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Psychological Climate, Empowerment, Leadership Style, and Customer-Oriented Selling: An Analysis of the Sales Manager–Salesperson Dyad

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This study examined antecedents and performance-related consequences of customer-oriented selling. The antecedents include sales managers' leadership styles, psychological empowerment, and the psychological climates of organizations. Data were gathered on two separate performance outcome measures. Responses from 106 sales managers and 313 sales representatives were analyzed. The results indicate that transformational leadership, empowerment, and specific components of the psychological climate are important predictors of customer-oriented selling.

Keywords: *sales management; customer-oriented selling; empowerment; leadership style; psychological climate*

Customer-oriented selling is a viable option for organizations seeking to improve long-term customer relationships. By definition, customer-oriented selling is the use of the marketing concept within the salesperson-customer relationship. This implementation is designed to enhance the customer satisfaction attributable individually to salespeople and overall to sales departments (Saxe and Weitz 1982). Customer-oriented salespeople acquire stronger skills in terms of establishing and maintaining relation-

ships with customers (Flaherty, Dahlstrom, and Skinner 1999; Williams and Attaway 1996). Although customer-oriented selling improves buyer-seller relationships (Williams and Attaway 1996), and certain personal salesperson factors influence salespersons' commitment to customer-oriented selling (Flaherty et al. 1999), empirical examinations of customer-oriented selling have often focused on specific situational work factors and their influence on customer-oriented selling (Siguaw, Brown, and Widing 1994).

Separate research on salespeople and other boundary-spanning employees has indicated that an organization's environment significantly affects the job attitudes and outcomes of these salespeople (Singh 1993). Specifically, organizations that are perceived as professional and amicable create less stressful and more enjoyable work atmospheres for boundary-spanning employees (Singh, Verbeke, and Rhoads 1996). Although personal salesperson characteristics have an impact on salespersons' attitudes and behaviors, critical organizational perceptions and influences also play an important role in the development of these attitudes and behaviors (Krafft 1999). The objectives of the present study were to identify the important antecedents of customer-oriented selling and to examine both organizational influences and individual variables of the sales manager and the salesperson.

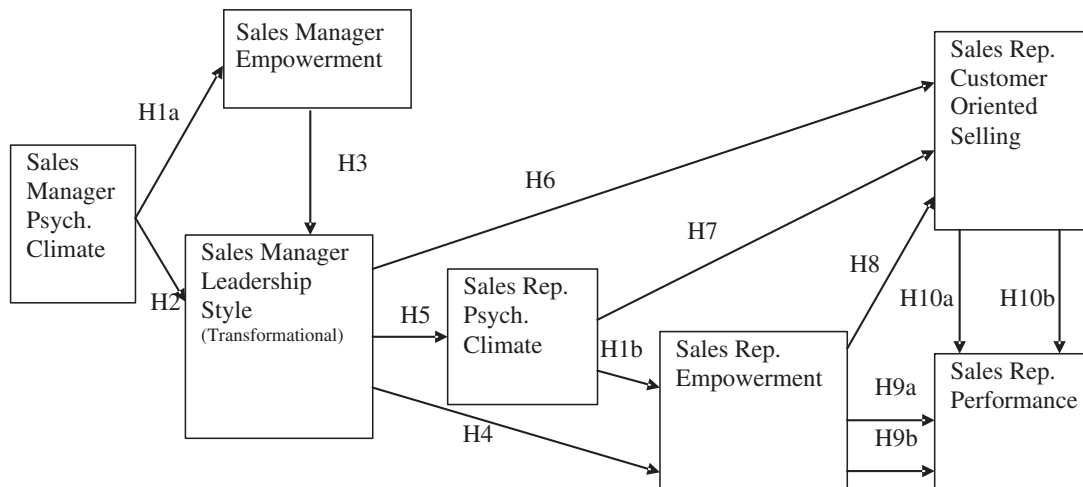
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FIGURE 1
Conceptual Model of Hypothesized Relationships



NOTE: H = Hypothesis; Psych. = psychological; Rep. = representative.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The following section provides a brief overview of the conceptual constructs and their relationships. Figure 1 provides a model that details each hypothesized relationship examined.

Customer-Oriented Selling

Saxe and Weitz (1982) defined customer-oriented selling as “the practice of the marketing concept at the level of the individual salesperson and customer” (p. 343). The most recent research investigating customer-oriented selling suggests further examination of pertinent antecedents. For example, it would be beneficial to understand an organization’s internal environment and how organizational characteristics of the controllable environment influence customer-oriented selling behaviors (Flaherty et al. 1999). Thus, it is appropriate for researchers to investigate two of the most important variables related to performance and customer-oriented selling: internal organizational variables and individual psychological perception variables (Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1977, 1979).

Psychological Climate (Individual Psychological Perception Variable)

The most widely accepted definition of psychological climate states that it is “an experiential-based, multidimensional, and enduring perceptual phenomenon which is widely shared by the members of a given organizational unit. Its primary function is to cue and shape individual behavior toward the modes of behavior dictated by organizational demands” (Koys and DeCotiis 1991:266). This

definition is important because it recognizes that psychological climate is a multidimensional variable. Koys and DeCotiis (1991) developed a widely used measurement scale for assessing the multiple dimensions of psychological climate and found that the overall construct of psychological climate is represented by the subdimensions of support, recognition, fairness, innovation, autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, and pressure.

Support refers to an employee’s perception that his or her superior is encouraging and tolerant, and fairness refers to an employee’s perception that supervisory decisions are fair and impartial. Trust suggests that employees trust superiors enough to allow open communication about sensitive or personal issues. Cohesiveness refers to employees’ perceptions of togetherness or sharing in an organization, and autonomy refers to the degree to which they can determine their own work procedures. Innovation refers to employees’ beliefs that an organization encourages change and creativity, but they feel pressure when time demands for project completions and performance standards are stricter than they believe are necessary. Finally, employees perceive adequate recognition if their inputs are consistently acknowledged (Swift and Campbell 1998). Therefore, each of the eight dimensions potentially has a significant influence on employee attitudes and behaviors.

Empowerment (Individual Psychological Perception Variable)

The concept of empowerment, derived from theories of participative management and employee involvement, promotes the idea that managers share decision-making processes and power with subordinates to enhance per-

formance (Wagner 1994). Defined as internal motivation that is evident in four cognitions reflecting a person's orientation to his or her role as an employee, Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) conceptualization of empowerment is widely considered the classical theoretical foundation of empowerment. Their work represents empowerment as the gestalt of four cognitions: a sense of meaning, worker competence, a sense of self-determination, and the perceived impact of the work.

Meaning can also be called purpose, and it involves the fit between the needs of an employee's work role and the employee's beliefs, values, and behaviors (Thomas and Velthouse 1990). Competence is also described as self-efficacy and is an employee's belief that he or she has the skills and abilities to perform the assigned job or task well (Gist 1987). Self-determination is an employee's belief that he or she has control over how work is completed (Wagner 1994). Impact is the perception that an employee substantially and significantly influences strategic, administrative, or operating consequences at work (Ashforth 1989).

Leadership Behavior Style in Selling Environments (Organizational Variable)

Research based in the general management literature defines transformational leadership as superior leadership performance that occurs when leaders

broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. (Bass 1990:21)

Transformational leaders raise their subordinates' awareness of the significance and worth of specified work outcomes, inspire employees to rise above their own self-interests for the benefit of the organization or customer, and improve the subordinates' desire for achievement (Bass 1985).

Transformational leaders demonstrate four key characteristics, including charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Charismatic leaders have a vision, a strong influence on employees, and a sense of where an organization should be in the long run. Employees usually exhibit strong levels of trust and confidence in charismatic leaders, develop loyalty to their charismatic leaders, and often embrace the visions emphasized by those leaders (Bass 1985). Inspirational leaders demonstrate self-determination and commitment to achieving goals, often creating atmospheres in which employees become convinced that they can attain higher goals than they initially thought possible. A transformational leader also stimulates his or her

employees' intellect, encouraging them to use new technology and unique approaches to solve mundane, everyday problems. In addition, managers who are transformational use individualized consideration to make each employee feel that he or she is a critical component to the success of a department or an organization. This type of attention usually improves employees' self-efficacy and self-esteem, increasing the respect they perceive from their manager (Bass 1990).

HYPOTHESES

Psychological Climate, Empowerment, and Transformational Leadership

Research based on cognitive social learning theory suggests that an employee's psychological climate perceptions summarize his or her overall depiction of organizational experiences and that these perceptions are relatively stable over time. Therefore, attempts to change these perceptions must be made consistently and with significant effort (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, and Weick 1970). In a personal selling environment, a sales manager is the person most likely responsible for changing or shaping a salesperson's perceptions and behaviors. Two recent studies analyzing sales departments have shown that managers' perceptions of psychological climate are critical in shaping the relationship between sales managers and sales subordinates (Strutton, Pelton, and Lumpkin 1993; Swift and Campbell 1998). Further research focusing on psychological climate within a sales force indicates that the motivating and involving dimensions of psychological climate positively predict salespeople's job involvement (Brown and Leigh 1996). Finally, Brown, Cron, and Slocum's (1998) analysis showed that when sales organizations foster competitive psychological climates, salespeople who are competitive by nature strive to meet more difficult sales goals.

Research conducted in the area of organizational behavior supports the proposition that psychological climate perceptions influence the empowerment perceived by an employee. Using the tenets of job enrichment theory, Spreitzer (1996) found that a participative climate that emphasizes individual contribution and employee initiative accepts and fosters the notion that employee creativity and self-determination are critical success factors in a competitive environment. In turn, as work climate perceptions become increasingly positive, employees likely perceive greater meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact in their work.

One dimension of the psychological climate construct, pressure, is generally perceived as a negative influence on employees. If employees are continuously pressured to achieve goals and meet standards, they likely will be less

satisfied with their jobs (Swift and Campbell 1998) and feel underappreciated in their organizations (Strutton et al. 1993). As this perceived pressure increases, employees are likely to sense a loss of personal decision-making power in their organizations, and their sense of personal choice and organizational influence will be diminished (DeCharms 1968). As these studies show, employees' perceptions of specific subdimensions of psychological climate (including support, autonomy, cohesion, innovation, and pressure, as we identified previously) in their organizations are critical in shaping perceptions of psychological empowerment. Therefore, psychological climate will positively influence employees' perceived psychological empowerment levels when support, fairness, trust, cohesiveness, autonomy, innovation, and recognition increase and pressure decreases.

Hypothesis 1a: The greater (lesser) a sales manager's overall perceptions of the positive (negative) psychological climate dimensions, the greater his or her psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis 1b: The greater (lesser) a sales representative's overall perceptions of the positive (negative) psychological climate dimensions, the greater his or her psychological empowerment.

Previous research on psychological climate has established that its primary function is to cue and shape employees' behavior so that the behavior is in line with organizational expectations (Koys and DeCotiis 1991). Because sales managers are directly responsible for the production of their sales forces, their behaviors have a significant influence on sales representatives. Outside of sales management research, Joyce, Slocum, and Abelson (1977) discovered that psychological climate dimensions are directly related to chosen leadership styles. Specifically, the motivation to achieve (or support) and the desire for social relations (or cohesion) positively predict a leader's use of consideration or his or her holistic concern for subordinates.

Organizations that want to improve sales managers' psychological climate perceptions should attempt to improve their perceptions of the individual dimensions of psychological climate. These improvements could be accomplished by augmenting the support given to managerial-level employees by supervisors, increasing the recognition given by superiors to sales managers, decreasing the pressure perceived by sales managers with respect to quantitative performance, and expanding the autonomy perceived by sales managers (Swift and Campbell 1998). By implementing each of these improvement initiatives, organizations can create a climate focused more on superior-subordinate relationships and less on strict lines of authority. Less focus on short-term quantitative output goals would also provide sales managers the freedom to motivate sub-

ordinates toward long-term goal accomplishment and greater customer satisfaction. More visible support from upper management and stronger recognition of sales managers' accomplishments would also allow sales managers to transmit greater confidence and self-esteem in the workplace, which in turn would provide the sales managers with the opportunity to inspire and intellectually challenge their subordinates rather than continuously rely on strict quantitative controls and contingent reward motivation (Dubinsky et al. 1995).

Positive outcomes associated with improved psychological climate perceptions in organizations are all characteristics associated with transformational leaders. Leaders who depend less on strict chains of command, focus on long-term goals, transmit observable self-confidence and self-esteem, and inspire and intellectually challenge subordinates are called "transformational leaders" (Dubinsky et al. 1995). These distinctions appear to indicate that increasing the positive perceptions associated with the psychological climate dimensions and decreasing the pressure placed on sales managers lead managers to focus more on the use of transformational leadership.

Hypothesis 2: The greater (lesser) a sales manager's overall perceptions of the positive (negative) psychological climate dimensions, the greater his or her use of transformational leadership.

In the area of sales management, no known study has examined the interpersonal outcomes associated with the empowerment perceived by sales managers. Similarly, a limited amount of research has investigated the factors that contribute to a sales manager's decision to use the leadership characteristics associated with transformational leadership. Theoretically, empowerment is a proactive orientation to an employee's work expectations, suggesting that employees can significantly influence organizational activities and decisions (Spreitzer 1996). As such, we expect that empowerment perceptions are critical in determining a sales manager's preferred leadership style.

Multiple studies from the organizational behavior literature have shown that empowerment magnifies or increases critical employee perceptions and behaviors, including an employee's use of innovation (Redmond, Mumford, and Teach 1993) and ability to inspire subordinates (Conger and Kanungo 1988). Previous research also suggests that empowered managers are more likely to be transformational leaders, focusing on employees' overall inputs rather than scrutinizing specific objective performance outcomes. Spreitzer, De Janasz, and Quinn (1999) found that middle-level supervisors from a *Fortune* 500 organization who reported higher levels of perceived empowerment were perceived by their subordinates as more inspirational, upward influencing, and innovative. Spreitzer et al. found that empowered leaders were more

likely to exhibit characteristics associated with transformational leadership than nonempowered leaders. They also reported no significant relationship between empowered supervisors and monitoring behavior.

Finally, empowered supervisors sense greater meaning or importance from their work and believe that it has a strong impact on organizational results (Spreitzer et al. 1999). A stronger perception of importance is likely to lead supervisors to become more involved with the decisions that subordinates make, a behavior commonly associated with transformational leaders. Therefore, a manager's transformational leadership behaviors are likely to be positively enhanced by the level of empowerment that he or she perceives.

Hypothesis 3: The greater a sales manager's psychological empowerment, the greater his or her use of transformational leadership.

Transformational Leadership Behavior and Salesperson Perceptions and Behaviors

The present study proposes that a salesperson's perceptions of empowerment are directly related to his or her perceptions of an organization's psychological climate. Previous research indicates that both psychological climate and psychological empowerment are directly influenced by the leadership style of a subordinate's direct superior. Transformational leaders communicate to employees the importance of the work or tasks being assigned, providing subordinates the opportunity to understand and appreciate the meaning of their work (Dubinsky et al. 1995). Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) found that leaders who exhibit the charismatic and inspirational characteristics of transformational leadership align their subordinates' efforts with a collective identity, increasing the intrinsic meaning of the work completed by subordinates. Because the meaning or appreciation of one's work is a critical component of psychological empowerment, it is suggested that transformational leaders engender greater psychological empowerment in their subordinates.

Bass (1985) found that transformational leaders demonstrate a strong sense of self-determination and find innovative and creative means for completing work assignments. This attitude is often transmitted to subordinates, who sense a greater freedom in work determination. Although transformational leaders may become more involved in the early stages of the decision-making processes before subordinate task initiation, they actually push subordinates to perceive greater control in actual task completion. Research in the financial industry confirms this relationship; Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) found that transformational leadership is positively related to employees' empowerment perceptions.

In a sales setting, Dubinsky et al. (1995) recognized that subordinate salespeople guided by transformational leaders become better problem solvers and often develop enhanced thought processes that heighten their confidence in their abilities to complete work. Finally, both Dubinsky et al. (1995) and Bass (1997) proposed that transformational sales leaders magnify the impressions made by sales associates in an organization. Transformational leaders display consideration toward individual employees, focusing on their individual development. Sales subordinates under this type of tutelage develop a stronger understanding of how their jobs can influence organizational performance (Dubinsky et al. 1995).

Hypothesis 4: The greater a sales manager's use of transformational leadership, the greater the psychological empowerment of sales representatives.

Theoretically, it has been established that transformational leaders view internal and external organizational factors holistically. As transformational leaders motivate subordinate employees to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of an organization, enhancing the trust and loyalty perceived throughout work units or departments, these leaders create a sense of togetherness and open sharing that could be described as cohesion (Bass 1985). Conceptually, transformational leaders also are known for their creative and innovative leadership styles. A transformational leader intellectually stimulates employees by encouraging them to use new or modified approaches for solving problems, to explore new methods of accomplishing tasks, and to use intuition (Dubinsky et al. 1995). This enables subordinates to possess greater confidence and to offer imaginative and resourceful ideas without fear of retribution.

A critical issue that we examined in the present study is the influence of transformational leaders on subordinates' psychological climate perceptions. Strutton et al. (1993) found that the level of trust between a sales manager and a direct subordinate salesperson influences the salesperson's perceptions of autonomy, cohesiveness, fairness, innovativeness, recognition, and ethicality. Research has also indicated that employees have high levels of trust and confidence in leaders who are truly transformational. Subordinates develop strong senses of commitment and loyalty to their immediate superiors when the superiors exhibit transformational leadership behaviors (Dubinsky et al. 1995). As subordinates perceive greater support and trust in their relationships with transformational supervisors, they are more likely to accept organizational practices as equitable and nonarbitrary, an important factor in developing positive perceptions of psychological climate.

Finally, we expect that sales subordinates perceive greater autonomy and recognition and less pressure in

terms of quantitative task completion and performance from transformational sales leaders. Although transformational leadership involves developing a closer relationship between leaders and subordinates, the relationships developed are based on trust and commitment rather than on contractual agreements (Jung and Avolio 1999). Therefore, transformational leaders appear to increase subordinate autonomy and recognition and to decrease time demand and performance pressures placed on subordinates.

Hypothesis 5: The greater a sales manager's use of transformational leadership, the greater (lesser) a salesperson's overall perceptions of the positive (negative) psychological climate dimensions.

In addition to influencing the salesperson perception variables of psychological climate and empowerment, we expect that sales managers who use transformational leadership influence certain salesperson behaviors as well. Although no known study has examined the relationship between a sales manager's use of transformational leadership and a salesperson's commitment to customer-oriented selling, an expected relationship between the two variables is easily constructed. Bass (1990) believed that transformational leadership is synonymous with "superior leadership performance" and that it occurs when a leader broadens or elevates his or her employees' interests. This type of leadership creates awareness and acceptance of an organization's underlying objectives and goals. For organizations that rely on industrial salespeople to push their products through the market, building relationships with important customers is critical. Therefore, an organization must convince its frontline salespeople to look beyond their self-interests for the good of the company.

From a theoretical standpoint, the aforementioned principles of transformational leadership appear to complement the basic behaviors recognized in the foundation of customer-oriented selling. Conceptually, customer-oriented selling consists of being concerned about customers, diagnosing customers' needs, striving to increase customers' satisfaction, and actively resolving problems (Saxe and Weitz 1982). Bass (1997) posited that transformational leaders use both intellectual consideration and emotional involvement strategies that subsequently enhance salespersons' concern for their own clients and that salespeople are more competent in their performance when they are both emotionally and intellectually considerate of customers' desires. Subsequent research has also shown that supportive organizational cultures have a positive impact on customer-oriented selling. Supportive organizational cultures are those that foster innovation, cooperation, goal congruence, a strong sense of pride, and adaptive behavior. Such supportive organizational cultures appear to be similar to the type of atmospheres that transformational leaders desire. These supportive organi-

zational cultures have a stronger influence on the customer-oriented selling of salespeople than bureaucratic cultures, which are based on rule-intensive, noninnovative, and contractually dependent relationships between supervisors and subordinates (Williams and Attaway 1996).

One final study, which was completed outside the sales management field, found that collectivists, defined as those subordinates with strong support for organizational values and high value congruence between themselves and their leaders, are more productive in generating ideas and satisfying organizational goals than individualists, defined as subordinates who are more motivated to satisfy their own self-interests and personal goals. Transformational leaders, who concentrate on subordinate relationships and intellectual stimulation, create followers or subordinates who are more in line with the collectivist mentality (Jung and Avolio 1999). Because customer-oriented selling is conceptually similar to the ideas of the collectivists, revolving around long-term satisfaction and organizational values, transformational leadership appears to be a strong positive influence in creating customer-oriented salespeople.

Hypothesis 6: The greater a sales manager's use of transformational leadership, the greater a sales representative's customer-oriented selling.

Salesperson Perceptions and Behaviors

In this study, we propose that a salesperson's psychological climate perceptions influence his or her perceptions of empowerment; however, empirical studies appear to indicate that these climate perceptions also have a strong impact on a salesperson's customer-oriented selling. Previous research indicates that improvements in psychological climate lead salespeople to place greater trust in and have greater acceptance of others, both inside and outside their organizations. Thus, greater perceptions of cohesion in the climate likely lead salespeople to show greater concern for their customers and to be more willing to assist customers when questions or problems arise. In addition, increasing the positive recognition of employees has been shown to increase the positive feelings and behaviors of salespeople toward others, including their customers (Strutton et al. 1993). Thus, salespeople's customer-oriented selling is likely to be improved by increasing their cohesion and recognition perceptions.

We also expect that improved innovation, autonomy, and support positively influence a salesperson's customer-oriented selling. Innovative environments give sales personnel the opportunity to improve on established work procedures and affect their own objective and subjective performance (Strutton et al. 1993). Moreover, improving the support perceived by salespeople increases the probability that they will be willing to strive for long-term cus-

customer satisfaction (Brown et al. 1998), even if short-term sales or profitability figures are lower than expected. Consequently, we suggest that giving salespeople support from upper management allows them to be more satisfied in their jobs and less obstructed by overly strict objective performance measures. Finally, in the organizational behavior literature, it has been shown that when companies use the negative perception of psychological climate (i.e., pressure), employees perceive less control over their behavior and often feel coerced or manipulated (DeCharms 1968). This hypnotic management of salespeople is likely to undermine any effort on behalf of the salesperson to be customer oriented.

Hypothesis 7: The greater (lesser) a sales representative's overall perceptions of the positive (negative) psychological climate dimensions, the greater his or her customer-oriented selling.

Early investigations into salespeople and their use of power in the workplace suggested that many salespeople exert socially based power, which is learned from sales supervisors, to improve customer relationships (Busch and Wilson 1976). Subsequently, researchers studying empowerment in a nonselling environment recognized that motivational empowerment enabled employees to focus on becoming more oriented toward organizational goals and relationship building (Conger and Kanungo 1988). This indicates that employees who perceive greater empowerment in the workplace are more likely to focus on satisfying both customer and organizational goals simultaneously, a critical factor underlying customer-oriented selling (Saxe and Weitz 1982).

The most widely accepted theoretical development of psychological empowerment proposes that increasing employees' perceptions of empowerment leads to improvements in their initiative and flexibility (Thomas and Velthouse 1990). These two characteristics are important for customer-oriented salespeople, because initiative creates salespeople who are willing to proactively satisfy customers, and flexibility enables salespeople to select or create customized solutions to satisfy customers. Thus, salespeople who perceive greater empowerment in the workplace are likely to exhibit greater customer-oriented selling behaviors.

Because the impact of psychological empowerment in a selling-related context has not been examined, the study of empowered salespeople remains in the conceptual stages. However, two recent articles recognized the critical importance of empowered employees in a personal selling context. Wotruba (1996) proposed that salespeople who perceive more authority are able to resolve customer problems and complaints without unnecessarily contacting superiors for approval. He also suggested that empowered salespeople possess stronger motivation to learn and retain

information on organizational products that are compatible with the specific products they are selling. Knouse and Strutton (1996) proposed that empowered salespeople are much more proficient at satisfying customer needs than salespeople who are not empowered because empowered salespeople have the ability and knowledge to solve client problems and provide solutions that are profitable for both the buyer and the seller.

Hypothesis 8: The greater a sales representative's psychological empowerment, the greater his or her customer-oriented selling.

Recent discussions of salesperson performance recognize that absolute sales or dollar values are not necessarily comprehensive in terms of their ability to assess a salesperson's overall contribution to an organization (Brown and Peterson 1994). These investigations suggest that extrarole performance criteria, or behaviors and processes that are not directly linked to bottom-line sales results, should be used in conjunction with direct sales-related criteria to measure the contribution of an individual sales representative to an organization (Rich, Bommer, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Johnson 1999). In the most recent examination of sales performance, Rich et al. (1999) suggested that objective measures (i.e., on the basis of sales volume, commission, or quotas) and subjective measures (i.e., process-related ratings of behaviors and attitudes) share very little variance, indicating that the measures are not interchangeable and likely provide the best overall estimation of salesperson performance when combined.

It is also important to note that recent investigations of sales performance do not distinguish between self-reported sales performance and company-provided sales performance. Citing the empirical work of Dubinsky and Hartley (1986), Lagace (1991) established that self-reported salesperson performance could be used as an objective measure, stating, "Performance, as reported by the salesperson, will be measured using income as an objective measure of performance" (p. 53). Rich et al. (1999) referenced Churchill, Ford, Hartley, and Walker's (1985) meta-analytic review of salesperson performance to confirm that objective performance measures include data such as total sales volume, sales commissions, or percentage of quota, with no separation of these measures on the basis of the source of the information. As such, it is accepted in the sales literature to assess objective performance through quantifiable self-reports.

The basic theoretical tenets of participative management and job enrichment advocate the positive relationship between empowerment perceptions and employee performance. The implicit assumptions associated with empowerment suggest that empowered employees have a greater opportunity to influence organizational decisions and activities and therefore are much more likely to be

concerned with individual performance levels (Thomas and Velthouse 1990). Research conducted in a services setting indicates that service employees' perceptions of empowerment positively influence their performance, as measured by self-reported responses focused on achievement relative to peers, concern for employees, and contribution to the organization (Fulford and Enz 1995). In analyzing managers in a manufacturing setting, Spreitzer, Kizilos, and Nason (1997) found that managers who consider themselves both highly competent and influential in their organizations, two critical components of psychological empowerment, are labeled as high performers by their subordinates.

In a personal selling context, Wotruba (1996) suggested that salespeople who perceive empowerment in the workplace are proficient at communicating with customers, placing orders, accessing information, and monitoring industry trends, all of which are critical factors in salesperson performance. A separate model of total quality management in a selling-related context proposes that empowered salespeople possess improved selling skills and greater decision-making capabilities and are more adept at recognizing and understanding customers' needs, problems, and questions (Knouse and Strutton 1996). Each of these improved capabilities enables salespeople to improve both their objective performance outputs and subjective performance evaluations.

Hypothesis 9a: The greater a sales representative's psychological empowerment, the greater his or her objective sales performance.

Hypothesis 9b: The greater a sales representative's psychological empowerment, the greater his or her subjective sales performance.

Most organizations presume that salespeople using the basic behaviors associated with customer-oriented selling automatically increase their personal contributions to an organization. Saxe and Weitz (1982) even defined customer-oriented selling as a philosophy used by salespeople who seek to meet customers' needs and organizational goals simultaneously. However, although it is taken for granted by most firms that promote or practice customer-oriented selling and is accepted as a theoretical assumption underlying the conceptual definition of the construct, the positive relationship between a salesperson's use of customer-oriented selling and high levels of sales performance has rarely been empirically examined.

Siguaw et al. (1994) found that customer-oriented salespeople are likely to have high organizational commitment and job satisfaction. They also found that customer-oriented salespeople perceive low role ambiguity and role conflict. In their meta-analysis, Brown and Peterson (1993) found that role ambiguity and role conflict are negatively related to sales performance, whereas sales perfor-

mance is positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Therefore, salespeople who exhibit strong orientations toward satisfying their customers are likely to improve their overall selling performance.

Williams and Attaway (1996) found that customer-oriented selling improves a salesperson's relationships with customers by enhancing trust, loyalty, and commitment. By improving customer relationships, customer-oriented salespeople concentrate on improving the long-term satisfaction of customers, a critical consequence associated with high-performing salespeople (Brown and Peterson 1993). In addition, Keillor, Parker, and Pettijohn (1999) found that customer-oriented salespeople are more likely to be satisfied with their performance than salespeople who use any of three other relational selling options. The results indicated that customer-oriented salespeople are more likely to be high performers than non-customer-oriented salespeople.

Hypothesis 10a: The greater a sales representative's customer-oriented selling, the greater his or her objective sales performance.

Hypothesis 10b: The greater a sales representative's customer-oriented selling, the greater his or her subjective sales performance.

METHOD

Measures

In the Appendix, we provide the scales used in the present research. We provide details of reliability and validity in subsequent sections.

We assessed psychological climate perceptions using a scale developed by Koys and DeCotiis (1991) that consists of eight subdimensions, including autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, pressure, support, recognition, fairness, and innovation. We initially selected 40 items, of which 5 represented each of the eight subdimensions, for use in the present study. We examined and analyzed all 40 items during a pretest. Comments from both sales managers and sales representatives who completed the pretest indicated that 1 item of the psychological climate scale ("My supervisor is not likely to give me a 'greasy meal'") was confusing or not understood. Therefore, we removed this item from the survey before final data gathering, which left a 39-item scale for examination of psychological climate.

We assessed the psychological empowerment perceptions of sales managers and sales representatives using the 12-item scale developed by Spreitzer (1995), and we assessed transformational leadership behaviors with the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass (1985). We used a revised version of the MLQ, Form 5X, to assess transformational leadership behaviors of sales managers (Bass and Avolio 1995). As does the

scale used by Bycio, Hackett, and Allen (1995), the revised version contains 20 items to assess distinct components of transformational leadership. We asked the sales representatives in the study to respond to the 20 items in the revised MLQ on the basis of their evaluations of the sales managers. We assessed a salesperson's customer-oriented selling through self-report using Saxe and Weitz's (1982) Selling Orientation–Customer Orientation Scale. This scale has 24 items, of which 12 are positively worded and 12 are negatively worded.

Because our goal was to examine both objective and subjective salesperson performance, we tried to identify previous research in sales that had successfully identified separate measures that could be used to measure each type of sales performance adequately. Dubinsky et al. (1995) identified multiple measurement scales that assess both objective and subjective performance. Thus, we used two of those scales in our study. We assessed subjective salesperson performance with a 10-item, self-report sales performance scale developed by Yammarino and Dubinsky (1990) and later adapted by Dubinsky et al. (1995). This measurement instrument focuses primarily on a salesperson's attitudes, efforts, and behaviors. This subjective performance measure is also designed to assess a salesperson's overall performance without specifying or emphasizing absolute sales figures, volumes, or numbers. We measured objective salesperson performance using a self-report item that previous sales management research has used. The figure used was the percentage of quota achieved for the year (Dubinsky et al. 1995). This indicator is a direct assessment of a salesperson's impact on the bottom-line sales results of an organization, and Rich et al. (1999) identified percentage of quota as an objective method for assessing salesperson performance.

Sampling Procedure and Data Collection

We collected data for the overall study from a cross-sectional sample of organizations in the United States. The sample contained responses from both sales managers and sales representatives, which composed matched dyads. Participation was solicited from both large and small organizations, some of which had strictly industrial-based sales forces and others that had both industrial and end-consumer sales forces. All the organizations involved in the data collection offered products that differed from one another. The specific industries represented in the data collection efforts included telecommunications, financial services, machine component manufacturing, and consumer goods wholesaling.

Sampling Frame

A mail survey solicited participation from sales managers and sales representatives. A packet of research materi-

als was mailed to the organizations. Each packet, addressed to the sales manager of the regional office, contained a sales manager questionnaire and sales representative questionnaires. Sales managers were asked to respond to the sales manager questionnaire before distributing sales representative questionnaires to their subordinates. A postage-paid return envelope, which was addressed directly to the researchers and contained the return address of the original organization, accompanied each survey given to sales managers and sales representatives. Finally, a brief reminder e-mail was sent to sales managers 2 weeks after the initial mailing. Overall, this process of coded data gathering followed successful dyadic data collection procedures that Lagace (1991) and Dubinsky et al. (1995) used.

Sample Characteristics

Questionnaires were distributed to 301 sales managers. Of these, 106 usable sales manager questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 35.2%. Questionnaires were distributed to 1,423 sales representatives. However, we could not match 7 of these questionnaires to corresponding sales managers, and thus we removed them, which left 1,416 sales representative questionnaires distributed. From these, 313 usable questionnaires were returned, equaling an original response rate of 22.1%. The resulting dyad size between the sales manager and his or her matched representatives was approximately 1 sales manager for every 3 sales representatives, a ratio that is consistent with previous research (Hartline and Ferrell 1996). We assessed the possibility of nonresponse bias by comparing the number of sales representatives per office of salesperson respondents and salesperson nonrespondents ($t = 0.617, p > .05$). This test indicated no significant difference between the two groups. Table 1 shows the sample characteristics of the sales manager and sales representative respondents.

Measurement Model

To analyze the data gathered from the participating sales managers and sales representatives, we used a structural equation model procedure using LISREL 8.3 (Joreskog and Sorbom 1999). Because of sample-size restrictions associated with the large number of measures used for both sales managers and sales representatives, we performed separate measurement model analyses for each sample group of responses. We assessed reliabilities of the individual measurement scales using Cronbach's (1951) coefficient α and Fornell and Larcker's (1981) composite reliability formula. All final factor loadings, reliability calculations, and scale items appear in the Appendix.

For the sample of 106 sales managers, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the 39 psychological climate items and the 12 empowerment items. As ex-

TABLE 1
Sales Manager and Sales Representative Characteristics

Characteristic	Sales Managers		Sales Representatives	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Race				
African American	13	12	59	19
Caucasian	83	78	235	75
Hispanic	1	1	5	2
Asian	1	1	3	1
Other	8	8	11	3
Age				
18 to 30	9	9	105	34
31 to 40	40	38	88	28
41 to 50	46	43	86	28
51 to 60	10	9	28	9
61 to 70	1	1	4	1
70 or older			2	<1
Income				
\$0 to \$25,000	0	0	7	2
\$25,001 to \$50,000	8	8	104	33
\$50,001 to \$75,000	27	25	74	24
\$75,001 to \$100,000	20	19	59	19
\$100,000 or more	51	48	69	22
Gender				
Male	93	88	201	64
Female	13	12	112	36
Marital status				
Single	8	8	81	26
Married	82	77	184	59
Divorced	14	13	42	13
Other	2	2	6	2
Mean number of years in present job		7.9		5.2
Range, number of years in present job		0.5 to 31		0.1 to 40
Mean number of years of employment in sales-related jobs		13.8		9.9
Range, number of years of employment in sales-related jobs		0.5 to 38		0.1 to 42

pected, all the empowerment items loaded onto the 12-item factor for empowerment (Spreitzer 1995). We expected the 39 psychological climate items to load onto 8 different factors: trust, fairness, support, autonomy, recognition, cohesion, innovation, and pressure (Koys and DeCotiis 1991). The initial CFA indicated that 33 of the 39 items loaded at .73 or higher. However, 2 of the items had factor loadings below .50. Therefore, as Anderson and Gerbing (1988) recommended, before we attempted to reassess the CFA for the sales manager data, we removed these 2 items, which left a 37-item scale that measured the individual perceptions of psychological climate.

However, before we attempted this reassessment, we identified a second potential problem with the original CFA results, which indicated that the observed measures for the psychological climate dimensions of support, trust, and fairness were highly related. Trust was highly correlated with fairness (.98) and support (.99), and fairness and support were also highly correlated (.98). These correlations possibly indicate that the three components of psychological climate are actually measuring the same perception (Anderson and Gerbing 1982). Previous research

in the area of sales management indicates that these three factors might assess the same perception (Strutton et al. 1993). Swift and Campbell (1998) also found that in general, trust, support, and fairness loaded on the same factor dimension, whereas the other five dimensions remained independent. The common thread underlying the 14 items constituting the three original dimensions is the interpersonal relationship between a sales manager and his or her subordinate. Therefore, following Swift and Campbell's recommendation, we combined the 14 items previously divided into support, trust, and fairness into one dimension of psychological climate, which we labeled support; the remaining dimensions were unchanged.

We completed a second CFA on the sales manager responses, in which 37 items loaded onto the six adjusted dimensions of psychological climate, and the 12 empowerment items still loaded on the single factor of empowerment. The fit of the overall measurement model specified in the adjusted CFA produced results that approached the generally acceptable levels that Bagozzi and Yi (1988) specified. Although the chi-square value (1,952.115) was significant, it was less than the degrees of freedom mul-

multiplied by two ($1,106 \times 2 = 2,212$), initially indicating that the large sample size might be contributing to the significant chi-square value for this model (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black 1998). In addition, the root mean square residual (RMSR) was .08, approaching the acceptable .05 cutoff level; the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was .70; and the normed fit index (NFI) was .74. Although these figures fell slightly below the general acceptance levels (Bagozzi and Yi 1988), the strong factor loadings from acceptable measurement scales, the strong individual reliability scores, and the acceptable chi-square value compared with twice the degrees of freedom indicate that the measurement model for the CFA of manager responses was sufficiently reliable.

We used 313 sales representative responses in a separate CFA to test the reliability of the scales that measured transformational leadership behavior (20 items), customer-oriented selling (24 items), the dimensions of psychological climate (39 items), empowerment (12 items), and subjective performance (10 items). Again, similar to the sales managers' responses, the same 2 items from the representative psychological climate scale had unacceptable factor loadings. Furthermore, the CFA results for the sales representative sample again indicated that the psychological climate dimensions of trust, support, and fairness were highly related. Therefore, we used the same procedure in adjusting the sales representative CFA as that in the adjusted sales manager CFA. Specifically, we removed 2 items from the analysis, and we combined the 14 items measuring trust, support, and fairness into the single dimension of support and then reassessed them. Again, as the Appendix shows, when we analyzed the strong adjusted factor loadings, high reliability scores, and the acceptable overall model fit to the data, the sales representative responses indicated acceptable measurement scales.

Finally, to assess the discriminant validity of the measures, we used two separate assessments. First, using the method that Gaski (1984) suggested, we compared the correlation between each construct with the reliability estimates for each construct. Discriminant validity is established if the correlation between the two constructs is not greater than their respective reliability estimates. The results of our study indicate that all reliability estimates were greater than their mutual correlations, indicating discriminant validity. Second, we also assessed the discriminant validity between each pair of measures. We completed this process using the 95% confidence interval approach, which ensures that the correlation plus or minus two standard errors does not include the value of one (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). None of the discriminant validity score confidence intervals contained the value of one, indicating discriminant validity for both the sales manager and the sales representative responses.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

We tested the hypotheses proposed herein using structural equation modeling with LISREL 8.3 (Joreskog and Sorbom 1999). Because sales managers were the ultimate unit of analysis, we aggregated (averaged) the sales representatives' responses and matched them to their corresponding sales managers' responses. In this way, one sales manager's response was eventually matched with multiple corresponding sales representatives' responses. As Hartline and Ferrell (1996) showed, aggregating and matching variables allows for the assessment of discriminant validity as well as the creation of a single data set in which the cases represent the sales managers rather than individual sales representatives. Using sales managers as the ultimate unit of analysis also allowed for the examination of sales managers' overall impact on their sales forces rather than their impact on each salesperson. Because sales managers are evaluated most often on the basis of their abilities and skills to lead their entire sales forces rather than individual salespeople, analyzing sales managers and their overall impact on their sales forces is appropriate for the present study.

Therefore, we analyzed the data from 106 sales managers and 313 matched sales representatives. We represented each latent construct with a single index that we calculated by averaging the item scores on the construct's scale. Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommendation, we fixed each construct loading (λ) at the square root of its construct reliability, and we fixed each error term at one less the construct reliability. We used the correlation matrix provided in Table 2 as the input. We first evaluated the proposed model by estimating the standardized path coefficients for the hypothesized links in Figure 1. We present both the coefficient value and the corresponding t value for each originally proposed hypothesis in Table 3; we also include the initial model fit statistics for the proposed relationships stated in Hypotheses 1 to 10 and the coefficients of determination for each dependent variable. We discuss each hypothesis test result next.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b pertain to a sales force member's psychological climate perceptions and their influence on his or her empowerment perceptions. For sales managers, the results indicate that three of the six dimensions of psychological climate exhibited the expected influence on the sales managers' empowerment perceptions. The dimensions of support (coefficient value of .483) and autonomy (.407) had a significant ($p < .01$), positive influence on the empowerment perceptions of sales managers, and the dimension of pressure (–.213) had a significant, negative impact on the empowerment perceptions of sales managers. The remaining three dimensions, recognition (–.031), cohesion (–.149), and innovation (–.019), had nonsignificant influences on sales managers' empowerment perceptions.

TABLE 2
Correlation Matrix

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
M support	5.43	1.30																	
M autonomy	5.41	1.38	.81*																
M recognition	5.06	1.49	.82*	.67*															
M cohesion	5.09	1.29	.79*	.70*	.68*														
M innovation	5.16	1.33	.78*	.65*	.71*	.71*													
M pressure	3.79	1.71	-.39*	-.37*	-.40*	-.45*	-.25*												
M empowerment	5.45	1.28	.61*	.62*	.48*	.44*	.46*	-.14											
Customer-oriented selling	7.03	1.98	.12	.08	.00	.10	.08	-.06	.12										
R support	5.44	1.63	.54*	.53*	.50*	.38*	.40*	-.33*	.52*	.15									
R autonomy	5.17	1.61	.65*	.63*	.58*	.52*	.47*	-.40*	.53*	.22*	.82*								
R recognition	5.22	1.72	.50*	.52*	.44*	.33*	.31*	-.32*	.47*	.07	.92*	.76*							
R cohesion	5.10	1.64	.55*	.52*	.59*	.50*	.43*	-.34*	.43*	.18*	.86*	.81*	.81*						
R innovation	5.04	1.53	.45*	.45*	.44*	.32*	.33*	-.26*	.47*	.08	.91*	.74*	.84*	.80*					
R pressure	3.79	1.64	-.39*	-.38*	-.34*	-.33*	-.37*	-.27*	-.36*	-.09	-.59*	-.50*	-.61*	-.58*	-.49*				
R empowerment	5.40	1.36	.64*	.58*	.55*	.45*	.44*	-.33*	.53*	.22*	.85*	.83*	.81*	.78*	.78*	-.57*			
Subjective performance	3.89	.74	.46*	.48*	.38*	.31*	.35*	-.13	.40*	.34*	.77*	.75*	.75*	.70*	.71*	-.47*	.81*		
Transformational leadership	3.71	1.05	.61*	.62*	.46*	.42*	.42*	-.34*	.60*	.26*	.90*	.77*	.86*	.81*	.83*	-.58*	.79*	.77*	
Objective performance	8.34	2.09	.15	.01	.16	.08	.01	.12	.08	.58*	.23*	.03	.13	.24*	.25*	-.12	.16	.19*	.11

NOTE: M = manager; R = sales representative. Sample size: sales managers = 106, sales representatives = 313.

* $p < .05$.

For sales representatives, the results were similar. The same three dimensions of psychological climate exhibited the expected influence on the sales representatives' empowerment perceptions. The dimensions of support (.261) and autonomy (.429) had a significant, positive influence, and the dimension of pressure (-.196) had a significant, negative impact. The remaining three dimensions, recognition (.100), cohesion (-.046), and innovation (.071), had nonsignificant influences on sales representatives' empowerment perceptions. Therefore, Hypotheses 1a and 1b are partially supported.

We tested the influence of a sales manager's perceptions of psychological climate on his or her use of transformational leadership in Hypothesis 2. The results indicate that three of the six dimensions of psychological climate exhibited the expected influence on transformational leadership. The dimensions of support (.444) and autonomy (.254) had a significant, positive influence, and the psychological climate dimension of pressure (-.193) had a significant, negative impact. The dimension of cohesion (-.238) had a significant, negative influence on the use of transformational leadership in sales managers, which is in direct opposition to the proposed positive relationship. The remaining two sales manager psychological climate dimensions, recognition (-.116) and innovation (-.026), had nonsignificant influences on managers' use of transformational leadership. These results partially support Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 is supported; the results indicate that a sales manager's perceptions of empowerment signifi-

cantly influence his or her use of transformational leadership (.311). Hypotheses 4 to 6 address sales managers' use of transformational leadership and its impact on sales representatives' empowerment, psychological climate perceptions, and customer-oriented selling. The results indicate that Hypotheses 5 and 6 are supported, but Hypothesis 4 is not supported. The coefficients in Table 3 denote that sales managers' use of transformational leadership had a positive, significant influence on sales representatives' customer-oriented selling (.747), as we predicted in Hypothesis 6. The results also indicated that transformational leadership positively and significantly predicted five of the psychological climate dimensions, including support (.895), autonomy (.766), recognition (.861), cohesion (.809), and innovation (.832), and negatively and significantly predicted the lone negative dimension of psychological climate, pressure (-.580). Hypothesis 4 is the only transformational leadership hypothesis that receives no support; the results indicated that transformational leadership did not have the expected positive and significant influence on sales representatives' perceptions of empowerment (.069).

Hypothesis 7 is the final hypothesis involving sales representatives' psychological climate perceptions. The results showed that Hypothesis 7 is partially supported, because three of the six psychological climate dimensions exhibited the expected influence on representatives' customer-oriented selling. Support (.187), autonomy (.193), and cohesion (.171) had a positive, significant influence on customer-oriented selling, whereas the remaining three

TABLE 3
Standardized Coefficient Estimates of Antecedents of Customer-Oriented Selling

Path	Hypothesis	Hypothesized Model			Final Model		
		Coefficient	t Value	R ²	Coefficient	t Value	R ²
COS → OBJPERF	10a	.574*	6.89	.350	.580*	7.26	.343
REMP → OBJPERF	9a	.029	0.33				
COS → SUBJPERF	10b	.173*	3.02	.683	.173*	3.06	.676
REMP → SUBJPERF	9b	.774*	12.82		.774*	13.09	
TFL → COS	6	.747*	12.27	.470	.583*	8.17	.451
RSUPP → COS	7	.187*	2.92		.330*	2.79	
RAUTO → COS	7	.193*	2.58		.250*	2.90	
RRECOG → COS	7	-.102	-0.50				
RCOHES → COS	7	.171*	2.27		.205*	2.33	
RINNOV → COS	7	-.121	-0.26				
RPRESS → COS	7	.056	0.51				
REMP → COS	8	.262*	2.37		.269*	2.86	
TFL → REMF	4	.069	0.40	.775			.768
RSUPP → REMF	1b	.261*	2.51		.439*	6.52	
RAUTO → REMF	1b	.429*	5.95		.424*	6.60	
RRECOG → REMF	1b	.100	1.10				
RCOHES → REMF	1b	-.046	-0.58				
RINNOV → REMF	1b	.071	0.85				
RPRESS → REMF	1b	-.196*	-2.68		-.202*	-2.86	
TFL → RSUPP	5	.895*	19.96	.801	.895*	20.08	.800
TFL → RAUTO	5	.766*	11.86	.587	.766*	11.92	.585
TFL → RRECOG	5	.861*	16.84	.741	.861*	16.94	.740
TFL → RCOHES	5	.809*	13.69	.654	.809*	13.77	.653
TFL → RINNOV	5	.832*	14.92	.692	.832*	15.01	.690
TFL → RPRESS	5	-.580*	-7.08	.336	-.580*	-7.13	.335
MSUPP → TFL	2	.444*	5.48	.516	.344*	3.39	.507
MAUTO → TFL	2	.254*	2.31		.252*	2.31	
MRECOG → TFL	2	-.116	-0.92				
MCOHES → TFL	2	-.238* ^a	-2.90		-.253* ^a	-3.12	
MINNOV → TFL	2	-.026	-0.22				
MPRESS → TFL	2	-.193*	-2.37		-.186*	-2.36	
MEMP → TFL	3	.311*	3.32		.314*	3.39	
MSUPP → MEMP	1a	.483*	2.60	.443	.355*	2.76	.435
MAUTO → MEMP	1a	.407*	3.15		.383*	3.00	
MRECOG → MEMP	1a	-.031	-0.23				
MCOHES → MEMP	1a	-.149	-1.11				
MINNOV → MEMP	1a	-.019	-0.15				
MPRESS → MEMP	1a	-.213*	-2.31		-.238*	-2.69	

NOTE: Hypothesized model fit statistics: $df=115$, $\chi^2=261.24$, root mean square residual = .058, normed fit index = .81, goodness-of-fit index = .91, comparative fit index = .94; final model fit statistics: $df=95$, $\chi^2=185.43$, root mean square residual = .041, normed fit index = .88, goodness-of-fit index = .93, comparative fit index = .96

a. Hypothesized as a positive relationship.

* $p < .01$.

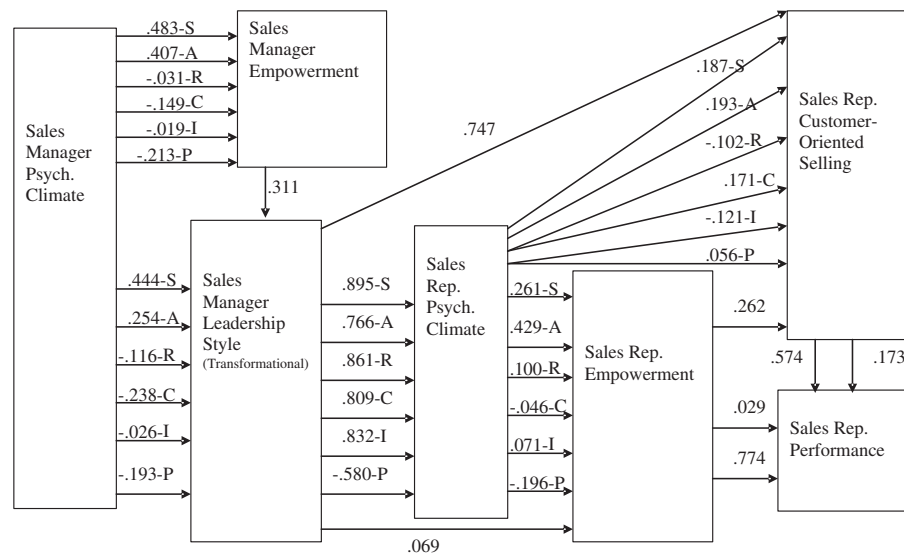
dimensions, recognition (–.102), innovation (–.121), and pressure (.056), did not exhibit a significant influence.

Hypothesis 8 is supported; empowerment perceptions positively and significantly influenced customer-oriented selling (.262). Hypothesis 9b is supported; the results indicated that a sales representative's empowerment perceptions positively and significantly influenced his or her subjective performance (.774). In contrast, Hypothesis 9a is not supported; a sales representative's empowerment perceptions did not significantly influence his or her objective

performance (.029). Hypotheses 10a and 10b are both supported; a sales representative's customer-oriented selling exhibits a positive, significant influence on his or her objective (.574) and subjective (.173) performance.

After assessment of the original 13 hypothesized paths by means of LISREL 8.3 (Joreskog and Sorbom 1999), the results indicated that 2 of the proposed relationships, Hypotheses 4 and 9a, are not supported. The results of this original structural equation model also indicate that Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2, and 5 are only partially supported.

FIGURE 2
Original Structural Model of Hypothesized Relationships and Parameter Estimates



NOTE: Psychological climate dimensions: S = support; A = autonomy; R = recognition; C = cohesion; I = innovation; P = pressure; Psych. = psychological; Rep. = representative. Bold type indicates $p < .01$.

The overall results of the original structural model and coefficient results appear in Figure 2.

More Parsimonious Model

To explain the supported relationships in the original model better, we removed the paths we identified as being not supported and assessed a modified structural model using only the supported paths from the original model. Anderson and Gerbing (1988) recommended this procedure if it is not used as a substitute for a priori hypothesis development. The removal of the nonsignificant paths from the structural model enabled the modified model to become more parsimonious, providing better explanations of the supported paths and a stronger fit of the model to the data. The final modified model and corresponding coefficient results appear in Figure 2. The coefficient results of the modified structural model appear in Figure 3.

A comparison of the revised model's coefficient scores and t values indicated that all the significant paths from the original model remained significant, and all but one were in the predicted direction. The path between a sales manager's perception of the psychological climate variable of cohesion and his or her use of transformational leadership, which was hypothesized as a positive relationship but shown to be negative in the original model, also remained in the revised model. As Table 3 shows, the model fit statistics also indicated that the revised model provided a better fit and was more parsimonious: the RMSR dropped from .058 to .041, the GFI rose from .91 to .93, the NFI

rose from .81 to .88, and the comparative fit index rose from .94 to .96. Moreover, the variance explained for each dependent variable remained significant, and the results from dividing the chi-square value by the degrees of freedom dropped from 2.27 to 1.95, indicating that the chi-square of the revised model was within the recommended level of tolerance (Hair et al. 1998). These statistics indicate that the final revised model provided a good fit to the data. The coefficients also indicate that except for one component of psychological climate at the managerial level, the remaining hypotheses are supported in their predicted directions.

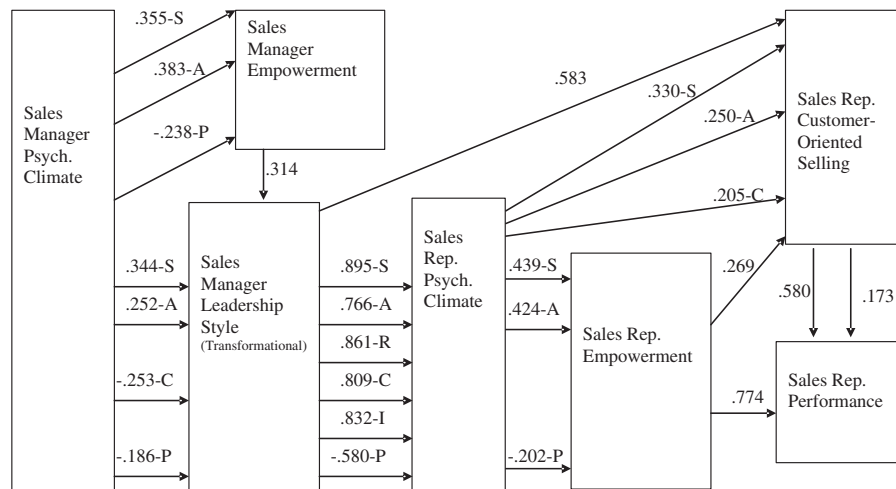
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Salesperson Variables

Three separate variables have a significant, positive affect on customer-oriented selling. A salesperson's empowerment perceptions, a sales manager's use of transformational leadership principles, and the salesperson psychological climate dimensions of support, autonomy, and cohesion are all significant predictors of customer-oriented selling.

The strong impact of transformational leadership on customer-oriented selling indicates that sales managers who want to establish strong customer orientations among their salespeople should focus on transformational leadership. Sales managers should concentrate on the qualitative

FIGURE 3
Revised Structural Model of Hypothesized Relationships and Parameter Estimates



NOTE: Psychological climate dimensions: S = support; A = autonomy; R = recognition; C = cohesion; I = innovation; P = pressure. Psych. = psychological; rep. = representative. Bold type indicates $p < .01$.

aspects of leading and guiding salespeople. MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Rich (2001) found that transformational leadership influences salespeople to perform beyond the call of duty and that transformational leadership behaviors have much stronger predictive ability for all types of salesperson performance than transactional leadership behaviors. Sales managers could best establish customer-oriented salespeople by creating workplace goals and values that are consistent with the values of the salespeople.

The results also indicate that empowered salespeople are able to focus greater attention on selling products that provide significant benefits for both themselves and their customers. Although it is often assumed that salespeople must be free to make decisions, we argue that to feel empowered, customer-oriented salespeople need more than freedom to make decisions. Work competence is critical in developing customer-oriented salespeople. Therefore, organizations that lack qualified sales training and product education courses likely create salespeople who lack the necessary foundation for empowerment. The same logic holds true for organizations that fail to show salespeople the importance of their work. This creates salespeople who do not recognize the impact of their production on overall profitability and undermines salespersons' empowerment, which in turn decreases their customer orientation.

Theoretically, the significant relationship established between empowerment and customer-oriented selling points to a previously unexamined possibility for conceptually explaining salesperson behavior. Empowerment has

yet to receive critical empirical assessment in the sales management field. Although it is often assumed to be important, we show that empowerment not only is a critical component that influences customer orientation levels but also has a significant impact on salespeople's subjective performance levels. Although job enrichment theory has been analyzed in sales management in terms of the impact of increasing the number of tasks assigned to salespeople, empowerment extends job enrichment theory possibilities by creating a greater focus on work impact, competence, and self-determination. Focusing attention on the aforementioned subdimensions of empowerment creates an entirely new avenue of research possibilities for sales management. Although significant research has involved examining sales force attitudes and behaviors, no known study has used the concept of empowerment to explain the rationale behind salesperson attitudes and behavior, in terms of both overall salesperson performance and salesperson contact behavior with clients. Therefore, our results provide new possibilities for understanding sales force attitudes and behaviors.

Finally, the results indicate that support, autonomy, and cohesion positively predict customer-oriented selling, whereas recognition, innovation, and pressure do not significantly influence it. The positive and significant results from this relationship suggest that managers who desire salespeople with high levels of customer orientation should be more concerned with establishing interpersonal relationships with their subordinates. These relationships allow salespersons to possess a sense of self-determination

in completing their jobs and to strive to make the overall work environment one that focuses on team spirit and compassion for others.

Sales Manager Variables

This study also provides insight into the relationships between critical sales manager variables. For example, support and autonomy play a critical role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of managers. Specifically, positive perceptions of support and autonomy lead to greater sales manager empowerment perceptions and transformational leadership. In addition, the less the perceived pressure in an organization's psychological climate, the greater a sales manager's perception of empowerment and his or her use of transformational leadership. Furthermore, the three psychological climate variables (i.e., support, autonomy, and pressure) that influence sales managers' empowerment are the same three psychological climate variables that predict salespersons' empowerment perceptions.

Combining these results has important theoretical implications. In the extant literature, all six dimensions of psychological climate are proposed as critical influence variables affecting both sales managers' and salespersons' behaviors and attitudes (Strutton et al. 1993; Swift and Campbell 1998). However, our findings suggest that two of the psychological dimensions, recognition and innovation, are not significant in terms of predicting and developing stronger relational-selling-based salespeople. Furthermore, the psychological climate dimension of cohesion has a significant, positive influence on customer-oriented selling and a significant, negative influence on a sales manager's use of transformational leadership. Although the original operationalization of the psychological climate construct validates the use of recognition, innovation, and cohesion as dimensions of psychological climate (Koys and DeCotiis 1991), we suggest that a modified version is more appropriate in a sales setting.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Initially, the scales used to collect the data for this study relied on self-report measures of sales force behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions. However, we took steps to limit the common method variance bias often observed in self-report measures. Specifically, we guaranteed anonymity to respondents and never asked them to provide their names. We also used reverse-coded items in the mea-

surement scales to prevent or identify questionnaires that were completed without thought or consideration. Finally, we used multiple organizations from a variety of industries in the data collection to eliminate method biases in particular industries.

Another limitation is the possibility that both sales managers and sales representatives participating in the study provided socially desirable responses. Because specialized coding was required to match sales managers' returned surveys with sales representatives' returned surveys, we were careful to place coding marks or symbols discreetly within the survey or on the return envelope, which lessened the possibility that respondents would think that their identities could be determined. In addition, we guaranteed anonymity to all respondents.

Only recently have sales management researchers considered the possible influence of greater psychological empowerment in a sales-related setting. As discussed previously, empowerment plays an important role in both salespersons' customer-oriented selling and salespersons' performance. Different levels of psychological empowerment create various differences in critical salesperson behaviors and attitudes. Thus, empowerment should not simply be an assumption in sales settings. Instead, understanding which dimensions of empowerment lead to stronger sales performance becomes a critical issue for organizations.

The scientific investigation of relational selling is in its formative stages. Further theory development and examination are required if sales management researchers are to understand the variables influencing, and the impact of, customer-oriented selling. The results of our study will ideally create the desire for further examination of the concept of customer-oriented selling. For sales organizations seeking to improve the long-term viability of their customer relationships, this extension of relational selling research is likely to be both desired and essential.

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APPENDIX
Scale Items, Measurement Model Factor Loadings, and Reliabilities

Scale anchors: 5a = *poor* (1) to *excellent* (5); (5b) = *not at all* (1) to *frequently, if not always* (5); (7) = *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7); (9) = *true for none of my customers* (1) to *true for all of my customers* (9).

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Sales Manager</i>	<i>Salesperson</i>
Psychological climate ^a (7)		
Support (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97, .98$; composite reliability = $.97, .98$)		
My supervisor has a lot of personal integrity.	.84	.83
I can count on a fair shake from my supervisor.	.88	.93
My supervisor is behind me 100%.	.88	.93
My supervisor is the kind of person I can level with.	.89	.93
I can count on my supervisor to help me when I need it.	.83	.92
I can count on my supervisor to keep the things I tell her/him confidential.	.84	.90
My supervisor is easy to talk to about job-related problems.	.88	.94
My supervisor backs me up and lets me learn from my mistakes.	.90	.94
My supervisor is interested in me getting ahead in the company.	.86	.91
My supervisor is not likely to give me bad advice.	.78	.91
My supervisor does not play favorites.	.76	.82
My supervisor follows through on her/his commitments.	.81	.91
If my supervisor terminates someone, the person probably deserved it.	.81	.86
The objectives my supervisor sets for my job are reasonable.	.71	.83
My supervisor is not likely to give me a "greasy meal."	Dropped	Dropped
Autonomy (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89, .93$; composite reliability = $.90, .93$)		
I set the performance standards for my job.	.62	.74
I schedule my own work activities.	.88	.87
I determine my own work procedures.	.91	.88
I organize my work as I see best.	.89	.88
I make most of the decisions that affect the way my job is performed.	.68	.86
Recognition (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92, .95$; composite reliability = $.92, .94$)		
I can count on a pat on the back when I perform well.	.81	.90
My supervisor is quick to recognize good performance.	.90	.94
My supervisor knows what my strengths are and lets me know.	.89	.95
My supervisor uses me as an example of what to do.	.84	.83
The only time I hear about my performance is when I screw up.	Dropped	Dropped
Cohesion (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88, .95$; composite reliability = $.89, .85$)		
There is a lot of "team spirit" in the company.	.66	.88
In this company, people take a personal interest in one another.	.73	.92
In this company, people tend to get along with each other.	.86	.93
In this company, people pitch in to help each other out.	.85	.93
In this company, people tend to have a lot in common.	.79	.82
Innovation (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92, .95$; composite reliability = $.92, .95$)		
My leader encourages me to find new ways around old problems.	.86	.89
My supervisor likes me to try new ways of doing my job.	.85	.90
My supervisor "talks up" new ways of doing things.	.83	.92
My supervisor encourages me to develop my ideas.	.86	.92
My supervisor encourages me to improve on his/her methods.	.79	.80
Pressure (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89, .86$; composite reliability = $.90, .86$)		
I feel like I never have a day off.	.65	.74
Too many employees at my level in the company get "burned out" by the demands of their jobs.	.90	.83
At home I sometimes dread hearing the telephone ring.	.87	.75
I have too much work and too little time to do it in.	.87	.81
Most employees consider the working conditions in this organization enjoyable and relaxing.	Dropped	Dropped
Customer-oriented selling ^b (9) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .98$, composite reliability = $.98$)		
I keep alert for weaknesses in a customer's personality so I can use them to put pressure on him or her to buy.		.70
I spend more time trying to persuade a customer to buy than I do trying to discover his or her needs.		.81
I try to give customers an accurate expectation of what the product will do for them.		.89
I try to achieve my goals by satisfying customers.		.91
A good salesperson has to have the customer's best interest in mind.		.92
I try to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a customer.		.91
I imply to a customer that something is beyond my control when it is not.		.66
I try to sell as much as I can rather than satisfy customers.		.75

(continued)

APPENDIX (continued)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Sales Manager</i>	<i>Salesperson</i>
I treat a customer as a rival.		.83
I offer the product of mine that is best suited to the customer's problem.		.89
I am willing to disagree with a customer in order to help him/her make a better decision.		.63
I try to sell a customer all I can convince him or her to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy.		.73
I decide what products to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to buy, not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run.		.82
I paint too rosy a picture of my products to make them sound as good as possible.		.72
I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product that helps him or her solve that problem.		.87
I try to help customers achieve their goals.		.92
If I am not sure a product is right for a customer, I will still apply pressure to get him or her to buy.		.78
I answer a customer's questions about products as correctly as I can.		.86
I begin the sales presentation for a product before exploring a customer's needs with him or her.		.76
I get customers to discuss their service needs with me.		.86
I try to influence a customer by information rather than by pressure.		.86
It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product to a customer.		.77
I try to figure out what a customer's needs are.		.85
I pretend to agree with customers to please them.		.61
Empowerment ^c (7) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95, .96$; composite reliability = .95, .96)		
The work I do is very important to me.	.77	.77
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	.82	.86
The work I do is meaningful to me.	.82	.82
I am confident about my ability to do my job.	.79	.87
I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.	.78	.90
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	.68	.77
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.	.80	.89
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.	.83	.86
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.	.74	.86
My impact on what happens in my department is large.	.75	.76
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.	.76	.66
I have significant influence on what happens in my department.	.75	.66
Subjective performance ^d (5a) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$, composite reliability = .94)		
Overall work attitude	.78	Overall sales or selling ability .84
Problem-solving effectiveness	.79	Overall performance improvement .82
Sales growth effort	.81	Activity reporting .74
Profitability of your sales effort	.79	Product knowledge .72
Overall job performance	.85	Achievement of overall sales objectives .79
Transformational leadership ^e (5b) (Cronbach's $\alpha = .98$, composite reliability = .98)		
My sales manager or sales supervisor . . .		
re-examines critical assumptions . . .	.80	acts in ways that83
talks about their . . .	.73	considers the moral and83
seeks differing perspectives . . .	.84	displays a sense of77
talks optimistically . . .	.81	articulates a compelling87
instills pride in me . . .	.84	considers me as having73
talks enthusiastically . . .	.86	gets me to look at82
specifies the importance . . .	.84	helps me to87
spends time . . .	.79	suggests new ways of87
goes beyond his/her . . .	.87	emphasizes the importance of87
treats me as an . . .	.83	expresses confidence that83
Overall model fit		
Sales managers: degrees of freedom = 1,106, $\chi^2 = 1,952.115$		
Model fit statistics: RMSR = .08, GFI = .70, adjusted GFI = .60, NFI = .74		
Sales representatives: degrees of freedom = 5,241, $\chi^2 = 9,718.361$		
Model fit statistics: RMSR = .05, GFI = .75, adjusted GFI = .73, NFI = .83		

NOTE: RMSR = root mean square residual; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; NFI = normed fit index.

a. Koys and DeCotiis (1991).

b. Saxe and Weitz (1982).

c. Spreitzer (1995).

d. Dubinsky et al. (1995), Yammarino and Dubinsky (1990).

e. Bass and Avolio (1995).

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