Daniel C. Bello, Constantine S. Katsikeas, & Matthew J. Robson

Does Accommodating a Self-Serving Partner in an International Marketing Alliance Pay Off?

This research examines a firm's performance in an international marketing alliance when it responds to a self-serving partner's exploitive behavior with accommodation, a cooperative response motivated by the firm's commitment to the venture. The authors theorize that a wronged firm's payoff from accommodation depends on its approach to monitoring, either employing overt surveillance or relying on its partner's self-control. Overt surveillance is believed to undermine accommodation's ability to convince a selfish partner that cooperation is beneficial and not inconsistent with its self-interest. In contrast, because no or low monitoring is a relational approach to evaluation, it tends to reinforce accommodation, persuading a competitive partner to reciprocate cooperatively. Data collected from 174 international marketing alliances support the authors' prediction that under low monitoring, accommodation is positively associated with performance in the alliance. Unexpectedly, under high monitoring, performance is greatest under both low and high accommodation. An explanation may lie in accommodation theory's notion that as accommodation increases, a selfish partner transitions from competition to cooperation, ceasing to exploit accommodation and upturning performance.

Keywords: international marketing alliance, accommodation, monitoring, commitment, nonlinear effects

International marketing alliances (IMAs) are cooperative arrangements in which autonomous firms based in different countries pool resources for the joint accomplishment of individual corporate goals (Luo, Shenkar, and Gurnani 2008; Parkhe 1993). Sharing resources and integrating marketing activities in a collaborative (i.e., joint-profit-maximizing) mode enable the partners to accomplish more together than either can alone through unilateral actions (Swaminathan and Moorman 2009). However, alliances are a uniquely fragile organizational form because of internal tensions between the contradictory forces of cooperation and competition: Cooperative behaviors maximize joint returns from complementary resources, but competitive actions maximize an individual firm's share of returns. A venturing firm faces a dilemma because self-serving behaviors may yield the greatest profits and yet are destructive to the alliance's value-creation process, which relies on cooperation (De Rond and Bouchikhi 2004). Balancing these opposing forces and avoiding rivalry are critical for IMAs because "the tension between simultaneous cooperation and competition may be responsible for the high failure rate of strategic alliances" (Das and Teng 2000, p. 86).

Gaining an understanding of how alliances maintain a productive mix of marketing activities is important because an ongoing IMA may be threatened by internal and external uncertainty, which can create governance problems and instability (Varadarajan and Cunningham 1995). Uncertainty is problematic for IMA governance because it creates opportunities for a self-serving partner to act competitively, depriving the collective interests of the alliance (Heide 2003). As a result of goal divergence and other differences, departures from a cooperative, joint-profit-maximizing mode can easily occur in an IMA (Luo 2006). Despite competitive actions, the crucial factor for performance in the IMA is the nature of a firm's response to another's negative, competitive behavior. We propose that the actual impact of a partner's destructive actions on the firm's performance depends on the response of the firm, whose reaction can either worsen or alleviate the effects of competitive acts. A wronged firm's willingness to inhibit its impulses to reciprocate with destructive behavior and instead produce a constructive reaction to its partner's competitive acts is termed "accommodation," which we propose is the key mechanism by which an IMA recovers from self-serving actions that threaten the productive alignment of tasks and resources (Arriaga and Rusbult 1998).

A wronged firm may not react with accommodation but may reciprocate with a competitive response that is just as destructive to the well-being of the relationship and passive in terms of addressing underlying task problems. To explain a wronged firm's reaction, we turn to commitment theory

Daniel C. Bello is Barbara and Elmer Sunday Professor of Marketing, J. Mack Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University (e-mail: dbello@gsu.edu). Constantine S. Katsikeas is Arnold Ziff Research Chair in Marketing and International Management (e-mail: csk@lubs.leeds.ac.uk), and Matthew J. Robson is Professor of Marketing (e-mail: mjro@lubs.leeds.ac.uk), Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds. The authors thank Rick Bagozzi (Rice University and University of Michigan), Sandy Jap (Emory University), Neil Morgan (Indiana University), Tamer Cavusgil (Georgia State University), and Bodo Schlegelmilch (Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration) for their constructive comments and suggestions on previous drafts of this article.

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(Kim and Frazier 1997) to identify motivations underlying the decision to respond with accommodation and sidetrack dysfunctional, competitive behaviors. Commitment, the strength of business ties, is posited to be the key driver of accommodation because it summarizes the various prorelationship concerns that encourage the choice of an accommodative response to competitive behaviors (Rusbult and Buunk 1993). Nevertheless, a committed firm choosing accommodation is highly vulnerable because its information disclosures, task adjustments, and other compromises may not be reciprocated but rather opportunistically exploited by a competitive partner (Luo, Rindfleisch, and Tse 2007). Theorists (e.g., Heide 1994) note that uncertainty in evaluating whether a partner acts correctly can be addressed through monitoring, defined as the governance process that oversees and assesses a partner's actions. As Figure 1 shows, we posit that the nature of monitoring within an IMA fundamentally affects partner interactions such that the approach taken to monitoring conditions the impact of accommodation on performance in the alliance.[1]

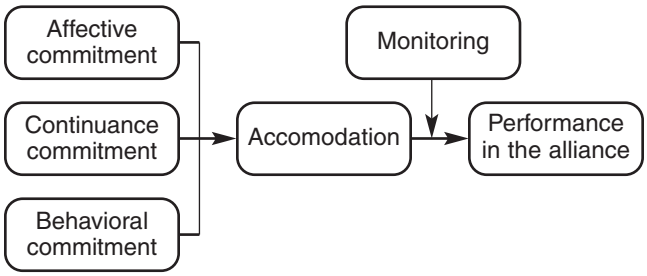
This research attempts to make three contributions to the knowledge of performance-enhancing processes in IMAs. First, we introduce accommodation to the IMA performance literature. Informed by relationship theory, we specify how emphatic accommodation triggers the transformation of motivation necessary to recast competition as cooperation. Furthermore, because of the way accommodation interacts with monitoring, our analysis provides new insights into the complex dynamics linking accommodative behaviors to performance in the alliance.

Second, because IMA governance is challenged by pervasive uncertainty, we specify accommodation and monitoring as underlying mechanisms that venturing firms employ to respond to their governance problems. Although governance theory notes that firms engage in unilateral or relational responses to uncertainty, we specify how combinations of these response modes either facilitate or hinder IMA productivity. That is, we identify particular governance problems as key aspects of alliance management, and the way a venturing firm resolves tensions to compete or cooperate matters the most in terms of its performance in the alliance.

Third, by identifying commitment as a key driver of accommodation, we develop and test a new theoretical approach to understanding the commitment–performance relationship based on a firm's response to its partner's selfish, competitive actions. We contribute by specifying unique mechanisms through which different facets of commitment motivate a venturing firm to respond with accommodation to a partner's self-serving behaviors. By analyzing the efficacy of different forms of attachment in triggering accommodation, we extend the understanding of how each component of commitment either does or does not alter alliance behavior in a performance-enhancing way.

[1]We focus on the focal firm's performance as a result of its own accommodative behavior. This is consistent with the literature (e.g., Palmatier, Dant, and Grewal 2007) and was supported by our field interviews.

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Model



Theoretical Background

Accommodative Response Behaviors

Within our theoretical framework, we view accommodation as a form of response behavior. When a firm is dissatisfied with a partner's competitive actions, its response repertoire is defined by the extent to which it reacts actively (by directly addressing the task problem at hand or not) and constructively (by maintaining the well-being of the relationship or not) (Antia and Frazier 2001; Wathne and Heide 2000). A variety of response behaviors have been discussed in the channels and conflict management literature streams. For example, Hibbard, Kumar, and Stern's (2001) seminal work on destructive acts in channel relationships identifies a broad set of responses, including disengagement, venting, constructive discussion, and passive acceptance. Likewise, research on conflict resolution behaviors identifies a set of responses, including problem solving, compromise, and aggressive reactions (Ganesan 1993; Koza and Dant 2007). When applied to marketing alliances, the literature does not fully account for the key role of response behaviors in relationship governance and in driving performance in these uniquely cooperative–competitive ventures.

Because marketing alliances feature relatively high interdependence (Parkhe 1993), passive responses seem less meaningful than and lack the transformational power of active responses. Disengagement, venting, and aggressive reactions by a wronged firm also reflect a unilateral approach to governance that not only undermines the joint exploitation of pooled, complementary resources but also weakens the relational climate of the IMA, further discouraging collaborative efforts. Consequently, destructive responses fail to advance work tasks of the alliance and social bonds between partners, rendering them impotent in terms of performance. Likewise, responses that solely address task issues (e.g., constructive discussion, problem solving, compromise) may not enhance social bonds and normative beliefs sufficiently enough to convince a competitive partner that cooperation is not harmful to its self-interest and is crucial to maximizing value creation. Although governance is an endogenous aspect of relationships (Ghosh and John 1999), extant analyses of response categories do not account for the way a wronged firm's response alters the state of the relationship and affects the

partner's task and social interactions (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987).

In summary, accommodation is a more inclusive construct than simply seeking constructive discussion and problem solving or avoiding venting and aggressive reactions. Because accommodation entails reacting (active response) in a consistently constructive way to the partner's competitive behavior, it uniquely enhances performance in this fragile organizational form by addressing task problems while maintaining relational bonds. Performance improvements reflect the operational interdependence of alliance partners that results from their need to work together to maximize value from pooled resources. Accommodation as a strategy to motivate partner cooperation is more likely to be attempted and to be successful in an IMA because the venturing firm and partner are so highly interdependent.

Uncertainty Problems in IMAs

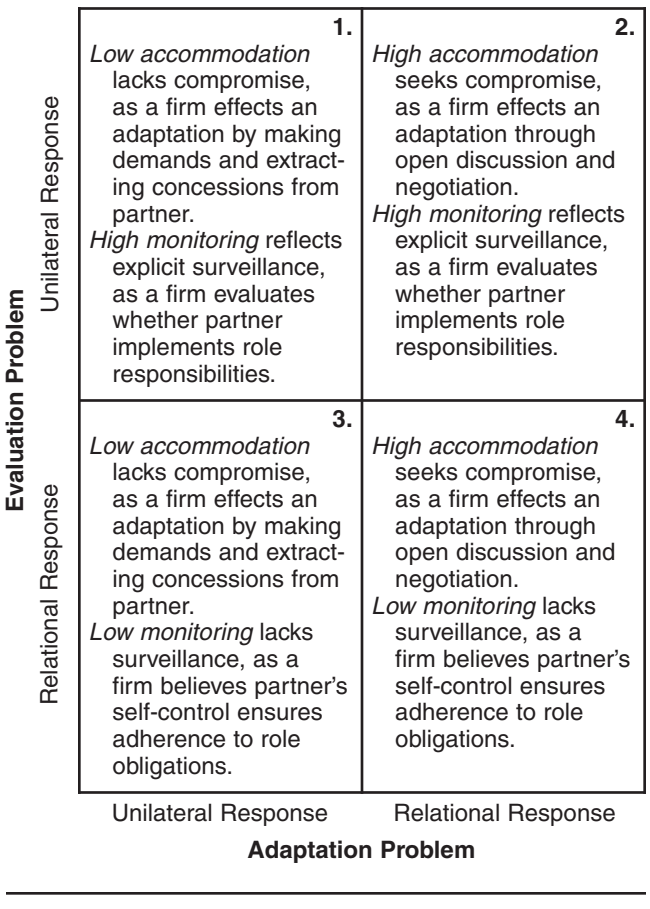
Institutional design theory (Carson et al. 1999) suggests that performance in a two-firm IMA stems from the partners' ability to identify and cooperatively implement an activity set that maximizes their joint performance outcomes. High performance occurs when the partners are able to integrate their activities as they deploy resources in novel and increasingly productive combinations. However, achieving productive synergy between partners is threatened by external and internal uncertainty, which creates the twin governance problems of adaptation and evaluation, respectively (Varadarajan and Cunningham 1995). External uncertainty, due to an unpredictable decision environment, can cause unexpected problems that dislodge the alignment of tasks and resources, creating an adaptation problem. Internal uncertainty refers to the difficulty of evaluating the compliance of a foreign partner with task assignments and other role responsibilities in the IMA, creating an evaluation problem (Das and Teng 2000). Unlike domestic alliances, the physical and cultural distances separating IMA partners aggravate these twin problems in a way that can degrade outcomes. Thus, we suggest that high-performance IMAs are able to resolve contradictory tensions to cooperate and compete along both the adaptation and the evaluation aspects of alliance management.

Adaptation and evaluation problems are typically addressed through some combination of unilateral and relational governance processes (Heide 1994; Zhang, Hu, and Gu 2008). Unilateral responses to uncertainty occur when a firm attempts to impose its decisions on another firm by developing rules and directing activities. Such responses tend to be self-serving and competitive, emphasizing solutions that satisfy a firm's own goals and performance requirements (Luo, Rindfleisch, and Tse 2007). In contrast, relational responses occur when a firm's reaction is alliance centered and cooperative, focusing on developing joint policies that address adaptation or evaluation difficulties. Relational responses flow from the parties' mutual interests, motivating a firm to act for the long-term benefit of the system and restrain its competitive tendencies. As Figure 2 shows, any given IMA can be marked by a mix of unilateral and relational response mechanisms because governance is "a heterogeneous phenomenon;… within a given relationship, processes from different governance forms can be combined in different fashions" (Heide 1994, p. 81).

Adaptation is of key importance because changing circumstances are impossible to foresee and write provisions for in a formal alliance contract (Dyer and Chu 2003). Disturbances can dramatically alter business requirements, creating task problems and turning once-integrated partner actions into inconsistent and uncoordinated activities. Unless steps are taken to reestablish a productive activity set, severe task problems can permanently lower performance and potentially lead to alliance dissolution (Makino et al. 2007). In a unilateral response to an adaptation occasion, a firm reacts competitively as it develops and imposes on its partner a self-serving solution to task dislocations (i.e., low accommodation). A firm may pursue its self-interest by extracting concessions from and making demands on the partner to effect an adaptation (Luo, Rindfleisch, and Tse 2007). A relational response is marked by accommodation, such that a firm cooperatively attempts to develop a solution through open discussion and compromise while refraining from aggressive and competitive responses (i.e., high accommodation) (Arriaga and Rusbult 1998).

However, in adapting to unexpected task problems, a firm faces an "accommodative dilemma." On the one hand, the firm is motivated to align its tasks with those of the part-

FIGURE 2
Uncertainty in IMAs: Key Problems and Response Processes



ner to create value for the alliance by identifying the most productive combination of resources. On the other hand, internal uncertainty creates an evaluation problem, making it difficult to verify whether the foreign partner complies with agreed-on actions. A dilemma is posed for the firm that cooperatively invests in realigning its activities but faces a potentially opportunistic partner that may shirk duties, fail to invest in the alliance, and unfairly appropriate value (Wathne and Heide 2000). Theorists (e.g., Heide, Wathne, and Rokkan 2007) note that monitoring procedures of some form are established in exchange relationships to evaluate the extent to which a partner complies with its obligations.

To address the evaluation problem, monitoring can be accomplished either unilaterally through explicit surveillance of partner behaviors or relationally "by aligning the incentives of decision makers *ex ante* to reduce the need for performance measurement altogether" (Heide 1994, p. 77). In addressing the evaluation problem through a unilateral response, a firm explicitly measures and verifies its partner's role performance by directly monitoring whether agreed-on actions are implemented (i.e., high monitoring). Alternatively, in handling evaluation through a relational response, a firm relies on its partner's self-control and prosocial behaviors to ensure voluntary compliance with agreements (i.e., low monitoring).

Accommodation and Performance in the Alliance

Theorists (e.g., Arriaga and Rusbult 1998) attribute performance gains from accommodation to relational processes triggered when an IMA party engages in a cooperative response to another's competitive action. Relationship development theory (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Ring and Van de Ven 1994) argues that a competitive partner may react to strong accommodation by positively reassessing equity and efficiency within the alliance, forcing recognition that cooperation may be beneficial and not necessarily inconsistent with its self-interest. That is, a firm's deliberate act of accommodation reveals clearly to the counterpart its intentions of mutuality, instilling a new belief in the superiority of cooperation and replacing opportunism with prorelationship behaviors (Heide, Wathne, and Rokkan 2007).[2] Rusbult and Buunk (1993, p. 177, emphasis in original) explain this turning point from a competitive to a cooperative focus: "Such preference shifts are referred to as *transformation of motivation*, a process which may lead individuals to relinquish their immediate self-interest and act on the basis of broader interaction goals."

A transformation to cooperate is critical because competitive orientations in alliances negatively affect financial returns by fostering detrimental practices and hindering beneficial outcomes of learning and sharing resources (Luo, Rindfleisch, and Tse 2007). When viewed from a relationship development lens, a partner's mental representation of competition or cooperation is not an exogenous alliance condition but rather an endogenous feature of the evolution of partner interactions and assessments (Ring and Van de Ven 1994). The idea that accommodative responses by a wronged firm can transform a selfish partner into a collaborator "represents a major transition in how the parties regard one another," enhancing the value-creation process (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987, p. 15). Thus, a firm's accommodation can stimulate relational interaction patterns and secure timely inputs from both sides; such prosocial behavior is crucial to enhancing the firm's performance in these highly interdependent alliances (Sivadas and Dwyer 2000).

However, accommodation is not blind but rather highly selective and is granted only to a partner to whom the firm is highly committed (Macneil 1980). As we show subsequently, accommodating a selfish partner reflects an underlying belief that the alliance will prove to be a long-lasting, unified partnership. Given a firm's commitment to the IMA, its prosocial reaction to negative behavior is consistent with expectations that the partner will recognize the utility of a cooperative, joint approach to alliance work and transform its self-serving motivation by reciprocating to the accommodation (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987). We suggest that emphatic accommodation is a crucial but highly selective behavioral mechanism that shifts performance in the alliance to a higher level.

Importantly, the relationship between a venturing firm's accommodative behavior and its performance in an IMA may be more complex than a simple positive link. As a firm engages in relational behavior that is increasingly accommodative, the partnership is better able to develop solutions to task problems through a more effective problem-solving dialogue. Increased accommodation signals a relational intent and also provides the information and ideas needed in the partnership to identify solutions to problems, thus driving better performance. Notably, the productivity fostered by accommodation is unlikely to have a straightforward, linear impact on performance in the IMA but will tend to increase rapidly as the firm engages in more open discussion. That is, at high levels of accommodation, theorists (e.g., Rusbult and Buunk 1993) note that the self-serving partner's transformed motivation increasingly yields beneficial, constructive behaviors that rapidly increase performance in the IMA. Thus, accommodation yields performance gains at a nonlinear rate because partners are increasingly capable of synergistically integrating and optimizing their activities as accommodation rises, yielding much greater outcomes for the firm.

H_1: The positive association between a venturing firm's level of accommodation and its performance in the alliance becomes greater as accommodation increases.

[2]Our notion that a self-serving partner transitions from competition to cooperation is consistent with the partner's changing microlevel social beliefs about the IMA context. Heide, Wathne, and Rokkan (2007, p. 427) define a microlevel understanding as "one party's belief about 'salient relationship issues' in the interaction with another exchange partner," noting that changing beliefs can increase or decrease opportunism. In the IMA setting, consistent accommodation alters a self-serving partner's microlevel beliefs about the alliance such that it accepts the idea that cooperation is in its self-interest and ceases to exploit accommodative acts, potentially enhancing the wronged firm's performance in the alliance.

Monitoring, Accommodation, and Performance in the Alliance

In terms of the uncertainty problem of evaluating a partner's compliance with role responsibilities, a venturing firm's response can range from explicit, unilateral monitoring to a relational approach that lacks overt surveillance (Heide 1994). We suspect that the nature of monitoring acts as a boundary condition, making the link between accommodative behavior and performance in the IMA stronger or weaker. This occurs not only because a firm's explicit monitoring tends to shift tasks toward its self-defined notion of role responsibilities but also because the firm is highly intrusive into a partner's operations, potentially driving a wedge into cooperative interaction and creating resentment (Antia and Frazier 2001).

Effect of high monitoring. A unilateral response to the evaluation problem triggers a complex dynamic between partners, altering the performance effects of the firm's approach to adaptation. Because overt monitoring signals mistrust and interferes with partner activities, it changes the impact of accommodative responses. As we show subsequently, governance mechanisms yield a complex relationship between accommodation and performance in the alliance under high monitoring.

When a firm exhibits low accommodation and high monitoring, it uses unilateral approaches to respond to both adaptation and evaluation problems (see Cell 1, Figure 2). Disturbances misaligning tasks are addressed without accommodation as the firm fails to compromise, instead pressing its partner for concessions and relief from existing agreements. Seeking an advantage by not entering into an open discussion, the firm withholds relevant information and does not reveal its true concerns (Luo, Rindfleisch, and Tse 2007). In such competitive circumstances, a firm also monitors its partner, using surveillance to ensure compliance with its demands. When the firm believes that the partner is unlikely to complete necessary tasks in a nonopportunistic manner, high monitoring detects shirking of assigned duties. Through a consistently unilateral approach to governance, performance in the IMA tends to be moderate because strong management by a firm ensures that tasks are coordinated and that operations are conducted as planned. Strong unilateral governance also benefits the competitively oriented firm: Its lack of accommodation restricts opportunities for the partner to act exploitatively, and its surveillance detects opportunistic acts if any should occur.

Under conditions of high monitoring, a firm that relaxes its lack of accommodation by compromising may be viewed skeptically by its partner. Given that unilateral, competitive mechanisms largely govern the IMA, attempts to accommodate will likely be perceived as inconsistent with alliance procedures and a manipulative extension of the firm's unilateral behavior to selfishly pursue its own gain (Antia and Frazier 2001). Under high monitoring, increasing levels of accommodation are not credible shifts toward or signals of relational governance and do not yield a performance-enhancing transformation of motivation. Rather, the alliance remains competitively unilateral, and a firm's accommodative acts tend to be quickly exploited opportunistically by the partner (Wathne and Heide 2000), lowering the firm's performance.

H_{2a}: Under conditions of high monitoring, a venturing firm's level of accommodation is negatively associated with its performance in the alliance.

Effect of low monitoring. Low monitoring reflects a relational response to evaluation because a firm does not engage in overt surveillance; instead, it recognizes that the partner's self-control ensures adherence to role obligations (Heide 1994). By avoiding explicit interventions into a partner's operations, a firm's lack of monitoring does not destabilize a cooperative climate or sidetrack the role performance of its counterpart (Bello and Gilliland 1997). Furthermore, low monitoring influences the nature of the accommodation–performance relationship.

We propose that an IMA governed by a combination of low monitoring and low accommodation will yield relatively low performance (Cell 3, Figure 2). With little or no accommodation, the key mechanism enabling the alliance to develop optimal integrative activities is absent. By failing to engage in productive dialogue and compromise, the firm does not contribute to solutions to task problems; rather, it imposes competitively oriented solutions that improve its immediate position but do not necessarily optimize performance in the IMA. Furthermore, a lack of surveillance greatly inhibits a firm's ability to discern emerging opportunism should its partner unfairly appropriate benefits and shirk its responsibilities. Consequently, a firm employing a hybrid system of unilateral responses to adaptation difficulties (i.e., low accommodation) but relational responses to evaluation problems (i.e., low monitoring) will suffer substantial performance penalties.

In contrast, we expect that a firm addressing both adaptation and evaluation difficulties through relational governance mechanisms will attain high performance (Cell 4, Figure 2). Our framework predicts such outperformance because productive activity sets are achieved by partners under cooperative conditions, in which these sets are most easily developed and implemented (Carson et al. 1999). High accommodation enables the parties to identify task assignments that best use each firm's competencies and resources; through discussion and compromise, the firms are able to integrate their activities in a cooperative way that increases IMA outcomes. Likewise, low monitoring implies that this aspect of the partnership is relationally governed such that tasks are self-monitored. Because of the relational nature of evaluation, disruptive interventions are minimized because role activity is not subjected to explicit surveillance. Thus, we posit that under low monitoring, there is a positive link between a firm's accommodation and performance in the IMA. Because a lack of explicit surveillance already presents some relational mechanisms in these ventures, the scope of relational elements is enlarged for high-accommodation alliances, further strengthening performance.

H_{2b}: Under conditions of low monitoring, a venturing firm's level of accommodation is positively associated with its performance in the alliance.

Commitment and Accommodation

Rather than being naive, accommodation is highly discerning and selectively granted to partners to which a firm is strongly committed. Commitment is a multicomponent construct that reflects various bases of attachment to an alliance partner (Gilliland and Bello 2002). Anderson and Weitz (1992, p. 18) propose that commitment is mutual such that "each party's commitment is affected by the perceived commitment of the other party." Empirically, they find (p. 29) that channel partners perceive similar levels of commitment, reflecting a process of signaling and reciprocation, leading to a "correspondence between the commitment levels." In an alliance context, this mutuality of commitment suggests that a committed venturing firm, perceiving its partner to be similarly committed, will be motivated to accommodate, believing that its relational act will be reciprocated.

The complex nature of commitment in an interfirm setting reflects three bases for a venturing firm's ties: affective, continuance, and behavioral commitment (Kim and Frazier 1997). Anderson and Weitz (1992) combine these facets into a global measure of commitment in their study of commitment mutuality, leaving unexamined the possibility of differential effects of each facet. Unique effects are likely given the distinctive nature and function of each facet of the attachment bond. An affective tie is a sense of unity and identification with the alliance partner, a continuance tie is recognition of and desire for an enduring relationship, and a behavioral tie is provision of extra effort to help the functioning of the IMA (Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp 1995). Because each commitment facet reflects a distinct state of attachment to an IMA, we suggest that each provides a venturing firm with a different incentive to respond with accommodation.

Affective commitment motivates accommodation because the wronged firm will view its positive response as benefiting the alliance and itself since it identifies with the IMA. An intensified sense of interconnectedness with the partner is consistent with the notion of collective benefits. Even when facing a partner's competitive behavior, it is likely that the committed firm's expectation of mutuality will determine that an accommodative response is in both parties' best interests (Menzies-Toman and Lydon 2005). Continuance commitment would stimulate the desire, borne out of pragmatism, to enhance and safeguard IMA unity (Gilliland and Bello 2002). Because the future casts a shadow on current actions, accommodation is encouraged from the recognition that any costs to current self-interest are balanced over time in light of the partner's expected reciprocation. Behavioral commitments further bond the firm to the partner because sunk investments lose value if the IMA should end, creating an incentive for the firm to strengthen the relationship (Frazier et al. 2009) and accommodate. This facet is behaviorally anchored because providing substantial aid aligns self-interest with the alliance, raising its salience. Thus, expectations of similarity in the partner's attachment bonds (Anderson and Weitz 1992) suggest that each aspect of commitment can affect a firm's reactions by inhibiting destructive responses and motivating constructive acts to bring about a beneficial alignment of the partner's activities.

H_3: The higher a venturing firm's level of (a) affective commitment, (b) continuance commitment, and (c) behavioral commitment, the higher is its level of accommodation in an IMA.

Method

Research Setting

The empirical context is IMAs of U.S., Western European, and Far Eastern firms with U.K. counterparts. The unit of analysis is the IMA venture, including equity and nonequity joint ventures because both entail partner integration and interdependence (Luo 2005). The IMA should involve partners' coordination in one or more marketing aspects (e.g., jointly developing, selling, and/or promoting products) but may extend into other areas, such as training and production (Swaminathan and Moorman 2009). We included both horizontally integrated partnerships between competitors and vertically integrated supplier–manufacturer partnerships. From prestudy interviews, we excluded manufacturer–overseas distributor deals because they tend to convey a more arm's-length form of interaction. We also excluded not-for-profit alliances because of their idiosyncratic policies. Our study focuses on two-parent IMAs because ventures with more than two parties involve complicated exchanges. We used a minimum operating duration of one-and-a-half years as a criterion for IMA inclusion to enable performance to reach stability (Lyles and Baird 1994).

Questionnaire Development

Following a thorough literature review, we conducted in-depth interviews with nine senior alliance managers to better understand the phenomena of interest, to capture any nuances of the constructs overlooked in the literature review, and to ensure that the measures were relevant. We used Zaichkowsky's (1985) procedure to ascertain content validity. We involved seven academics familiar with alliance research as expert judges to assess whether each scale item is representative of the particular construct or dimension. For accommodation, which we treated as a formative construct, the judges concluded that the items thoroughly captured the construct's domain of content. We developed a draft questionnaire, which we refined in personal interviews with seven senior IMA executives. Measures, response scales, and internal consistency estimates appear in the Appendix.

The field interviews, along with previous studies on interfirm conflict harmonization and relationship maintenance behaviors (e.g., Hibbard, Kumar, and Stern 2001), were instrumental in operationalizing accommodation. The fieldwork revealed that firms' accommodative responses to interpartner differences in IMAs occur in the form of deploying constructive behaviors and avoiding destructive actions. These insights suggest that a formative perspective is theoretically appropriate for assessing accommodation (Jarvis, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff 2003). We used a ten-

item index to tap the domain of accommodation. Each item represents a distinct aspect of the construct—that is, these behaviors are manifestations of accommodation (Bollen and Lennox 1991).

We also followed Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer's (2001) procedures to assess the validity of our accommodation index. Multicollinearity among the ten indicators constituting the index did not appear to pose a problem; the highest variance inflation factor was 2.63. Furthermore, to evaluate the external validity of the measure, we estimated a MIMIC (multiple indicators and multiple causes) model. Because of the identification problem associated with specifying a set of causal indicators (Jarvis, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff 2003), we used two global items that summarize the essence of the accommodation construct (i.e., "Fix things with the partner so as to better align the two sides' activities and goal achievement in the alliance" and "Adopt a competitive, less accommodative stance in relation to the partner" [reverse-scored item]). Estimation of the model produced an excellent fit to the data ($\chi^2_{(9)} = 13.45$, $p = .14$; comparative fit index [CFI] = .99; nonnormed fit index [NNFI] = .98; and root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .05).[3]

Data Collection

We used three sources to develop our sampling frame: *Financial Times* Discovery, *Financial Times* McCarthy, and the U.K. Department of Trade and Industry International Business News. We identified 598 IMAs for possible inclusion. We contacted the U.K. partner in each of these IMAs by telephone to ensure that the alliance was still active, to determine whether the alliance met our IMA definition and eligibility criteria, to prenotify the firm about the research, and to identify the most appropriate (key) informant. The literature (e.g., Aulakh, Kotabe, and Sahay 1996) suggests that the individual alliance manager is capable of producing valid reports. After telephone contact, we identified 301 potential respondents (and IMAs) who were eligible for and expressed an interest in the study. We dropped 297 alliances because they ceased operations (180 IMAs), did not conform to our IMA definition and eligibility criteria (59 IMAs), or had corporate policy restrictions that precluded provision of information necessary to assess their eligibility (58 IMAs).

We used personal interviews with alliance managers to collect the data. In this way, we ensured that the respondents were responsible for the IMA ventures under study, fully understood the purpose of the research and questions asked in the interview, and focused on the specific IMA venture while excluding other alliances of the parent firms. We sent all 301 potential informants a letter that outlined the nature of the study and requested their participation. Of these, 179 alliance managers participated. We dropped five questionnaires because they failed post hoc informant quality tests. Thus, we achieved a satisfactory response rate of 58% (174 of 301 IMAs). Most respondents (73%) were at the director level, and the remainder (27%) were senior business managers.

Our sample alliances had an average age of four years and an average size of 82 employees. Seventy (40%) partners were from Western Europe, 62 (36%) were from the United States, and 42 (24%) were from the Far East. There were 124 (71%) horizontal alliances and 50 (29%) vertical alliances. There were 109 (63%) equity joint ventures and 65 (37%) nonequity joint ventures. A total of 113 IMAs (65%) operated in goods sectors, and the other 61 (35%) fell into the services sector. We compared means of the study constructs between equity and nonequity IMAs and between goods and services IMAs and detected no significant differences. Furthermore, we compared our sample IMAs with a group of 41 randomly selected (1 in 3 of the 122) nonrespondents in terms of alliance age, governance structure, and industry sector and found no differences. Thus, nonresponse bias does not appear to pose a problem.

To validate our key informant data, the final part of the questionnaire assessed the interviewee's (1) knowledge of IMA activities, (2) involvement in IMA decisions, and (3) confidence in answering the questions, using a seven-point scale in each case (Heide and Weiss 1995). We dropped five questionnaires with scores of 4 or below on any of these items. The mean rating for informant quality was 6.34. We were also able to obtain data from a competent second informant for 20 IMAs. Reports of the two raters were significantly correlated, ranging from .69 ($p < .01$) for behavioral commitment to .78 ($p < .01$) for monitoring. The mean correlation between the two raters was .74, which compares well with other studies using secondary respondent data to corroborate perceptions of primary informants (e.g., Morgan, Kaleka, and Katsikeas 2004).

Analysis and Results

Measure Validation

We ran two measurement models (see Table 1). The first contained 17 items that tapped the first-order reflective constructs affective commitment, continuance commitment, behavioral commitment, and monitoring and one composite for the accommodation index. The error term for accommodation was set at .10. The second model tested performance in the IMA as a second-order construct comprised of three first-order factors: effectiveness, the extent to which the firm's IMA goals and objectives are achieved; efficiency, the ratio of the firm's IMA performance outcomes to its inputs required to achieve them; and responsiveness, the ability of the firm to make adjustments in the IMA in response to environmental changes (Katsikeas, Leonidou, and Morgan 2000). We used the elliptical reweighted least squares estimation procedure in EQS, which produces unbi-

[3]Accommodation contains consistently positive reactive behaviors and cannot coexist with opportunistic actions. We found a negative correlation (r = –.64) between a firm's accommodation and its opportunism (four-item scale based on Parkhe [1993]), in support of this assumption. In addition, accommodative actions are perceived as reactive because they make the focal firm's concerns transparent. We found a positive correlation (r = .55) between accommodation and communication quality between the IMA partners (five-item scale adapted from Mohr and Spekman [1994]), which lends support to this assertion. This evidence enhances confidence in the external validity of our accommodation construct.

TABLE 1
Measurement Models

A: Measurement Model 1: First-Order Construct Measurement Summary: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Factors and Items	Standardized Loading	t-Value
Affective Commitment		
AFFCOM1	.79	10.59
AFFCOM2	.82	11.10
AFFCOM3	.91	12.92
AFFCOM4	.86	11.96
Continuance Commitment		
CONTCOM1	.94	14.03
CONTCOM2	.94	14.09
CONTCOM3	.91	13.39
CONTCOM4	.87	12.39
CONTCOM5	.83	11.43
Behavioral Commitment		
BEHCOM1	.67	8.07
BEHCOM2	.73	8.96
BEHCOM3	.81	10.33
BEHCOM4	.74	9.14
Monitoring		
MONITOR1	.66	8.05
MONITOR2	.85	11.19
MONITOR3	.80	10.32
MONITOR4	.71	8.83
Accommodation		
ACCOM1	.91	12.87
Fit Statistics		
$\chi^2_{(126)} = 205.94$, $p < .001$; NFI = .93; NNFI = .971; CFI = .97; and RMSEA = .06		

B: Measurement Model 2: Performance in the Alliance Measurement Summary: Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Factors and Items	Standardized Loading	t-Value
Effectiveness (First-Order Factor)		
EFFEC1	.76	___[a]
EFFEC2	.78	8.58
EFFEC3	.81	8.79
Efficiency (First-Order Factor)		
EFFIC1	.76	___[a]
EFFIC2	.75	8.74
EFFIC3	.91	10.50
Responsiveness (First-Order Factor)		
RESP1	.64	___[a]
RESP2	.73	7.00
RESP3	.88	7.84
RESP4	.69	6.76
Performance in the Alliance (Second-Order Factor)		
Effectiveness	.79	7.26
Efficiency	.97	8.47
Responsiveness	.75	6.19
Fit Statistics		
$\chi^2_{(32)} = 47.07$, $p = .042$; NFI = .97; NNFI = .98; CFI = .99; and RMSEA = .05		

[a]Item fixed to set the scale.

ased estimates for multivariate normal and nonnormal data (Sharma, Durvasula, and Dillon 1989).

In the first measurement model, the chi-square statistic is significant ($\chi^2_{(126)} = 205.94$, $p < .001$), as we would expect because of its sensitivity to sample size. The other fit indexes (normed fit index [NFI] = .93, NNFI = .96, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .06) suggest that the model fits the data well. Items load heavily on their posited constructs (t-values > 8.04), revealing convergent validity. Likewise, the second-order measurement model for performance exhibits a good overall fit ($\chi^2_{(32)} = 47.07$, $p = .042$; NFI = .97; NNFI = .98; CFI = .99; and RMSEA = .05), with large and significant loadings (t-values > 6.18).

We assessed discriminant validity using a chi-square difference test that involves collapsing each pair of constructs into a single-factor model and comparing its fit with that of a two-factor model (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). In each case, a two-construct model had a better fit than a one-construct model. Furthermore, the average variance extracted for each reflective construct was greater than the squared correlation between that construct and any other construct in the model (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Table 2 shows the correlation matrix and summary statistics of the measures. Composite reliability scores for all reflective scales range from .77 to .96 (see the Appendix).

Structural Model

We estimated a structural model containing linear and quadratic terms pertaining to H_1 and H_3. We assessed the conditioning role of monitoring (H_{2a} and H_{2b}) using subgroup analysis. We employed a parsimonious estimation approach (e.g., Settoon, Bennett, and Liden 1996) to reach a sample size-to-parameter ratio greater than five, which is recommended as sufficient to attain reliable parameter estimates (Bentler 1995). Furthermore, scholars (e.g., Cadogan, Kuivalainen, and Sundqvist 2009) recommend the use of single indicants for models involving nonlinear terms. Thus, we used composite measures as manifest indicators for each latent construct by averaging the items of each scale, index, or subscale. For the reflective scales of affective, continuance, and behavioral commitment, we set the path from the latent construct to its composite indicator at the square root of the scale's reliability and the error term at (1 – reliability) × construct variance (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1982). We assumed that the formative and control variables had a reliability of .90 for purposes of model estimation (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). We calculated the loading and error variance of the accommodation quadratic term using Ping's (1995) equations. Because multiplicative terms raise the possibility of multicollinearity and Type II errors, we mean-centered and standardized accommodation before calculating its quadratic term (Nygaard and Dahlstrom 2002).[4]

[4]We included two control variables: alliance size (i.e., IMA employee number) and duration. Large alliances may enjoy advantages over small alliances in terms of securing partner firms' contributions of resources necessary to achieve operational effectiveness and efficiency, and alliances become more successful over time because partners have greater opportunity to coordinate joint actions.

TABLE 2
Correlations and Summary Statistics

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Affective commitment										
2. Continunce commitment	.53									
3. Behavioral commitment	.44	.22								
4. Monitoring	–.25	–.24	–.01							
5. Accommodation	.53	.40	.42	–.34						
6. Effectiveness	.51	.23	.27	–.24	.44					
7. Efficiency	.57	.31	.34	–.24	.44	.64				
8. Responsiveness	.47	.30	.40	–.20	.46	.50	.60			
9. Alliance duration	–.06	–.12	–.10	.02	–.15	.02	–.09	–.09		
10. Alliance size[a]	.09	.02	.03	–.11	.01	.12	.04	.01	.28	
Summary Statistics										
Range	1.0–7.0	1.0–7.0	1.0–7.0	1.0–7.0	2.2–7.0	1.0–7.0	2.2–7.0	1.5–7.0	1.5–35.0	1.1–10.8
Number of items	4	5	4	4	10	3	3	4	1	1
M	5.02	5.22	5.50	3.10	5.36	5.30	5.09	5.09	3.96	4.41
SD	1.49	1.72	1.10	1.37	.74	1.21	1.05	1.10	4.49	2.09

[a]We used a logarithmic transformation to reduce the variance (Merchant and Schendel 2000).
Notes: n = 174; correlations greater than .14 or less than –.14 are significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 3
Structural Model Results

	Theoretical Model[a]		Modified Model[b]	
Structural Relationships	**Estimate**	**t-Value**	**Estimate**	**t-Value**
Hypothesized Links				
Accommodation → performance in the alliance	.68	6.54**	.32	2.87**
Accommodation-squared → performance in the alliance	.24	2.42*	.24	2.63**
Affective commitment → accommodation	.42	2.74**	.37	2.36*
Continuance commitment → accommodation	.13	1.05	.15	1.24
Behavioral commitment → accommodation	.26	2.14*	.26	2.04*
Control Variables				
Alliance duration → performance in the alliance	.00	–.02	.00	–.02
Alliance size → performance in the alliance	.10	1.10	.06	.74
Affective commitment → performance in the alliance			.54	4.56**
Split Group Moderator Test[c]				
High-Monitoring Group				
Accommodation → performance in the alliance			.11	.78
Accommodation-squared → performance in the alliance			.34	2.66**
Low-Monitoring Group				
Accommodation → performance in the alliance			.55	3.59**
Accommodation-squared → performance in the alliance			.04	.30

*$p < .05$.
**$p < .01$.
[a]$\chi^2_{(31)} = 69.28$, $p < .01$; NFI = .86; NNFI = 88; CFI = .92; and RMSEA = .08.
[b]$\chi^2_{(30)} = 46.58$, $p = .027$; NFI = .91; NNFI = .95; CFI = .96; and RMSEA = .06.
[c]Groups are split at the median level of monitoring.

Table 3 (see "Theoretical Model" columns) shows standardized estimates, t-values, and significance levels for the structural paths. The results ($\chi^2_{(31)} = 69.28$, $p < .001$; NFI = .86; NNFI = .88; CFI = .92; and RMSEA = .08) suggest a moderate model fit. Examination of the modification indexes reveals a significant path that had not been theoretically specified (Hoyle and Panter 1995). Freeing the affective commitment → performance in the alliance path yielded a significant test statistic (t = 4.56, $p < .01$). We initially specified that any effect of commitment facets on performance would be indirect, through accommodation. This path is consistent with prior research (Luo 2002), and its addition (Table 3, modified model: $\chi^2_{(30)} = 46.58$, $p = .027$; NFI = .91; NNFI = .95; CFI = .96; and RMSEA = .06) does not disturb the significance of the hypothesized paths. The modified model offers a better fit to the data ($\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} = 22.70$, $p < .01$), and thus we used it to test the main effects.

Main effects. The results suggest that except for one path, which we found to be nonsignificant, the relationships are significant and in the expected direction. The increasing

positive slope (concave upward) for the accommodation–performance link predicted in H_1 is supported; both accommodation ($t = 2.87$, $p < .01$) and accommodation-squared ($t = 2.63$, $p < .01$) are associated positively with performance in the alliance (Aiken and West 1991). Affective ($t = 2.36$, $p < .05$) and behavioral ($t = 2.04$, $p < .05$) commitment are related positively to accommodation, in accordance with H_{3a} and H_{3c}, respectively. The results suggest that continuance commitment is not linked to accommodation ($t = 1.24$, $p > .05$), providing no support for H_{3b}. The squared multiple correlations for accommodation and performance in the IMA are .42 and .66, respectively.[5]

Although our framing of continuance commitment as a driver of relational outcomes is in line with prior research (e.g., Noordewier, John, and Nevin 1990), others (e.g., Anderson and Weitz 1989) treat expectation of relationship continuity as an ultimate outcome. We reran our analysis with continuance commitment as an outcome of performance, which produced moderate fit indexes ($\chi^2_{(30)} = 63.32$, $p < .001$; NFI = .87; NNFI = .89; CFI = .93; and RMSEA = .08). A models comparison test suggests that our modified model offers a better fit ($\Delta\chi^2_{(0)} = 16.74$, $p < .01$) than this rival.

Moderation effects. We divided the data (median split) into low- and high-monitoring groups. We ran two models: restricted (i.e., imposing equality constraints on the accommodation → performance and accommodation-squared → performance paths between the two groups) and nonrestricted (i.e., permitting all parameters to vary between the groups). For the low- versus high-monitoring groups, the unconstrained model yields $\chi^2_{(60)} = 64.28$ ($p = .33$), while the constrained model yields $\chi^2_{(62)} = 72.77$ ($p = .16$). The significant $\Delta\chi^2_{(2)} = 8.49$ ($p < .05$) between the two models supports the conditioning effect of monitoring on the accommodation–performance link. In the high-monitoring group, the accommodation → performance path is not significant ($t = .78$, $p > .05$), but accommodation-squared is associated positively with performance in the alliance ($t = 2.66$, $p < .01$). Thus, we find a U-shaped relationship (Aiken and West 1991), not the negative link predicted in H_{2a}. In the low-monitoring group, accommodation positively affects performance ($t = 3.59$, $p < .01$), while accommodation-squared is not related to performance ($t = .30$, $p > .05$), in support of H_{2b}. Other structural paths are stable across the two groups. The observed U-shaped relationship in the high-monitoring group has a turning point with a value of 5.24 for accommodation.

Assumptions check. Two assumptions underpin the role of monitoring. First, the influence of monitoring on the accommodation-squared → performance link assumes that the firm might believe that monitoring is necessary and also is able to evaluate accurately its partner's behaviors. However, the power of a contract to police competitive acts relies on the notion that the partner's behavior is observable and verifiable (Argyres and Mayer 2007). Similarity between the firms makes the partner's actions more readily interpretable. Inferences about what managers in the other firm are doing tend to be more accurate. Thus, we tested for conditioning influences of similarity (a five-item index, modified from Johnson and colleagues [1996]) on the quadratic part of the accommodation–performance link. For low- versus high-similarity groups (median split), the unconstrained model yields $\chi^2_{(60)} = 84.05$ ($p = .02$), and the constrained model yields $\chi^2_{(61)} = 90.81$ ($p < .001$). The significant $\Delta\chi^2_{(1)} = 6.76$ ($p < .01$) supports the conditioning effect of similarity for the accommodation-squared → performance path. In the low-similarity group, the accommodation-squared → performance link is not significant ($\beta = .00$, $t = .02$, $p > .05$), while in the high-similarity group, accommodation-squared is related positively to performance ($\beta = .47$, $t = 2.03$, $p < .05$); all other paths remain stable. Thus, the curvilinear effect observed for high (rather than low) monitoring is also present for high (rather than low) similarity. This lends support to the assumption that monitoring can effectively interpret partner behaviors and serve as a solution to the evaluation problem in IMAs.

Second, because we posit that in the absence of monitoring firms handle evaluation through a relational response, we checked for differences in institutional trust between the low- and high-monitoring groups. Institutional-based trust production occurs through a firm's institutionalization of values and norms that constitute the ethics of the relationship (three-item scale based on Doney and Cannon's [1997] scale). The results reveal that institutional trust ($t = 2.88$, $p < .01$) is significantly higher in the low-monitoring group than in the high-monitoring group, reinforcing our conceptualization.

Mediation effects. To investigate a possible mediating role for accommodation, we tested three additional structural models, following Baron and Kenny (1986). Model 1 yielded significant results for affective commitment → accommodation ($\beta = .42$, $t = 3.40$, $p < .01$) and behavioral commitment → accommodation ($\beta = .30$, $t = 3.11$, $p < .01$) but a nonsignificant result for continuance commitment → accommodation ($\beta = .15$, $t = 1.23$, $p > .05$). In Model 2, affective commitment and behavioral commitment affect performance in the alliance ($\beta = .68$, $t = 6.73$, $p < .01$, and $\beta = .19$, $t = 2.21$, $p < .05$, respectively), while continuance commitment has no such influence ($\beta = .02$, $t = .19$, $p > .05$). Model 3 yielded significant results for the paths to performance from accommodation ($\beta = .33$, $t = 3.70$, $p < .01$) and affective commitment ($\beta = .61$, $t = 5.89$, $p < .01$) but not from behavioral commitment ($\beta = .13$, $t = 1.39$, $p > .05$) and continuance commitment ($\beta = –.04$, $t = –.45$, $p > .05$). These findings suggest that accommodation partially mediates the affective commitment–performance link and fully mediates behavioral commitment to performance but plays no medi-

[5]Intuitively, a firm's accommodation facilitates task realignment for the parties and thus boosts overall alliance performance, with favorable outcomes for each party's performance in the IMA. Regression results suggest that accommodation is positively related to a single-item measure of overall alliance performance ($\beta = .61$, $t = 10.04$, $p < .01$). In addition, we found a positive correlation ($r = .67$) between overall alliance performance and our measure of the focal firm's performance in the alliance.

ating role for the continuance commitment–performance relationship.[6]

Survival bias. The results may be affected by survival bias, reflected in the relative absence of poor performance cases in our sample. We performed two checks to assess the impact of such bias. First, telephone interviews with informants for 16 of the sample IMAs that had ended showed that this was due to success (4 IMAs), failure (5 IMAs), or a more neutral reason (e.g., contract expiration) (7 IMAs). On no occasion had low commitment or low accommodation caused the termination. Second, we were able to generate data from a convenience set of 31 IMAs (not in our sample) that had dissolved because of interpartner relationship problems. We searched for IMAs that had terminated in the last 12 months to improve the likelihood of obtaining accurate retrospective reports. The addition of these extreme cases to our data set (combined sample of 205 IMAs) reduced the overall mean for the commitment, accommodation, and performance constructs from 5.23 to 4.97. We reran our analyses using the combined sample, which produced acceptable fit ($\chi^2_{(30)} = 73.41$, $p < .01$; NFI = .93; NNFI = .93; CFI = .96; and RMSEA = .08) and path coefficients for direct and moderator effects consistent with those reported in Table 3. Furthermore, we randomly selected 30 high-performance IMAs that were dropped from the combined sample, which reduced the overall mean for the main effects constructs to 4.78. Again, our analyses yielded results in line with Table 3. These checks, along with the wide variation in responses for the study constructs in Table 2, indicate that survival bias does not appear to be an issue in interpreting our results.

Discussion and Implications

Considering the pace of alliance dissolution, it is important to understand how key processes in marketing alliances function together to affect performance (Fang et al. 2008). We theorize that commitment fosters accommodative behaviors and demonstrate the pivotal role of behaviors in developing a highly productive marketing collaboration. Resolutions of the adaptation and evaluation problems of alliance management are not independent: Outcomes from accommodative responses to adaptations are specified as contingent on the level of relational engagement with evaluation issues in IMAs. We tested our theoretical predictions, and the findings are largely consistent with the conceptual model, offering novel insights into specific processes of IMA governance that enable the partners to develop and implement joint profit-maximizing activities.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to marketing theory in several ways. First, we introduce accommodation to the IMA performance literature. Although optimizing returns from pooled resources is fundamental to alliance logic, the specific processes of alliance governance that enable the partners to develop and implement their joint-profit-maximizing activities are not well understood (Antia and Frazier 2001). Our framing stresses the inherent productivity of accommodation as active, constructive responses to a partner's competitive acts that best maintain the coordination and integration of alliance activities. Empirical support for H_1 provides evidence of the efficacy of accommodation in IMAs.

However, our finding of a U-shaped accommodation–performance relationship in the alliance link for high-monitoring IMAs demonstrates complexity among governance processes. Although the logic in H_{2a} suggests that high monitoring leads to a negative accommodation–performance relationship, we find that performance in the alliance is highest for low and high accommodation. A possible explanation lies in the transformational reasoning of relationship development theorists (Ring and Van de Ven 1994; Rusbult and Buunk 1993). A self-serving partner is believed to react to consistently constructive behavior by lowering its tendency to exploit accommodative acts, realizing that the wronged firm is sincere in cooperatively achieving optimal activities for the IMA that can benefit both sides (Heide, Wathne, and Rokkan 2007). Triggering the transformation of motivation, high accommodation alters relationship beliefs by credibly manifesting a shift toward a relational response to adaptation problems (Cell 2, Figure 2). This may reverse a self-serving partner's opportunism and lead to a performance upturn (U shape). Although the firm continues its explicit monitoring, a hybrid form of task governance takes effect—a "trust-but-verify" governance mode in which unilateral monitoring and nonmanipulative, relational accommodation are recognized as coexisting, which slows and then reverses the performance decline (Ruigrok and Wagner 2003).

A related theoretical issue is whether performance gains from accommodation are curtailed by decreasing benefits and increasing costs of increasing accommodation. Decreasing benefits could occur because the partner's accommodative cooperation eventually exhausts the economic gains available from coordinating work tasks using pooled resources. Decreasing returns to accommodation are experienced as the IMA becomes efficient, which institutional design theory defines as "the level of joint profits in the [alliance] relative to an upper bound or 'fully efficient' state" (Carson et al. 1999, p. 117). Furthermore, increasing accommodation to a partner requires increasingly difficult and costly adjustments to the firm's own operations because

[6]To limit potential effects of common method bias, we followed Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Lee's (2003) procedural steps. We also generated primary objective performance data on sales growth and profitability growth for 36 of the sample IMAs. These data were strongly correlated with our corresponding performance measures (Morgan, Kaleka, and Katsikeas 2004). Furthermore, because statistical tests for method bias using structural equation modeling require direct linear effects and multi-item construct measures (Andrews et al. 2004), we estimated the potential biasing impact of common methods for the affective commitment → performance and behavioral commitment → performance links observed within our mediation analysis. No change is evident in the paths. The path estimates for affective commitment → performance and behavioral commitment → performance are .70 (t = 6.18, $p < .01$) and .45 (t = 3.72, $p < .01$), respectively, in the constrained model and .59 (t = 3.60, $p < .01$) and .52 (t = 3.79, $p < .01$), respectively, in the unconstrained (same-source factor) model. Thus, common method bias does not appear to be a particular problem in this study.

simple, inexpensive adjustments required to integrate alliance operations have previously been implemented. Costs of enhanced accommodation may also include opportunity costs of forgone profits from alternative, competing uses of the venturing firm's resources. It would be enlightening for further research to examine performance outcomes across the full range of accommodation's effects.

Second, the study responds to the call for research on performance effects of multiple governance mechanisms by "explicitly considering constellations of governance processes" (Heide, Wathne, and Rokkan 2007, p. 431). Figure 2 offers a new logic of the heterogeneity of IMA governance by specifying combinations of responses to basic adaptation and evaluation problems inherent in these uncertain ventures. We find that a firm's performance reflects interconnections in the way it responds to adaptation and evaluation challenges. Higher-performing combinations are consistently unilateral (low accommodation/high monitoring) or relational (high accommodation/low monitoring). Our results support the notion that outcomes for low-accommodation firms flow from self-serving demands reinforced by surveillance to ensure compliance. Similarly, the findings support the notion that outcomes for high-accommodation firms flow from cooperatively integrating resources reinforced by avoiding explicit monitoring that alienates a collaborating partner.

In contrast, our results suggest that inconsistent, hybrid approaches to the problems of uncertainty dampen performance for the firm. Relational evaluation undermines unilateral adaptation because outcomes for low-accommodation firms that avoid explicit monitoring suffer compared with those engaged in active surveillance. Likewise, unilateral evaluation interferes with relational adaptation because outcomes for high-accommodation firms that explicitly monitor suffer compared with those that rely on partner self-control. Thus, this complex picture of IMA governance supports recent insights that the question is not merely *whether* a relational approach is a substitute or complement to other mechanisms but rather *when* and *how* governance mechanisms interfere or complement one another (Cavusgil, Deligonul, and Zhang 2004; Gulati and Nickerson 2008).

Furthermore, the efficacy of monitoring as a means of managing partner competitive acts depends on the costs of monitoring (Heide, Wathne, and Rokkan 2007). Consistently unilateral solutions to adaptation and evaluation problems may not be appropriate if costs associated with difficulties in observing and interpreting an IMA partner's actions are prohibitive. The deleterious effects of interfirm diversity require the partners to incur monitoring costs (White 2005). We add to our theorizing of monitoring by considering the moderating effect of similarity between the parties, which facilitates transparency and achievement of monitoring goals. The results show consistent effects of monitoring and similarity on the accommodation-squared → performance link, enhancing confidence in our view of monitoring as a routine that can judiciously manage partner competitive behavior in IMAs. The interplay between monitoring and similarity in affecting the accommodation–performance link appears complex and is an intriguing issue for future inquiry.

Third, in identifying how and why accommodation matters in IMAs, we advance a novel explanation of the link between commitment and performance based on a firm's response to its partner's competitive acts. The study adds to the limited empirical work (Luo 2002), highlighting greater intricacy than the generally accepted positive, direct association. We explicate not only the role of accommodation in enabling committed partners to cope with unexpected problems that dislodge IMA task alignment but also the notion that different commitment facets are likely to be nonequivalent within the process.[7] For example, affective commitment appears to be naturally dyadic and seems most productive because it alone influences accommodation and performance in the alliance. Our results challenge the tendency among channels and alliance studies (Ramaseshan, Yip, and Pae 2006) to treat commitment as a unidimensional, global, or higher-order construct.

Managerial Implications

The argument that committed partners seek win–win situations that can improve IMA outcomes has gained acceptance among practitioners. This study of the mechanisms linking commitment to performance in the alliance supports this view but also qualifies it in various ways. Our theoretical framework and the results show that the accommodation mechanism plays a major role in the translation of commitment into performance. The implication is that alliances that encourage partner commitment as an end in itself but neglect the process of governing adaptation and evaluation problems may not achieve their intended performance objectives. The results indicate that accommodation is not without potential implementation costs, which could trap the unwary and lead to less effective deployment of a firm's commitment. Managers should note that internally consistent governance approaches tend to work well. In particular, productive activity sets are best attained by IMA partners under governance conditions in which these sets are most easily developed and implemented. Thus, accommodation plays a pivotal role in low-monitoring IMAs, governed relationally through self-regulation. High accommodation enables the partners to integrate their activities fully, and low monitoring indicates that each firm smoothly self-implements its assigned tasks with no opportunism. Bound by an advanced normative structure, the firm is obliged to accommodate its counterpart to safeguard existing relational assets and processes of the working partnership. Alliance management should recognize that deviation from this, in the form of low accommodation, is likely to weaken the constitution and threaten the stability of the venture.

[7]We examined whether accommodation is a dependence-driven behavior. First, we found that continuance commitment, reflecting an assessment of the IMA dependence picture (Kim and Frazier 1997), does not affect accommodation. Second, we regressed accommodation on two aspects of the focal firm's relative dependence—its value received less the partner's score and the partner's irreplaceability in the IMA less the focal firm's score (five-item scales adapted from Gilliland and Bello [2002] and Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp [1998])—and the three commitment facets. The firm's value received ($\beta = -.05$, $t = -.69$) and irreplaceability ($\beta = -.10$, $t = -1.64$) were not linked (at $p < .05$) to accommodation. Thus, accommodation manifests goodwill rather than dependence.

Managers may also find advantage in understanding the less straightforward U-shaped link between accommodation and performance in IMAs with pronounced monitoring. Here, a firm's performance in the alliance increases when its accommodative response is either low or high. These nonrelational alliance partnerships are most efficient when they are consistently unilateral, which involves high monitoring and little (or no) accommodation. Broadly, accommodative behavior is viewed as a manipulative extension of the actor's competitive behavior and offers the counterpart the opportunity to act exploitatively. Thus, as accommodation grows from low levels, the firm's performance decreases as a result of its increased exposure to opportunism. Managers need to appreciate that only strongly consistent accommodative responses to the partner's competitive behavior will represent a credible shift toward relational governance intentions by the firm and encourage the partner to follow suit. In a competitive climate, only emphatic accommodative behaviors that convincingly demonstrate the superiority of cooperation over competition will trigger the joint IMA activity necessary to synergistically and productively integrate the partners' behaviors.

Furthermore, this study calls on managers to consider that the attributes of commitment exert differential effects on accommodation and performance in the IMA. We reveal that accommodation partially mediates the effects of affective commitment and fully mediates the effects of behavioral commitment on performance. Continuance commitment exhibits no association with either outcome. Thus, managers may derive benefit from prioritizing the development of affective, "strong form" commitment sentiments and should also contemplate establishing behavioral levers pertaining to the timely investment of economic and emotional resources in the IMA operation. The social attachment efforts of the partners seem to engender a deeper level of relational engagement through which independent actors are able to realize coordination advantages.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The empirical assessment of our theoretical model should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the data limits our ability to make causal inferences. Longitudinal data would have been useful to establish the hypothesized sequence of events and investigate how changes in certain variables affect venturing firm performance over time. In essence, sagacious longitudinal research involves an enormous amount of sustained cooperation by managers serving as key informants over time. In alliance research, sample attrition tends to be considerable (Makino et al. 2007), potentially creating data reliability problems. Our prestudy interviews revealed that knowledgeable IMA managers often are unwilling or unable to participate in research on multiple occasions. Another study limitation concerns our focus on a venturing firm's accommodation and performance in the alliance. An intriguing opportunity for further research would involve extending the model to examine the interplay between focal firm and partner firm accommodation and performance in linking to overall IMA performance.

Caution should be exercised in attempts to generalize from these findings. We conducted this study within the context of IMAs of U.S., Western European, and Far Eastern firms with U.K. partners. Testing the external validity of our findings would ideally require replication studies. Of interest is whether accommodation is used less and is less related to performance in more typical arm's-length relationships. Typically, IMAs exhibit moderate to high interdependence between the parties. Unilateral accommodation deployed when high interdependence or mutual commitment does not already exist would be a risky strategy. Although it could motivate a desired response from the partner, the potential for exploitation would be greater. Accommodation must glean a desired response, or it will not persist. The current methods (e.g., cross-sectional data, survival bias) do not allow such a test. Capturing this cost of accommodation represents a valuable opportunity for further research.

Despite the salience of accommodation and monitoring in addressing the twin governance problems of adaptation and evaluation in IMAs, further research might explore a more complex array of governance mechanisms and levels. Mechanism interconnections and allied implementation costs are critical to fostering and maintaining value-enhancing alliance exchanges. Additional research is needed to place accommodation in the broader context of relational, social, psychological, and formal contractual elements through which committed partners could conceivably allay governance tensions within their marketing alliances. Research might also examine the level at which governance processes occur in an IMA. For example, does monitoring primarily reflect an organization decision while accommodation springs from individual-level decisions (Fang et al. 2008)? Along this line, the literature (Perrone, Zaheer, and McEvily 2003) suggests that the discretion managers have in enacting their roles could condition the links between commitment facets and accommodation in these important organizational forms for conducting marketing.

APPENDIX
Measurement Scales

Construct	Reliability[a]
Performance in the Alliance	
Effectiveness	.75
(Seven-point Likert scale, adapted from Bucklin and Sengupta [1993] and Fisher, Maltz, and Jaworski [1997])	
1. The alliance has achieved my firm's set goals.	
2. The time and effort spent by my firm in developing and maintaining the alliance has been worthwhile.	
3. This alliance has not been productive enough for my firm. (R)	

APPENDIX
Continued

Construct	Reliability[a]
Efficiency	.77
(Seven-point Likert scale, adapted from Boyle and Dwyer [1995] and Dunn, Norburn, and Birley [1994])	
Thinking of performance outcomes relative to the inputs required to achieve them, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:	
1. In this alliance, my firm's resources are deployed efficiently.	
2. Procedures and mechanisms for utilizing my firm's alliance resources are cost-effective.	
3. The alliance is not effective in converting my firm's resource inputs into venture outputs. (R)	
Responsiveness	.77
(Seven-point Likert scale, adapted from Ayers, Dahlstrom, and Skinner [1997] and Kumar, Stern, and Achrol [1992])	
In thinking about the alliance's ability to sense and respond to change, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:	
1. My firm's alliance operations can adapt quickly to environmental changes.	
2. My firm is able to make adjustments in the alliance to cope with changing circumstances.	
3. Whenever some unexpected situation arises, my firm is capable of modifying the existing structure and strategies of the alliance.	
4. In the face of problems or special circumstances, my firm's managers cannot make adjustments to the alliance as required. (R)	
Accommodation	—[b]
(Seven-point scale anchored by "never" and "always"; new construct measure development)	
When unexpected events or problems occur in the alliance and your firm is unhappy or dissatisfied with your partner's self-serving actions, to what extent does your firm:	
1. Enter into a direct discussion with the partner to better understand the situation?	
2. Suggest an ideal solution to the partner?	
3. Show the partner the logic of their position?	
4. Attempt to get all its concerns and difficulties into the open?	
5. Work toward a compromise with the partner?	
6. Try to get the partner to make some concessions? (R)	
7. Depart from formal or informal alliance agreements? (R)	
8. Exchange harsh words with the partner? (R)	
9. Make demands that are in conflict with the partner's interests? (R)	
10. Threaten to end, or withdraw some resources from, the alliance? (R)	
Affective Commitment	.84
(Seven-point Likert scale, adapted from Kim and Frazier [1997])	
1. A high sense of unity exists between the alliance partner and my firm.	
2. The alliance partner is a very important ally of my firm.	
3. My firm and the alliance partner have developed a close business relationship.	
4. My firm lacks a strong business link with this alliance partner. (R)	
Continuance Commitment	.90
(Seven-point Likert scale, adapted from Kim and Frazier [1997] and Kumar, Scheer, and Steenkamp [1995])	
1. My firm is going to continue with the alliance for years.	
2. My firm expects the alliance to be long-lasting.	
3. My firm sees the alliance as constituting a long-term strategy.	
4. My firm may have to end this alliance soon. (R)	
5. My firm is uncertain whether this alliance will last long. (R)	
Behavioral Commitment	.76
(Seven-point Likert scale, adapted from Kim and Frazier [1997])	
1. My firm devotes more time to the alliance when it needs help.	
2. My firm adjusts its operations when necessary for the alliance.	
3. My firm provides special aid to the alliance when it is in trouble.	
4. My firm does not help the alliance to solve its problems. (R)	
Monitoring	.78
(Seven-point Likert scale, adapted from Aulakh, Kotabe, and Sahay [1996] and Inkpen and Currall [1997])	
1. My firm believes it is not necessary to monitor the partner's work in order to ensure high standards. (R)	
2. My firm believes the alliance partner is not the sort of partner that needs constant surveillance. (R)	
3. My firm closely monitors the partner after asking it to do something.	
4. My firm watches the partner in everything it does.	

[a]Composite reliability (Fornell and Larcker 1981).
[b]Formative scale.
Notes: (R) indicates that the item was reverse scored.

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