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# The antecedents and consequences of salesperson deviance: A question of fit

Mahmoud Darrat

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**THE ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF  
SALESPERSON DEVIANCE: A QUESTION  
OF FIT**

by

Mahmoud Darrat, BS, MBA

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS  
LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

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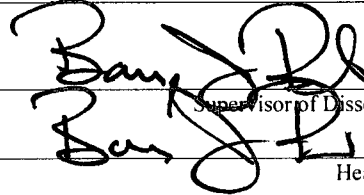
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We hereby recommend that the dissertation prepared under our supervision  
by Mahmoud A. Darrat

entitled "The Antecedents and Consequences of Salesperson Deviance:  
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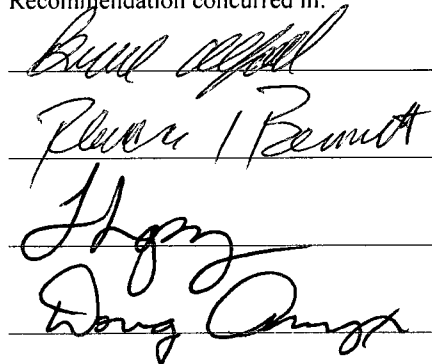
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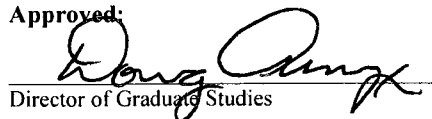
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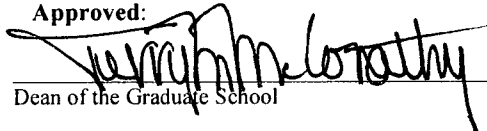
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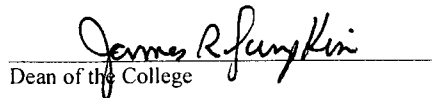


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## **ABSTRACT**

The linkages between salesperson-organization fit and salesperson deviance behaviors have not received adequate attention in the marketing literature. Salespeople can be viewed as either a tremendous asset for the realization of an organization's long term goals or as a potential threat to its overall success. This research addresses the importance of managing salesperson-organization fit in mitigating subsequent anti-normative behaviors. The study employs a conceptual model of sales-specific organizational congruence factors (work/nonwork demands fit, compensation structure fit, and values congruence) which drive salesperson deviance behaviors. The study examines how deviant behaviors are employed as a coping mechanism by salespeople who do not 'fit' within an organization. These behaviors influence salesperson competence through individual and organizational outcomes (performance, organizational commitment, turnover intentions and life satisfaction). The empirical tests of the hypotheses are based upon online survey data collected from 408 non-retail industrial salespeople from multiple companies in various industries.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Motivation for the Study .....	2
Theoretical Background .....	4
Dissertation Overview .....	5
Dissertation Contributions .....	8
Sales Managers .....	9
Marketing Educators Researchers .....	10
Society .....	11
Dissertation Organization .....	13
CHAPTER 2 DEFINITIONS, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	14
Salesperson Deviance .....	14
Coping Theory .....	23
Salesperson Organization Values Congruence .....	29
Pay Structure Fit .....	38
Work/Non-Work Demands Fit .....	44

Job Satisfaction .....	47
Performance .....	50
Organizational Commitment.....	53
Turnover Intentions.....	55
Life Satisfaction .....	56
Research Questions.....	57
<b>CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHOD .....</b>	<b>69</b>
Sampling Procedure and Data Collection .....	69
Independent Variables .....	70
Dependent Variables.....	71
Control Variables.....	74
Measurement Model .....	74
Construct Validation .....	76
Structural Model .....	77
<b>CHAPTER 4 RESULTS .....</b>	<b>78</b>
Sampling Procedure and Data Collection .....	78
Confirmatory Factor Analysis.....	80
Construct Validity.....	82
Structural Model Testing .....	85
Moderation Test.....	91
<b>CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>92</b>
Limitations .....	96
Future Research .....	98



APPENDIX A HUMAN USE COMMITTEE REVIEW .....102

APPENDIX B SURVEY INSTRUMENT .....104

REFERENCES .....109

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.1.	Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Comparison of Fit for Measurement Models.....	81
Table 4.2.	Descriptive Statistics and Variables Intercorrelations .....	84
Table 4.3.	Standardized Factor Loading .....	86
Table 4.4.	Structural Path Coefficients for Theoretical and Revised Models.....	87

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1.1.	Theoretical Model.....	4
Figure 2.1.	Typology of Deviant Salesperson Behavior .....	22
Figure 2.2.	Hypothesized Model .....	68
Figure 4.1.	Standardized Structural Path Coefficients for Theoretical Model.....	89
Figure 4.2.	Standardized Structural Path Coefficients for Revised Model .....	90

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Salespeople can be viewed as either a tremendous asset for the realization of an organization's long term goals or as a potential threat to its overall success. The threat of deviant and unethical behavior is becoming widespread (Strout, 2002) and has proven capable of causing the demise of entire organizations. The Department of Commerce estimates as many as a third of all business failures, annually, can be attributed to one type of deviant behavior - employee theft (Department of Commerce, 2008). An industry specific poll addressing the unethical behavior of pharmaceutical sales reps, indicates that nearly 40% of sales reps have acted in an 'inappropriate manner' when attempting to close a sale (Murray, 2002). This phenomenon is not restricted to any given industry as 47 percent of sales managers suspect their salespeople have lied on sales calls and 36 percent believe that the ethical behavior of their salespeople is diminishing incrementally as the years progress (Strout, 2002). Coupled with an ongoing recession and an unprecedented financial crisis, many salespeople may view deviant behavior as a way to "make ends meet" by improving short term performance, while ignoring the fact that these activities are clear violations of important organizational norms.

Salespeople play a central role in determining a firm's revenue-producing efforts, and a salesperson's performance has a direct and major impact on the success or failure of a large number of related positions in a firm (Churchill, et. al 1974). Salespeople are boundary spanners of the firm, interacting with both co-workers in their organization as well as external customer organizations. Therefore, their behavior can directly affect how well an organization operates internally, while simultaneously affecting how the organization operates externally through the development of long term customer relationships (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006; Jaramillo, et. al 2006).

### **Motivation for the Study**

Frontline employees, and salespeople in particular, have been the focus of numerous studies exploring the effects of behavioral deviations from organizational expectations and the consequential impacts on firm performance (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2005; Jelinek and Ahearne, 2006). Salespeople are generally the first line of organizational contact to customers, and thus, are representatives of the firm. This position carries an immense potential for organizational liability since customers tend to attribute the salesperson's personal behaviors to the organization as a whole (Scott and Jehn, 2003). Salespeople who are dishonest or engage in questionable behaviors may inadvertently reflect organizational standards, although the organization may neither condone nor encourage such actions. Salesperson deviance refers to a salesperson's voluntary behavior which violates organizational norms and is opportunistically directed at the salesperson's organization, other individuals within the organization, or towards customers/prospects of the organization. The three dimensions of salesperson deviance consist of organizational deviance, interpersonal deviance, and customer-directed

deviance. Not only has the prevalence of deviant behaviors in the workplace become an increasingly rampant epidemic, but prior research demonstrates that its pervasiveness has been an enduring problem. For instance, early studies investigating workplace deviance among frontline employees indicate that 80% admitted to regularly engaging in counterproductive behaviors at work (Boye and Slora, 1993). These behaviors range in severity from 'on the job' drug and alcohol abuse to company theft. Clearly, a significant amount of damage can be inflicted on an organization by the misbehavior of its salespeople, and a deeper investigation of this issue could prove beneficial for both marketing academicians and sales managers.

Many organizations in need of entry level salespeople may not be able to conduct thorough background checks on newly hired salespeople due to the tremendous influx of applicants. For instance, sufficient experience in the sales industry is usually not required for an entry level salesperson in order to encourage applications for the job. Minimal recruitment expectations for entry level sales positions may induce an incursion of unqualified salespeople who would inevitably represent the organization to external constituents. Oftentimes, sales organizations compensate for this discrepancy by enrolling newly hired salespeople in training programs with hopes of indoctrinating expected organizational practices into professional interactions. However, if these salespeople have personal values or beliefs which contradict organizational expectations, the process of altering or adjusting these attitudes to match the organization may lead to reactive counterproductive behaviors. Personal values are enduring, lifelong beliefs acquired through wide-ranging life experiences which guide behaviors and are not easily modified through provisional training sessions (Rokeach, 1973). When salesperson

values are threatened due to conformity pressures, reactive behaviors may ensue to compensate for the stress inflicted by the organization. Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the theoretical model.

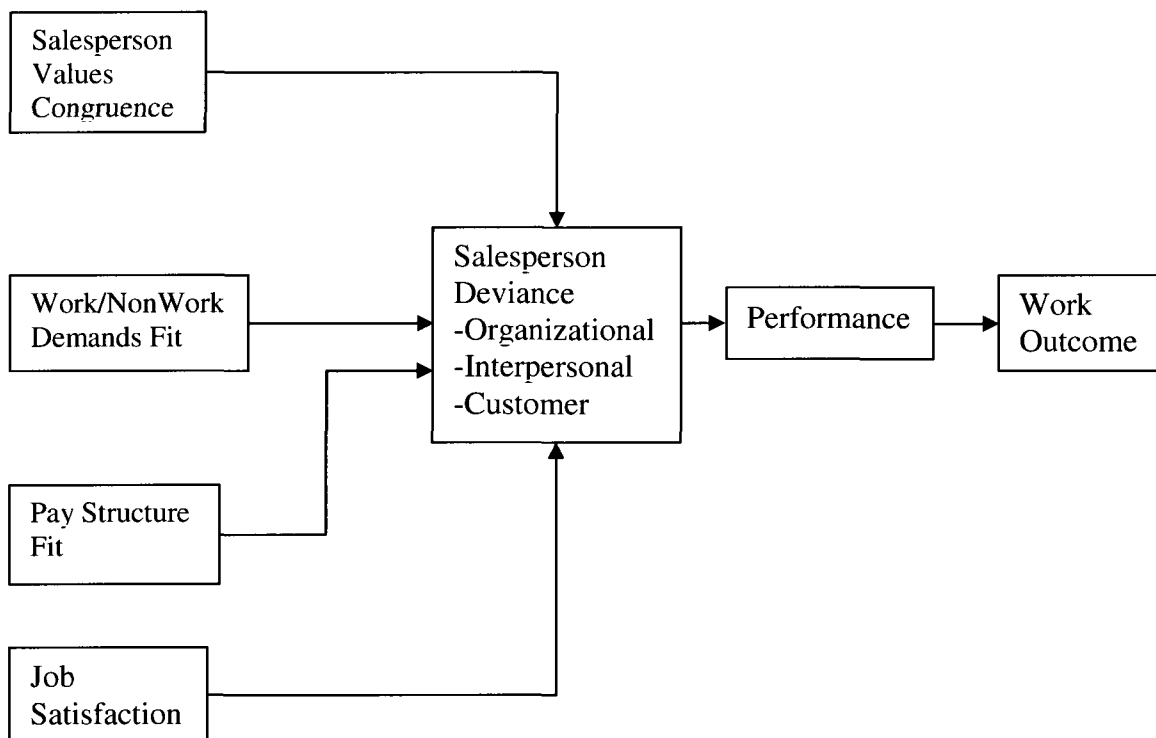


Figure 1.1. Theoretical Model

### Theoretical Background

A brief overview of the theoretical rationale used in this dissertation is described here. Chapter 2 offers a more detailed description of the theoretical relationships.

Coping occurs when individuals continuously adjust cognitive and behavioral efforts in order to manage internal/external demands which are perceived as exceeding their personal resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). In other words, coping theory emphasizes the existence of reactive behaviors which are actively employed by individuals to rectify or deal with stressful situations. Salespeople who feel 'left out' of



their organizations due to a mismatch in personal and organizational values may resort to expressing dissatisfaction through anti-normative behaviors (Liao, Joshi and Chuang, 2004). Confrontive coping refers to engagement in aggressive behaviors which are used to alter an unsatisfactory situation such as organizational incongruence, and are characterized by a certain degree of hostility and risk taking (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, Gruen 1986). It is apparent that salespeople who resort to confrontive strategies such as deviant behavior directed towards the organization, coworkers, or customers may aggravate rather than improve the situation. However, the implementation of these mechanisms may still be prevalent since the objective of coping is not to resolve stressful encounters, but to manage the stress associated with the experience.

### **Dissertation Overview**

This research addresses the issue of salesperson-organization fit and the subsequent effects on salesperson deviance. Not only is it important to assess the impact of organizational fit on salesperson deviance, but it is essential that the study investigates how these behaviors affect salesperson competence through individual performance. Although the intent of salesperson deviance may be retaliation or the management of stress associated with organizational incongruence, these behaviors may also have detrimental effects on customer perceptions of the salesperson, and inevitably, the organization represented. However, a mismatch of salesperson-organization values does not necessarily imply that the salesperson is at fault from a moral perspective. It is quite possible that the conflicting value system (i.e. the organization) is unethical, and hence, anti-normative behavior would, in actuality, constitute ethical behavior. For example, a

sales rep employed by an organization that implements predatory pricing strategies may inform customers that they would be better off purchasing certain premium-priced products from an alternative seller. Although the salesperson would be fulfilling his/her ethical obligations to the customer, organizational norms would be violated by redirecting customers to competitors. Thus, it is the objective of the study to utilize the underpinnings of coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) to empirically examine the relational interplay between the constructs.

The study introduces a multi-dimensional assessment of salesperson-organizational fit by examining an assortment of role stressors traditionally associated with the sales position and adapting relevant scales to an organizational fit setting (see Figure 1.1). For instance, organizational values congruence, or an inherent convergence between the values of the organization and those of its employees, has proven to be an effective predictor of organizational commitment and performance (Chatman, 1989). Organizations which endorse a conflicting value system with regard to its salespeople may create a stressful environment which may be individually managed through counterproductive behavioral reactions to the incongruence.

Work-nonwork conflict, or the inconsistencies experienced between expectations from a salesperson's work and life roles, also has negative effects on salesperson satisfaction (Babin and Boles, 1998). However, the interplay between salesperson work-nonwork conflict and organizational fit is understudied. Organizations which exhibit a sense of rigidity to non-work demands through a 'live to work' culture may inadvertently hire salespeople whose role expectations are driven by 'work to live' inclinations. The inability to balance personal expectancies and organizational expectations contributes to a

more stressful environment in both dimensions. These overburdened salespeople would expect the organization to be more lenient when it comes to life role demands; therefore, when organizational inflexibility is experienced, salespeople may attempt to manage the discrepancy through anti-normative behavioral adjustments. For instance, a salesperson with extensive traveling demands which are negatively affecting his/her personal life may react by attempting to compensate by running personal errands on company time.

Over the years, sales researchers have contributed a vast array of studies examining salesperson compensation and its effects on job satisfaction and performance (Coughlan and Sen, 1989; Martocchio, 2008). Considerable debate still exists in the marketing community regarding the ideal pay structure which would ensure the optimization of salesperson performance. Proponents of behavioral based compensation structures suggest that a consistent salary is the most effective method for ensuring salesperson commitment to the organization (Cravens, Ingram, LaForge, and Young, 1993). On the other hand, combination strategists posit that sales managers concerned with overall salesperson productivity should balance their pay structures through a mixture of behavioral and incentivized reward systems (Martocchio, 2008).

However, the majority of these studies ignore the potential ramifications of salesperson preference regarding pay structures. If a salesperson is risk averse, it is likely that he/she would prefer a consistent reward system based on salary, and would be apprehensive of a pay structure based strictly on performance. With a behavioral system, as long as the salesperson carries out daily obligations of developing and maintaining customer relationships, the actual sales outcomes are irrelevant to salesperson compensation. If these salary-inclined salespeople are employed by an organization

which is characterized by a strictly commission-based strategy, they may react by breaking organizational norms to express their incongruence. For example, if an incongruent salesperson perceives that a coworker has been successful under the same pay structure which has rendered him/her unsuccessful, feelings of jealousy may lead to interpersonal deviance.

### Dissertation Contributions

The effects of stressors on both individual and organizational outcomes have received significant attention in the sales literature due to the highly demanding nature of the sales position. Notably, the minimization of role exhaustion, stress and turnover intentions associated with salespeople experiencing work/non-work conflict and the optimization of compensation practices have become primary objectives of sales organizations concerned with the long term commitment of their salesforce. The purpose of this study is to assess the various types of salesperson-organizational fit and the subsequent effects on crucial individual and organizational outcomes.

This dissertation intends to integrate and adapt the scales associated with these stressors to a salesperson organization fit setting since the majority of sales research ignores the effects of salesperson congruence on organizational outcomes. However, without significant theoretical or practical relevance, the mere existence of a gap in the literature does not constitute an acceptable justification for research in the area. More importantly, it is necessary for research to be relevant to the four primary stakeholders of marketing researchers:

- managers,
- researchers,

- marketing educators, and
- society at large.

In addition, it is imperative that the findings of this dissertation not only contribute to existing sales literature, but also fuel the pursuit of practically relevant explorations linking salesperson deviance to person-organization fit.

Over the years, a vast array of studies investigating person-organization fit in various industry scenarios have inundated the management literature, however, the effects of person-organization fit have been largely ignored by the marketing community (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Smith, Taylor, and Fleenor, 1998; Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Kristof, 1996). The apparent literature gap is indeed surprising since the potential ramifications of organizational fit, or lack thereof, are highly relevant from a sales perspective. In particular, a salesperson may cope with low person-organization fit by engaging in deviant and potentially harmful behaviors. Person organization fit is potentially linked to key outcomes like job performance and turnover, therefore, the topic is critically important to sales managers and marketing researchers.

### **Sales Managers**

Organizations suffer from considerable salesperson attrition due partly to unrealistic expectations on both ends of the employment spectrum. However, the threat of losing newly hired salespeople due to unexpectedly high work demands or because he or she does not like the pay structure may be less threatening than having a disgruntled salesperson remain with the organization and take out revenge in nefarious ways. Although sales managers would agree that temporary training and replacement expenditures associated with incongruent salespeople are costly mistakes, these

recruitment errors are less risky than a permanently disillusioned salesforce. Sales managers who are aware of deviant behaviors in an incongruent salesforce may downplay their awareness in order to preserve what remains of salesperson morale. Turning a blind eye to these behaviors may create a dangerous subculture of deviance acceptance which may become irreversible. This dissertation suggests that sales managers implement mandatory assessments of salesperson organization fit in existing recruitment procedures to realistically reflect the expectations of a sales job before appointing new salespeople. There are distinct financial benefits for sales managers that ensure salesperson congruence with organizational values and procedures and the formalized avoidance of hiring potentially deviant salespeople.

### **Marketing Educators/Researchers**

A lack of emphasis on salesperson deviance is not limited to the realm of marketing research, but academicians are also hard pressed to find adequate coverage of deviance related material in marketing textbooks as well. This is expected since research and teaching share a mutually reciprocal relationship in that the de-emphasis of either is inevitably reflected in decreased attention of its counterpart. Conceptually, deviance is not a mainstream area for marketing academicians due to its managerial underpinnings and the general proclivity of marketers to de-emphasize its importance. Nevertheless, the lack of attention to deviance in marketing only masks the prevalence of this phenomenon indicated by previous research. The vast majority of marketing students tend to seek employment, many of which enter the salesforce, directly after graduation. Therefore, it is the responsibility of marketing educators to equip these graduates with practical knowledge of both the negative and positive effects of industry relevant trends. Not only

this, but marketing educators are obliged to convey the practical implications of organizational congruence from a recruitment perspective. Many college graduates accept entry level sales positions without fully grasping the nature of the job. Due to a lack of exposure to the basic elements of salesperson-organization congruence, these students may encounter higher stress levels which may lead to deviant behaviors.

### **Society**

Marketing academicians have obligations to society, most prominent of which is the education of future marketers to be ethically productive contributors to society. If sales academicians continue to discount destructive industry trends such as salesperson deviance based strictly upon mainstream appeal, the influx of ill-equipped salespeople to the workforce will become an endless problem. Therefore, it is the societal duty of marketing researchers to address the effects of prevalent counter-normative salesperson behavior on individual and organizational outcomes. This dissertation eases the transition to increased attention to salesperson deviance in the classroom through future research stimulated by the adaptation of relevant person organization fit scales to a sales setting.

There has been sparse attention given to the area of deviance in the sales literature with surprisingly few studies investigating the effects of salesperson deviance on individual and organizational outcomes (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2005, Jelinek and Ahearne, 2006). A potential reason for this limited attention is the perplexity of effectively capturing the salesperson deviance construct since many salespeople would be reluctant to open admittance of organizational insubordination. This dissertation validates a multidimensional scale of salesperson deviance, which consists of an organizational and

interpersonal scale used in prior research as well as proposing a new scale geared towards customer-directed deviance.

Marketing ethics has apparently overshadowed the investigation of deviance in the marketing literature evidenced by a relatively higher number of studies in premier marketing journals dealing with ethics and a relative lack of studies on deviance (see Robin and Reidenbach 1987, Robin and Reidenbach 1993). By no means does this dissertation de-emphasize the established importance of ethics to marketing. Instead, I propose that the delineation between deviant and unethical behavior is much more interesting from a sales perspective. Salesperson ethicality is primarily determined by harm, or potential harm inflicted by a behavior and not concerned with organizational norms (Robin, 2004). On the other hand, salesperson deviance may be simultaneously deviant and ethical, and vice versa. For example, salespeople who warn customers of defective products or flaws in services would be considered to be acting ethically due to a deflection of potential harm away from customers. However, these behaviors may contradict organizational norms which emphasize increasing sales at all costs. The inclusion of deviance in studies of salesperson ethicality may open up exciting avenues of research addressing the inherent conflict of interests between salespeople and their organizations.

There are numerous possibilities for future extensions of the current study. For example, an examination of alternative dimensions of salesperson-organization fit such as autonomy level preferences and their effects on individual and organizational outcomes. Inexperienced salespeople may prefer higher supervision especially during the initial stages of employment; while many organizations adopt an 'every salesperson for



him/herself' culture. In this case, increased monitoring may be a preferred strategy for sales managers in the reduction of impending salesperson deviance behaviors. Further research may also address salesperson/manager relationships and the potential effects on the three dimensions of salesperson deviance. That is, supportive supervisory relationships may ameliorate the prevalence of deviant behavior in sales organizations. Similarly, perceptions of managerial deviance in an organization may also impact fluctuations in salesperson deviance.

### **Dissertation Organization**

The dissertation chapters will be organized as follows. Chapter 1 introduced the topic and provided support for research in this area. Chapter 2 will define salesperson deviance and person-organization fit, summarize relevant literature in the area, and review the theoretical framework utilized in the development of hypotheses tested. Chapter 3 will outline the employed research methodology as well as criteria used to assess the research hypotheses. Chapter 4 will provide an assessment of the measurement properties and outline the structural model evaluation and the results of the hypotheses tests. Finally, Chapter 5 will offer conclusions and future avenues for research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DEFINITIONS, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The following section integrates and synthesizes relevant literature associated with the focal constructs outlined in the model depicted in Figure 1.1. This includes defining the investigated constructs, as well as, developing the theoretical premise for the study. The remainder of this chapter will address the specific hypotheses tested in the study, while emphasizing the practical and theoretical significance of potential findings outlined in Chapter 1.

#### **Salesperson Deviance**

There has been extensive research conducted on the various types of workplace deviance and their effects on employee and organizational outcomes. The research spans many fields and includes a wide variety of terms all describing behaviors that are morally questionable: employee deviance (Bolin and Heatherly, 2001), antisocial behavior (Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly, 1998), organizational resistance (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007), employee misconduct (Kidder, 2005), workplace retaliation (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997), dysfunctional behavior (Choi, Dixon, and Jung, 2005), and service dysfunction (Harris and Ogbonna, 2006). Workplace deviance has been defined as a voluntary

behavior that violates significant organizational norms, which threaten the well-being of an organization or its members (Bennett and Robinson, 2000).

The inherent distinction between unethical behavior and deviant behavior is that the former focuses on behavior that is right or wrong when judged in terms of justice or law, while the latter focuses on behavior that violates organizational norms (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). Indeed, researchers have argued that some behaviors may be unethical yet in accordance with organizational norms (Robin and Reidenbach, 1987). The authors contend that in many instances, financial success may dominate an organizational culture at the expense of ethical core values. For example, when salespeople exaggerate the attributes of products/services with the intent of manipulating a customer into an unneeded purchase, this would qualify as an unethical behavior. However, in many organizations, inflating product benefits would not be considered an anti-normative behavior, especially if this misrepresentation leads to an increase in sales figures.

Marketing ethics is a generalized belief that marketing actions should be conducted in accordance with high moral standards so they work toward justice and equity in the treatment of stakeholders. An individual marketing employee's moral or ethical standards reflect tolerance for behaviors that unjustly take advantage of people (customers, other employees, management, investors, members of society) (Robin 2004). Ethics inherently deals with rightness and wrongness and therefore ethical judgments deal with assessing an action as right or wrong. Moral equity is the key dimension of ethical judgment and is reflected in how morally right, just and fair some action is deemed. In this sense, moral equity is distinguished from relativism which more reflects

a judgment of the degree to which a behavior deviates from social and cultural norms (Reidenbach, Robin and Dawson, 1991). The two dimensions are related but distinct, and the relativism aspect of ethical judgment more closely mirrors deviance in capturing how acceptable some behavior might be deemed.

Marketing ethics also requires that individuals behave in accordance with the moral standards and guidelines enforced by society with an emphasis on avoiding those actions which lead to personal gain at the expense of others (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Robin and Reidenbach, 1987). Salespeople and managers may legitimize prevalent norms of product puffery within the organization by emphasizing that there is no real harm inflicted upon customers. However, moral philosophers would disagree since customers are entitled to a more heightened level of concern and regard for well-being by the organization which goes beyond simply not harming them (Robin and Reidenbach, 1987). Generally, customers are not very knowledgeable about the features of the product/service being sold, so the opportunity to take advantage of the situation by salespeople may be quite tempting. Customers compensate for the risk associated with a lack of knowledge by trusting the salesperson to maintain a sense of ethicality in the relationship (Robin, 2004).

From a relative standpoint, unethical behavior may also be difficult to gauge since the severity of these actions are generally determined by the perpetrator (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985). According to the authors, company theft by employees is generally viewed as wrong; however, this consensus seems to dissipate as these behaviors decrease in unethical severity from funds embezzlement to “borrowing supplies” from work for a child’s school project. The opportunity to act in an unethical manner was also posed as a

better predictor of unethical behavior on the part of employees. Salespeople who feel that their organizations adopt a lenient approach when dealing with unethical behavior may have a greater likelihood of engaging in these actions since fears of punishment are nonexistent. Ethical work climate has become a focal construct in the marketing literature due to the susceptibility of salespeople to engage in unethical conduct when they perceive that the organization does not formally condemn these behaviors (Schwepker, Ferrell and Ingram, 1997; Babin, Boles, and Robin, 2000; Schwepker, 2001).

Many unethical behaviors are considered taboo by marketers, while a more lenient approach is assumed when evaluating deviant behaviors (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985). Employees may view unethical behavior as universally tacit knowledge of what is socially unacceptable or morally wrong, but acceptable normative behavior may vary across industries, professions, and organizations. For instance, customers expect auto salespeople to engage in some puffery, or exaggeration of automobile features, through the use of phrases such as “the best deal in town” or “most economical”. Although such claims are only occasionally true, most customers would not consider them unethical.

Although the majority of researchers have focused on the effects of destructive deviance, constructive or positive deviance is also a well established construct. Positive deviance focuses on behaviors that contradict the norms of an organization with honorable intentions, not taking into account the outcomes or effects of those behaviors (Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2004). Therefore, the primary distinction between positive and negative deviance is the intention and/or the means by which this behavior is carried out. For instance, frontline service employees who are dishonest when dealing with

customers tend to legitimize their behaviors by focusing on the beneficial effects of not being completely honest such as shielding apprehensive customers from negative thoughts by telling them what they want to hear (Scott, 2003). Obviously, well intentioned deviance could also potentially harm the parties involved since outcomes are not a primary focus of positive deviance. Similarly, constructive deviance refers to any voluntary behavior which contradicts organizational norms while contributing to the well being of the organization or its constituents (Galperin and Burke, 2006). Galperin and Burke (2006) argue that workaholism, a form of constructive deviance, is an effective deterrent of organizational deviance since workaholics are so consumed with their duties that they do not have time to engage in destructive behaviors. Similarly, traditional employees are not expected to work overtime unless the organization recompenses extra role efforts, thus, these employees would also be characterized as well-intentioned deviants. The underlying assumption with negative deviance, on the other hand, is that the perpetrator will gain intrinsic or extrinsic rewards from their actions to legitimize the risk of engaging in the behavior. This dissertation focuses on the effects of organizational congruence on the destructive anti-normative behaviors of salespeople.

The prevalence of deviance in the salesforce may be associated with various demographic, personality, and organizational traits. For instance, younger, newly hired employees are more likely to engage in organizational deviance than their older counterparts because they are less vulnerable to the social stigma of being caught (Hollinger and Clark, 1983). A subsequent meta-analysis lends additional support to this view with the finding that older employees engage in less organizational and production deviance than younger employees (Lau, Au, and Ho, 2003). Other studies have found

that demographic variables such as gender and job tenure play a significant role in the extent of antisocial behaviors engaged in by employees (Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Lau, et. al 2003). That is, male employees tend to behave in a more aggressively opportunistic manner than females due to a natural gender inclination, while employees with lengthier tenures are less likely to engage in deviance either because of fears of damaging their social status in an organization or they may have already been terminated by the time they reach higher levels of employment. Other studies suggest a link between gender and retaliation with men engaging in substantially higher retaliatory behavior than women (Bettencourt and Miller, 1996). Positive and negative affectivity, which are related to an individual's personal outlook on life, may also have a significant impact on organizational and interpersonal deviance (Aquino, Lewis, and Bradfield, 1999). Cynical employees who are inclined to view their external environment (i.e. organization, coworkers, and customers) negatively are more likely to achieve retribution through deviant behavior.

The current study proposes that salesperson deviance refers to a salesperson's voluntary behavior which violates organizational norms and is opportunistically directed at the salesperson's organization, other individuals within the organization, or towards customers/prospects of the organization. The three dimensions of salesperson deviance consist of organizational deviance, interpersonal deviance, and customer-directed deviance. Organizational deviance refers to counter-normative organizational behavior which may range in severity from withholding effort to vandalism, theft, or sabotage (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007). There has been a substantial amount of research on organizations being targeted by employees due to perceived inequities in organizational,

interactional, distributive, and procedural justice (Skarlicki and Folger 1997; Aquino, Galperin, and Bennett, 2004; Henle, 2005; Berry, Ones, and Sackett, 2007). On the other hand, interpersonal deviance refers to those counterproductive behaviors directed towards individuals, namely coworkers or fellow salespeople (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2005). These behaviors may vary in severity from refusing to participate in the synergetic sharing of relevant customer information, sales territory infringement, or even engaging in hurtful behavior directed at coworkers (e.g. cursing, gossiping, making ethnic or derogatory comments). Additional interpersonal deviance behaviors include deferring undesirable customers to co-workers, publicly embarrassing co-workers, and sabotaging existing or future customer relationships of fellow salespeople.

Since the majority of deviance research has not been conducted from a sales/marketing perspective, a deeper examination of the links between salesperson-customer relationships and deviant behavior deserves further exploration (Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Dunlop and Lee, 2004; Henle, 2005). The current study proposes the enhancement of the salesperson deviance construct with the addition of “customer-directed deviance”. Customer directed deviance includes, but is not limited to:

- Exaggeration of product benefits
- Misstating the services provided prior to, during, and after delivery
- Lying about competitors’ services and products
- Lying about product availability
- Engaging in the sale of defective products
- Purposeful use of coercion to complete a transaction
- Knowingly selling a product that does not match customer needs



Given the inherent importance of customer relationship management within the sales literature, the lack of focus on customer-directed deviance is surprising. The violation of relational contracts with customers by frontline service employees has been shown to significantly diminish the potential for long term customer relationships (Eddleston, Kidder, and Litzky, 2002). In fact, studies have shown that habitual misbehavior of frontline employees may lead to the erosion of an organization's image in the minds of consumers since consistent misconduct is attributed to the organization as a whole, not to the individual employee (Scott and Jehn, 2003). Since securing, building, and maintaining long term relationships with profitable customers is the lifeline for success in any industry, not the least of which is the sales industry, further investigation of customer-directed deviance is crucial.

Prior research suggests that employee deviance has both harmful and beneficial effects on organizational and individual performance (Robinson and Greenberg, 1998). For instance, salespeople who exaggerate product benefits or use deceptive selling techniques may not only provide more perceived value to customers but they may also experience increased short term sales which will improve individual and organizational performance assessments. Therefore, the salesperson's intentions may, in actuality, be to benefit themselves and their organization through sales performance improvement, but the means by which this benefit is attained may not be honorable. For example, a salesperson who infringes on prospects within a fellow salesperson's territory would be engaging in interpersonal deviance. However, the question that might be posed to those labeling such behavior as deviant is, if these prospects were not being effectively pursued by the assigned salesperson, isn't the organization better off?

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the three types of deviant behavior rated according to the severity of harm inflicted by each behavior. Although these behaviors may not be homogenous from a moral standpoint, deviance researchers have expressed difficulties in capturing the severity of harm with existing scales.

Level of Harm Inflicted	Organizational Deviance	Interpersonal Deviance	Customer-Directed Deviance
Minor	Consistently arriving late to sales meetings	Deferring undesirable customers to coworkers	Purposefully misstating the provided services
	Neglecting to follow supervisor instructions	Refusing to share relevant information with coworkers	Engaging in unequal treatment of customers
	Refusing to share relevant customer information with organization		Purposefully engaging in less than optimal customer service
Moderate	Consistently engaging in unexcused absenteeism	Acting rudely towards coworkers	Using 'puffery' or over-exaggeration of product benefits
	Falsifying receipts for reimbursement	Spreading rumors about coworkers	Lying about product availability
	Discussing negative perceptions of organization and/or its supervisors with customers		Knowingly selling inferior quality products
Extreme	Engaging in company theft	Infringing on fellow coworkers' sales territories	Purposefully using coercion to complete a transaction
	Engaging in service sabotage	Directing ethnic, religious, or racial remarks at coworkers	Knowingly engaging in the sale of defective products
	Discussing confidential organizational information with unauthorized sources	Publicly embarrassing coworkers	Lying about competitors' products/services

Figure 2.1. Typology of Deviant Salesperson Behavior

This dissertation will investigate the various dimensions of salesperson-organization fit and subsequent effects on the three types of salesperson deviance. The study will then integrate the three dimensions of deviance under the umbrella of salesperson deviance and examine the effects of these behaviors on organizational outcomes such as performance, organizational commitment, and satisfaction.

### **Coping Theory**

Researcher interest in the effects of employee coping mechanisms on both physical and psychological outcomes has increased substantially within the medical and psychology disciplines with numerous studies investigating this relationship (Penley, Tomaka, and Wiebe, 2002; Haar, 2006). The conceptual reasoning behind the examination of this relationship is that employees tend to value their work roles highly, and will implement the necessary strategies to reduce, or alter, discrepancies at work which negatively affect their well being. Coping is defined as an individual's continuous changes in cognitive and behavioral efforts in managing external/internal demands which are viewed as taxing or exceeding personal resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). In other words, coping refers to the methods or behaviors employed by individuals in handling or balancing role requirements which surpass personal expectations or resource tolerance thresholds.

The literature suggests that coping is a key mediator between stressful person-environment relations and both immediate and long term outcomes (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, and Gruen, 1986). These authors contend that coping should not be evaluated based on whether or not the coping strategy used was successful in mitigating the problem, but should be assessed based on the inherent reasoning behind

enforcing the strategy (i.e., managing demands). If the strategy was employed with the intention of dealing with a specific problem, then this strategy, by definition, would be considered a coping mechanism. Therefore, problem resolution is not a determining factor in the assessment of whether or not a certain behavior can be considered a coping strategy since the individual may evaluate the outcome of a situation as satisfactory as long as he/she feels that the demands encountered were managed to the best of his/her ability.

Different coping strategies can be implemented based on personal preference or perceived effectiveness. For example, problem-focused or active coping strategies refer to coping behaviors utilized to manage the person-environment relationship (Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005). That is, these behaviors are an attempt to alter the situation or, at the very least, relieve the stress associated with environmental discrepancies. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping refers to the regulation of emotions that result from the stress and is usually invoked when an individual feels that the particular stressor must be endured. (Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005). Consequently, salesperson deviance may be an industry specific manifestation of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping since salespeople who encounter fit discrepancies within their organizations may be forced to manage the issue or risk losing their jobs. These salespeople may attempt to relieve the accompanying stress by engaging in deviance directed towards the organization, co-workers, or customers.

Confrontive coping strategies, a form of problem-focused coping, are associated with unsatisfactory encounters between individuals and their environments (Folkman, et. al 1986). Confrontive coping refers to engagement in aggressive behaviors which are

used to alter an unsatisfactory situation, and are characterized by a certain degree of hostility and risk taking. According to the authors, although these strategies may exacerbate rather than improve the situation, the implementation of these mechanisms may still be prevalent for individuals confronted with organizational incongruence. Individuals whose identity is threatened due to a lack of organizational fit have been shown to engage in irrational behaviors which are self defeating and, in fact, increase rather than decrease feelings of alienation (Ferris, Brown, and Heller, 2009). The authors argue that such perceptions of estrangement from the organization lead to the erosion of self esteem in employees and consequent increases in retaliatory behavior.

Although deviant behaviors are initially carried out as remedial responses to emotional distress, maladaptive coping strategies such as deviance actually increase personal distress levels as well as associated situational problems in the future (Aldwin and Revenson, 1987). For instance, salespeople who consistently engage in deviance as a reaction to organizational asymmetry may be unknowingly distancing themselves from fellow salespeople that do not want to be associated with counter-normative behavior. Social exclusion from personal interactions with the sales force not only deprives these salespeople of a sense of belonging and affiliation with the organization, but it also inhibits the exchange of pertinent customer information which may have detrimental effects on performance.

As mentioned earlier, employees who feel that stressful demands were managed well through the coping mechanism employed have intrinsically fulfilled the primary objective of coping. According to coping theory, actual resolution of the problem is not the goal of coping behaviors. In other words, although the problematic situation may

become inflated due to deviant behavior (i.e. increased alienation from the organization or decreased homeostasis resulting from engagement in the behavior); if the individual perceives a restoration of equity from the behavior, then the coping mechanism is considered successful. However, in some instances, the detrimental effects of engaging in counterproductive behaviors may not be limited to the organization, but may have both physical and psychological effects on the individual as well. For example, coercive salespeople who threaten customers with the cancellation of preferred customer status if they do not purchase a certain product, experience increased levels of physical and mental stress due to their behavior (McFarland, 2004). The mental stress associated with salesperson deviance is not necessarily limited to feelings of regret and blameworthiness, but may also encompass social apprehension or the fear of being caught by the organization.

Research indicates that coping strategies can be applied to person organization fit scenarios in that withdrawal is considered an individual adjustment strategy enforced by employees who experience incongruence with organizational expectations (Wright and Bonnett, 1993). The study addresses employees' permanent withdrawal tendencies, or turnover, as a response to lack of fit with an organization; however, the researchers insist that a deeper investigation of engagement in temporary withdrawal, or absenteeism, as a coping strategy is warranted. The issue of temporary withdrawal vis à vis absence has been categorized as behavioral disengagement, or "reducing one's effort to deal with a stressor" (Carver, Scheier, Weintraub, 1989: p. 269). The authors contend that employees generally pursue a strategy of behavioral disengagement when a poor coping outcome is expected. From a fit standpoint, if salespeople encounter significant

incompatibilities with their organization, a coping mechanism may assist in reducing stress associated with the incongruence, but it is unlikely that it will resolve the discrepancy. Many employees merely focus on the financial benefits of remaining within an organization while ignoring blatant incompatibilities; which has a corrosive impact on future satisfaction (Menaghan and Merves, 1984). Recent research also examines the beneficial implications of occasional employee absenteeism as a buffering, or coping strategy through which the maintenance of physical and psychological states such as anxiety and elevated stress levels can be controlled (Hackett and Bycio, 1996). That is, employees who reported to work shifts despite heightened stress levels were more likely to be tired, dissatisfied, and prone to poor service. Therefore, occasional absences during peak stress levels may contribute to a minimization of dysfunctional service behaviors by frontline employees.

Organizational deviance is highly discouraged due to its detrimental effects on overall firm performance; however, the majority of deviance studies do not employ coping as a theoretical foundation for their empirical models. This is surprising since aggressive, norm violating behaviors directed toward the organization (e.g. company theft) or toward co-workers (e.g. infringing on sales territories) may be effective coping strategies through which salespeople may alleviate stress associated with organizational incompatibility. For instance, aggressive coping strategies have been linked to feelings of self rejection which are caused by: “(a) the loss of motivation to conform to and acquisition of motivation to deviate from conventional expectations and (b) association with deviant peers” (Kaplan and Peck, 1992: p. 905). In other words, salespeople who

experience self rejection due to a lack of organizational congruence may engage in deviant behavior and search for fellow salespeople who share their incompatibilities.

An extensive meta-analytic review suggests that confrontive coping is negatively correlated with various psychological health outcomes leading to increased distress and anxiety (Penley, et. al 2002). This was attributed to the potentially deteriorating effects on interpersonal relationships and social associations when confrontive coping is enforced. In a more recent study, it was shown that individuals appraise person-environment interactions when determining whether the encounter is perceived as negative or positive (Fugate, Kinicki, and Prussia, 2008). These authors contend that when employees are confronted with stressful situations at work, these situations are appraised negatively and personal well being is also negatively affected due to the intrinsic value that work roles facilitate for employees. Such negative appraisals appear to be linked to harmful relationships with supervisors and coworkers, increased anxiety/depression, and increased absences (Fugate, et. al 2008).

Prior research has indicated three primary ways in which deviance has been conceptualized in the literature: (a) as a reaction to experiences at work, (b) as a manifestation of employees' personalities, and (c) as an adaptation to the social context at work (Bennett and Robinson, 2003). From a sales perspective, salespeople who are confronted with substantial organizational incongruence may undergo significant anxiety and attempt to cope with the demands of the organization through normatively legitimate or illegitimate means. Therefore, the current study follows the lead of previous researchers in assessing salesperson deviance as a reactive coping mechanism



implemented to offset or mitigate frustrations associated with organizational incongruence and job dissatisfaction.

### **Salesperson/Organization Values Congruence**

Person-organization fit refers to the “compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics or (c) both” (Kristof, 1996). According to the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model, individuals and organizations are inherently drawn to each other based on common similarities in backgrounds, characteristics, and orientations (Schneider, 1987). The underlying logic behind this model is that people are attracted to certain organizations because of an implicit correspondence in values or characteristics; and organizations select appropriate matches based on these similarities in their recruitment processes. Applicants that do not match these criteria are either not selected to begin with or suffer from attrition through a natural selection process which leads to turnover due to a lack of fit with the organization. From a measurement standpoint, there are two ways that person organization fit is assessed. Perceived fit refers to an individual’s direct assessment of their compatibility with the environment, while objective fit is an indirect assessment of this compatibility made by external sources (i.e. supervisors) (Kristof-Brown, et. al 2005). The consensus among researchers is that these two measures are conceptually distinct and, therefore, person organization fit can be assessed as a composite measure of both constructs (Erdogan, Kraimer, and Liden, 2004; Kristoff-Brown, et. al 2005).

Although subsequent studies reveal that the homogeneity hypothesis may not always be the ideal solution for long term organizational effectiveness since a

homogeneous workforce may experience significant stifling of creativity and innovation; overwhelming evidence suggests that similarities among coworkers promote a sense of cohesiveness and cooperation (Schneider, Smith, Taylor, and Fleenor, 1998). In other words, when employees experience a cohesively blended values system in their respective work groups, the sense of commonality among employees will translate into synergetic work practices. Salesperson organizational fit has been positively associated with job satisfaction (Netemeyer, Boles, McKee, and McMurrin, 1997). That is, salespeople who perceive a sense of compatibility with their organization are likely to experience an increase in contentment with their job as well as their organization.

On the other hand, person-organization incongruence has detrimental effects on employees' self esteem (Saks and Ashforth, 1997). In order to remedy the erosion of self esteem, employees will likely leave the organization in search of an alternative which would satisfy congruence needs. In times of economic prosperity, salespeople may not encounter any difficulties in locating other employment opportunities; however, leaving one's job in search of an unguaranteed alternative is generally not as attractive an option in times of an economic downturn. If organizationally incongruent salespeople become hostages to employment, what are the potential ramifications on the internal and external environment? Recent studies propose that organizational fit is one of the primary contextual factors inversely associated with negative deviant behaviors (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2005).

Values congruence refers to an inherent correspondence between an employee's enduring beliefs which guide attitudes/behaviors and an organization's culture (Rokeach, 1973; Cable and Judge, 1997). This congruence, or fit, between the values and/or

orientations of employees and their organizations has been shown to have a significant impact on favorable work attitudes and performance (Chatman, 1989; Herrbach and Mignonac, 2007). The underlying assumption is that matching value systems contribute to a sense of belonging within the organization which translates not only into greater productivity, but also personal satisfaction with the job and the organization as a whole. Meta-analytic evidence suggests that among the various types of person-organization fit dimensions, values congruence is the most effective in assessing key work outcomes such as commitment, satisfaction, and intent to turnover (Verquer, Beehr, and Wagner, 2003). In other words, correspondence between organizational values and the intrinsic values of employees is a primary determinant of job tenure. Others posit that the effects of values incongruence are realized by the organization through increased turnover in the initial stages of employment, but ensuring employee-organization compatibility in the recruitment process helps to alleviate the stress incurred by this dilemma (Vandenberghe, 1999).

A longitudinal assessment of values congruence posits that employees who exhibit compatibility with the values criteria of their respective organizational cultures report higher job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity ratings and are less likely to leave the organization (O'Reilly, et. al 1991; Westerman and Cyr, 2004). The authors argue that personal factors such as employee values interact with environmental factors (norms) altering attitudinal and behavioral responses. In the case of salespeople, higher productivity may be captured by either short term or long term performance depending on the measures employed in assessment. As mentioned earlier, long term performance

through consistent customer re-patronage is a key requirement for success in the sales industry.

On the other hand, other studies suggest that ethnically diverse employees joining organizations with significantly different value systems than their own usually engage in more organizational deviance in response to conformity pressures (Liao, et. al 2004). This finding is based on the presumption that ethnic diversity implies differences in attitudes regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in the workplace. In other words, certain behaviors which may be considered unacceptable by the employee may fit within the organization's acceptable range of behaviors depending on their ethnic background. For instance, salespeople from countries which rank low on power distance, or were raised in less authoritarian societies, would expect to be treated as equals by sales managers. However, in organizations with high levels of power distance, it is likely that salespeople would be expected to run personal errands for their sales managers emphasizing their role as subordinates. These salespeople may attempt to retaliate against the perceived injustice by engaging in organizational deviance.

Salespeople are expected to conform not only to formal controls (management-initiated) but also to informal controls (salesperson initiated); regardless of contradiction to personal values and expectations (Jaworski, 1988). An established sales quota would be considered a formal control; however, salespeople may enforce an unwritten norm of lowered productivity in which members would be expected to minimize overall sales with the hopes of lowering management expectations in the future. For instance, salespeople in organizations which enforce a relative individual effort reward system share a vested interest in collectively lowering overall productivity since they would

receive identical financial rewards with minimal effort (Kidwell and Bennett, 1993). Consequently, the propensity to withhold effort may become a group norm among salespeople. Salespeople who contradict the norm of lowered productivity by consistently exceeding sales quotas would be subsequently ostracized from the group.

Person-organization values congruence has also been shown to be an effective predictor of fit within an organization (Cable and Judge, 1997). Employees with higher ethical value standards engage in more intensive moral behavior evaluations and are likely to assess these behaviors based on values compatibility. On the other hand, employees who do not evaluate the moral acceptability of behaviors as rigorously tend to have a lower resistance to deviant behavior. However, organizational values also vary across a continuum of pivotal and peripheral values. Pivotal values are equivalent to norms of the organization which are enforced through sanctions and formal punishments for violators, while peripheral values are subculture oriented and not enforced through sanctions (Adkins and Caldwell, 2004). Therefore, salespeople are expected to conform not only to the organizational culture as a whole, but also to group norms and expectations of the assigned sales team.

An examination into the effects of charismatic leadership found that employees who experienced high values congruence with their leaders (i.e. managers) tended to refrain from engaging in interpersonal deviance (Brown and Trevino, 2006). Specifically, employees who experience value similarities with managers are more inclined to avoid interpersonal behaviors that are contrary to those shared beliefs for fear of violating mutual reciprocity expectations. Similarly, leader member exchange, or supervisory support from a manager, was found to moderate the relationship between

value congruence and both employee job and career satisfaction (Erdogan, et. al 2004). Sales research indicates that perceptions of ethical conflict between salespeople and their managers are significantly reduced when a sales organization projects a strong ethical climate (Schwepker, Ferrell, and Ingram, 1997). Clear ethical standards and guidelines which are emphasized in the recruitment process and regularly enforced by management help to eliminate confusion about acceptable salesperson behavior.

Over the years, the ethics literature has become immersed with studies investigating the effects of person-organization ethical fit on a multitude of individual and organizational outcomes (Sims and Kroeck, 1994; Sims and Keon, 1997; Sims, Valentine, Godkin, and Lucero, 2002; Ambrose, Arnaud, Schminke, 2007). As mentioned earlier, prior research indicates that ethical and deviant behavior are not conceptually equivalent since unethical behavior (e.g. exaggerating product benefits) may not be against the norms of an organization ; and, as such, it would not be considered deviant behavior (Robinson and Bennett, 1995). On the other hand, an employee's deviant behavior can sometimes be considered ethical (e.g. open disclosure of product deficiencies to customers).

Discrepancies between a salesperson's values and his/her organization may create conflicting beliefs about which work behaviors are deemed acceptable. This values divergence creates a conflict of interest since salespeople are basing their behaviors on a different code of conduct than that which is enforced by the organization. Research suggests that employees experiencing value discrepancies with their organizations encounter difficulties in assimilating with co-workers, exhibit poor communication skills in their work groups, and are less likely to cooperate with team members (Chatman and

Barsade, 1995; Kalliath, Bluedorn, and Strube, 1999). An inherent lack of synergy between co-workers may lead to an environment which is conducive to interpersonal deviance since there are no socially binding obligations in disconnected salesperson relationships.

According to equity theory, employees perceive unfairness from their organizations when they sense that the ratio of their outcomes to inputs is unequal to coworkers' ratio of outcomes to inputs (Adams, 1965). Based on this assumption, the theory of relative deprivation argues that when employees sense that job outcomes are unfair, they will react by either adapting their behavior to restore equity or by attempting to change the governing system. If changing the system is beyond the employees' ability, which is mostly the case, they will attempt to restore equity through retaliatory behavior directed at the source of inequity (Fischer and Baron, 1982).

If an employee senses that his/her organization compels them to behave in a manner which is inconsistent with their intrinsic values, these employees may react by violating organizational norms to express their dissatisfaction. In support of this claim, research has shown that employees tend to direct retaliatory behavior towards the source of a discrepancy (Martinko, et. al 2002). If salespeople attribute their incongruence to an external party (i.e. the organization or coworkers) then these salespeople will be more likely to seek equity restoration through organizational and interpersonal deviance, respectively. Low value congruence may result in feelings of resentment towards the organization since employees are forced to behave in ways that are incompatible with their own belief systems (Kraimer, 1997). On the other hand, convergence in person-organization values has been shown to improve employees' understanding of the

interpersonal environment as well as increase group task performance (Verquer, et. al 2003). Therefore, values congruence should lead to greater workforce cohesion and less likelihood of interpersonal deviance.

Salespeople, as frontline ambassadors of their firms, play a central role in displaying the values and moral standards of their organizations. This boundary spanning position entrusted to salespeople carries with it a potentially devastating risk; since salespeople are authorized representatives of the firm, and even verbal statements made to customers about price or product attributes are considered legal obligations upon the organization (Johnston and Marshall, 2008). Therefore, any discrepancies between the values and/or ethical standards of salespeople and those of their organizations have potentially disastrous consequences not only on the internal functioning of the organization, but also on the external development and maintenance of profitable, long term customer relationships.

An individual's moral values determine the manner in which they evaluate the inherent "goodness" and/or "badness" of behaviors. Theoretically, individuals with lower moral values will have a relatively high threshold or tolerance for immoral behavior, and vice versa. Oftentimes, the morality of a behavior is assessed based on the potential harm the act may inflict on others. For instance, a pharmaceutical sales representative who exaggerates product benefits to a doctor may be deemed as conducting immoral behavior if the puffery intentionally misrepresents the product. However, if a salesperson intentionally refrains from disclosing harmful side effects of the product in a presentation, his or her behavior would rate considerably higher than simply puffery. This example illustrates a high moral intensity situation frequently



encountered by salespeople in the medical or pharmaceutical industry. Moral intensity refers to “the extent of issue-related moral imperative in a situation” (Jones 1991:372). In other words, salespeople who are employed in industries which are responsible for the physical safety and health of others would encounter high moral intensity situations, whereas others who sell regular consumption products would rank considerably lower on the moral intensity scale. Research has shown that the perceived moral intensity of a situation is dependent on perceptions of magnitude, probability, immediacy, and concentration of harm (Singhapakdi, Vitell, and Franke, 1999).

Although most values research focuses on the individual, the congruence of individual and organizational moral values is crucial to understanding the effects of values on organizational outcomes. In the past, researchers have implied that organizational moral values are nonexistent since values are exclusive to human beings (Ladd, 1970). However, recent findings indicate that organizations enforce moral values which are manifested through distinctive codes of conduct used to regulate employee activities and behaviors (Scott, 2000; Scott 2002). The authors suggest that organizational moral values are composed of five dimensions: honest communication, respect for property, respect for life, respect for religion, and justice. A violation of any of these elements by an employee would constitute grounds for alienation from the organization. The prerequisites for the dissemination of organizational values are: 1) a shared acceptance among members of the organization (Schein, 1992) and 2) inherent importance to the organization’s survival and long term success (Selznick, 1992). These values are initially developed by an organizational minority such as upper management or the founders of an organization (Scneider, 1987). For this reason, it is expected that

overarching moral codes of conduct may not be in tune with employees' individual beliefs. In the hypothetical example mentioned earlier, the pharmaceutical salesperson may not adopt a "do unto others" approach in their interpersonal dealings. However, withholding information about the harmful consequences of a product would be in clear violation of both the 'honest communication' and 'respect for life' clauses. Due to significant emphasis placed on these dimensions in the healthcare industry, openly displayed breaches of these values would likely ostracize the salesperson not only from the organization, but also from the industry as a whole.

Many studies have investigated the causal influence of ethics or ethical fit on sales-related outcomes (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985; Hunt, et. al 1989; Sims and Kroeck, 1994; Jaramillo, et. al 2006). The basic premise is that organizations which implement well-communicated codes of ethics that are recognized and accepted by salespeople are likely to experience noticeable increases in organizational commitment and performance. Researchers have also found that salesperson ethical fit is a primary deterrent of unethical behavior and controversial selling practices (Trawick and Swan, 1988; Dabholkar and Kellaris, 1992). Similarly, organizational moral values lead to higher levels of productivity, job satisfaction, and commitment (Jehn, 1994; Finegan, 2000).

### **Pay Structure Fit**

According to agency theory, salespeople serve as agents, or intermediaries for their organizations; and their managers are considered "principals" through their representation of owners' interests (Bergen, Dutta, and Walker, 1992). The customer is also involved in the agency relationship since his/her role in the exchange process is to gather adequate product features, advantages, and benefits from the salesperson.

However, the role of the salesperson is critical in that salespeople are legal representatives of their organizations, meaning any verbal or nonverbal commitment on the part of a salesperson is, in fact, a legally binding contract on the firm he/she represents. An underlying assumption in agency theory is that all agents (i.e. salespeople) possess the inclination to act opportunistically if the situation presents itself (Bergen, et. al 1992). The most effective method enforced to control this behavior is monitoring (Kidder, 2005). In fact, salesperson opportunity, or the perceived ability to act unethically and/or deviantly with potential for rewards and without fear of reprisal, was found to be a better predictor of ethical behavior than individual beliefs (Ferrell and Gresham, 1985). Traditionally, opportunistic behavior is financially driven since a salesperson engaging in behavior that is self-interested and counter to the norms of an organization will expect some monetary return to legitimize the risk of engaging in the behavior.

Alternatively, proponents of equity theory argue that employees evaluate exchange relationships with their organizations based on an internal assessment of the perceived fairness of the ratio between inputs and outputs across fellow employees (Adams, 1965). Meta-analytic evidence suggests that job performance is positively impacted by perceptions of pay policies and administration (Williams, McDaniel, and Nguyen, 2006). The authors posit that employees make internal comparisons with fellow employees in the same organization as well as external comparisons based on industry standards.

Studies on the effects of pay dispersion on workforce performance have indicated that although outcome based compensation may provide a clear performance incentive,

this incentive may be attained at the cost of cooperation and goal orientation among employees (Shaw, Gupta, and Delery, 2002). That is, organizations which rely strictly on outcome-control rewards to stimulate performance usually do so at the cost of workforce cohesion. On the other hand, behavioral-control employees whose compensation does not rely solely on measurable outcomes may experience increased affiliation with their organization and coworkers. For example, compared to outcome-control salespeople, behavioral-control salespeople firmly adhere to company norms and procedures, pursue organizational goals while minimizing self interest, and display high levels of organizational commitment (Oliver and Anderson, 1994).

Employees in organizations which implement policies of hierarchical pay dispersion, or relatively large compensation differences between employees, have been shown to harbor feelings of psychological and economic injustice (Bloom, 1999). If salespeople perceive that the compensation structure enforced by their organization (e.g., outcome based) favors other coworkers over themselves through comparatively higher returns, then these salespeople may react to this perceived inequity in a deviant manner. Therefore, from an equity theory perspective, a salesperson's perception of inequitable treatment should enhance the likelihood of opportunistic behavior.

An interesting caveat of this assumption that has not been fully explored is the intrinsic motivation which triggers salespeople to engage in these behaviors. It is not known whether a salesperson would act opportunistically because opportunities become more vengefully apparent when inequitable treatment is experienced, or if the salesperson was aware of these opportunities a priori, but did not act upon them due to expectations of mutual reciprocity. According to balance theory, individuals tend to minimize

discrepancies between attitudes and behavior (Heider, 1958). That is, if a salesperson is treated unfairly by his/her organization (behavior), then they are likely to formulate balanced, negative attitudes toward the organization and possess a higher propensity to retaliate.

The most popular compensation package for salespeople consists of a combination of base salary and a proportion of incentive pay (Johnston and Marshall, 2008). Compensation specialists suggest that the benefits of a combination strategy over total commission based pay (i.e. outcome-based) or total salary based pay (i.e. behavior-based) is that combination plans are more stable, encourage performance of non-incentivized tasks, and promote relationship management (Martocchio, 2008). However, the eclectic paradigm of salesperson compensation argues that the selection of the most effective compensation method is contingent upon four factors:

- Firm control
- Amount of resource commitment
- Amount of dissemination risk
- Salesperson motivation (Chowdhury and Massad, 1997)

Studies on the effects of pay dispersion and compression, or the compensation gaps between the highest and lowest paid employees occupying identical positions, report that the method of compensation alone is neither beneficial nor detrimental to an organization (Shaw, et. al 2002). These authors posit that certain situational contingencies such as interdependency of employees, legitimacy of compensation source, and individual incentives determine the effectiveness of such techniques. The optimal mix of salary/commission therefore, would be contingent upon a multitude of

individual/organizational/situational factors which weakens the argument for an ad-hoc approach to salesperson compensation.

Research shows that when a salesforce control system is more outcome-based, there will be inherently less monitoring of salespeople by management because the risk of underperforming lies on the shoulders of salespeople (Cravens, et. al 1993). The authors argue that salespeople compensated through behavior based systems are likely to feel more committed to their organizations, achieve agency goals, and serve customer needs more effectively. However, measures of individual level performance were considerably lower for salespeople under the behavior-based control systems. The sales literature has explored this issue and shown that outcome-control systems lead salespeople to focus on short term goals such as immediate sales, whereas behavior-control salespeople are more concerned with the development of long term relationships with customers (Kraft, 1999). Consistent with this finding, a recent meta-analysis on the effects of pay level satisfaction suggests that 'contingent reward systems' are more likely to lead to higher performance outputs than traditional behavior based systems (Williams, et. al 2006).

An organizational emphasis on performance (e.g. increased sales) through incentive based compensation structures can contribute to an environment in which employees are more concerned with their own performance than conformity with organizational goals since monetary gain is directly linked to meeting performance expectations (Bloom, 1999). Prior research on industrial salespeople indicates that salespeople employed by firms that enforce strict input based compensation systems (i.e. process controls) are inclined to act more ethically than those operating under a more

outcome based approach (Robertson and Anderson, 1993). As previously noted, behavior-control salespeople tend to undergo more extensive monitoring than those with an outcome-control which may explain the relatively higher adherence to ethical standards and organizational norms.

It is no surprise that the primary motivator of sales effort and performance is monetary reward and the major concern of most salespeople is the pay package employed by organizations (Walker, Churchill, and Ford, 1977). Salesperson-pay structure fit is based on the logic that salespeople who are more performance-oriented will identify more with organizations that enforce more outcome-based compensation packages; while those that are more behavior-oriented will identify with organizations that emphasize financial security through fixed salary compensation. Studies have suggested that individuals with a high need for achievement are more likely to be attracted to firms that reward and emphasize individual efforts and accomplishments (Bretz, Ash, and Dreher, 1989).

Similarly, personnel research has shown that applicants base job search decisions in large part upon the fit between individual traits and the pay structure of an organization (Cable and Judge, 1994). The authors contend that an employee's inherent congruence with a given pay structure serves as a primary indicator of organizational fit since pay structures are usually constructed to reflect organizational norms and values. For this reason, an optimal compensation package should minimize discrepancies between organizational and salesperson expectations. That is, an organization concerned with minimizing incompatibilities between pay structure and salesperson preferences should take into account "differences in basic goals and objectives (e.g., profit maximization

versus utility maximization), and differences in risk attitudes (e.g., a risk-neutral firm and a risk-averse salesforce)” (Coughlan and Sen, 1989: p.339).

Similarly, research indicates that employees prefer organizations whose internal structures, including reward systems, match their personal needs such as self achievement (Turban and Keon, 1993). In sum, individual preferences for different compensation packages vary based on personal characteristics that may or may not match the enforced reward system. This potential discrepancy may play a crucial role in determining whether salespeople engage in deviant behavior. The investigation of compensation fit for salespeople is ideal due to their unique situation as boundary spanners and the financial incentives to give in to the allure of deviant behavior. In fact, perceptions of fair pay decisions have been associated with increased commitment and reductions in opportunistically dysfunctional behavior (Ramaswami, Srinivasan, and Gorton, 1997).

### **Work/Non-Work Demands Fit**

The effects of work-family conflict and family-work conflict on organizational outcomes have been well documented in the management and psychology literatures; however, the emphasis on life-role conflict in marketing has been surprisingly limited (Netemeyer, Brashear-Alejandro, and Boles, 2004). According to the authors, work-family conflict refers to an inter-role conflict where job expectations interfere with family related responsibilities, while family-work conflict refers to the role conflict that occurs when the demands created by the family interfere with work related demands. Identity theory suggests individuals possess certain life roles (i.e. work/family roles) which may cross paths; thus, creating a “spill over” effect (Thoits, 1991). When role clash occurs, the more valued role (e.g., non-work) takes precedence and individuals are likely to instill



protective measures to safeguard against potential damage. According to identity theory, these defense mechanisms may be implemented at the risk of abandoning the conflicting role. Consistent with this notion, a study based in the retail sales industry indicates that when salespeople encounter conflict between two salient roles (work and family), they tend to withdraw from the less salient work role through higher turnover in order to maintain the more valued family role (Netemeyer, et. al 2004). The authors argue that retail salespeople experiencing work family conflict also reported significantly higher levels of job stress than salespeople experiencing role conflict or role ambiguity.

However, the issue of role salience, or the degree to which a given role is a defining component of one's self image, is critical in assessing the extent to which conflict between work/non-work roles will affect employee outcomes. For example, an extensive look into the effects of work family conflict on government employees revealed that employees who had both high work and high family role salience were likely to experience the most conflict (Carlson and Kacmar, 2000). In the present context, salespeople with dual role priorities (work and non-work commitments) may experience a unique dilemma with the emotional and physical strains incurred while attempting to balance time constraints. If an acceptable balance is not achieved, salespeople tend to withdraw either from the organization or from their non-work obligations (Dubinsky, Howell, Ingram, and Bellenger, 1986). Turnover, in this case, would be considered a permanent coping strategy employed to ameliorate the negative effects of incongruence of work/non-work demands. However, studies suggest that most employees tend to engage in more transitory forms of escapist coping to deal with work/non-work demands conflict (Burke, 1998). It should be noted that the ultimate objectives or priorities of the

salesperson should be considered in assessing work/non-work roles. For instance, research reveals that some salespeople value income maximization more highly with a minimal concern for extracurricular activities, while others are more concerned with overall utility maximization which is achieved through a balance between income and increased leisure time (Coughlan and Sen, 1989). In other words, preferences for time over money could influence the degree to which salespeople experience role conflict or how they respond, or cope, to this discrepancy.

Moreover, it has been well documented that elevations in job stress will likely lead to deviance and/or deviance-inducing outcomes such as absenteeism, dissatisfaction, tension, and anxiety (Jackson and Schuler, 1985). In the case of salespeople, due to a highly competitive work environment driven by incentives, a salesperson's non-work life may suffer the negative effects of a progressively demanding career. Prior research indicates that work stressors have a substantial impact on perceived levels of work family conflict, among which, participation in boundary spanning activities was considered a major contributor (Burke, Weir, and DuWors, 1980). In the current context, this conflict would represent an overlap or interference of salesperson job requirements (e.g. travel requirements, after hour client meetings, etc.) with expected non-work duties.

Since the generalization that all salespeople have daily family obligations (i.e. husband/wife and/or children) is unrealistic, this study follows the lead of previous research in assessing this construct as work/non-work conflict (Babin and Boles, 1998). The detrimental effects of work-non-work conflict on job satisfaction, employee retention, and psychological well being have been thoroughly documented (Good, Sisler, and Gentry, 1988; Boles, et. al 1997; O'Driscoll, Brough, and Kalliath, 2004). Evidence

from both academics and practitioners has indicated that salespeople are currently assigned to more accounts, larger territories, and assume an increasingly higher number of administrative responsibilities which has led to increased emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction within the salesforce (Boles, et. al 1997; Wilson, 1997). The burdens of continuous travel requirements, unexpected client meetings, and consistent pressures to meet sales quotas have considerable implications for salespeoples' non-work life roles. Proponents of identity theory would argue that salespeople who are dispossessed of their social lives due to increasingly time consuming job requirements may perceive a sense of incongruence, or lack of fit, with organizational expectations.

Salespeople who are deprived of ample non-work time due to highly demanding work schedules may resort to 'cutting corners' through deviant behavior such as unexcused absenteeism, deceptive closing techniques, or deferring undesirable customers to co-workers in order to balance this discrepancy. These behaviors would not necessarily be directed towards any single component of the work dimension (i.e. organization, coworkers, customers), since work related strains on non-work time may cause reactive behaviors indiscriminately directed at all dimensions of the workplace.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is the most widely studied variable in organizational research because of its well documented impact on various employee outcomes; most notably performance (Spector 1997). The study of job satisfaction as a work outcome has been covered extensively in sales literature as a key determinant of overall salesperson success (Churchill, Ford, and Walker, 1974; Churchill, et. al, 1976; Walker, et. al 1977; Churchill, Ford, Hartley, and Walker, 1985). From an intuitive standpoint, one can

assume that salespeople who are satisfied with their jobs will likely experience less friction in associations with their organization, fellow salespeople, and customers since job satisfaction is a composite measure of overall work satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences.” (Locke, 1976; p. 1300). Studies have shown that greater job satisfaction is significantly associated with shared values among the workforce and higher pay (Brown and Peterson, 1993). Cohesively integrated person-organization value systems translate into a sense of belonging for employees which has a positive effect on overall satisfaction.

Some studies demonstrate that employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs are more likely to engage in organizational deviance behaviors that affect an individual’s performance or undermine organizational effectiveness (Lau, et. al 2003). According to the authors, examples of counterproductive behavior would include stealing, production deviance, and absence from work. Other research emphasizing the effects of social bonding suggests that employees who experience higher job satisfaction are less likely to engage in unethical behavior within their organizations due to an implicit relationship based on mutual reciprocity (Sims, 2002). If employees perceive their jobs in a positive light, they are less likely to engage in questionable activities that may jeopardize future employment. On the other hand, employees that harbor negative perceptions of their organizations tend to reciprocate this negativity through interpersonal deviance and withholding effort on the job (Colbert, et. al 2004). From an intuitive standpoint, it may be expected that employees would counteract negative experiences at work by violating organizational norms of conduct, but these studies suggest that dissatisfied employees do

not limit retaliatory behaviors to the source of dissatisfaction since coworkers are also likely targets. In support of this claim, studies on workplace dissimilarity indicate that employees may not clearly differentiate between engaging in organizational or interpersonal deviance since coworkers are considered agents of the organization and thus, legitimate targets for retaliation (Liao, et. al 2004).

Previous research on the effects of organizational climate on industrial salespeople indicated that salespeople with lower job satisfaction ratings were more likely to report higher rates of absenteeism (Churchill, Ford, and Walker, 1976). Generally, research suggests that organizational deviance behaviors such as absenteeism are related to organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction. This claim has been supported through subsequent research which suggests that dissatisfaction is also a significant predictor of employee theft (Bolin and Heatherly, 2001). In this case, deviance may be a vengeful or reactive behavior employed to restore equity through 'getting even'. Depending upon the cause of this dissatisfaction (i.e. organizational policies, coworkers, customers), the employee may be more likely to direct his/her deviant behavior at the source of the problem. For example, a restaurant waitress who is mistreated by a restaurant patron may decide to retaliate by sabotaging the patron's meal in some way. It is more conceivable that the waitress' dissatisfaction with the patron's rudeness would be reflected by singling him/her out in retaliation instead of seeking retribution on the entire party. Consistent with this notion, frontline employees tend to reciprocate negative customer behavior which often translates into service sabotage (Reynolds and Harris, 2006; Browning, 2008). The authors argue that immediate revenge is taken by employees immediately following customer misconduct, while cold

revenge is delayed until considerable deliberation is undergone to ensure that an optimal level of vengeance is achieved. Obviously, cold revenge has higher destructive potential since considerable time and effort are invested in planning and enforcing acts of reprisal.

An examination into the effects of perceptions of the work environment on workplace deviance indicates that employees with positive perceptions of their work environment report lower levels of workplace deviance (Colbert, et. al 2004). Plausibly, employees who are dissatisfied with their organizations tend to engage in more retaliatory behaviors than those who are satisfied at their workplace. Behavioral reactions to organizational frustrations and job dissatisfaction include organizational and interpersonal aggression as well as increased absenteeism (Fox and Spector, 1999). In other words, employees who are dissatisfied with their individual jobs are likely to react by targeting the organization itself as well as affiliated constituents such as co-workers.

### **Performance**

Job performance refers to measurable behaviors and outcomes that employees engage in which are linked with and contribute to organizational goals (Viswesvaran and Ones, 2000). Exceeding sales performance expectations is one of the primary objectives in the career of a successful salesperson and one of the most widely researched topics in the field of marketing due to its direct effect on salesperson satisfaction (Bagozzi, 1980; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Ahearne, 1998). For this reason, substantial research has focused on the determinants of salesperson performance and job satisfaction (Churchill, Ford, and Walker, 1974; Churchill, et. al, 1976; Walker, et. al 1977; Churchill, Ford, Hartley, and Walker, 1985).

There has been considerable debate in the sales literature regarding the causality sequence between performance and job satisfaction. Some argue that salesperson performance precedes satisfaction (MacKenzie, et. al 1998), while others contend that satisfied salespeople reflect their satisfaction through increased sales and productivity (Podsakoff and Williams, 1986). It should be noted that although the majority of sales research points towards sales performance as the primary predictor of job satisfaction, substantial meta-analytic evidence suggests that the correlations between performance and job satisfaction are, in fact, illusory since performance is an end in itself and the two constructs are not causally related (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Ramaswami and Singh, 2003).

Among the multiple antecedents of sales performance outlined by researchers over the years, self esteem has been shown to have a direct impact on individual performance (Bagozzi, 1980). Salespeople who are high performers tend to be highly motivated and exhibit stronger self confidence in their pursuit of potential clients. Interestingly, recent research has revealed that frontline employees who engage in service sabotage, or behaviors that consciously harm customer service, do so to increase their self esteem through a sense of accomplishment (Harris and Ogbonna, 2006). Employees who do not fit within their respective organizations may attribute low self esteem to the experienced incongruence, and may attempt to resolve this problem through the contradiction of organizational norms of conduct. This view has been supported by researchers who claim that employees sometimes engage in deviant behavior for functional reasons; namely to maintain their sense of self respect and autonomy or as a reactance to lack of control (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007). Attempts to enhance self

esteem and autonomy through deviant behavior may also have negative effects on individual performance.

Alternatively, many researchers suggest that deviant behavior is linked to detrimental effects on overall performance. Generally, organizational norms are developed to facilitate and support both short and long term goals of a firm which means that anti-normative behaviors such as deviance usually undermine employee performance. An examination into the effects of 'anti-citizenship behaviors' of salespeople revealed that when customers sense an incongruence between organizational standards and salesperson behavior, suspicions may arise which will have deleterious impacts on the trust and commitment in a relationship (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2006). The undeniable importance of trust and commitment in developing sustainable, long term competitive advantages through a loyal customer base is well documented (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh, 1987; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Salespeople who demonstrate the ability to earn the trust of customers through consistently efficient service and delivery are likely to build a committed customer base which translates into positive long term performance outcomes.

An investigation of frontline employees found a significantly negative association between workplace deviant behaviors and business unit performance (Dunlop and Lee, 2004). Interestingly, business unit performance was measured both subjectively (i.e. individual ratings) and objectively (i.e. supervisory ratings), indicating a strong negative relationship in both dimensions. Success in the service industry is based heavily on synergetic, task-related performance which can be significantly disrupted by organizational, interpersonal, and customer-directed deviance. For example, the



prevalence of company theft, work group dysfunctionality, or customer deception in a service based company has the potential to cause serious internal and external damage to the organization through financial losses and poor customer service.

### **Organizational Commitment**

The antecedents and consequences of salesperson organizational commitment, or the psychological attachment of salespeople to their organizations, has been the focus of numerous studies (Hunt, Wood, Chonko, 1989; Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell, and Black, 1990; Schwepker, 2001). Due to their boundary spanning positions and lack of regular physical proximity to the organization, investigations into the attachment of salespeople to their organizations has been quite intriguing. Organizational commitment exists when employees readily identify with their organizations and exert their utmost efforts to achieve organizational goals (Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian, 1974). Based on the definition, the consequential effects of organizational commitment are inherently beneficial and include increased employee performance and satisfaction as well as lower employee turnover rates. Alternatively, research suggests that lower levels of organizational commitment may actually lead to dysfunctional outcomes (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). That is, the behaviors of employees who are psychologically detached from the organization may be dangerously unconstrained.

There are three factors which influence the organizational commitment process: personal influences, non-organizational influences, and organizational influences (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982). Personal influences are stable characteristics which can be demographic in nature such as age or education or general predispositions associated with the job such as job expectations. Non-organizational influences consist

of external factors which may have an effect on attachment to an organization such as the degree of job embeddedness, alternative employment opportunities or financial pressures. Organizational influences, on the other hand, are generated from within the organization which may include characteristics of the job, compensation, organizational policies and procedures, etc. (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982). Prior research indicates that organizational influences play a crucial role in the assessment of organizational commitment (Morris and Koch, 1979; Johnston, et. al 1990). The current study investigates the effects of salesperson-organization fit on deviance and subsequent work outcomes. Hence, of these three factors, the primary focus will be on organizational influences.

Meta-analytic evidence suggests that salesperson commitment is directly influenced by performance and satisfaction and propensity to leave an organization is determined by a salesperson's level of organizational commitment (Brown and Peterson, 1993). Both performance and satisfaction were positively related to organizational commitment while a negative relationship was suggested between commitment and propensity to leave. That is, salespeople who are high performers tend to be more satisfied with their jobs and are likely to remain with the organization. The causal influence of performance on organizational commitment was further supported by Mackenzie and colleagues (1998) who found that exceptional salespeople that are compensated with proportionally higher rewards than their co-workers have financial incentives for remaining with their organizations.

## Turnover Intentions

The turnover intentions of salespeople, or plans to permanently withdraw from an organization, are significant predictors of actual turnover (Johnston, et. al 1990). Due to discrepancies in job expectations, many newly employed salespeople do not comprehend the demanding job requirements of a boundary spanning position, which may be a reason why the sales industry suffers from such high attrition rates. Most person organization fit studies incorporating the attraction-selection-attrition model have predicted that congruence with an individual's organization is related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction; which in turn predict turnover (O'Reilly, et. al 1991). That is, employees with higher levels of continuance commitment will likely remain with their organizations unless the withdrawal is externally imposed.

Along with organizational commitment, job satisfaction has also been posited as a predictor of salesperson turnover intentions (Good, et. al 1988; Johnston, et. al 1990; Boles, et. al 1997; Mulki, et. al 2006; Jaramillo, et. al 2006). The authors contend that the role instability of a sales position has a deleterious impact on job satisfaction which contributes to higher propensity to leave the organization. A meta-analysis conducted by Brown and Peterson (1993), found that organizational commitment plays a mediating role between performance and satisfaction on one end, and propensity to leave on the other. That is, salespeople who were high performers and more satisfied with their jobs were less likely to leave their organization. The intermediary effect of organizational commitment was also proposed by Mackenzie, et. al (1998) who argue that dichotomizing performance into in-role and extra-role behaviors provides a more robust assessment of turnover. The authors contend that in-role performance, or expected sales

role behavior, is an antecedent of organizational commitment, while extra-role performance is directly related to actual turnover.

Similarly, another meta-analytic study suggests that employees who are satisfied with compensation levels which are tied to performance are less likely to consider permanent or temporary withdrawal strategies (Williams, et. al 2006). Although the majority of studies investigating associations between performance and salesforce turnover have suggested a direct relationship, some researchers posit that performance may assume a moderating role on the job satisfaction-turnover relationship (Futrell and Parasuraman, 1984). That is, job satisfaction becomes a more salient determinant of turnover intentions when the salesperson is a low performer than when he/she is a high performer. For successful salespeople, the monetary rewards of remaining with the organization outweigh the negative effects of job dissatisfaction.

### **Life Satisfaction**

Life satisfaction refers to an intrinsic assessment of a person's overall contentment with his/her quality of life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin, 1985). That is, life satisfaction is the ultimate measure of individual satisfaction since all other facets of satisfaction (i.e. job satisfaction, non-work satisfaction, etc.) are subsumed within life satisfaction. Researchers have primarily adopted one of two modeling approaches with regard to the effects of job and life satisfaction. Most research, including this dissertation, considers life satisfaction as an outcome variable and incorporates job satisfaction as a causal antecedent (Babin and Boles, 1998; Judge, Locke, Durham, Kluger, 1998; Rode, 2004). Intuitively, the influence flows from distinctively specific facets like work outwardly to more general facets with life

satisfaction being perhaps the most general. The logic is the basis for the 'bottom-up perspective' which posits that causal influence lies with job satisfaction since life satisfaction is composed of job satisfaction (Andrews and Withey, 1976). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are likely to be more satisfied with their lives since work is an integral component of one's life.

Alternatively, the top-down approach suggests that dispositional factors (e.g. positive/negative affect) associated with one's outlook on life affect the degree of job satisfaction achieved (Judge and Watanabe, 1993). That is, if a salesperson is dissatisfied with his/her personal life for any reason, this intrinsically driven dissatisfaction will be externally reflected through his/her workplace attitudes. Life satisfaction has also been associated with fluctuations in salesperson work productivity ratings as well as absenteeism (Kantak, Futrell, and Sager, 1992). Salespeople who consistently engage in anti-normative behaviors such as coercive sales tactics tend to experience relatively higher stress levels which inevitably affect satisfaction with life (McFarland, 2004). This finding is reinforced by others who argue that employees who engage in confrontive coping behaviors such as deviance have significantly higher levels of distress and anxiety (Penley, et. al 2002).

### **Research Questions**

It is no surprise that the interactions between personal and organizational values play an integral role in both perceived and actual fit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson 2005). As compared to traditional employees, the significance of salesperson values congruence is more pronounced since salespeople serve as external representatives of an organization. The potential repercussions of stress incurred due to value system

incompatibilities may be all encompassing from an organizational standpoint since salespeople not only possess the ability to harm the organization from within (e.g. vandalism, company theft, coworker abuse), but they can also tarnish a company's image externally through anti-normative behaviors directed at customers (e.g. coercive selling, deception, etc.). Research indicates that increased divergence in value systems among employees leads to heightened levels of organizational deviance, which, if not addressed promptly, may become an irreversible subculture within an organization (Liao, Joshi, and Chuang, 2004).

Dissimilarity in value systems also has detrimental effects on workforce cohesion since employees who do not fit in with an organization reflect their incongruence through a lack of cooperation with coworkers (Chatman and Barsade, 1995). From a sales perspective, the negative effects of a lack of cooperation in the sales force may lead to more serious acts of retribution. For example, if salespeople collectively abstain from the synergetic sharing of customer information, and the sub-norms of an organization become individualistic in nature; the likelihood that salespeople would consider harming coworkers to help themselves through behaviors such as territory infringement drastically increases. Although the majority of deviance research has overlooked the effects of anti-normative behaviors aimed at customers, it is very likely that customers are also a legitimate target of salespeople experiencing a lack of fit with organizational values. Salespeople who have incompatible value systems may redirect their frustrations on the primary lifeline for organizational success, i.e., customers (Kraimer, 1997). It may be counterintuitive to assume that salespeople would advantageously attack their customers who are a major determinant of long term success in the sales industry. However,

salespeople whose values and beliefs do not match their organizations tend to seek alternative employment opportunities indicated by increased turnover and attrition (Schneider, 1987). Engagement in deviance is not necessarily limited to salespeople who have inferior value systems relative to the organization. A salesperson may innately perceive that he/she 'walks a higher road' than their organization with regard to their principles and ideals, however, perceptions of morality and values can be highly relativistic in nature (Rokeach, 1973). Though salespeople may view themselves as morally upright, differences in organizational and subculture (sales) norms may create a sense of moral leniency in breaking organizational norms (Adkins and Caldwell, 2004). Incongruent salespeople who are looking for an exit strategy from an organization are not focused on long term relationships and may be more inclined to adopt short term capitalization strategies through opportunistically-driven customer relationships.

*Hypothesis 1: Salesperson value congruence is negatively related to salesperson deviance.*

A multitude of compensation packages are employed by organizations with the primary objective of motivating salesperson performance. However, the search for an optimal pay structure for salespeople has sparked considerable debate among marketing researchers and practitioners (Cravens, et. al 1993; Robertson and Anderson, 1993). Advocates of behavioral based pay structures propose that compensation methods with consistent salary payments emphasize stability and promote organizational commitment and satisfaction (Oliver and Anderson, 1994). Alternatively, compensation packages which are performance oriented tend to encourage individual productivity and discourage engagement in stagnant strategies by de-emphasizing reliance on salary payments

(Cravens, et. al 1993). However, these studies do not account for differences in salesperson preferences with regard to compensation. A 'one size fits all' approach to salesperson motivation may not be an ideal strategy for managers hoping to maximize performance. Consistent with prior research, this dissertation assumes that salespeople are disparate in their pay structure preferences, and the ideal payment system is contingent upon the personal characteristics and inclinations of salespeople (Coughlan and Sen, 1989).

An effective, competent, confident salesperson characterized by risk taking may relish the notion of a direct relationship between productivity and compensation. In this case, an organization which enforces an outcome based compensation system would converge with salesperson performance aspirations creating limitless possibilities for financial success. However, if the salesperson is employed by an organization with a behavioral based payment system, perceptions of incongruence may induce feelings of resentment towards the organization resulting in substantial increases in dysfunctional behaviors (Ramaswami, Srinivasan, and Gorton, 1997).

On the other hand, competent, behaviorally-inclined salespeople employed by outcome driven organizations who are dissatisfied with their level of pay may attribute their dissatisfaction to the compensation structure of the organization rather than to their own deficiencies as salespeople. The pressure to exceed, or at least, meet sales expectations is logically much higher for salespeople whose compensation is based in large part on their performance, and these pressures may also encourage deviant or counterproductive behavior to meet sales quotas. Therefore, I propose:



*Hypothesis 2: Salesperson pay structure fit is negatively related to salesperson deviance.*

Role expectations for salespeople have witnessed a dramatic increase with regard to administrative responsibilities and sales territories, and the balance of these demands with social and leisure obligations poses a potentially stressful situation (Wilson, 1997). It can be argued that all jobs require employees to balance the demands of work and non-work, however, the unique position of salespeople as boundary spanners of their organizations implies a heightened sense of fragility in balancing the stress associated with role equilibrium since organizational image is at stake. Elevated stress levels incurred by work non-work conflict have been associated with increased employee deviance as a reaction to perceived organizational injustice (Jackson and Schuler, 1985). Sales organizations with stringent time constraints and expectations may aggravate an already stressful situation when its salespeople have conflicting beliefs about extracurricular leniency.

Salespeople joining organizations with demanding role expectations will likely suffer from substantial exhaustion and dissatisfaction (Boles, Johnston, and Hair, 1997). Frustrated salespeople who attribute their dissatisfaction to organizational standards and expectations are likely to retaliate against the source of the problem which, in this case, is not limited to the organization itself (Martinko, Gundlach, and Douglas, 2002). Equally, a bored salesperson with an inclination for heavier and more challenging workloads may also feel a lack of fit. According to these authors, all constituents and agents of an organization, which include fellow employees and customers, would become legitimate targets for retaliation.

*Hypothesis 3: Salesperson role fit is negatively related to salesperson deviance.*

Due to significant financial constraints, many organizations are unable to implement intensive background checks for newly hired salespeople in the recruitment process (Wilson, 1997; Boles, et. al 1997). According to the authors, frontline salespeople who are required to engage in daily interactions with customers encounter substantial role stress which may have detrimental effects on job satisfaction. It is expected that many new sales recruits undoubtedly realize that they are not ideal candidates for a frontline sales position due to incompatibilities with organizational and/or industry expectations. Research indicates that the predominant reaction for these salespeople would be to leave the organization and search for alternative forms of employment (Schneider, 1987). However, dissatisfied salespeople who are embedded within an organization due to family obligations or a lack of employment options may decide to remain within an organization until an acceptable alternative presents itself. Research indicates that behavioral reactions to job dissatisfaction include organizational and interpersonal aggression (Fox and Spector, 1999).

From the perspective of a dissatisfied salesperson, short term incentives become a primary motivator of deviant activity since the deterrent effects of mutual reciprocity concerns are minimized due to perceived inequity. A salesperson who feels that he/she has been mistreated by an organization is generally not innately constrained to meet organizational expectations for employee behavior. Conversely, studies suggest that a satisfied workforce tends to develop shared values which may discourage interpersonal acts of deviance (Brown and Peterson, 1993). It is the viewpoint of this dissertation that dissatisfied salespeople pose an imminent threat to the success of an organization due to

an infinite array of behavioral reactions which can display their dissatisfaction not only to the organization, but to its various constituents.

*Hypothesis 4: Salesperson job satisfaction is negatively related to salesperson deviance.*

Assessments of salesperson performance have tremendous financial implications for sales managers, and for this reason, have been subject to extensive investigation from researchers (Churchill, Ford, Hartley, and Walker, 1985). Although success in the sales industry is not gauged solely through sales margins, the relative complexity of capturing the development and maintenance of customer relationships over time has led to the adoption of individual sales figures as a reflection of sales performance. As discussed earlier, these figures also serve as significant compensation determinants for organizations employing outcome based or combination pay systems. Indeed, the opportunities and financial incentives to engage in counter-normative behaviors in hopes of achieving higher performance levels are staggering.

Improvements in individual performance by engagement in salesperson deviance may have a corrosive effect on long term organizational performance due to significant reductions in customer loyalty (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2005). Customers consistently subjected to salesperson deviance will likely search for alternative organizations to satisfy their needs. This finding has been supported by research which claims that organizations with frontline employees who engage in deviant workplace behaviors tend to experience significant reductions in business unit performance (Dunlop and Lee, 2004). Therefore, although employees may be engaging in deviance behaviors in an attempt to boost sales figures, these behaviors are, in reality, harming performance

ratings. I propose that salesperson deviance negatively influences salesperson performance.

*Hypothesis 5: Salesperson deviance is negatively related to performance.*

Sales researchers who investigate organizational commitment as a focal construct tend to include two related antecedents in the model of analysis: job satisfaction and performance (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Mackenzie, et. al 1998). The underlying performance logic is that salespeople who are exceptional performers will likely reap the financial benefits of sales success which will translate into greater attachment to the organization. Salespeople who outperform their coworkers are recognized and rewarded by their organizations, and these rewards enhance organizational commitment (Mackenzie, et. al 1998). On the other hand, below average sales performers may encounter pressures to exit the organization since replacing these salespeople may be an effective strategy to increase sales. However, job tenure stability is not the only effect associated with organizational commitment. Employees who are committed also tend to identify with their organization and behave in a manner that is consistent with its interests and expectations (Hunt, et. al 1989). As mentioned earlier, salespeople who engage in anti-normative behaviors such as territory infringement, deceptive selling techniques, or puffery of products/services tend to witness detrimental effects on performance figures. If a positive relationship exists between performance and organizational commitment, an investigation into the means by which performance is attained deserves the attention of researchers.

Deviant salespeople whose contra-normative behaviors are not financially rewarding will likely reassess their approach since the risks of engaging in these

behaviors far outweigh the benefits. If salesperson deviance leads to negative effects on performance, and poor performers experience a detachment from their organizations, performance should play an intermediary role in the relationship between salesperson deviance and organizational commitment. Although the primary objective of salesperson deviance may not be financially driven (i.e. relieving stress); subsequent negative effects on performance may serve as an added incentive to regress to organizational norms.

*Hypothesis 6. Salesperson performance will play a mediating role between salesperson deviance and organizational commitment.*

Sunk costs incurred by organizations suffering from salesperson attrition are extremely relevant from a practical sense. Most organizations tend to enroll their salespeople in expensive training programs and/or seminars. Losing these salespeople after extensive sales training and preparation does not only constitute an unfruitful investment, but these salespeople will likely join competitors who will utilize the knowledge and skills developed by their former employers. For this reason, sales managers attempt to implement supportive policies and procedures which are intended to boost salespersons' organizational commitment and job satisfaction levels.

The majority of sales research examining turnover intentions suggests that organizational commitment significantly explains a salesperson's propensity to leave (Johnston, et. al 1990; Mulki, et. al 2006). It is expected that salespeople who identify and feel a sense of attachment with their organizations will be less likely to withdraw from their jobs. On the other hand, salespeople who are psychologically detached from an organization's goals and values will likely be filtered out through the attrition process. It should be the objective of managers to instill a sense of commitment in productive

salespeople and weed out uncommitted, and potentially deviant counterparts in order to ensure a cohesive salesforce. There has been considerable debate concerning the direction of causality with a few of the studied constructs, namely, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. In accordance with previous research, this dissertation will follow the consensus of the marketing community in assessing these variables as endogenous constructs (Jaramillo, et. al 2006; Boles, et. al 1997; Brown and Peterson, 1993; Good, et. al 1988).

*Hypothesis 7. Salesperson organizational commitment is negatively related to turnover intentions.*

A salesperson's life satisfaction is an intrinsic assessment of overall contentment with his/her quality of life. The relationship between salesperson performance and life satisfaction should be positive since performance is considered a reflection of success in the organization or the sales industry as a whole. Exceptional salespeople who perform well tend to exhibit higher self esteem levels; and this confidence has a positive influence on core self evaluations and life satisfaction (Judge, et. al 1998). However, since life satisfaction is an intrinsic appraisal of one's quality of life, what if a salesperson has attained this "success" at the cost of deviating from organizational norms?

Research indicates that employee deviance has potentially beneficial effects on individual performance (Robinson and Greenberg, 1998). Successful salespeople may privately attribute their exceptional performance levels to anti-normative behaviors. In accordance with the adage, "money cannot buy happiness", although sales managers and co-workers may applaud performance achievements, an internal conflict will likely ensue within the salesperson if he/she feels that the means used to achieve sales success were

not acceptable. The stress associated with feelings of self rejection and guilt may negatively affect personal well being and life satisfaction (Kaplan and Peck, 1992; Penley, et. al 2002; Fugate, et. al 2008).

*Hypothesis 8. Salesperson performance will mediate the relationship between salesperson deviance and life satisfaction.*

As mentioned previously, confrontive coping strategies (of which deviance is a subcategory) have been characterized as having a certain degree of risk proclivity. An employee who engages in extreme anti-normative behaviors is, in fact, jeopardizing his/her position within an organization. Organizational norms are implemented and enforced by management and organization-wide compliance is expected. Employees who habitually disregard these norms and engage in deviance will likely be ostracized or terminated to avoid contamination of the organizational culture.

Therefore, engagement in anti-normative behaviors entails a certain degree of risk taking as far as job security is concerned. If the salesperson is caught engaging in an extreme form of deviance such as serious company theft, it is likely that he/she will immediately lose their job. However, consistent engagement in less serious acts of deviance such as constant absenteeism may also constitute grounds for dismissal from the organization. Prior research has shown that individuals who are highly risk averse have a tendency to behave in a manner that exhibits extreme caution, while those with a proclivity for risk tend to be reckless in their behavior (Griffin, Babin, and Attaway, 1993). The social and financial risk of being caught engaging in counter-normative behaviors is a 'societal control' which limits the prevalence of these activities (Short, 1984). A risk-averse salesperson experiencing a lack of organizational fit may be tempted

to retaliate against the organization by engaging in anti-normative behavior, however, his/her actions may be constrained due to fears of termination. On the other hand, a risk-taking salesperson would not fully weigh the advantages and disadvantages a priori, but would seek immediate retribution. See Figure 2.2 for the hypothesized model.

*Hypothesis 9. Salespeople experiencing a lack of fit with their organizations will be less (more) likely to engage in salesperson deviance when their level of risk aversion is high (low).*

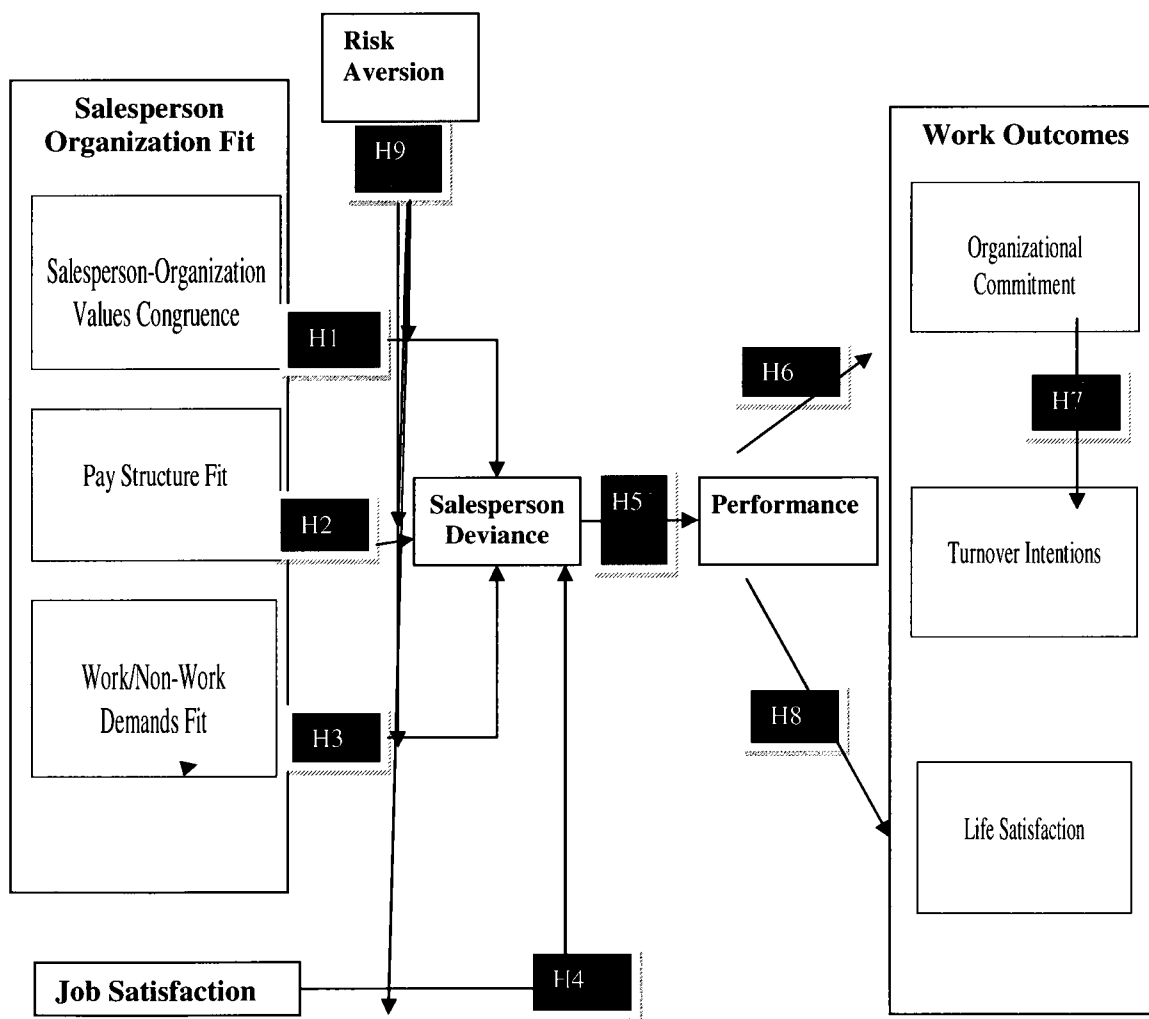


Figure 2.2. Hypothesized Model



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

The objective of this chapter is to provide an outline of the research method employed in this dissertation. This will include an overview of the sample, research design, measurement instruments, and the construct validation approach which will be utilized. Next, I will address the standards used in the development and/or adaptation of novel measurement instruments. Finally, the criteria which will be used for analysis of both measurement and structural models will be discussed.

#### **Sampling Procedure and Data Collection**

The data will consist of a nation-wide sample of industrial salespeople collected electronically through a national consumer panel of pre-screened pre-qualified volunteers who participate using services provided by an electronic survey company. Respondent anonymity is ensured because the electronic surveys are collected by the service provider and input data are made available to researchers on a website without any opportunity to identify individual participants. In a study which solicits information concerning engagement in socially unacceptable behaviors such as this one, assurance of respondent confidentiality is crucial.

The inherent lack of industry specificity in the respondent base increases optimism in the generalizability of results. Using online panel data has both advantages and disadvantages. Disadvantages include a higher dropout rate than among conventional methods (Birnbaum 2004) and a restriction to users who have access to the internet (which has become less of a concern as internet usage has become widespread). Advantages include access to a large national sample, clean data (that has been entered directly by respondents without researcher coding errors), and access to a specialized group of respondents (Birnbaum 2004) such as industrial salespeople. Finally, recent high quality business journals have become replete with online panel data (e.g. Dreze and Zufryden 2004; Johnson et al. 2004; Punj 2006). There has been considerable debate among researchers regarding the effectiveness of online data collection techniques. However, empirical research of online vs. paper and pencil data collection techniques indicates that both techniques result in similar covariance structures (Stanton, 1998).

### **Independent Variables**

The research involves standard survey methodology commonly applied in marketing research. Multiple item scales are used to assess constructs. These constructs are then formulated into models by applying first a measurement theory, indicating how each construct is assessed, and second, a structural theory indicating how constructs are intertwined.

*Salesperson-Organization Values Congruence:* Salesperson values congruence will be measured by the four-item, seven-point Likert rating scale developed by Netemeyer, et. al (1997). This scale was chosen based on demonstrated reliability ratings and industry relevance.

*Pay Structure Fit:* Pay structure congruence will consist of five items derived from Carraher, Mulvey, Scarpello, and Ash's (2004) pay satisfaction questionnaire. That is, the seven-point Likert rating instrument will be altered to reflect salesperson congruence with an organization's pay structure. Salesperson panel feedback will be used to determine the wording of scale items based on compensation predispositions and industry trends.

*Work/Non-Work Demands Fit:* An abundance of studies incorporating work/non-work conflict in the literature simplifies the task of scale adaptation from a sales perspective. After a thorough examination of existing scales, the measure chosen consists of five items from Burke, Weir and Dowors' (1979) study adapted to a work/non-work fit setting. The use of salesperson panel feedback from various industries will serve as a tool in the development of a generalizable measurement instrument incorporating typical work/non-work obligations which attract or repel salespeople from an organization.

*Job Satisfaction:* Job satisfaction will be captured by a nine item, five-point Likert rating scale developed by Babin and Boles (1998). The scale was chosen based on demonstrated reliability and validity ratings.

*Risk Aversion:* Risk aversion will be measured using the five item, five-point Likert rating scale developed by Griffin, Babin, and Attaway (1993).

### **Dependent Variables**

*Organizational and Interpersonal Deviance:* The salesperson deviance constructs used in this study will be adapted from the workplace deviance scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000), however, a projective technique will be utilized to

minimize respondent bias. Also, general employee-driven items will be either replaced or adapted with items that are more appropriate from a personal selling perspective. For example, the original organizational deviance item, “I have dragged out work in order to get overtime,” would be adapted to “My colleagues have ‘worked from home’ but did not do much work at all.” Interpersonal deviance will be measured with an eight item, seven-point Likert rating scale from Bennett & Robinson’s (2000) original scale which are relevant to salespeople. The deviance items will be measured based on the frequency of engagement in the behaviors with the following anchors: “Never,” “Once a year,” “Twice a year,” “Several times a year,” “Monthly,” “Weekly,” and “Daily.” All items will utilize a Likert-based response format.

*Customer-Directed Deviance:* A primary contribution of this study is the introduction and validation of customer-directed deviance to the sales literature. Therefore, a rigorous process of scale item adaptation and development will be undertaken in order to ensure appropriate behaviors are included based on relevant salesperson deviance behaviors. Items related to the customer-directed deviance scale are generated from a large inclusive pool of examples of deviant behavior. Examples of salesperson deviant behavior directed at customers will be generated in part from the literature (e.g., Bennett and Robinson, 2000, Dabholkar and Kellaris 1992; Dubinsky and Ingram 1984; Jelinek and Ahearne 2006; Trawick and Swan 1988), as well as from a panel of salespeople from various industries who provided feedback on prevalent deviant behaviors directed towards customers.

*Organizational Commitment:* Organizational commitment will be captured using the nine-item scale developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). Extensive research suggests exceptional validity and reliability ratings for this measure.

*Salesperson Performance:* This construct will be measured using an existing five-item, seven-point Likert rating scale which addresses various dimensions of sales success which include meeting and/or exceeding sales objectives, generation of new customer sales, and sales comparisons with fellow coworkers (Silver, Dwyer, and Alford, 2006). The performance self rating approach is widely used and accepted in marketing in the measurement of salesperson performance and has demonstrated reliable results (Behrman and Perreault, 1982; Churchill, et. al 1985). Though there has been some debate among researchers regarding the validity of using self-report measures of workplace deviance to predict performance, research suggests that self-reports of workplace deviance significantly correlate with supervisor ratings of job performance (Mount, Johnson, Ilies, and Barrick, 2002).

*Turnover Intentions:* Intentions to quit will be measured by a three-item, seven-point Likert rating scale developed by Tepper, Carr, Breaux, Geider, Hu, and Hua (2009). This measure differs from related instruments used to capture turnover intentions in that it is representative of a culmination of the turnover decision process. An undiluted measure of salesperson turnover intentions is critical since other instruments may measure unrelated withdrawal cognitions such as intentions to search for alternative employment opportunities.

*Life Satisfaction:* Life satisfaction will be captured using the five-item, seven-point Likert rating scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin, (1985).

### Control Variables

Job embeddedness (the extent of immersion in one's job and inability to leave due to familial, community or other complications) may affect whether or not salespeople engage in deviance. Employees who are highly embedded are less likely to engage in behaviors that may jeopardize their tenure with an organization (Mitchell, Holtom, and Lee, 2001).

Job embeddedness will be captured by a seven item measure developed by Crossley, Jex, Bennett, and Bumfield (2007). The measure has demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity ratings. Lastly, positive and negative affectivity will be assessed using the twenty-item PANAS scale developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988).

### Measurement Model

Measurement and structural analysis for this study will utilize the two-step analytical procedure (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). In other words, the examined constructs will be assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ensure that the specified factors derived through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) adequately match the dataset. In order to ensure an accurate measurement model and proceed to structural analysis, the data set must first qualify by meeting certain measurement criteria. These factors consist of multivariate normality, internal consistency and dimensionality, and construct validity.

*Multivariate Normality:* Multivariate normality is an overall normality assessment of both independent and dependent variables included in a model. Departures from normality may undermine the quality of model estimations; therefore, graphical and

statistical multivariate normality tests will be conducted prior to confirmatory factor analysis to ensure the adequacy of the data set for measurement.

*Dimensionality:* Overall fit of the measurement model will be assessed by evaluating the fit statistics. A number of fit statistics abound in structural equation modeling. Since a one-size fits all approach is not appropriate for an adequate measure of fit, an evaluation of both absolute and incremental fit statistics will be employed in this study (Hair, et. al 2006). The absolute fit statistics will include chi-square and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values. Non-significant chi-square values are acceptable since this signifies that differences between observed and input covariance matrices are due only to sampling variations in maximum likelihood estimation and RMSEA values within .08 indicate an acceptable model fit (Hair, et. al 2006). Other measures which will be evaluated include individual item loadings, composite reliabilities, variance extracted for individual constructs and an assessment of residuals. The incremental fit statistic used in this study is the comparative fit index (CFI) which compensates for sample size effects. Research indicates that a value of .90 for CFI estimates is an acceptable cutoff (Hair, et. al 2006).

Individual item loadings will be evaluated separately on their respective constructs, and lambda loadings below 0.7 will be eliminated (Netemeyer, Burton, and Lichtenstein, 1995). Statistical significance of estimates will be assessed by an evaluation of T-values for the non-standardized loadings, while squared standardized loadings which do not meet the cutoff value of 0.6 will be deleted (Netemeyer et al., 1995). Results from confirmatory factor analysis will be used to calculate composite

reliability scores ( $>.70$ ) and variance extracted estimates ( $>.50$ ) (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Gerbing and Anderson, 1988).

### Construct Validation

Due to the relative novelty of numerous constructs examined in the current study, a thorough assessment of construct validity is a crucial prerequisite for an effective analysis. Initially, convergent validity will be investigated by measuring the average variance extracted for the studied constructs to ensure all constructs meet the acceptable cutoff value of .50 (Hair, et. al 2006). Measuring internal consistency through reliability estimates is a less stringent procedure for assessing convergent validity. For this reason, all constructs will be evaluated to ensure that all scales meet the cutoff value of .70 for acceptability from a basic research standpoint (Nunnally, 1978).

Discriminant validity is an assessment of the degree to which a construct is distinctly unique from other constructs. Initial exploratory factor analysis procedures will be conducted to eliminate items which cross load on multiple constructs. However, in order to gain a more robust evaluation of discriminant validity, researchers should compare the variance-extracted percentages for any two constructs with the square of the correlation estimate between the two constructs (Hair, et. al 2006). Constructs with variance extracted estimates which are lower than the squared correlation estimate indicate discriminant validity deficiencies. Nomological validity requirements will be maintained by ensuring that all significant inter-construct correlations are appropriately associated according to the underlying theory.



## Structural Model

Although confirmatory factor analysis and structural equations modeling are the primary statistical tools of analysis in this study, exploratory factor analysis will be conducted due to the relative novelty of the salesperson deviance and salesperson-organization fit constructs. Recent research indicates that the practice of ignoring exploratory factor analysis procedures and proceeding directly to confirmatory factor analysis may lead to “the development of non-parsimonious theories based on superfluous constructs” (Patil, Singh, Mishra, and Donovan, 2008). Inter-correlations between the three dimensions of salesperson deviance will be evaluated and a principal components factor analysis conducted to ensure that all related items load exclusively on a single factor. The second step of the procedure will consist of an examination of the proposed hypotheses through structural equations modeling (SEM) in Amos 17.0.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Sampling Procedure and Data Collection**

Before the formal commencement of data collection, two separate pilot studies were conducted in order to assess the overall acceptability of the measures to be used. The first pilot study consisted of 48 undergraduate students from a junior level marketing course. After careful analysis of results and student comments, the wording of a few items was adapted in order to improve the readability of the survey. A second pilot study was then conducted on 20 industrial salespeople from a local branch of an international sales firm. There were no major issues encountered with analyses of the second pilot study, and initial results indicated a satisfactory model.

The final sample consists of 408 non-retail ‘business to business’ and ‘service-oriented’ salespeople. The data were collected electronically through a national panel of pre-screened volunteers who participated using services provided by an electronic survey company, Qualtrics. A randomly selected sample of 10,100 salespeople from various industries were invited to participate in the survey and received a corresponding web link. Due to the distinctive nature of retail selling as compared to most industrial and service-oriented selling, salespeople who indicated their involvement with retail sales were screened out through a filter question at the beginning of the survey.

Of the panel members invited, 1,384 members (click through rate of 13.7 percent) visited the Qualtrics survey website within 24 hours. Among the panel members who visited the survey website, 784 responded to the survey. The completed responses were obtained within 44 hours before the survey was closed. Therefore, the response rate which would have been obtained had the online survey been extended is unknown. Further, 376 respondents failed to pass screening tests and preliminary checks for sufficient survey involvement. As a result, those 376 respondents were deemed unsuitable and thus eliminated from the data set, leaving a total of 408 usable survey respondents (i.e., *29.5 percent response rate* and an overall response rate of four percent with regard to the initial 10,100 who received an invitation to participate and provided usable surveys). This figure is well above the mean response rate of 21 percent for web based surveys reported in meta-analytic research (Kaplowitz, Hadcock, and Levine, 2004).

Various scale formats were also used to avoid uniformity in response types. Respondent anonymity was ensured since Qualtrics collected the electronic surveys and made the input data available to the researchers on a website without identifying individual participants. These steps along with multiple scale formats throughout the survey minimize the effects of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, 2003; Richardson, Simmering, and Sturmon, 2009).

Using online panel data has both advantages and disadvantages. Disadvantages include a higher dropout rate than among conventional methods (Birnbaum 2004) and a restriction to users who have access to the internet (which has become less of a concern as internet usage has become widespread). Advantages include access to a large national

sample, clean data (entered directly by respondents without researcher coding errors), and access to a specialized group of respondents (Birnbaum 2004) such as industrial salespeople. There has been considerable debate among researchers regarding the effectiveness of online data collection techniques. However, researchers agree that online vs. paper and pencil data collection techniques result in similar covariance structures (Hair, et al 2006). Other studies have shown that web survey applications are an acceptable alternative to hard copy questionnaires and response rates are comparable (Kaplowitz, et al. 2004).

### **Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the CFA was run on the nine multi-item constructs. The initial model displayed less than adequate fit statistics:  $\chi^2=5,746.63$ ,  $df=2,582$ ,  $CFI=.85$ ,  $PNFI=.724$ ,  $RMSEA=.055$ . Thus, a close examination of results and residuals is used to find potential problems with the measures. Further analysis of the salesperson deviance construct revealed that thirteen items from the salesperson deviance scales displayed highly skewed mean values (<2 on a seven point scale) and were subsequently deleted. A second CFA was run with the adjusted seven item salesperson deviance scale which produced the following model fit:  $\chi^2=3,396.31$ ,  $df=1,595$ ,  $CFI=.89$ ,  $PNFI=.777$ ,  $RMSEA=.059$ . Further analysis of residuals indicated that multiple items from the following scales yielded unusually high residual values and were subsequently deleted: job satisfaction (four items), salesperson deviance (one item), turnover intentions (one item), organizational commitment (three items), and life satisfaction (one item). Twenty four items were dropped from the original model resulting in a total of 45 items (35% dropped).

Table 4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Comparison of Fit for Measurement Models

Model	df	$\chi^2$	p	CFI	PNFI	RMSEA
<u>Model 1</u>	2,582	5,746.63	.000	.85	.724	.055
Values Congruence (5 items) <sup>1</sup>						
Compensation Fit (6 items) <sup>1</sup>						
Work/NonWork Demands Fit (6 items) <sup>1</sup>						
Job Satisfaction (9 items)						
Salesperson Deviance (20 items)						
Performance (5 items) <sup>1</sup>						
Turnover Intentions (4 items)						
Life Satisfaction (5 items)						
Organizational Commitment (9 items)						
<u>Model 2</u>	1,595	3,396.31	.000	.89	.777	.059
Salesperson Deviance (7 items) <sup>2</sup>						
<u>Model 3</u>	909	2,084.19	.000	.92	.794	.056
Job Satisfaction (5 items) <sup>2</sup>						
Salesperson Deviance (6 items) <sup>2</sup>						
Turnover Intentions (3 items) <sup>2</sup>						
Organizational Commitment (6 items) <sup>2</sup>						
Life Satisfaction (4 items) <sup>2</sup>						
<sup>1</sup> Construct items remained unchanged throughout analysis. <sup>2</sup> Construct items reduced after residual analysis.						

Although this is fairly high, the majority of dropped items were isolated to a single construct (salesperson deviance). At the exclusion of salesperson deviance, the model would have retained 59 items (14% dropped) which meets the cutoff value for retained items (Hair, et. al 2006).

A third CFA was conducted on the adjusted model which produced the following model fit:  $\chi^2=2,084.19$ ,  $df=909$ ,  $CFI=.92$ ,  $PNFI=.794$ ,  $RMSEA=.056$ . The CFI exceeds the cutoff standard and the RMSEA is less than .08 indicating an acceptable model fit (Hair, et al. 2006).

### **Construct Validity**

A thorough assessment of construct validity is a crucial prerequisite for an effective CFA. Initially, convergent validity was investigated by measuring the average variance extracted for the finalized constructs to ensure all constructs met the acceptable cutoff value of .50 (Hair, et al. 2006). Average variance extracted values were acceptable ranging from .50 to .86 except for the salesperson deviance construct. This construct failed to meet the .50 cutoff value for convergent validity with a value of .33. Other studies have encountered similar convergent validity problems in assessing this construct. For instance, Mulki et al. (2006) report an average variance extracted value of .37 for the organizational deviance construct which is conceptually similar to the refined salesperson deviance construct under investigation. Similar results were obtained for a three dimensional salesperson deviance construct with average variance extracted values ranging from .30 to .36 (Darrat, et al. 2010). This being said, measuring internal consistency through reliability estimates is a less conservative procedure for assessing convergent validity. As can be seen from Table 4.2, all constructs were acceptable

ranging from a low of .70 to a high of .95 which meets the acceptable cutoff value of .70 for basic research (Nunnally 1978).

Factor loadings are above .50 for all constructs except for two salesperson deviance items (see Table 4.1). Due to the critical nature of the salesperson deviance scale in the current study, a decision was made to retain the construct after necessary refinement. There is an inherent difficulty in measuring constructs with ethical or moral undertones which may be due to fears of public disclosure.

Discriminant validity is an assessment of the degree to which a construct is distinctly unique from other constructs. Initial EFA procedures eliminated four items which cross loaded on multiple constructs. However, in order to gain a more robust evaluation of discriminant validity, researchers should compare the variance-extracted percentages for any two constructs with the square of the correlation estimate between the two constructs (Hair, et al. 2006). Constructs with variance extracted estimates lower than the squared correlation estimate indicate potential discriminant validity problems. All constructs except for one under investigation met the requirements for acceptable discriminant validity. The job satisfaction-organizational commitment squared correlation estimate (.50) was higher than the average variance extracted value (.45).

A less conservative test was conducted to assess whether discriminant validity issues exist between these two constructs. First, a CFA of the original model with organizational commitment and job satisfaction as separate constructs was run ( $\chi^2:2,084.19$ ;  $df:909$ ). In the subsequent model, organizational commitment and job satisfaction were combined to represent one construct ( $\chi^2:2,277.52$ ;  $df: 917$ ).

Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Variables Intercorrelations

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Values Congruence	5.14	1.52	<b>(.95)</b>								
2.Work/Non-work Fit	3.41	.93	<b>.438**</b>	<b>(.89)</b>							
3.Compensation Fit	4.32	1.24	<b>.437**</b>	<b>.267**</b>	<b>(.77)</b>						
4. Job Satisfaction	3.88	.68	<b>.628**</b>	<b>.431**</b>	<b>.340**</b>	<b>(.77)</b>					
5.Salesperson Deviance	4.77	.53	<b>-.065</b>	<b>.059</b>	<b>-.002</b>	<b>-.127*</b>	<b>(.70)</b>				
6. Performance	4.30	1.32	<b>.084</b>	<b>.084</b>	<b>.078</b>	<b>.221**</b>	<b>-.066</b>	<b>(.94)</b>			
7.Turnover Intentions	2.89	1.85	<b>-.613**</b>	<b>-.393**</b>	<b>-.302**</b>	<b>-.572**</b>	<b>.098*</b>	<b>.003</b>	<b>(.95)</b>		
8.Life Satisfaction	3.15	.94	<b>.301**</b>	<b>.242**</b>	<b>.326**</b>	<b>.404**</b>	<b>-.062</b>	<b>.243**</b>	<b>-.299**</b>	<b>(.89)</b>	
9.Organizational Commitment	5.04	1.45	<b>.790**</b>	<b>.438**</b>	<b>.418**</b>	<b>.707**</b>	<b>-.121*</b>	<b>.100*</b>	<b>-.654**</b>	<b>.346**</b>	<b>(.94)</b>

Notes: Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) for multi-item scales are on the main diagonals in bold. N=408

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$



The difference between the two models is statistically significant indicating the constructs are distinct ( $\chi^2:193.3$ ;  $df:8$ ;  $p<.01$ ), i.e. two factors are better than one. Nomological validity requirements were met since all significant inter-construct correlations were appropriately associated according to the underlying theory. This will be examined further by testing the proposed structural model.

### **Structural Model Testing**

The structural modeling approach used follows the two-step analytical procedure (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). In the first step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) tests the overall validity of the implied measurement theory. CFA provides both an assessment of fit and statistics concerning construct validity. The second step of this procedure consists of an examination of the proposed theory and implied hypotheses using structural equations modeling (SEM) with Amos 17.0. The factor loadings are shown in Table 4.3.

As can be seen from Figure 2.2, the proposed theoretical model demonstrates reasonable fit for a complex model:  $\chi^2=2,613.632$ ,  $df=927$ ,  $CFI= .878$ ,  $RMSEA=.067$ . Therefore, the model is adequate for testing hypotheses. However, the direct relationships between constructs provide mixed results (see Table 4.4). Surprisingly, no significant relationship is found corresponding to the first three hypotheses between the dimensions of organizational fit (H1: values congruence, H2: pay structure fit, H3: work/non-work fit) and salesperson deviance ( $\beta=.02$ ,  $t=.216$ ,  $p=.829$ ;  $\beta= .04$ ,  $t= .567$ ,  $p=.57$ ; and  $\beta= .02$ ,  $t=.223$ ,  $p=.824$ , respectively).

Table 4.3. Standardized Factor Loadings

	VAL	TI	COMP	JS	LS	SD	WF	OC	PF
VAL1	0.84								
VAL2	0.94								
VAL3	0.91								
VAL4	0.91								
VAL5	0.89								
TI1		0.89							
TI2		0.96							
TI3		0.93							
COMP1			0.87						
COMP2			0.87						
COMP3			0.87						
COMP4			0.38						
COMP5			0.83						
COMP6			0.81						
JS1				0.51					
JS3				0.69					
JS5				0.49					
JS6				0.77					
JS8				0.83					
LS1					0.8				
LS2					0.91				
LS3					0.9				
LS4					0.68				
SD1						0.51			
SD2						0.76			
SD3						0.44			
SD5						0.63			
SD6						0.44			
WF1							0.73		
WF2							0.82		
WF3							0.76		
WF4							0.76		
WF5							0.74		
WF6							0.76		
OC1								0.71	
OC5								0.85	
OC6								0.89	
OC7								0.92	
OC8								0.86	
OC9								0.89	
PF1									0.72
PF2									0.91
PF3									0.92
PF4									0.89
PF5									0.87
Variance									
Extracted	.81	.86	.63	.50	.68	.33	.58	.73	.75
Construct									
Reliability	.95	.95	.87	.80	.90	.70	.89	.94	.94



Consistent with Hypotheses 4 and 5, a negative relationship exists between job satisfaction and salesperson deviance ( $\beta = -.35$ ,  $t = -3.329$ ,  $p < .001$ ) as well as between salesperson deviance and self-report job performance ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $t = -3.038$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

In accordance with prior research, the negative effect of organizational commitment on turnover intentions (Hyp. 7) and the positive relationship between performance and life satisfaction (Hyp. 8) is also supported ( $\beta = -.326$ ,  $t = -6.088$ ,  $p < .0001$ ;  $\beta = .253$ ,  $t = 4.709$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively). As expected from the insignificant findings of hypotheses 1-3, the proposed mediation of salesperson deviance between the dimensions of organizational fit and performance is not supported because these relationships are essential to a mediation process. Similarly, salesperson deviance as a mediator in the relationship between job satisfaction and performance is not supported since the relationship remains significant and relatively unchanged after salesperson deviance is added to the model ( $\beta = .335$ ,  $t = 3.538$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As for the mediation of performance in the salesperson deviance-organizational commitment relationship proposed in Hypothesis 6, no support is found because the relationship remains significant and relatively unchanged when performance is added as a mediator ( $\beta = -.528$ ,  $t = -5.380$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). The indirect effects for the job satisfaction-performance and salesperson deviance-commitment relationships are .06 and -.02, respectively. These results are shown in

Figures 4.1 and 4.2.

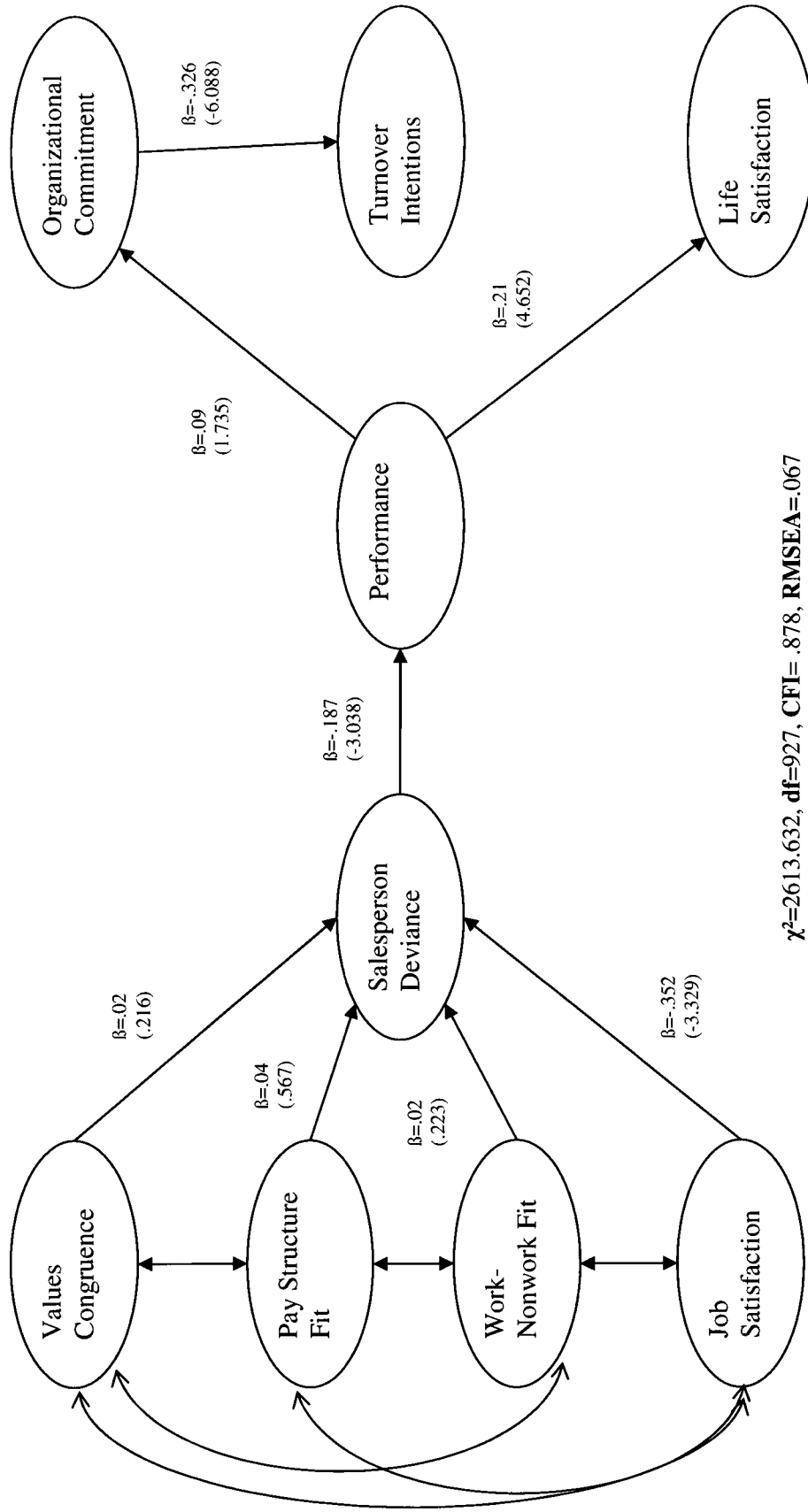


Figure 4.1. Standardized Structural Path Coefficients for Theoretical Model

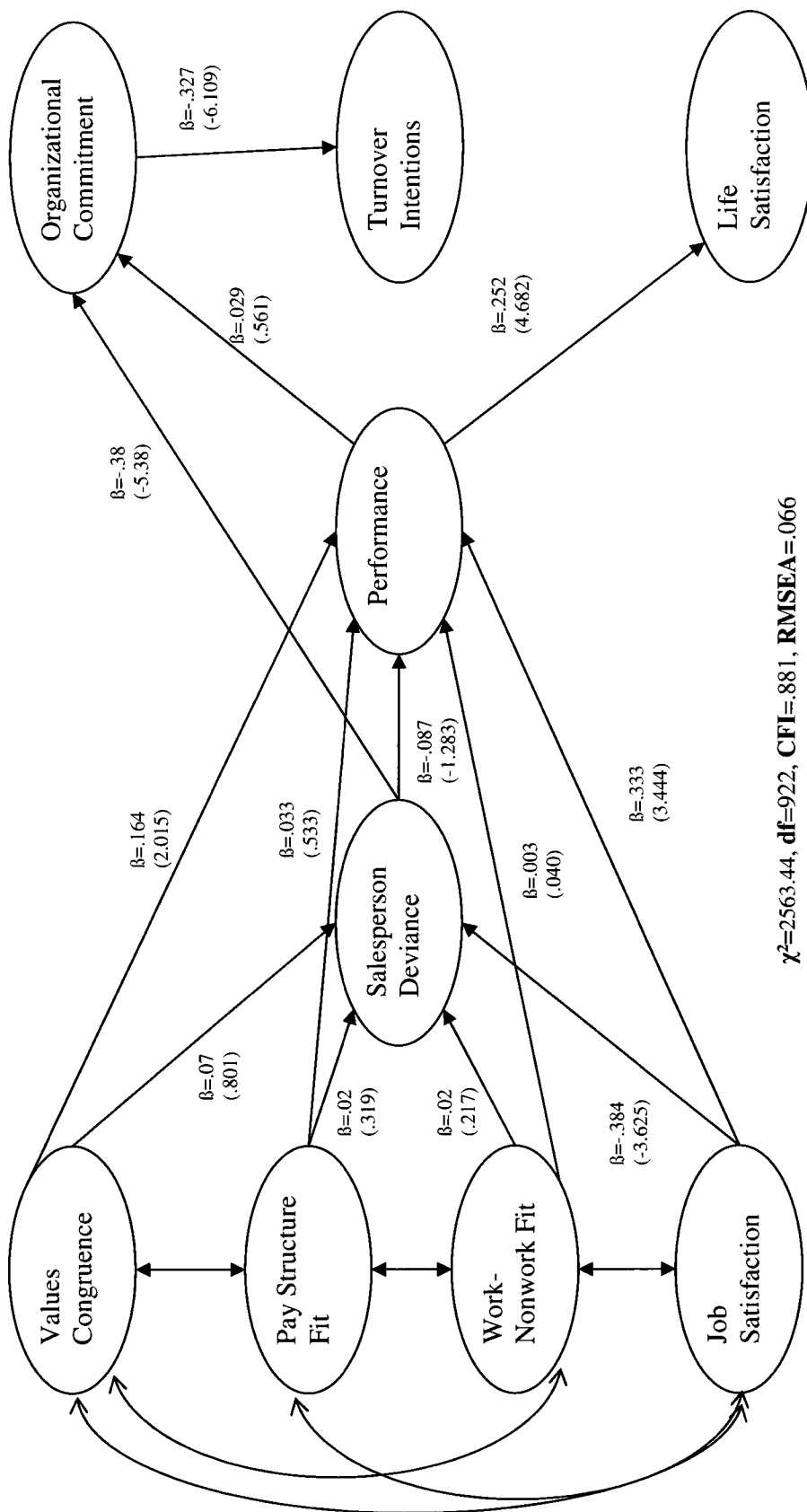


Figure 4.2. Standardized Structural Path Coefficients for Revised Model

### **Moderation Test**

Lastly, Hypothesis 9 proposes a moderating effect of risk aversion on the relationship between salesperson congruence/job satisfaction and salesperson deviance. Since unequal sample sizes across groups have been shown to reduce statistical power (Frazier, et al. 2004), the sample was separated into two equivalent groups by dropping all observations within 1 standard deviation of the mean for risk aversion (Hair, et. al. 2006). A multiple group, structural model provides results useful in testing moderation. A TF (Totally Free) model is estimated allowing all structural parameter coefficients to take on unique values in each group. This model is then constrained by equating all corresponding structural parameter coefficients (i.e., the JS – SD relationship is forced to be equal across groups as is the WNW – SD relationship, etc.) to match between groups. If moderation is present, the added constraints will significantly worsen fit.

Results indicate that the invariance constraints do not significantly harm model fit relative to the TF model ( $\Delta\chi^2=5.811$ ,  $\Delta df=13$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\Delta CFI=.002$ ,  $\Delta RMSEA=.001$ ). This indicates that the constrained model fits just as well as the freely estimated original model, and therefore, the moderating effect of risk aversion is not supported.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This research examines the effects of salesperson congruence and job satisfaction on destructive salesperson behaviors and, subsequently, the effect of these behaviors on organizational outcomes. With the advent of technology, today's salespeople have become an enduring remnant from an era when human interaction between buyers and sellers was the norm. It is critical that managers are not myopic in their approach to manager-salesperson relationships and do not downplay the significance of the human element in sales. That being said, the study provides mixed results.

Salesperson deviance has a significant negative impact on salesperson performance, and in turn, organizational outcomes, however, no support was found for organizational congruence as an antecedent of salesperson deviance. The lack of support for the initial hypotheses (1-3, 9) may be due, in large part, to inherent difficulties in adapting a traditionally management-oriented deviance measure to a sales context. As mentioned earlier, extensive refinement of the scale was necessary to eliminate items that exhibit extremely low variance and very low (i.e., floor effects) mean values and/or display unusually high residual values. The utilized salesperson deviance scale is unidimensional in that it excludes the dimensions of interpersonal and customer-directed



deviance and is geared more towards organizational deviance. It is possible that due to the highly sensitive nature of the boundary spanning role, salespeople seem to be overly defensive when it comes to disclosing actual engagement in anti-normative behaviors which may explain the relatively low variance ratings. This being said, it may be more practical from a sales perspective to utilize projective techniques in measuring these behaviors for which salespeople would only need to express their comfort level with these actions. Perhaps the highly social nature of selling makes individuals more aware of the possible negative ramifications associated with the types of deviant behavior depicted in the scale. Salespeople often depend on the cooperation of others to accomplish sales goals and if you mistreat them, you won't get the cooperation.

In accordance with prior research (Fox and Spector, 1999), the study's results support a negative relationship between job satisfaction and salesperson deviance. In other words, salespeople who are dissatisfied with their jobs may seek to alleviate any related stress associated with the situation by employing confrontive coping mechanisms (i.e., salesperson deviance). It is also plausible that employees see the organization as directly responsible for many of their work-related problems. Also, many stressors faced by a dissatisfied sales force (role ambiguity, role stress, etc.) could be attenuated if managers implement proactive training sessions that facilitate the development of healthy salesperson-manager relationships.

Managers who are intent on minimizing the prevalence of deviance in the sales force should actively seek to instill confidence in their salespeople by helping them comprehend how tightly the success of the firm is tied to their own success. Not only is this an effective strategy for developing a confident and successful sales team, but

organizations with active and supportive work environments will likely dissociate themselves from negative salesperson perceptions and increase satisfaction levels. Dissatisfied salespeople will likely employ more constructive strategies such as attempting to resolve the situation by expressing their concerns to managers and sharing suggestions for improvement. Management should focus its efforts on seeking feedback from salespeople on how to facilitate an environment which is more conducive to their needs as a boundary spanner.

The minimization of anti-normative salesperson behaviors should be at the forefront of managerial agendas. The study posits that salesperson deviance is negatively related to salesperson performance. This means that disillusioned salespeople who resort to anti-normative behaviors are considered counterproductive not only to their organizations, but also to themselves. This may be due, in part, to the nature of these behaviors; e.g. shirking on the job would lead to less emphasis placed on developing and maintaining long term relationships with prospective clients.

However, it may be that disgruntled salespeople are unable to break out of the vicious cycle of job dissatisfaction, retaliation, and reductions in performance. Because many of these offenses are, by nature, not readily apparent to managers, salespeople may develop a self-destructive subculture of deviance within the organization before managers even realize the behaviors are taking place (Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). Preventive measures should be undertaken by sales managers in order to avoid the financial repercussions associated with a dysfunctional sales force. It is imperative that managers eliminate the potential for such problems by facilitating open communication

channels in which salespeople experiencing difficulties can vent their frustrations in a constructive manner.

Under the aforementioned circumstances, the finding that salesperson performance relates positively to life satisfaction is also interesting. Salespeople who attempt to cope with their disillusionment at work by breaking the rules are actually employing a 'double edged' strategy since decreases in performance significantly corrode personal life satisfaction. The deleterious effects of a salesperson that is frustrated with his/her job are minor when compared to a salesperson that is distressed about his/her life. This study reminds sales managers that both the professional and personal welfare of their salespeople should be primary concerns of the organization. One possible strategy which could be used to achieve this goal is the empowerment of salespeople. Research has shown that salesperson satisfaction is directly tied to the degree of personal initiative allowed in daily sales tasks (Teas, 1981). Although not investigated in this study, it may be possible that a lack of autonomy is negatively affecting the level of salesperson job satisfaction. If salespeople perceive their jobs as more empowering due to policies which emphasize creative leniency in day to day sales tasks, it is likely that job satisfaction levels will increase as well.

A major implication which can be derived from this research is that the prevalence of deviance in the sales force may be a controllable phenomenon. Organizations should focus on creating sales environments and job descriptions which have the best interests of salespeople at heart. A salesperson's dissatisfaction with his/her job is a strong predictor of whether he/she will engage in destructive, anti-normative behaviors. For instance, implementing realistic job previews for new recruits to ensure

they understand exactly what and how many duties and responsibilities they will be assuming could discourage potentially unfit salespeople from accepting a position. Managers and practitioners should remember that the salesperson deviance process is not a vertical, but rather, a circular progression which begins and ends with salesperson satisfaction. It is no secret that positive, normatively-minded salespeople reflect a successful organization in the minds of clients. Managerial insensitivity to the continually increasing demands of salespeople is a 'lose-lose' scenario which ends in negative consequences for the salesperson as well as the organization.

### **Limitations**

As any other empirical research, this study is not without limitations. First, it appears that salespeople recognize the negative effects of deviance on the organization and are reluctant to openly admit to engaging in these behaviors. This may explain the unusually low means and variance encountered with this measure. Future research should use a more projective measure which captures a salesperson's proclivity to deviance. This way a salesperson would not actually admit to engaging in deviance, but would only report his/her comfort level with the specific behavior. Salespeople that rank higher on the scale would obviously be considered prime candidates for deviant behavior.

Second, salesperson performance was a self-report measure. Ideally, a multi-source assessment of performance would have been preferred since the potential for inflation of performance levels is a possibility. However, anonymity was ensured so there would be neither a monetary nor ego-driven incentive for respondents to exaggerate their success. Nevertheless, future salesperson deviance research should use a multi-source assessment in order to provide a more accurate representation of performance.

Third, the study provides no support for the relationship between salesperson deviance and organizational congruence. Theoretically, the notion that the incongruence of salespeople within their organizations has absolutely no effect on anti-normative behavior seems to be counterintuitive (Browning, 2008). As discussed previously, it is quite possible that deficiencies in the measurement of salesperson deviance may have masked or attenuated these relationships. Researchers should re-examine the effects of *organizational incongruence* on a projective measure of salesperson deviance.

Fourth, as most descriptive research in the social sciences, this study is cross sectional in nature. Due to the long term effects of these behaviors on individual and organizational outcomes, it would be more accurate to infer causality from a model with longitudinal data. Avenues for future research include the examination of long term performance as an outcome of salesperson deviance. Although the current study suggests that salesperson deviance reduces short term performance, managers would derive greater practical implications from a more enduring assessment.

Fifth, as with most research, the potential for alternative models cannot be ruled out. For instance, there has been considerable debate in the sales literature regarding the sequence of causality between performance and job satisfaction. Some argue that salesperson performance precedes satisfaction (Bagozzi, 1980, MacKenzie, et. al 1998), others contend that satisfied salespeople reflect their satisfaction through increased sales and productivity (Podsakoff and Williams, 1986). Others posit inconclusive evidence for causality between the constructs since performance each can be considered an end to itself (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Ramaswami and Singh, 2003). Similarly, some research suggests that low levels of organizational commitment may spur dysfunctional

outcomes instead of the proposed relationship of anti-normative behaviors reducing salesperson commitment (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Liao et al. 2004; Mulki et al. 2006). In other words, employees who are psychologically detached from the organization may be more likely to engage in anti-normative behaviors.

The current study also adopts the 'bottom up' perspective of life satisfaction which assumes that life satisfaction is the ultimate work outcome since occupation is a major contributing factor to one's overall life satisfaction (Andrews and Withey, 1976). Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are likely to be more satisfied with their lives since work is an integral component of one's life. However, the alternative 'top-down' approach suggests that dispositional factors associated with one's outlook on life may affect the degree of job satisfaction achieved (Judge and Watanabe, 1993). That is, if a salesperson is inherently pessimistic about life, this negativity may spill over to affect perceptions related to his/her workplace. Similarly, decreases in salesperson productivity have also been attributed to reduced life satisfaction ratings (Kantak, Futrell, and Sager, 1992).

### **Future Research**

Future research should investigate whether additional individual or organizational variables have an effect on these relationships. For example, a salesperson who perceives that the way promotions and pay raises are decided within the sales force are unfair or that a certain level of favoritism exists which is not based on selling ability; would this aggravate an already dissatisfied salesperson to engage in more anti-normative behaviors? Similarly, does a salesperson's ethical fit with an organization have any impact on their propensity toward deviance? In addition, it would be interesting to

explore whether a supportive work environment characterized by increased salesperson-manager trust effectively alleviates destructive salesperson tendencies.

Subsequent studies should emphasize the delineation between deviance and ethics through the development of a scale which incorporates both the constructive and destructive dimensions of deviance. As ethics researchers point out, unethical behaviors are characterized by the inherent immorality of the actions leaving no possibility for well intentioned unethical behavior (Robin, et al. 2004). However, salespeople may disobey organizational norms (i.e. deviance) with positive intentions such as improving efficiency or performance. Due to the elusiveness of the deviance construct, it may be interesting to investigate the possibility of an attitudinal or formative scale in this endeavor. Formative constructs differ from reflective ones in that the measurement items for formative constructs are not expected to covary with each other, need not share a common conceptual basis, and should *cause* the factor in question (Hair, et al. 2006). Some behaviors can be considered independent causal forces which drive the salesperson deviance construct. For instance, a deviant salesperson who exaggerates expense reports for personal gain may draw the line when it comes to jeopardizing customer welfare by knowingly selling defective products. In other words, these behaviors have different underlying themes and would not be considered interchangeable. In addition, salesperson deviance is actually the outcome of such actions since anti-normative behaviors are not manifestations of deviance, but actually define the construct. Model misspecification is an important issue in marketing since research has shown that about 30% of published studies in well-recognized marketing journals suffer from this problem (Jarvis, Mackenzie, and Podsakoff, 2003). Therefore, researchers should undertake a rigorous

assessment of both model specification and psychometric properties of the salesperson deviance scale before proceeding with future research.

Deviance researchers have expressed a keen interest in positive, well intentioned behaviors which transgress organizational norms and the effects of such actions on the success of both the employee and the organization (Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2004; Appelbaum, et al. 2007). However, to my knowledge, there is no formal measure of positive employee deviance, much less one which is adapted to a sales context. Much of the relatively small literature base regarding dysfunctional salesperson behavior has been limited to inherently negative activities. It may be that the negative effects of deviance on salesperson satisfaction found in this study are reversed when negative deviance is replaced by positive deviance. Researchers should develop a measure for well-intentioned salespeople who engage in honorable actions which are morally sound and intrinsically rewarding which include items such as whistle blowing or deterring customers from purchasing defective products.

Sales organizations may also vary in their tolerance of anti-normative behavior. By their very nature, successful salespeople may be more inclined to 'do things their own way' based on their experience of what works in their respective industries. For instance, relationship-oriented salespeople who are unable to fulfill a specific need of a customer with an existing product may alternatively suggest a competitor's product. Many managers would argue that the objective of salespeople is to secure the business of clients which entails that passing these customers on to the competition is in direct contradiction to this norm. Salespeople with a long term orientation may disagree with this viewpoint if their experience suggests that honesty and candor lead to customer loyalty in the long



run. Researchers should investigate the individual and organizational implications of organizational cultures which are tolerant of constructive deviance.

Lastly, it would be interesting to explore the effects of realistic job previews on salesperson deviance. Many new recruits, sometimes directly out of college, may be lured to accept sales jobs which boast of flexible hours and attractive compensation only to discover that the pressures and obligations of a sales job were not adequately covered by recruiters. Researchers should investigate whether salespeople employed by organizations which emphasize both the positive and negative aspects of a sales career in the recruitment process are less inclined to engage in destructive anti-normative behaviors. It is no secret that the sales profession suffers from relatively high turnover rates. This may be due, in part, to an incongruence between what these salespeople expected and what they discovered a career in sales entails.

**APPENDIX A**

**HUMAN USE COMMITTEE REVIEW**



LOUISIANA TECH  
UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

TO: Dr. Barry Babin and Mr. Mahmoud Darrat  
 FROM: Barbara Talbot, University Research  
 SUBJECT: HUMAN USE COMMITTEE REVIEW  
 DATE: January 20, 2010

In order to facilitate your project, an EXPEDITED REVIEW has been done for your proposed study entitled:

**"The Antecedents and Consequences of Salesperson Deviance: A Question of Fit"**

# HUC-722

The proposed study's revised procedures were found to provide reasonable and adequate safeguards against possible risks involving human subjects. The information to be collected may be personal in nature or implication. Therefore, diligent care needs to be taken to protect the privacy of the participants and to assure that the data are kept confidential. Informed consent is a critical part of the research process. The subjects must be informed that their participation is voluntary. It is important that consent materials be presented in a language understandable to every participant. If you have participants in your study whose first language is not English, be sure that informed consent materials are adequately explained or translated. Since your reviewed project appears to do no damage to the participants, the Human Use Committee grants approval of the involvement of human subjects as outlined.

Projects should be renewed annually. *This approval was finalized on January 15, 2010 and this project will need to receive a continuation review by the IRB if the project, including data analysis, continues beyond January 15, 2011.* Any discrepancies in procedure or changes that have been made including approved changes should be noted in the review application. Projects involving NIH funds require annual education training to be documented. For more information regarding this, contact the Office of University Research.

You are requested to maintain written records of your procedures, data collected, and subjects involved. These records will need to be available upon request during the conduct of the study and retained by the university for three years after the conclusion of the study. If changes occur in recruiting of subjects, informed consent process or in your research protocol, or if unanticipated problems should arise it is the Researchers responsibility to notify the Office of Research or IRB in writing. The project should be discontinued until modifications can be reviewed and approved.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Mary Livingston at 257-4315.

A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

*Survey instrument*

## EXOGENOUS VARIABLES

(“Strongly disagree” = 1 to “Strongly agree” = 7)

Salesperson/Organization Values Congruence
I feel that my personal values are a good fit with my current organization
My current organization has the same values as I do with regard to respect for others
My current organization has the same values as I do with regard to honesty
My current organization has the same values as I do with regard to fairness
My current organization is a good match for me

(“Strongly disagree” = 1 to “Strongly agree” = 7)

Pay Structure Fit
I am very happy with the method by which my pay is determined
The compensation system that we have adequately rewards good performance
The method by which pay is determined is equitable
The amount of incentives given for good performance is adequate
My organization’s pay structure is compatible with my expectations
The compensation system that we have adequately rewards the implementation of company policy

The impact my current job has on (insert phrase) is...?

(“Highly incompatible with my job expectations” = 1 to “Highly compatible with my job expectations” = 5)

Work/Nonwork Demands Fit Items
my mental and physical state away from work
my participation in home activities
concerns for my overall health and/or safety
my true personal development
my weekend and vacation time
my social life

(“Strongly disagree” = 1 to “Strongly agree” = 5) (Babin and Boles, 1998)

Job Satisfaction Items
I consider my job unpleasant
I am often bored with my job
I feel fairly well-satisfied with present job
Most of the time, I have to force myself to go to work
I definitely dislike my work
Most days, I am enthusiastic about my work
My job is pretty uninteresting
I find real enjoyment in my work
I am disappointed I ever took this job

#### ENDOGENOUS VARIABLES

(“Never”= 1 to “Daily” = 7)

Salesperson Deviance Items
I have arrived late to work and/or sales meetings without permission
I have neglected to follow my supervisor’s instructions
I have spent too much time fantasizing or daydreaming instead of working
I have refused to share relevant customer information with my organization
I have put little effort into my work
I have “worked from home” but did not do much work at all

Compared to my coworkers, I would rate my performance on (insert phrase) as...

(“far below average”= 1 and “far above average”= 7).

Salesperson Performance Items
Sales commissions earned
Exceeding sales objectives and targets
Generating new customer sales
Generating current customer sales
Overall, compared to the typical salesperson in my organization, I rate my performance

("Strongly disagree" = 1 to "Strongly agree" = 5)

Turnover Intention Items
I plan on leaving this organization very soon
I expect to change jobs in the next few months
I will look to change jobs very soon
I am comfortable with the idea of working for this company my entire career

("Strongly disagree" = 1 to "Strongly agree" = 7)

Life Satisfaction Items
In most ways my life is close to my ideal
The conditions of my life are excellent
I am satisfied with my life
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing

("Strongly disagree" = 1 to "Strongly agree" = 5)

Organizational Commitment Items
I am willing to put a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected to help this organization be successful
I talk about this organization to my friends as a great place to work
I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization
I find that my values and the organization's values are similar
I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization
I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work over others I was considering at the time I joined
This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance
I really care about the fate of this organization
For me, this is the best of all organizations for which to work

("Strongly disagree" = 1 to "Strongly agree" = 5)

Risk Aversion (Griffin, Babin, and Attaway 1996)
Taking risks can be fun
I would like to drive a race car
I sometimes do things I know are dangerous just for fun
I have considered skydiving as a hobby
I prefer friends who are unpredictable

(“Strongly disagree” = 1 to “Strongly agree” = 5)

---

Job Embeddedness

(Crossley, Bennett, Jex, and Bumfield, 2007)

---

Even if I wanted to change jobs, my current life situation would make it almost impossible
--

It would be difficult for me to leave this organization
---

I'm too caught up in this organization to leave
---

I cannot change jobs because it would mean totally changing the way I currently live
--

I have to continue working at this organization because I cannot afford to risk losing the benefits (health insurance, retirement benefits, etc.)
---

It would be easy for me to leave this organization
--

I am tightly connected to this organization
---



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