life model
   ——— Rogerian/client-centered
   ——— Gestalt
   ——— Transactional analysis
   ——— Rational emotive
   ——— interpersonal/Sullivanian
   ——— none
   ——— other (please specify) __________________________

42. Briefly describe the kinds of client problems with which you are currently working. (Please list up to 5 problems in the space below)
   1. __________________________________________________
   2. __________________________________________________
   3. __________________________________________________
   4. __________________________________________________
   5. __________________________________________________

43. Briefly describe the kinds of services you currently provide to clients. (Please list up to 5 services in the space below)
   1. __________________________________________________
   2. __________________________________________________
   3. __________________________________________________
   4. __________________________________________________
   5. __________________________________________________

44. In general, would you describe your current work with clients as long-term or short-term? (Please specify average length of time)
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In reviewing the literature on trust, there seems to be a great deal of difficulty in defining trust. What do you think of when we speak of client trust?

2. How would you describe problems of trust in your work with clients?

3. In your judgment, can we work with clients who have little, or no, basic trust? How?

4. Can we work with clients whom we, for whatever reason, do not trust? How?

5. Can clients trust "too much"? How?
Interview Questions - 2

6. In your judgment, what are social workers competent to do for their clients? What can clients trust us to do for them?

7. In your judgment, how would you compare social work with other professions on the issue of ethics and commitment to serving clients' best interests?

8. Social workers provide a significant proportion of clinical services to clients. Yet, our public image is often that of the 'welfare' worker.

In your individual client-worker relationships, has this public image of social work influenced your work in the development of client trust? How?

9. This research evolved out of theoretical work on trust which defined and examined trust in the professional relationship. The theory considers a phenomenon called a "rational distrust" of the professions, i.e., a rationally based distrust of professionals who have not lived up to the public's expectations for competence and the commitment to clients' best interests.
Interview Questions - 3

9. (continued)

From the perspective of social work, how do you feel about the idea of "rational distrust" of professions? Based on your experience, does it exist? Is it justifiable on the part of clients?

10. In your judgment, what can we as professionals do to enhance our trustworthiness to clients?