

THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF EMPATHY, TRUST AND CONFLICT AND THEIR IMPACT ON SALES PERFORMANCE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

RICHARD E. PLANK, University of South Florida Polytechnic

DAVID A. REID, Bowling Green State University

There is a great deal of evidence in the general interpersonal behavior literature that an individual's perceptions of another person's trust, empathy and conflict impacts behaviors toward that individual. This has also been found to be true in the business-to-business sales literature. Moreover, it has been found that these perceptions affect various aspects of the organizational buying process. Consequently, knowledge of the relative importance of these perceptions on organizational choice processes needs to be taken into consideration in decisions on hiring, training, and even sales strategy. However, while these factors have been studied, their relative importance has not. This paper develops a model of these constructs and then tests that model empirically in a specific business-to-business selling context. The results demonstrate the primacy of trust and empathy as predictors of sales success while suggesting that social conflict plays a relatively insignificant but interesting role.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to report on an exploratory study that examined the interrelationships between empathy, trust and conflict and their relationship to sales performance. As such, the research makes a number of unique contributions. To begin with, it is the first attempt at measuring all three of the above variables in a sales performance context. And while all three variables have been examined in the social sciences, this is the first study to offer consistent theoretical and operational definitions for all three variables that are grounded by the perceptions of other significant parties. It also presents two dependent variables – choice of vendors and relative salesperson performance.

The paper begins with a very brief review of the relevant conflict, empathy, trust, and sales effectiveness/performance literature that serves as the basis for the model. The rationale for that is simply conflict, trust, and empathy have been extensively studied and there is a

significant literature that has been reviewed in each area (e.g., Anonymous 2008; Comer and Drollinger 1999; Nair 2008; Seppanen, Blomqvist and Sundqvist 2007; and Swan, Bowers and Richardson 1999). In addition, most major empirical works have substantially reviewed the constructs as well, and in the general social sciences literature there are numerous reviews. Hence only the research in sales for each variable is examined and then research in other contexts which have addressed these conflicts together is addressed. The model is then tested first using path analysis, then logistic regression. The resultant findings and limitations of the research are discussed along with future research opportunities and managerial implications. As will be demonstrated, the findings suggest strong linkages between the variables and a strong linkage to buyer choice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sales performance on the part of individual salespeople is a broad topic. Many constructs have been proposed and tested which have purported to impact performance. Much of this research can be subsumed under a model developed by Walker, Churchill and Ford

(1977) from the industrial and organizational psychology literature on work performance.

As noted above, each construct reviewed below has a long history of research, both conceptual and empirical, and each has been applied to personal selling. There is, however, very little research that examines the interrelationships of all three variables and none has been done in the sales or marketing literature. The research that has been done has taken many paths with very different theoretical and operational definitions of the constructs.

Conflict in Sales Research

The very nature of sales facilitates interpersonal conflict. From a sales management perspective, for example, interpersonal conflicts arise between sales managers and salespeople. From a selling process perspective, conflict takes the form of role conflict or it may arise from sales interactions between the salesperson and the buyer and thus would represent interpersonal conflict. Empirical research on conflict in the sales management domain, however, has been almost exclusively focused on role conflict (Walker, Churchill and Ford 1975). And while organizational buying behavior research, such as Day, Michaels, and Perdue (1988), has examined how buyers handle conflict with suppliers' representatives, there has only been limited research examining the nature of interpersonal conflict between the buyer and the salesperson (e.g. Reid et al. 2004; Newell and Plank 2007).

Various authors (Weitz and Bradford 1999; Bradford and Weitz 2009; and Bobot 2010) note that conflict is inherent in buyer-seller relationships. The challenge from a salesperson's perspective obviously then is to recognize when a conflict situation exists and to manage it accordingly. Unfortunately, sales research has shed little light on the nature of conflict in sales interactions or normative advice on how to deal with it. As selling increasingly focuses on relationship management and building long-term customer relationships, the on-going management of

conflict in the sales process becomes increasingly more important. This interpersonal level conflict is referred to as perceived sales interaction conflict by Reid et al. (2004). They define it as the perception of conflict generated during sales interactions between a salesperson and a buyer.

But perhaps the biggest driver of conflict and what makes it critical to understand is the notion of adaptation at the organizational level. Significant research has focused on organizational adaptation (Brennan, Turnbull and Wilson 2003) and has documented the nature of conflict involved in organizational adaptation activities both at the organizational and individual level within those organizations. While organizations adapt some aspect of their businesses as they continually interact with various network actors, the actual adaptation by the organization is as a result of the actors, driven by their organization roles, and how they deal with conflict among themselves.

Research examining conflict in organizations has demonstrated that it is important to recognize the different dimensions of conflict that may be present in a given situation (Jehn 1997). Given the nature of the sales process and drawing on existing conflict literature, sales interaction conflict can be seen as consisting of two types of conflict: relationship conflict and task conflict. These can be defined in a sales context as follows:

Relationship conflict refers to the existence of interpersonal incompatibilities between a salesperson and a buyer. These interpersonal incompatibilities may include tension, animosity, or annoyance.

Task conflict refers to disagreements between a salesperson and a buyer about the content of tasks being performed. These disagreements could relate to differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions.

These definitions mirror those developed by Jehn (1995) and utilized by Simons and Peterson (2000), Amason (1996), and others.

In essence, relationship conflict has its basis in the people involved, while task conflict has its basis in the issues involved. The interpersonal nature of personal selling, we argue, calls for an examination of interpersonal conflict and both dimensions are important.

Empathy in Sales Research

In the sales literature the most frequently taken perspective of empathy is that of a trait personality construct, following the work of Greenberg and Mayer (1964), which is linked to sales performance. Such a view is useful and has been recently updated by Comer, Drollinger and Ding (1999). These authors note that as a trait, empathy is modified by the situation and impacts on the process. However, virtually all of the studies in the sales literature have examined some form of empathy and related it directly to sales (e.g., Dawson, Soper and Pettijohn 1992).

To test the impact of empathy on sales performance in a business-to-business context we employed the measure developed by Plank, Minton and Reid (1996) that defines empathy as an individual's perception that another person demonstrates that s/he both feels and understands the other individual's situation.

Trust in Sales Research

According to Dwyer and Lagace (1986), definitions of trust can be conceptualized in one of three ways. The first views trust as a personality trait or generalized expectancy (e.g., Rotter 1967). The second treats it as a predisposition toward another or belief that another will behave in a manner beneficial to the other party (e.g., Driscoll 1978). The third views it from the standpoint of risking behaviors (e.g., Schurr and Ozanne 1985), which reflects a willingness on the part of the buyer to accept the possibility of vulnerability on his/her part in the transaction.

A number of authors (e.g., Schurr and Ozanne 1985; Swan, Trawick, Rink and Roberts 1988; Pappas and Flaherty 2008) have examined

some aspect of trust within the buyer/seller dyad. This research has generally suggested a linkage between a set of trust earning components, trust, and success in sales. Research in trust building in sales has offered sets of components for trust building. Swan, Trawick and Silva (1987) for example, suggested that being dependable/reliable, honest/candid, competent, customer-oriented, and likable/friendly were all likely to lead to trust of the salesperson by the buyer. This logically suggests that some behaviors that salespeople execute lead to trust on the part of the buyer.

Sales research also indicates that sellers who develop a trusting perception on the part of their buyers are more likely to be successful than those who do not. It is widely accepted that trust and the development of a trusting perception in selling contexts is a necessary ingredient for long term sales success (e.g., Hawes 1994). Also, when queried, organizational buyers rank trustworthiness as one of the most important characteristics of a seller (Hayes and Hartley 1989).

The sales literature is fairly consistent on the definition of trust. For the most part, interpersonal trust relates to a belief on the part of the trusting person that obligations will be fulfilled. The Swan and Nolan (1985) definition reflects this. Specifically, they define trust as the situation where "the industrial buyer believes and feels that he can rely on what the salesperson says or promises to do in a situation where the buyer is dependent upon the salesperson's honesty and reliability (Swan and Nolan 1985, p. 40)." As defined, this reflects Dwyer and Lagace's (1986) notion of trust as a predisposition rather than personality or risking behaviors.

To date, however, the sales literature has viewed trust from a global perspective as an overall impression of the salesperson. However, the notion of global versus situation-specific trust is one that needs to be considered. As noted by Butler (1991), there is a tremendous amount of literature that supports the

importance of specific measures of trust performing much better in prediction and explanation.

In the buyer-seller literature, the specific object of trust has been limited. Specifically, research has concentrated purely on interpersonal trust, or trust of another person. However, when a buyer does business with a seller, trust of the salesperson is only one aspect of obligation; s/he also needs to consider the obligations or expected functions associated with the product/service itself and the company that stands behind the product/service. Therefore, the measure developed for this study is based on the idea that trust is based on multiple objects in buyer-seller relations. While these different dimensions of trust are likely to be correlated, they are unique dimensions and need to be captured. It is also suggested that certain behaviors that salespeople do are more likely to affect one or the other of the dimensions (Plank and Reid, 1994). In this study, the Plank, Reid and Pullins' (1999) definition is employed in a slightly modified form. We define trust as a global perception on the part of the buyer that the salesperson, product and company will fulfill their obligations as understood by the buyer. Individual components of trust are defined as follows:

Salesperson trust is the perception by the buyer that the salesperson will fulfill his/her obligations as understood by the buyer.

Product trust is the perception by the buyer that the product /service will fulfill its functions as understood by the buyer.

Company trust is the perception by the buyer that the company will fulfill all its obligations as understood by the buyer.

Studies of Constructs Jointly

Not surprisingly, there is little work that has examined all three constructs at the same time. A conceptual paper by Denton (1988) argues that managers having empathy and building trust would have an easier time of resolving

conflicts and by developing these attributes would experience less conflict, but he provides no empirical justification. Feldman (1980) also models the three concepts in examining marital discord. He suggests therapeutic solutions to build empathy and trust thereby reducing conflict and making conflict resolution easier. However, no test of this conceptualization was provided. There have been a number of empirical tests of various facets of the relationships between these three concepts (e.g., Langlois 1998; Newman 1997; Ward, McCormack and Hudson 1997; Williams 2002). Langlois measures the constructs based on the Plank and Reid (1994) model and their subsequent measures, but does not examine the interrelationships. Other research uses somewhat different theoretical definitions for their constructs. In Newman (1997), for example, the three constructs are confounded within the assessment of interpersonal relations measure which measures all three constructs and a number of others. None of the other studies mentioned above were useful for the purposes of the current study, primarily because the theoretical and operational definitions of the constructs are different across all of them. In summary, the various studies have either not offered empirical evidence as to the interrelationships of all variables or have made the evaluation difficult.

A number of studies have, however, examined the relationships between the variables of conflict and trust. But once again, all have either one or both of the constructs conceptually and/or operationalized differently. Kauser and Shaw (2001) found that trust was a good predictor of international strategic alliance success, but that higher degrees of conflict hindered success. LaBahn and Kohli (1997) found similar findings in ad agency/client relationships as did Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone (1998) in buyer seller relationships and Moore (1998) in logistical alliances. An earlier study by Young and Wilkerson (1988) within a marketing channels context clearly found that the level of trust was lower when conflict was present. In summary, the empirical evidence suggests a negative relationship between trust

and conflict. In general, when one is higher the other is lower.

Much less work has been done linking empathy and conflict. Harvey (1998) in a management context suggests that most conflict is caused by different viewpoints and that being empathetic will reduce that conflict, but does not offer data to support that conjecture. In the psychological literature, Baron (1993), Bissonnette, Rusbult and Kilpatrick (1997), and Richardson et al. (1994) link empathy to conflict and suggest the higher the empathy, the lower the conflict. This research appears to be very consistent, we have a negative relationship between empathy and conflict, but again none of it is causal suggesting a direction for the relationship.

Trust and empathy have been examined extensively in a number of contexts. However, the theoretical and operational definitions varied greatly across studies. Simons and Peterson (2000) found that trust moderated the relationship between task and relationship conflict and inferred that trust is a key to gaining benefits of task conflict without suffering the costs of relationship conflict. Thus, higher levels of trust would moderate any negative role of conflict in general and in this case they suggest that relationship conflict will not occur. DeRuyter and Wentzels (2000) found that trust and empathy were empirically discrete concepts but correlated. While Johnson (1971) showed how trust and empathy were related from a developmental perspective. With respect to the relationship between trust and empathy in different settings, Northouse (1977) demonstrated the relationship in a business setting, while Schneider (1984) did so in a counselor setting, and Semmes (1991) along with Redfern, Dancey and Dryden (1993) did likewise in health care settings.

In summary, this literature generally supports the notion that empathy and trust are positively related. Summarizing the literature on interrelationships of the three constructs there is general support for their interrelatedness. In general, trust and empathy are seen as being positively related. However, conflict is a more

complex situation. One could easily agree that conflict is negatively related to both trust and empathy. However, the social conflict research suggests that social conflict is composed of two related types of conflict – task and relationship conflict. The relationship between these two constructs and other constructs is not as clear.

Sales Performance

The notion of sales performance is not as obvious as it might first seem. Walker, Churchill and Ford (1979) first differentiated performance from effectiveness. They define performance as the evaluation of behaviors in terms of contributions to the goals of the organization. What many people define as sales performance, such as meeting/exceeding quotas, achieving a certain level of sales, and the like is what they refer to as effectiveness. These are summary measures or indices for outcomes for which the individual is at least partly responsible. The literature on behavior-based versus outcome-based sales force control systems has its roots in this dilemma (e.g., Anderson and Oliver 1987). There are literally dozens of effectiveness measures, but the behaviorally-based measures are much less developed. Churchill, Ford and Walker (1994) note the potential advantages of developing behaviorally-anchored rating scales (BARS) and while there is an extensive academic literature on these (e.g., Rarick and Baxter 1986) actual usage has been minimal with Bush et al. (1990) being the one example.

There are, of course, other ways of examining performance. One can use non-BARS scales to examine performance. The most extensively used scale to date has been that of Behrman and Perreault (1982). This scale has multiple items and was designed to be used by sales managers to evaluate the performance of their salespeople. Another way of measuring is by designing it into the actual research design. For example, in a study by Reid and Plank (1997), a single item measure of sales performance was used (i.e., whether the salesperson received the order or not). Half the sample reported on a

salesperson that received the order and the other half reported on salesperson who did not.

Figure 1 represents a testable research model derived from the extant research. Based on the empirical evidence discussed in the literature review and the proposed research model, we empirically examine from the buyer's perspective the five general research questions stated below:

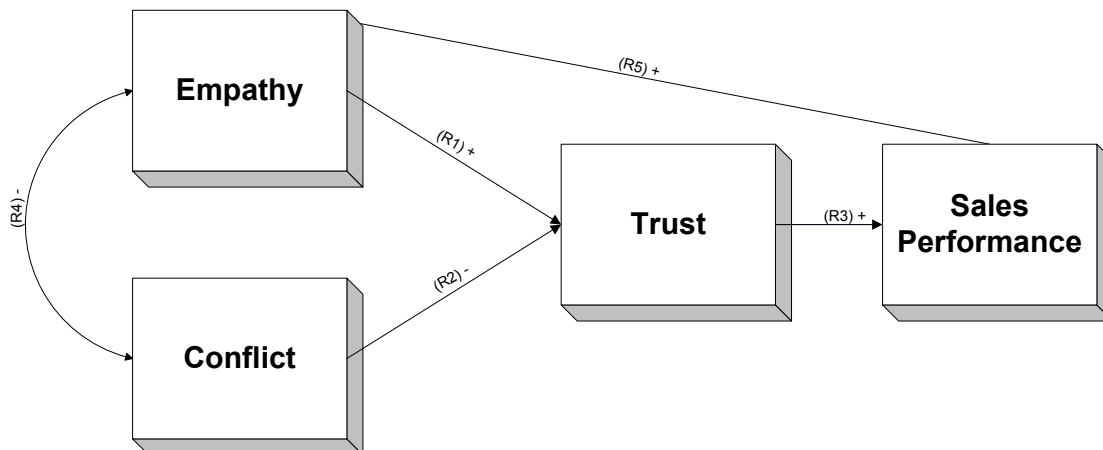
- RQ₁:** There is a positive relationship between the level of empathy a buyer perceives and the level of trust of the salesperson.
- RQ₂:** There is a negative relationship between the level of conflict and the level of trust of the salesperson.
- RQ₃:** There is a positive relationship between trust and the level of salesperson effectiveness.
- RQ₄:** There is a negative relationship between conflict and the level of empathy.
- RQ₅:** There is a positive relationship between empathy of the salesperson and the level of salesperson effectiveness.

As research by Simonds and Peterson (2000) and LaBahn and Kohli (1997) would suggest, empathy and conflict are related to perceptions of trust. Research (e.g., Lewicki and Wiethoff 2000) also suggests that trust is the dominant variable and empathy and conflict serve as antecedents to trust. Thus, we posit that empathy and conflict are linked and drive trust, and that trust is a key driver of performance. Empathy, in addition to being an antecedent of trust, as research by Baron (1993) suggests, also has a direct relationship to performance. In other words, empathy works both through trust and by itself (RQ₅). Research by Plank, Reid and Pullins (1999) demonstrated that trust is connected to sales effectiveness (RQ₃) while research by Richardson et al. (1994) has demonstrated a relationship between conflict and empathy (RQ₄).

MEASUREMENT AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, conflict is theoretically defined following Jehn (1995). The measure used is one developed by Amason (1996), which is based on Jehn's (1995) work. Amason's measure has been used repeatedly (e.g.,

Figure 1: Theoretical Model of the Impact on Empathy, Conflict, and Trust in Sales Performance



Pearson, Ensley and Amason 2002) and has a demonstrated history of robust reliability and validity.

Empathy was measured using a scale developed by Plank, Minton and Reid (1996). This eight-item scale produces a single factor measurement model and has been used in a similar context with demonstrated reliability and validity. It incorporates both affective and cognitive indicators.

Trust was measured using the scale developed by Plank, Reid and Pullins (1999). This scale was also shown to have good validity and reliability in its initial use.

Performance was measured in two ways. The first was a single item scale developed for this study and is a perceptual measure. For this first measure, respondents were simply asked to compare the salesperson they were reporting on to other salespeople they do business with via an overall summary measure. While other self-report measures could have been used (such as Behrman and Perreault 1982), those measures were designed for sales management respondents. The current study's respondents are purchasing agents who are not capable of answering many of the specific questions utilized in other self-report measures. Thus, a single question was used that asked respondents to compare the effectiveness of the salesperson they were reporting on against others with whom they do business.

The second measure of performance was designed directly into the study. The sample was randomly split in half. Half the respondents were asked to respond to the questionnaire vis á vis a salesperson who they had recently given an order. The other half were asked to respond to the questionnaire vis á vis a salesperson to whom they did not give an order. Respondents were asked to respond to the questions in the questionnaire in the context of a choice situation where they had the option and ability to choose from one or more suppliers. This methodology has a number of advantages. For instance, while buyers are

responding directly to the independent variables (e.g., trust, conflict, and empathy), they are not responding directly to the dependent variable (e.g., effectiveness) thus limiting the possibility of common method bias. Secondly, the nature of the design randomly assigns each respondent to one or the other scenarios (purchase vs. no purchase), thereby eliminating choice bias and the built in differences that frequently occur when you ask a respondent to compare both cases at the same time. This represents a more conservative design so that any differences observed are likely to be more realistic.

Demographic and situational variables of various types were also measured to provide a profile of the sample relative to the population from which it was drawn. These variables also provide additional data on buyer center variables.

The study's measures of conflict, empathy, and trust performance are contained in the appendix.

The Study

A list of 5000 randomly selected names was obtained from the Institute for Supply Management. This list was cleaned of all individuals not currently employed by a firm; this resulted in the deletion of students and retired persons who would not be in a position to answer the questionnaire. From this cleaned list 1800 names were randomly selected and mailed the questionnaire. Given the study's limited budget, a single wave mailing with no pre-notification or reminder was used. Of the total mailings, only 12 were undeliverable, making the list 99.5 percent deliverable. Of those 1788 actual deliveries, a total of 481 completed usable questionnaires were received for a response rate of 26.8 percent. Of the 481 responses, 251 responses were for situations where the salesperson received an order and 230 where the salesperson did not.

In order to explore possible non-response bias a comparison was made of early (first quartile) and late (last quartile) respondents in terms of

their demographic profile and responses to the behavioral items, in this case mean conflict scores (Armstrong and Overton 1977). The resulting Chi-square and ANOVA tests showed no significant differences, which suggest a lack of non-response bias.

The single item measure of performance asked respondents to rate the salesperson using a seven-point scale (where 1 was strongly disagree and 7 was strongly agree) in terms of the following statement: "This salesperson is among the best salespeople who have called on me."

The mean for this item was 5.09 (SD 1.51) for salespeople that received an order and 2.91 (SD 1.75) for those that did not.

Demographics

Demographic variables collected included the gender of the respondent, type of business, number of employees, and the respondent's years of purchasing experience. The sample consisted of 66.5 percent male and 33.5 percent female respondents. Manufacturing (56.3 percent) dominated the industries represented in

**TABLE 1:
First Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis Of Conflict Scale**

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Parameter Estimate
Affective Conflict			
Affcon2		1.63	.8240
Affcon3		1.72	.9387
Affcon4		1.65	.7900
Composite Reliability	.902		
Variance Extracted	.758		
Cognitive Conflict			
Cogcon1		2.30	.7702
Cogcon2		2.38	.8159
Cogcon3		2.44	.8072
Composite Reliability	.840		
Variance Extracted	.637		

All Estimates Significant p<.01 AGFI = .9591; CFI = .9975; NNFI = .9953; RMR = .031; Chi-Square = 9.611; Df= 8; p<.293

Correlation Matrix:

	Aff1	Aff2	Aff3	Cog1	Cog2	Cog3
Aff2	1.0	.776	.624	.461	.424	.434
Aff3		1.0	.747	.477	.410	.433
Aff4			1.0	.446	.392	.399
Cog1				1.0	.624	.605
Cog 2					1.0	.675
Cog 3						1.0

Summed Scales Statistics*

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Affective Conflict	1.666	.898	1-5
Cognitive Conflict	2.376	.881	1-5
Total Conflict	4.04	1.566	2-10

*lower numbers indicate lower conflict

the sample. In terms of company size, 76 percent of the firms represented had more than 100 employees. Respondents had an average of 14 years of purchase experience with a standard deviation of 8 years. Demographics of the sample were compared to published ISM demographics for sex and work experience (<http://www.ism.ws/ISMMembership/files/MemDemReport.pdf>). The sample appears to be a reasonable representation of the ISM membership from which the sample was drawn.

Measurement Validation

In this section, each of the individual variables is reported separately prior to reporting on the full measurement model.

Conflict. Using Proc Calis in SAS as a structural equation modeling program and following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a confirmatory analysis was conducted on the items after cleaning each of the variables. One affective conflict indicator was removed as indicated in the Appendix (affcon4). The confirmatory factor analysis shown in Table 1 provides evidence of a solid and reliable measure of affective and cognitive conflict. In this analysis and all other cases the sample size was limited to 200 regardless of the actual larger sample size to provide a more meaningful comparison of the Chi-Square statistics (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black 1999).

The AGFI was .9591, with an RMR of .03, a Chi-square of 9.61 Pr> Chi-square of .293, a CFI of .9975, and a NNFI of .9953. There were no residuals over 2.58. This suggests a very strong fit for a six-item model of conflict. Three item scales were created for both sub-constructs by adding the scores of the indicator and dividing by the number of indicators, which in each case was three. The resulting statistics are provided in Table 1. These indicate that both measures are skewed to the low side with affective conflict being reported lower than cognitive conflict.

Next, a second order confirmatory factor analysis was run with the two constructs

modeled as a single construct of social conflict. The resulting statistics, AGFI .9532, with an RMR of .03, a Chi-square of 9.61 Pr> Chi-square of .212, a CFI of .9960 and an NNFI of .9914 provide evidence of a solid and reliable measure which indicates the two sub-constructs of conflict can be subsumed under the overall construct of social conflict. A six-item scale of social conflict was created by summing the indicators and dividing by the number of indicators, which was six in this instance. The resulting statistics are provided in Table 1. As was expected, total conflict is also skewed to the low side of the scale, but again the entire range is utilized by respondents. The results of these analyses are similar to those found by Pearson, Ensley and Amason (2002).

Empathy. Following the same procedure as above, Proc Calis was used to structurally model the single factor empathy measure. Following cleaning, a confirmatory model on six indicators was run as preliminary analysis suggested items 5 and 8 would not fit the model. As reported in Table 2, the AGFI of .9326, with an RMR of .032, a Chi-square of 16.96 Pr>Chi-square of .0493, a CFI of .9893, and a NNFI of .9821 with no residuals over 2.58, which again suggests a solid model fit. A six-item scale of empathy was created by summing the indicators and dividing by the number of indicators, which in this case were six. The resulting statistics are provided in Table 2.

In general, empathy is slightly skewed (less than one standard deviation). Buyers reported slightly higher empathy.

Trust. The same procedure as above was followed for the trust measure. Following data cleaning both a first and second order confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in the same manner as that used by Plank, Reid and Pullins (1999), who created the measure. Preliminary analysis suggested an 11-item measure that included three items for salesperson trust, four items for product trust, and four items for company trust. As reported in Table 3, the resulting AGFI of .9298, with an RMR of .038, a Chi-square of 51.92 Pr>Chi-

TABLE 2:
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Empathy Scale

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Parameter Estimate
Empathy 1	2.17	1.126	.8031
Empathy 2	1.86	1.269	.7612
Empathy 3	2.42	1.146	.8443
Empathy 4	2.53	1.191	.8500
Empathy 6	2.67	1.170	.7302
Empathy 7	2.38	1.069	.8024

All Estimates Significant $p < .01$ AGFI = .9326; CFI = .9893; NNFI = .9821; RMR = .032; Chi-Square = 16.96; Df= 9; $p < .0493$

Correlation Matrix:

	Emp1	Emp2	Emp3	Emp4	Emp6	Emp7
Emp1	1.0	.622	.663	.656	.612	.610
Emp2		1.0	.629	.693	.697	.542
Emp3			1.0	.741	.707	.601
Emp4				1.0	.706	.590
Emp6					1.0	.528
Emp7						1.0

All Estimates Significant $p < .01$ AGFI = .9326; CFI = .9893; NNFI = .9821; RMR = .032; Chi-Square = 16.96; Df= 9; $p < .0493$

Summed Scale Statistics*

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Empathy	2.679	1.047	1.17-5.83

* lower numbers indicate higher empathy

square of .1181, a CFI of .9906, and a NNFI of .9874 with one residual over 2.58. These results again suggest a solid model fit. The resulting statistics are provided in Table 3.

The second order confirmatory factor analysis, also clearly indicated that the three sub-constructs of trust could be subsumed under a single construct of trust with a similar result to that reported by Plank, Reid and Pullins (1999). They found that only ten indicators loaded, however, in the current study eleven indicators loaded. The summed scale consists of eleven indicators summed and divided by the number of indicators, in this case eleven. Statistics are reported in Table 3. The trust indicators are also slightly skewed, by less than one standard deviation. In the case of salesperson trust, it is

lower, in the case of product and company trust it is slightly higher.

Full Measurement Model. Using Proc Calis in SAS, the analysis contains the 23 variables from the individual analysis presented above. The analysis provides a moderate fit. With an AGFI of .8727 and a Chi-square significance of .0499 (250.236, DF = 215) the model does not fit as well as expected. However, the CFI is .9874 and the NNFI is .9852, both are acceptable, as is the RMSR at .0461 and the RMSEA at .0287. The independence model with a Chi-square of 3058.70, DF=253, is a much poorer fit. An analysis of the residuals indicates 10 residuals over 2.58 out of 275, which is below the five percent threshold (Hair et al. 1998, p. 625).

TABLE 3:
First Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis Trust Scale

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Parameter Estimate
SPTrust1	2.45	1.254	.829
SPTrust4	2.41	1.187	.857
SPTrust10	3.25	1.182	.577
PRTrust5	1.70	0.898	.613
PRTrust8	2.11	1.083	.702
PRTrust12	2.24	1.055	.796
PRTrust15	2.08	1.017	.853
COTrust3	1.93	1.012	.837
COTrust6	2.03	1.030	.834
COTrust9	2.03	1.01	.748
COTrust13	2.22	1.108	.797

II Estimates Significant AGFI = .9298; CFI = .9906; NNFI = .9874; RMR = .039; Chi-Square = 51.91; Df= 41; p< .1181
Correlation Matrix:

SP1	SP4	SP10	PR5	PR8	PR12	PR15	CO3	CO6	CO9	CO13	
SP1	1	.710	.449	.303	.319	.362	.356	.612	.551	.475	.615
SP4		1	.517	.304	.340	.361	.358	.597	.577	.527	.562
SP10			1	.163	.251	.270	.247	.387	.360	.383	.443
PR5				1	.450	.424	.526	.416	.431	.512	.370
PR8					1	.564	.587	.432	.398	.478	.383
PR12						1	.698	.456	.470	.463	.478
PR15							1	.488	.469	.501	.483
CO3								1	.711	.642	.630
CO6									1	.617	.698
CO9										1	.551
CO13											1
Summed Scale Statistics*											
Scale			Mean	Standard Deviation	Range						
Salesperson Trust			2.70	1.014	1-5						
Product/Service Trust			2.03	0.862	1-5						
Company Trust			2.05	0.888	1-5						
Overall Trust			6.77	2.341	3-15						

*Lower numbers indicate higher trust

Research Questions

In order to examine the five research questions three different analyses were done. The first utilized Proc Calis in SAS. The single item performance measure was used as the dependent variable. All variables were treated as manifest and path analysis using maximum likelihood was the methodology employed. Given the second order factor analysis of both conflict and trust this was appropriate. We examined the multivariate normality of the variable set and individual values for kurtosis and skewness. While the data was not multivariate normal, the individual skewness

data (-.224 to + .930) and kurtosis (-1.201 to + .643) indicate relatively minor deviations from normality, as was previously noted. This suggests minimal impact on the results as various fit statistics can lead to false conclusions of fit (Hu and Bentler, 1995) under extreme conditions of non-multivariate normality. Conflict as a variable was the most severely skewed variable, as was noted previously. Figure 2 provides the results of this analysis. An alternative model was also run, in this case, the direct impacts of empathy on performance were not modeled, instead, conflict and empathy were linked only to trust. This model was not significant as indicated in

Figure 2: Hypothesis Testing of the Theoretical Model

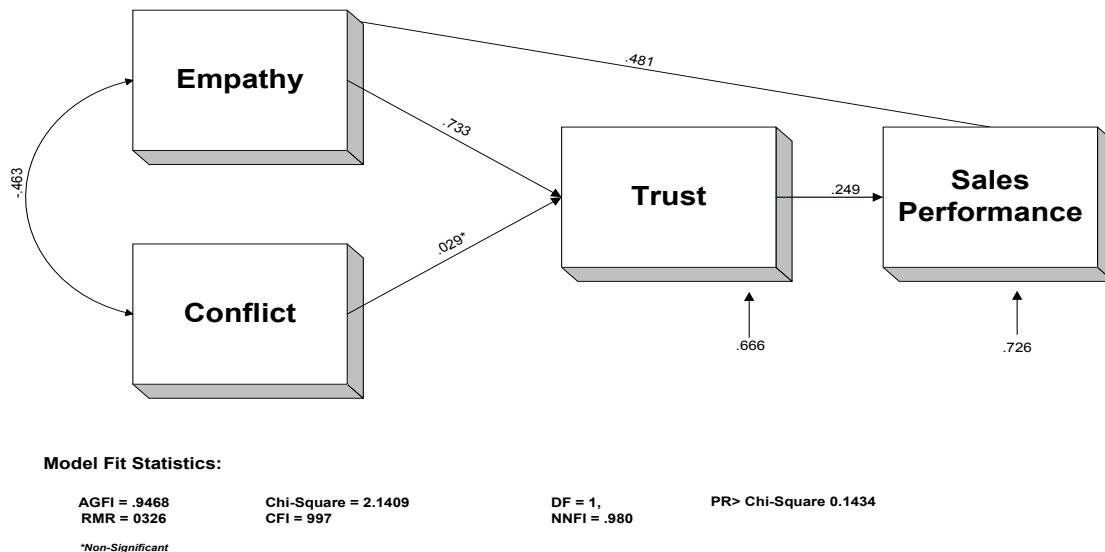


Figure 2. This provides some evidence that the modeling of empathy as directly influencing performance is accurate.

The second analysis, also utilized Proc Calis. In this case, we divided the sample by those respondents reporting on salespeople who had received the order and those reporting on salespeople who did not. We ran the analysis separately on each sample. Figures 3 and 4 provide the results of the analysis. It should be noted that we re-analyzed the data to model fits for the sample reporting on those salespeople who received and those who did not separately using the same methodology as reported above. The data addressing salespeople who received an order represented a good fit of the data to the measurement model. However, the data on salespeople who did not receive an order did not fit the measurement model as well and caution needs to be exercised in interpretation. This is noted again in the limitations section.

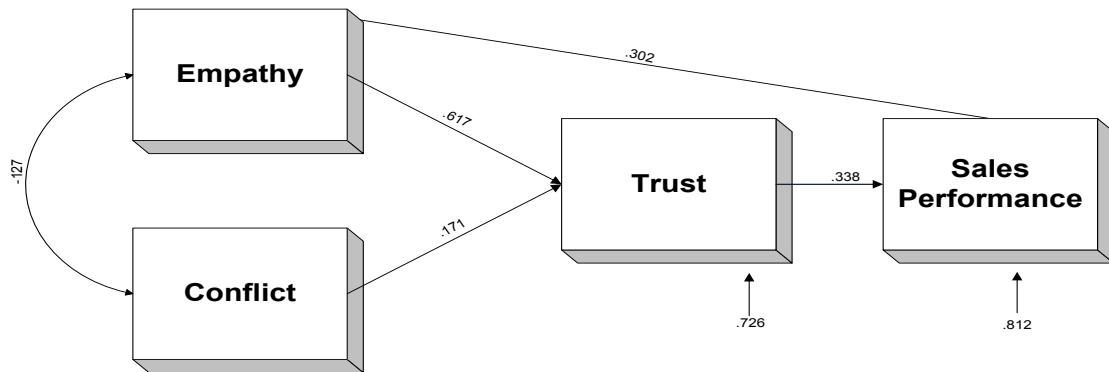
The third analysis utilized logistic regression. In this case, the dependent variable was the

performance measure of whether or not the salesperson received the order or not. Again, the summed scales were used for the independent variables of conflict, trust, and empathy. Using this methodology does not allow for path analysis, but allows the researcher to estimate the relative direct effects of each variable on the dependent variable. Thus, this is a very different model than those tested above, not only is the dependent variable different, but the actual model is also. Table 4 provides the results.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the study’s findings are interesting from a number of perspectives. The initial model tested (Figure 2) suggests that empathy is the biggest driver of sales performance. It has a higher direct association with sales performance than trust and has a very strong association with trust directly. Conflict has no association with trust. However, conflict does have a high negative correlation with empathy.

Figure 3: Hypothesis Testing of the Theoretical Model Successful Sales People



Model Fit Statistics:

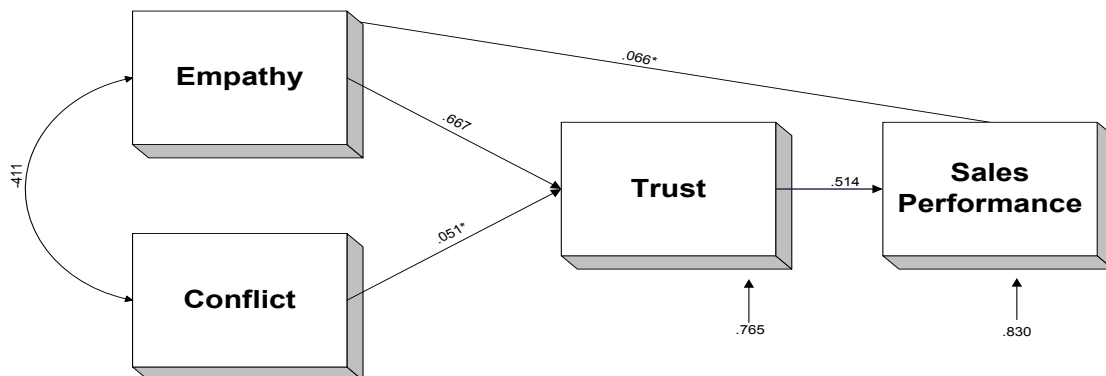
AGFI = .9994
RMR = .0028

Chi-Square = 0.242
CFI = 1.000

DF = 1,
NNFI = 1.026

PR> Chi-Square 0.8763

Figure 4: Hypothesis Testing of the Theoretical Model Unsuccessful Sales People



Model Fit Statistics:

AGFI = .8793
RMR = .0533

Chi-Square = 4.9248
CFI = .983

DF = 1,
NNFI = .979

PR> Chi-Square 0.0265

*Non-Significant

TABLE 4:
Logistic Regression Model

-2 log likelihood	465.585	
Variables in the Equation		
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>Significance</u>
Constant	-4.831	.000
Total Trust	.533	.000
Empathy	.482	.018
Total Conflict	-.021	.801

Classification Table

Observed	Predicted		Percentage Correct
	Received Order 1	No Order 2	
Received Order 1	201	41	83.1%
No Order 2	61	159	72.3%
Overall Percentage			77.9%

The second analysis (Figures 3 and 4) provides an interesting addendum to the initial findings. The model based on those salespeople who received the order is very strong in terms of fit. The findings are similar to the overall model with somewhat more balance between the explanatory power of trust and empathy. In this case empathy is still very strongly associated with trust, but the direct association of empathy to sales performance is slightly smaller than for trust. Also interesting is the positive and significant association of conflict with trust. In the general model it is positive, but non-significant. However, the levels of conflict were generally low as noted previously. While the model based on the salespeople who did not receive an order is not as strong a fit, the findings provide some interesting insights. In looking at the results, an argument could easily be made that empathy played a key role in those people not receiving the order. There was no direct association with sales performance, whereas the direct association with trust was only slightly greater than the model for those salespeople receiving the order.

The logistic regression, while interesting did not add any additional insight into the model. In that analysis, trust was the strongest direct driver and empathy was just slightly less related. Conflict was clearly not related. The overall prediction rate of 77.9 percent is high. However, this model provides a comparison of only the direct impacts of the three major

variables and does not include direct and indirect effects of empathy as shown in Figures 2, 3 and 4.

We can summarize the results for the research questions as follows:

RQ₁: In this study, it is clear that empathy is related to trust. It is a strong relationship for both salespeople who received the order and those who did not. Moreover, it is positive as expected from previous empirical research in other contexts.

RQ₂: The relationship of conflict to trust is mixed. When the relationship between conflict and empathy was low, as it was for situations where the salespeople received an order, conflict was positively related to trust. No relationship was found between trust and conflict, when the relationship between conflict and empathy was high, as was the case in situations where salespeople who did not receive an order.

RQ₃: The relationship between trust and effectiveness was significant and positive in all cases, but was much stronger for the cases involving salespeople who did not receive an order. In those

cases, the relationship between empathy and performance (RQ5) was not significant.

RQ4: The correlation between empathy and conflict was generally as expected, positive and significant. However, for the sample where the salespeople received an order that correlation was very low, whereas it was quite high for the sample where they did not.

RQ5: The relationship between empathy and performance was mixed. For the sample in which salespeople were successful and received an order it was positively related to sales performance, but not so for those instances where the salespeople failed to get an order. This suggests that perhaps the reason the salespeople who were not successful in getting an order was because they were not empathetic.

The results are suggestive. Trust and empathy are clearly important, but the role of conflict is not clear. Given the skewed nature of the conflict distribution, it is useful to examine only those respondents (buyers) who rated sellers as high either on affective or cognitive conflict or on both. In order to do this, we looked at the high scores for affective conflict and cognitive conflict which we defined as those scoring over 3 on the 1-5 scale for each of the respective variables. This resulted in 55 cases of high affective conflict and 88 cases of high cognitive conflict. Respondents reporting on salespeople who did not get the order accounted for 40 (73 percent) of the instances of high affective conflict and 49 (56 percent) of the instances of high cognitive conflict. Further analysis examined those who were high in both. It was found that only 35 of those respondents were high in both. Of those high in both types of conflict, 26 of 35 (74 percent) were from respondents where the salesperson did not receive the order. Of the remaining 20 (55 -35)

who were high in affective conflict, only 6 (30 percent) were from respondents where the salesperson received the order. Of the remaining high cognitive conflict responses, 23 (44 percent) of the 53 (88 high cognitive conflict – 35 high in both types of conflict) were from respondents where the salesperson got the order.

The results are suggestive. First salespeople having high scores on both affective conflict and total conflict are much more apt to have failed to get an order. Conversely, those with only high cognitive conflict scores were much more apt to have secured an order. The differences in the sizes of both samples indicate that some of those who are high in cognitive conflict are lower in affective conflict, so much so that they don't appear in the high total conflict list. This perhaps provides an explanation for the significant finding among salespeople receiving an order, namely that cognitive conflict has a positive impact on buyers' perceptions.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study have a variety of implications for managers with respect to hiring and training. Of the three variables (empathy, conflict, and trust) examined in this study, empathy clearly plays the most important role in building trust. Consequently, it would seem that identifying salespeople or potential salespeople who have naturally high levels of empathy and/or are able to develop the necessary skills to be empathetic is essential. Conflict appears to be much less important and while training in conflict resolution/management might be worthwhile, it probably would not yield as a return on investment as helping salespeople improved their empathetic abilities.

The findings with respect to the possible curvilinearity of cognitive conflict and outcomes suggest that cognitive conflict can be good for all parties when it leads to some type of improvement in the decision making process, e.g., the buyer receiving greater value. It would

seem that being able to manage cognitive conflict so as to keep it from turning to affective conflict, which negatively impacts a relationship, is also important.

Overall this research confirms the findings of other studies that trust and empathy are important drivers of sales success. Both are critical and both lead to not only successfully closing, but also perceptions of effectiveness on the part of buyers. In addition, the presence of cognitive conflict may in fact be very productive if managed well.

LIMITATIONS

As with any study, this study is not without its limitations. This study has the usual limitations of data collection that relies on respondent recall. The data was collected from a single respondent at each firm. And as with any empirical piece, the measures while solid and demonstrated through their usage in other studies are not without some error. In addition, as a cross-sectional design without any experimental control, no causal inferences could be made.

Finally, an additional issue, which is not always discussed in these kinds of studies, is the notion of common method bias or variance. Common method variance is the idea that since all measures were collected from a single source and that multiple sources and methods were not used in the data collection, the result is due to the use of a common methods or respondent bias and does not represent real differences (Cote and Buckley 1987). There are several ways to deal with this issue. In this case, the decision was made to utilize a very broad cross-section of buyers. As noted by McLaughlin (1999) and Lindell and Whitney (2001) effects are most prevalent in self-report studies (Organ and Ryan 1995). This study used other rating forms; the buyers rated the salespeople, not themselves, which has been shown to minimize method effects. In addition, McLaughlin argues that procedures used in questionnaire design can minimize these effects and these suggestions were followed. In addition, work

by Paglis and Williams (1996) as reported in Kline, Sulsky and Rever-Moriyama (2000) found that common method variance would have to be approximately 18-20 percent between observed relationships before it would be a plausible alternative to the more parsimonious explanation that the two variables are indeed correlated. Such high common method variance seems unlikely in light of efforts made. Finally, the Harmon one factor test was used and the results indicated multiple factors, thus supporting this study's contention of limited common method variance (Podsakoff and Organ 1986).

FUTURE RESEARCH

There are multiple areas for possible future research on what makes for successful selling. One element is the predispositions of the buyers. For example, it is possible that some buyers are more trusting in general than others and respond to empathetic activities on the part of the salesperson more quickly. These kinds of buyers are likely to be easier to develop trust in than others who are not as predisposed. More importantly they may also perceive that the salesperson is empathetic, understands their problems, and is working with them to solve them. The same issue is true with conflict, some people react to conflict very negatively, while others have a higher tolerance for it. Since this was not measured and controlled for in this study, no inferences can be made.

This study focused on choice situations, even though the dependent variable was a performance variable, the study was grounded in a choice situation. In the past 20 years, there has been much more emphasis on having single supplier versus multiple suppliers and keeping that single supplier for a long time by working closely with them. This context, while not free of choice by the buyer, since switching can always occur, is still a different situation and may well require different levels of building empathy and different levels of conflict. For example, once a close relationship is developed, individuals might be more likely to tolerate more conflict, especially cognitive conflict. Of

course, maintaining the perception of trust is different than trying to build it during initial encounters with a person.

Another important issue is the relationship of personal versus task behaviors. This study focused only on relationship behaviors, indirectly, and not on the task behaviors that go along with the job. Research by Wathne, Biong and Heide (2001) also found support for both task and personal behaviors, with the task relationship being the more prominent. Two important research issues include the following: 1) under what conditions are task issues more important and 2) what conditions drive personal relationships between buyer and seller. Task and relationship behaviors need to be directly linked to trust, empathy, conflict, and performance to understand this issue.

Given the strong role of empathy in this model, more work needs to be done in the context of buyer-seller relations on the actual process of empathetic communication. As has been noted in the literature review of this paper, process models of empathy do exist, but not in buyer-seller contexts, so better understanding of the actual process of developing empathy is warranted based on this study's findings and the previous research.

Finally, a very important and much neglected issue is the role of the process as a frame for understanding the importance of perceptions on choice processes in general. We would argue that sales performance research has to take into account that at different stages of the process, different factors emerge as important. For example, the argument can be made that empathy and getting the buyer to perceive the salesperson as empathetic has more impact on the early stages of the process and that, if it is not formed early, the possibility exists that it may never be formed. Experimental research needs to determine if that is the case.

CONCLUSION

This research has provided the first examination of the interrelationship of trust, empathy and

conflict in a business-to-business buyer-seller relationship. Prior to this study, the extant research had suggested that all might be important. This research clearly supports trust and empathy as being more important than conflict. However, it appears that cognitive conflict can have a positive impact on decision making, but it is likely to be curvilinear in its effects. Too much cognitive conflict could be negative whereas the right amount and on the right issues may be very valuable to both parties.

REFERENCES

- Amason, A. C. (1996), "Distinguishing the Effects of Functional and Dysfunctional Conflict on Strategic Decision Making: Resolving a Paradox for Top Management Teams," *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(1), 123-148.
- Anderson, E. and R. L. Oliver (1987), "Perspectives on Behavior-based Versus Outcome-based Salesforce Control Systems," *Journal of Marketing*, 51(4), 76-93.
- Anderson, J. C. and D.W. Gerbing, (1988), "Structural Equation Modeling in Practice: A Review and Recommended Two-Step Approach," *Psychological Bulletin*, 103, 411-423.
- Anonymous (2008), "A Review of the Literature on the Empathy Construct Using Cluster Analysis," *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 22(3), 3-22.
- Armstrong, J. S. and T. S. Overton (1977), "Estimating NonResponse Bias in Mail Surveys," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(3), 396-402.
- Baron, R. A. (1993), "Reducing Aggression and Conflict: The Incompatible Response Approach or, Why People Who Feel Good Usually Won't be Bad," in G. G. Brannigan and M.R. Merrens (Eds), *The Undaunted Psychologist: Adventures in Research*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA. 203-217.

- Behrman, D. N. and W. D. Perreault (1982), "Measuring the Performance of Industrial Salespersons," *Journal of Business Research*, 10(3) 355-370.
- Bissonnette, V. L., C. E. Rusbult and S. D. Kilpatrick (1997), "Empathic Accuracy and Marital Conflict Resolution," in W.J. Ickes (ed.), *Empathic Accuracy*, New York: Guilford Press, 251-28.
- Bobot, L. (2010), "Conflict Management in Buyer-Seller Relationships," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 27(3), 291-319.
- Bradford, K. D. and B. A. Weitz (2009), "Salespersons' Management of Conflict in Buyer-Seller Relationships," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 29(1), 25-42.
- Brennan, D. R., P. Turnbull and D. T. Wilson (2003), "Dyadic Adaptation in Business-to-Business Markets," *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(11/12) 1636-67.
- Bush, R. P., D. J. Ortinau, A. J. Bush and J. F. Hair (1990), "Developing a Behavior Based Scale to Assess Retail Salesperson Performance," *Journal of Retailing*, (66)1, 119-136.
- Butler, J. K. (1991), "Toward Understanding and Measuring Conditions of Trust: Evolution of a Conditions of Trust Inventory," *Journal of Management*, 17(3), 643-663.
- Churchill, G. A., N. Ford and O. C. Walker (1994), *Sales Force Management, Fourth Edition*, Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, 758-782.
- Comer, L. and T. Drollinger (1999), "Active Empathetic Listening and Selling Success: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 19(1), 15-29.
- _____, _____ and J. Ding (1999), "Three Faces of Empathy: A New Look at an Old Conundrum," in M. A. Humphreys, ed. *Proceeding of the National Conference in Sales Management*, Normal IL: Illinois State University, 105-116.
- Cote, J. A. and M. R. Buckley (1987), "Estimating Trait, Method and Error Variance: Generalizing Across 70 Construct Validation Studies," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24 (3), 315-318.
- Dawson, L. E., B. Soper and C. E. Pettijohn (1992), "The Effects of Empathy on Salesperson Effectiveness," *Psychology and Marketing*, 9(4), 297-310.
- Day, R. L., R. E. Michaels and B. C. Perdue (1988), "How Buyers Handle Conflicts," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 17(2), 153-160.
- Denton, K. D. (1988), "Attitudes that Solve Conflicts," *Manage*, 39(4), 23-25.
- DeRuyter, K. and M. Wentzels (2000), "Determinants of Relational Exchange Orientation in the Marketing-Manufacturing Interface: An Empirical Investigation," *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(2), 257-276.
- Driscoll, J. W. (1978), "Trust and Participation in Organizational Decision Making as Predictors of Satisfaction," *Academy of Management Journal*, 21(1), 44-56.
- Dwyer, F. and R. Lagace (1986), "On the Nature and Role of Buyer-Seller Trust," in T. Shimp and A. Sharma (Eds.), *AMA Educators Conference Proceedings*, Chicago: American Marketing Association, 40-45.
- Feldman, L. (1980), "Marital Conflict and Marital Intimacy: An Integrative Psychodynamic Behavioral-systemic Model," *Advances in Family Psychiatry*, 2, 19-33.
- Greenberg, H. and D. Mayer (1964), "A New Approach to the Scientific Selection of Successful Salesmen," *Journal of Psychology*, 57, 113-123.
- Hair, J. F., R. E. Anderson, R. L Tatham and W. C. Black (1998), *Multivariate Analysis, 5th ed.*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Harvey, E. (1998), "Management by Switching Shoes," *Executive Excellence*, 15(8), 11.
- Hawes, J. (1994), "To Know Me is to Trust Me," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 23(3), 215-219.
- Hayes, M. H. and S. W. Hartley (1989), "How Buyers View Industrial Salespeople," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 18(2), 73-80.
- Jehn, K. A. (1995), "A Multimethod Examination of the Benefits and Detriments of Intragroup Conflict," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40(2) 256-282.

- _____, (1997), "Qualitative Analysis of Conflict Types and Dimensions in Organizational Groups," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42(3), 530-557.
- Johnson, R. J. (1971), *An Explanation of Relationships Between and Among Empathy, Trust, and Ego Stage Development in the Adult Learner*, Dissertation Abstracts International, 31, 11A, 5748-9.
- Kauser, S. and V. Shaw (2001), "International Strategic Alliances: The Impact of Behavioral Characteristics on Success," *Journal of Euro-Marketing*, 10(1), 71-84.
- LaBahn, D. W. and C. Kohli (1997), "Maintaining Client Commitment in Advertising Agency-Client Relationships," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 26(6), 497-508.
- Langlois, E. (1998), *The Impact of Trust Between Buyer and Seller on the Purchase Decision*, Doctoral Dissertation, Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Nova Southeastern University.
- Lewicki, R. J., S. E. Weiss and D. Lewin (2000), "Models of Conflict, Negotiation, and Third Party Intervention: A Review and Synthesis," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13(3), 209-252.
- Lindell, M. K. and D. J. Whitney (2001), "Accounting for Common Method Variance in Cross-Sectional Research Designs," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(1), 114-21.
- McLaughlin, M. E. (1999), "Controlling Method Effects in Self-Report Instruments," *Research Methods Forum, Academy of Management Research Methods Division*, 4(Summer) from www.aom.pace.edu/rmd/1999_RMD_Forum_Method_Effects_in_Self-Reports.htm.
- Moore, K. R. (1998), "Trust and Relationship Commitment in Logistic Alliances: A Buyer Perspective," *International Journal of Purchasing and Materials Management*, 34(1), 24-37.
- Nair, N. (2008), "Towards Understanding the Role of Emotion in Conflict: A Review and Future Directions," *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 19(4), 359-374.
- Newman, V. L. (1997), *An Investigation of Interpersonal Relationships Among Runaway and NonRunaway Adolescents*, Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 57(9-A), 3829.
- Northouse, P. G. (1977), "Predictors of Empathic Ability in an Organizational Setting," *Human Communication Research*, 3(2), 176-178.
- Organ, D.W. and K. Ryan (1995), "Meta-Analytic Review of Attitudinal and Dispositional Predictors of Organizational Citizenship Behavior," *Personnel Psychology*, 48(4), 775-802.
- Paglis, L. L. and L. J. Williams (1996, April), "Common Method Bias: When Does It Bias OB Results?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, San Diego, CA.
- Pappas, J. M. and K. E. Flaherty (2008), "The Effect of Trust on Customer Contact Personnel Strategic Behavior and Sales Performance in a Service Environment," *Journal of Business Research*, 61(9), 894-902.
- Pearson, A. W., M. D. Ensley and A. Amason (2002), "An Assessment and Refinement of Jehn's Intragroup Conflict Scale," *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13(2), 110-116.
- Plank, R. E. and D. A. Reid (1994), "The Mediating Role of Sales Behaviors: An Alternate Perspective on Sales Performance and Effectiveness," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 14(3), 43-56.
- _____, A. P. Minton and D. A. Reid (1996), "A Short Measure of Perceived Empathy," *Psychological Reports*, 79, 1219-1226.
- _____, D. A. Reid and E. B. Pullins (1999), "Perceived Trust in Business-to-Business Sales: A New Measure," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 14(3), 61-72.
- Rarick, C. A. and G. Baxter (1986), "Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales: An Effective Performance Appraisal Approach," *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, 51(1), 36-39.

- Redfern, S., C. P. Dancy and W. Dryden (1993), "Empathy: Its Effect on How Counselors are Perceived," *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, 21(3), 300-309.
- _____ and R. E. Plank (1997), "The Moderating Role of Purchasing Situation on the Behavior-Performance Relationship: A Replication and Extension," in M. Williams (Ed.), *Proceedings of the National Conference in Sales Management*, 163-170.
- _____, E. B. Pullins, R. E. Plank and R. Buehrer (2004), "Measuring Buyers' Perceptions of Conflict in Business-to-Business Sales Interactions," *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 19(4), 236-249.
- Richardson, D. R., G. S. Hammock, S. M. Smith and W. Gardner (1994), "Empathy as a Cognitive Inhibitor of Interpersonal Aggression," *Aggressive Behavior*, 20(4), 275-289.
- Rotter, J. (1967), "New Scale for the Measurement of Interpersonal Trust," *Journal of Personality*, 35(4), 651-665.
- Schneider, M. E. (1984), *The Relationship Among Primary Representational Systems, and Counselor Empathy, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertness, and Subject Preference*, Dissertation Abstracts International, 45-(2A), p. 418.
- Schurr, P. H. and J. L. Ozanne (1985), "Influences on Exchange Partners Processes: Buyers' Preconceptions of a Seller's Trustworthiness and Bargaining Toughness," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11(4), 939-953.
- Semmes, C.E. (1991), "Developing Trust: Patient Practitioner Encounters in Natural Health Care," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19(4), 450-470.
- Sepanen, R., K. Blomqvist and S. Sundqvist (2007), "Measuring Inter-Organizational Trust- A Critical Review of the Empirical Research in 1990-2003," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 36(2), 249-262.
- Simons, T. L. and R. S. Peterson (2000), "Task Conflict and Relationship Conflict in Top Management Teams: The Pivotal Role of Intragroup Trust," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(1), 102-111.
- Swan J. E., M. R. Bowers and L. D. Richardson (1999), "Customer Trust in the Salesperson: An Integrative Review and Meta-analysis of the Empirical Literature," *Journal of Business Research*, 44(2), 93-107.
- _____ and J.J. Nolan (1985), "Gaining Customer Trust: A Conceptual Guide for the Salesperson," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 5(2), 39-48.
- _____, I. F. Trawick and D. W. Silva (1987), "How Industrial Salespeople Gain Customer Trust," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 14(3), 203-211.
- _____, _____, Rink, D. R. and J. J. Roberts (1988), "Measuring Dimensions of Purchaser Trust of Industrial Salespeople," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 8(2), 1-9.
- Walker, O. C., Jr., G. A. Churchill, Jr. and N. M. Ford (1975), "Organizational Determinants of the Role Conflict and Ambiguity Experienced by Industrial Salesmen," *Journal of Marketing*, 39(1), 32-39.
- _____, _____ and _____ (1977), "Motivation and Performance in Industrial Selling - Present Knowledge and Needed Research," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(2), 156-168.
- _____, _____ and _____ (1979), "Where Do We Go From Here? Selected Conceptual and Empirical Issues Concerning the Motivation and Performance of the Industrial Salesforce," in G. Albaumb and G. A. Churchill (Eds.), *Critical Issues in Sales Management: State of-the-Art and Future Research Needs* G. Eugene OR: University of Oregon, 10-75.
- Ward, T., J. McCormack and S. M. Hudson (1997), "Sexual Offenders' Perceptions of Their Intimate Relationships," *Sexual Abuse: Journal of Research and Treatment*, 9(1), 57-74.
- Wathne, K. H., H. Biong and J. B. Heide (2001), "Choice of Supplier in Embedded Markets: Relationship and Marketing Program Effects," *Journal of Marketing*, 65(2), 54-66.

Weitz, B. and K. D. Bradford (1999), "Personal Selling and Sales Management: A Relationship Marketing Perspective," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 27(2), 241-254.

Williams, M. (2002), *Seeing Through the Client's Eyes: Building Interpersonal Trust, Cooperation, and Performance Across Organizational Boundaries*, Doctoral Dissertation, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.

Young, L. C. and I. Wilkinson (1988), "The Role of Trust and Co-Operation in Marketing Channels: A Preliminary Study," *European Journal of Marketing*, 23(2), 109-122.

Zaheer, A., B. McEvily and V. Perrone (1998), "Does Trust Matter? Exploring the Effects of Interorganizational and Interpersonal Trust on Performance," *Organizational Science*, 9(2), 141-160.

APPENDIX

Conflict (7 Items) Scaled 1 = None 2 = Almost none 3 = A little 4 = Moderate amount 5 = A great deal

Affective Conflict (4 Items)

- How much anger was there between you and the salesperson during this negotiation?
- How much personal friction was there between you and the salesperson during the course of the negotiation?*
- How much of a personality clash was there between you and the salesperson during this negotiation?*
- How much tension was there between you and the salesperson during this negotiation?*

Cognitive Conflict (3 Items)

- 1. How many disagreements about the content of the decision were there between you and the salesperson during this negotiation?*
- 2. How many differences about the content of the decision were there between you and the salesperson during this negotiation?*
- 3. How many general differences of opinion were there between you and the salesperson during this negotiation?*

Empathy (8 Items) Scaled 1= strongly agree, 2 = moderately agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = moderately disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

- 1. This salesperson understands me as a person and my role in this organization.*
- 2. I have good feelings when dealing with this salesperson.*
- 3. This salesperson really understood my feelings about this buyer-seller situation.*

- 4. I feel as if I am on the same wavelength as this salesperson.*
- 5. This salesperson really understands how I think.
- 6. This salesperson has a lot of knowledge about how I need to make decisions and do my job.*
- 7. This salesperson seemed to feel what I needed when we talked about this purchase.*
- 8. This salesperson always understood our company needs

Trust (15 Items) Scaled 1=strongly agree 2 = moderately agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = moderately disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

- 1. This salesperson did everything possible for our company.*
- 2. The product/service will meet our needs without question.
- 3. The company this salesperson works for will stand behind us.*
- 4. This salesperson will always use good judgment.*
- 5. This product/service has the technical attributes necessary to do the job.*
- 6. The company can be counted upon to do right with us.*
- 7. The salesperson is a real expert.
- 8. The product/service will give us little trouble in use.*
- 9. This salesperson's company has quality people working for them.*
- 10. The salesperson is like a good friend.*
- 11. The salesperson's company has a good reputation.
- 12. The product/service will please all those in our company who use it or are responsible for it.*
- 13. The company will do what it takes to make us happy.*
- 14. When the salesperson tells me something it must be true
- 15. This product/service will do everything we want it to do.*

Sales Effectiveness (1 item) Scaled 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree

- 1. This salesperson is among the best salespeople who have called on me.*

*Items so marked are included in the final scaling used for analysis.

¹We use the term buyer in all definitions to reflect the general nature of the person who is the object of the efforts of the salesperson. They may have many titles and functional responsibilities given the nature of organizational buying.