UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

# BOUNDARY SPANNER MODIFICATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTIVES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

GREGORY MCAMIS
Norman, Oklahoma
2013

BOUNDARY SPANNER MODIFICATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTIVES

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
MICHAEL F. PRICE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

BY

Dr Kenneth R. Evans, Chair

Dr. Todd Arnold

Dr. Suman Basuroy

Dr. Jack J. Kasulis

Dr. Mark P. Sharfman

To Amy and my parents who have tirelessly supported me on this long journey

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Kenneth Evans, for his patient support and counsel through this long journey. He has helped me to understand the high standards required of being a professional scholar. His commitment to excellence and high scholarly thought have helped me to grow tremendously both as an academician and an individual.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Todd Arnold, Dr. Suman Basuroy, Dr. Jack Kasulis, and Dr. Mark Sharfman for their reassuring words and thoughtful criticisms that have made a significant contribution to this research project and to my understanding of the research process.

In addition, I want to thank my professors who have helped me to appreciate how to be an academician through their coursework as well as the example they have shown: Patricia Daugherty, Tony Roath, Jeff Schmidt, Rajiv Dant, Robert Terry, Parthiban David, Buster Allaway, Glen Richey, Rob Morgan, Giles D'Souza, Brent Wren, and David Berkowitz.

Finally, I would like to extend a special thanks to Dr. Jim Simpson whose energy and passion in that first marketing class helped a young college undergraduate find a rewarding and satisfying career path.

## Table of Contents

## List of Tables

## List of Figures

**Abstract**

Boundary spanners represent an important and challenging set of employees for organizational management. Given frequently high autonomy levels and varied job roles, boundary spanning agents have ample opportunity and motivation to modify organizational directives. Based on a multi-theoretical perspective, this research investigates these motivations as well as their various antecedents. Results indicate that boundary spanners have three distinct and relatively stable motivations for modifying organizational directives. The implications of these findings as well as future research opportunities are discussed.

# INTRODUCTION

"A firm's strategy is its theory of how to achieve high levels of performance in the markets and industries within which it is operating" (Barney 2007). How each firm pursues its strategy can vary greatly because strategy is an exercise in being different from the competition (Porter 1996). However, strategies of different firms do have some commonalities between them. For example, the strategy (or more accurately set of strategies) of a firm determines its competitive advantage over other organizations in an industry (Porter 1985). Another commonality that is often shared is that frontline employees have a significant influence over the translation of a strategy from a thought exercise to recognizable action by the organization as a whole.

In most organizations, particularly B2B ones, the boundary spanners represent the most obvious set of frontline employees. The boundary spanner is the face and voice of the organization to the outside world, managing several functions such as sales, post-sales service, and relationship management (Weitz and Bradford 1999). Playing such a critical role with external partners, the boundary spanning employee greatly influences how organization strategies are enacted in both a literal and perceptual sense. Therefore, organizations need to understand how their boundary spanners receive and act upon directives and policies that flow from strategies that the organization is trying to enact. To this point, the literature in sales and marketing has not addressed this issue.

As a group of employees, boundary spanners present an unusual challenge to organizational management. First, the boundary spanning function involves a great deal of autonomy and flexibility. For each goal that is laid out for the employee either by the organization or him-/herself, every individual seemingly has a unique way of accomplishing it. Although management would likely prefer to monitor and control the boundary spanner in each of these tasks, this is virtually impossible in most circumstances for a number of reasons. First, the level of monitoring of such a subjective set of tasks would be extremely costly to the point of being counterproductive from a profit standpoint. Second, controlling the boundary spanner's actions would negate benefits to the organization derived from that individual's intimate knowledge of the customer and industry as well as potentially push the employee to behaviors that do not optimally suit his/her unique skill set. This is in addition to the negative motivational consequences that would stem from such a work condition. With this in mind, boundary spanners, particularly in B2B organizations, are bestowed an unusually large degree of freedom in their job function, which creates the opportunity for information asymmetry between the boundary spanner and his/her parent organization.

The second reason that the boundary spanning employee is a managerial challenge is the rather unique role this individual plays within the organization. Boundary spanners interact with both the employer and external organizations or partners. Sometimes, the amount of contact with the external partner(s) can far outweigh the amount of contact with the employer. With this function comes a number of potential concerns. For example, the demands of the partner and the employer are not always compatible, resulting in role conflict (Behrman and Perreault 1984). Additionally, the boundary spanner can be quite valuable to the focal firm when compared to other employees because of the intimate relationships with customers that are often formed. He/she may be the lone avenue or at least the most effective method for communicating with a partner.

The importance of the boundary spanner along with the flexibility of their job function makes acceptance with respect to the firm's directives and policies critical for the success of organizational strategy. Each strategic initiative that an organization undertakes produces a directive or set of directives aimed at guiding the behavior of relevant employees to be more in line with pursuit of that strategy. External partners such as customers are co-producers of value with the organization (Vargo and Lusch 2004). This value is created at the boundary, often with the involvement of boundary spanning employees. The directives of the organization are intended to guide boundary spanners in creating the right type and amount of value with the external partner. Deviation from the directives of the parent organization by boundary spanners results in a different value output from the interaction between boundary spanning employee and external partner. With this in mind, boundary spanner reaction to directives can be very important in determining the success or failure of organizational strategy.

In a perfect world, each directive from management makes clear improvements in employee job function, and the employee complies with the directive of management to the best of his/her abilities. In reality, though, this is not the case. Not all directives from the organization necessarily aid the boundary spanner in achieving whatever goals are set before him/her (whether personal or organizationally-prescribed). As we have already discussed, the boundary spanner also has a certain amount of independence inherent in his/her job function which would allow leeway with respect to how diligently that employee pursues particular organizational directives. Additionally, a major part of the role of boundary spanning employees is as an advocate of the interests of external partners (e.g. customers) within the parent organization. Therefore, boundary spanners may frequently modify the directives of organizational management to more effectively accomplish the immediate goals in their job function. Additionally, this modification of directives may often be unknown to organizational management, creating a gap between the intended organizational strategy and the actual strategy pursued because of employee actions.

The purpose of this paper is to explore situations in which boundary spanning employees choose to modify the directives of their organization. In particular, we intend to uncover some of the potential causes and implications of such modification behavior by boundary spanners. Because boundary spanners engage in varied job functions with a number of internal and external parties, they are subject to an intricate web of loyalties and motivations as well as consequences with respect to their job behaviors. Utilizing extant literature in conjunction with multiple theories, we endeavor to lay a foundation for understanding this complex system by exposing and discussing constructs relevant to this research setting. Our exploration uncovers various motivations for boundary spanners to engage in the modification of organizational directives that can affect relevant parties such as the boundary spanner, the external partner(s), and the employer. Additionally, we posit that this behavior by boundary spanning employees can, in some cases, have positive results for the organization as a whole. Considering these motivations and potential outcomes, various types of modification behaviors are discussed.

## BACKGROUND

Before we can fully delve into the current research, some definitions and assumptions must be established to properly set the context of this research. First, the definitions of some basic terms must be advanced. The term “directive” has hardly been well researched in marketing literature and has not been formally defined. In general, we propose that a directive is any guidance from organizational management directly communicated to the boundary spanning employee that is focused on altering some input of the boundary spanner’s job function. A number of aspects of this definition are important to note. For the purposes of this research, we limit our consideration to only those directives that are explicit in nature. While we believe that directives can be implicit as well as explicit, the purview of this research is limited to only those that explicitly communicate the input of the boundary spanner that is to be altered.

Additionally, as a specific order focused on an *input* of the job function of the boundary spanner, a directive is distinct from outcome controls such as quotas for sales agents. Because outcome controls are objectively measured, they are rarely subject to the autonomy of the boundary spanner. As a basic example, consider an organization following a strategy to sell more of X product in the coming period. The organization could set a quota for that product and instruct the sales force that all conversations with existing and potential customers must include mention of that product. The quota is not a directive under our definition. However, the instruction to mention the product to all customers is a directive because it addresses the inputs of the sales agent.

Further, a directive is directly communicated by organizational management to the boundary spanner. This precludes situations in which a boundary spanning employee learns of a directive by some means other than communication within the organization. Examples could include learning of a directive from an external partner or unofficial communication with other individuals inside the parent organization. Although these cases are rare, we explicitly exclude them from the current research because such circumstances would likely influence some of the relationships we will propose.

Following from this discussion, “directive modification” is defined as any behavior by a boundary spanner that partially or wholly deviates from the actions prescribed by his/her parent organization in its directive. Modification behaviors can run the spectrum from full rejection of a directive to a slight alteration. Referring to our previous example, a sales agent engaging in directive modification could refuse to mention the product to any of his customers (full rejection) or “forget” to mention it to just one of several customers (slight alteration).

In addition to these definitions, one assumption is essential to establish for the current research. We assume that there is at least some dissension by the boundary spanning agent with respect to the directive introduced by organizational management. If there is no disagreement, then there would be no reason for the boundary spanner to modify the directive that management issues. Therefore, we assume that there is disagreement so that the focus of the current research is solely on modification behaviors.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The extant literature has yet to directly address the issue of directive modification by boundary spanners. However, some existing literature informs the current research and provides motivation for investigation of this phenomenon. There are a number of articles that acknowledge the notion that boundary spanners may take advantage of their unique role to pursue interests not in line with their organization's goals. For example, Palmatier et al (2007a) recognize that salespeople may deliberately attempt to develop customer loyalty directed only to him-/herself instead of toward the company. Earlier research considered the possibility that manufacturer's reps might develop deeper relationships with customers in order to discourage the manufacturer from establishing an internal sales force (Weiss and Anderson 1992). One prime example of a strategic initiative that influences the job function of a boundary spanner is a new product that an organization wishes for its salespeople to promote. An entire stream of literature has been devoted to the organizational challenge of getting salespeople to devote effort and commitment to these new products (e.g. Atuahene-Gima 1997; Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). Research has also examined the level of autonomy and trust that should be granted to boundary spanners by their organization, acknowledging that those individuals might exploit such opportunities (Perrone et al. 2003). These are just a few of the examples of such implications in the extant literature. While each of these papers does not functionally address the notion of directive modification, they acknowledge and imply that it does exist in practice.

Two relatively new streams of sales literature provide a starting point for the current research. First, an emerging topic in boundary spanner research is that of deviant behavior. This topic has been examined in the management literature for some time but has only recently been investigated in the unique context of the sales force. The broad topic of deviance in the workplace has been identified under various labels such as organizational resistance (Lawrence and Robinson 2007) and anti-citizenship behaviors (Ball et al. 1994) among others. The generally accepted definition of workplace deviance is "voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both" (Robinson and Bennett 1995, p. 556).

One important point that is made throughout the literature on workplace deviance is that the definition directly identifies that the employee is violating organizational norms. This object of the violation provides a critical distinction from the overarching notion of unethical behavior. Unethical behavior is a violation of universally held right and wrong, but workplace deviance, directive modification, and similar constructs delineate a specific focus of the behavior, which may or may not be related to right and wrong. So, a boundary spanner can engage in workplace deviance but not unethical behavior if the organizational norm that is being violated is deemed unethical. In a similar fashion, directive modification research is distinct from the ethics paradigm in that directive modification focuses on the organizational directive instead of universal right and wrong. If an organization issues a directive that is unethical, the more ethical choice for a boundary spanner may be to disregard or modify the directive. Clearly, directive modification could have ethical implications and outcomes. However, it must be treated as a separate research stream from ethics, and the ethical repercussions fall outside the scope of this research.

The amount of research on workplace deviance specific to the boundary spanners is limited. Jelinek and Ahearne (2006a) put forth a number of propositions concerning anti-citizenship behaviors and their deleterious effects on organizational performance. Intra-firm competition and justice perceptions have been found to be empirically linked to different types of deviance (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006b). Additional research has looked at the influence of work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and other workplace factors on salespeople's propensity to engage in workplace deviance (Darrat et al. 2010; Jelinek and Ahearne 2010).

While there are some similarities and overlaps between directive modification and workplace deviance, the differences are acute and require a new conceptual formulation to properly explore the phenomenon proposed in the current research. Jelinek and Ahearne (2006b) discuss four salient points regarding the definition of workplace deviance: (1) the behavior is committed by members of the organization, (2) this behavior is voluntary, (3) organizational norms are the focus of the violation, and (4) the violations have a significant and negative impact because the behavior threatens the organization and/or its members in some way. Points 1 and 2 overlap with our conceptualization of directive modification. Boundary spanners within the parent organization voluntarily engage in directive modification behavior. However, the distinction lies with points 3 and 4. In contrast to workplace deviance, directive modification behavior violates specific directives of the selling organization, regardless of their compliance with organizational norms. So, as with the distinction with unethical behavior, this difference in the target of directive modification behavior creates a distinctly different research situation. Also, directive modification does not necessarily threaten the wellbeing of the organization or its members. In fact, a boundary spanner engaging in directive modification may benefit the organization and its members, as we will discuss later. So, despite some overlap in relevant behaviors, directive modification and workplace deviance are conceptually distinct, requiring separate streams of literature.

The second stream of literature that informs the current research focuses on sales-marketing interface and integration. As one of the most common boundary spanning employees, research on salespeople is quite relevant to this examination of directive modification. A substantial amount of literature has been written concerning the interface between marketing and other internal departments within the organization. This includes a number of articles focused on how marketing and sales are able to more effectively integrate and the organizational implications of that integration. This stream of investigation is relevant to the current research because the sales department often is not involved in the formation of strategies that directly influence their duties within the organization (Viswanathan and Olson 1992). Instead, the directives that influence the sales agent's day-to-day job function come from other departments, particularly the marketing department. Therefore, research focused on the interface between sales and marketing can be informative to our research question because it sheds light on some of the motivations that affect how directives are translated into action.

The extant literature has established that a number of differences exist between marketing and sales based on the focus of their respective job functions such as short- and long-term orientation or making the customer vs. the product a priority (Rouzies et al. 2005). Strahle et al (1996) discovered that many sales managers disregard or overlook the orders they receive from marketing executives, indicating that this attitudinal disconnect translates into disparate behavior. Further research indicates that marketing-sales integration should involve strategies as well as activities (Guenzi and Troilo 2006). Other literature has discovered that the sales-marketing interface influences firm performance through features such as strategy making and dispersion of influence (Malshe and Sohi 2009b; Troilo et al. 2009). All of this extant literature seems to suggest that the differences in attitude between the departments lead to dysfunctional behavior by one or both parties.

Three papers in this stream of literature contribute significantly to the current research. Some research indicates that differences between the marketing and sales function do not necessarily lead only to deleterious effects for the organization as a whole (Homburg and Jensen 2007). In their examination of the sales-marketing interface, the authors find that the market performance of the firm can potentially be enhanced by these differences in attitudes because the resulting behaviors create a type of balance in the firm. For instance, their findings indicate that market performance of the organization can actually be improved when one of the two sides advocates for the customer while the other side champions the product. Market performance can also be enhanced when one side pursues short-term considerations and the other supports long-term considerations. This evidence provides critical support for our contention that directive modification behavior does not necessarily have to result in negative consequences for the overall performance of the organization. Directive modification behavior can be driven by a number of attitudinal dispositions such as a concern for the customer's welfare. When directive modification is considered as the boundary spanner advocating one side of the debate (the customer over product), then the findings of Homburg and Jensen (2007) support our assertion that the results will not always be injurious to the focal organization.

The second piece of literature that is critical to this work has to do with the views of the sales force toward marketing. Malshe (2010) investigated the credibility of marketers in the eyes of the sales department. That article establishes through qualitative data that the sales force at times doubts the expertise and trustworthiness of the members of the marketing department because the marketers do not understand the realities of the selling function. This indicates a somewhat natural predisposition for sales agents to doubt the validity of the directives that originate from the marketing department. If the sales force does not fully trust the department from which many of the directives originate, those sales agents will be inclined to believe they must modify those directives as a matter of course to make them relevant and reasonable in practice. Further, this research can be logically expanded to suggest that boundary spanners may be inclined to modify directives of other departments as well. It is unlikely that any other departments within the organization are better informed than the marketing department when it comes to the realities of the boundary spanning function. Therefore, we can reasonably expect that directives from departments other than marketing will also be met with some degree of misgiving because they will show equal (if not higher) levels of disregard toward the requirements of boundary spanners. We believe that this attitude of the sales force toward other departments indicates a consistent motivation for boundary spanning employees to engage in directive modification behavior.

Finally, Malshe and Sohi (2009a) directly address the notion of "buy-in" from the sales department. "Buy-in" is the closest concept in the literature to directive modification because it is applied to a specific marketing initiative. Using qualitative data, the authors explore some antecedents and conditions that facilitate "buy-in" by salespeople. That "buy-in" is an issue that has emerged in the sales literature definitively establishes that this area of academic endeavor exists and is worthy of further exploration.

Although the concept of "buy-in" is similar to directive modification and reinforces the need for research in this general domain, there are significant differences between the concept of "buy-in" as it currently exists and directive modification. Malshe and Sohi (2009a) define "buy-in" as "the sales function's belief that a proposed marketing strategy or initiative is appropriate and has merit" (p. 208). From the definition, "buy-in" refers to an affective response from sales employees that is not linked to specific action. The current research goes beyond just the belief of the sales force (or any other boundary spanner) to consider measurable intentions that individuals form. So, whereas buy-in is more affective in nature, directive modification focuses on a cognitive response by boundary spanners. While we do consider the attitudes and motivations of the boundary spanner that drive directive modification behavior, the core of the directive modification concept is about a deliberate, cognitive decision on the part of the boundary spanner to take concrete actions to modify the directive and deviate from organizationally-prescribed action. Two individuals that have "buy-in" with respect to some initiative may actually pursue that belief in very different ways. We consider that possibility in our exploration of this phenomenon.

Directive modification also goes beyond the "buy-in" conceptualization to include any initiative that the selling organization undertakes, regardless of the department of origin. In addition, directive modification considers a level of depth and complexity that Malshe and Sohi's (2009a) "buy-in" concept does not with respect to the beneficiary. For a boundary spanner to consider something "appropriate" is a complicated issue because these employees engage with at least three relevant entities: parent organization, external partner organization or individual, and self. An initiative that has merit for one party may cause great harm for another party. We consider the conflicting goals of these different parties that are relevant to the boundary spanner. Finally, the definition of "buy-in" implies a certain binary nature: either the boundary spanner buys in or does not. Directive modification allows that boundary spanner behavior lies along a continuum spanning from full acceptance of the directive to complete rejection of it.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### *Agency Theory*

Agency theory provides an ideal beginning structure for the current research problem. Agency theory is concerned with situations in which a principal and agent have conflicting interests (Eisenhardt 1989; Fama 1980). In most cases, the principal is an employer and the agent is an employee of the principal. Agency theory has been used a number of times in the extant literature to study the behavior of boundary spanners (e.g. Krafft 1999; Ramaswami et al. 1997; Rouzies et al. 2009). The principal is usually (although not always) depicted as the organization as a whole and the agent as an individual person. We propose this same framework in the current research setting primarily because the immediate manager of the boundary spanner is not likely to be the source of the directives with which we are concerned. Instead, the direct supervisor often must relay directives and policies that originate with his/her superiors. The boundary spanner will not often have an opportunity to build a relationship with those individuals within the organization. So, the directives toward which the boundary spanner is focused effectively come from a faceless organization rather than an individual with whom a relationship may have been formed.

There are three primary assumptions in agency theory for the human agent (Eisenhardt 1989). First, the individual is assumed to be guided by self-interest. This certainly holds true with almost all employees and holds true in our case. In some of the later discussion in this paper, we will consider instances in which the boundary spanner prioritizes the concerns of the external partner or his/her employer as motivation for directive modification. While this may seem to be in contradiction to this first assumption, one must bear in mind that the boundary spanning employee is not concerned with these partners' best interests for merely altruistic reasons. The quality of the relationship with these partners can significantly influence future business opportunities and, thus, future compensation possibilities (Crosby et al. 1990). Therefore, protecting the interests of both the employer and external partners is ultimately a method for the boundary spanner to assure income from future sales, which is an expression of self-interest.

The second human assumption of agency theory is that of bounded rationality (Eisenhardt 1989). Bounded rationality refers to the inability of individuals to make perfectly rational decisions due to either a lack of information or a lack of ability to process all the available information. Basically, it means that humans cannot take everything into account, so people are apt to make incorrect judgments in some cases due to limited or incorrect perceptions of the relevant information. The third human assumption that Eisenhardt (1989) posits is that the agent is risk averse. So, the boundary spanning agent in our research problem desires to reduce the risk involved if given the opportunity.

For the organization, agency theory assumes that there are at least partially conflicting goals between the agent and the principal (Eisenhardt 1989). Put in terms of the current research, this means that the boundary spanner will have some level of disagreement with the directive that the organization has initiated. Recall that we are operating from the assumption that the agent disagrees in some way with the directive in question. In addition, information asymmetry is assumed to exist between the principal and agent. This is especially true with boundary spanners because of the great deal of autonomy and independence their job function includes. Finally, information is considered a purchasable commodity in agency theory. So, the organization is capable of reducing the information asymmetry that exists if it is willing to incur the added expenses to do so.

*Role Theory*

Although agency theory provides a general framework for studying directive modification, it is insufficient to fully guide this research because of its somewhat simplistic representation of human behavior. While the assumptions of agency theory are generally considered valid, they do not provide the basis for a detailed investigation of the behavior of individuals in complex employment situations. Thus, other theories focused on human behavior are required to more effectively represent the scope of the current research. The first of these supplemental theories is role theory.

Role theory holds that individuals in social settings have a role to fulfill through their actions and behavior in everyday life (Biddle 1986). Much like actors in a play, everyone is considered to have a script to follow. This script is a product of the views and expectations of the other participants in any given social context (Lutz and Kakkar 1976). Therefore, the appropriate response to a given stimulus can be considered a moving target because individuals are subjected to varying and diverse social settings. For example, a story that is appropriate at the workplace may be entirely inappropriate at home because the participants involved are different. Sharing that story would have differential consequences for the individual depending on the social setting.

Additionally, role theory posits that individuals make judgments as to how well they and other relevant individuals perform in their prescribed roles (Secord and Backman 1964; Shaw and Costanzo 1982). These assessments result in satisfaction or dissatisfaction with self and others. So, individuals are motivated to adhere to their roles in order to improve their personal satisfaction as well as heighten others' judgments of them.  An inability to fulfill expectations will thus create dissatisfaction and other negative emotions for the individual.

Boundary spanners have a number of parties that create different scripts for them.  These parties fall into one of three general categories:  self, the employing organization, and partners external to the organization.  The expectations that are communicated implicitly and explicitly to the boundary spanner by these parties can make it difficult for the boundary spanner to understand and fulfill his/her role, which results in role stress (Velicer and Jackson 1990).  Many boundary spanners experience role stress because they face conflicting expectations from the various parties around which their job function rotates (Dubinsky and Mattson 1979).  This role stress is comprised of role conflict and role ambiguity (Velicer and Jackson 1990).

Role conflict occurs for a boundary spanner when the expectations from different parties become incompatible and conflict with each other (Behrman and Perreault 1984).  Boundary spanners are often exposed to role conflict potential stemming from a job function that interacts with parties external to the parent organization.  In our research context, the directive of the parent organization sets that organization's expectations for the boundary spanner.  These expectations may be mismatched with the expectations of an external partner, the boundary spanner himself, or possibly even other directives of the selling organization.  In such a situation where expectations are conflicting, the boundary spanning employee can choose one of four basic courses of action:  fulfill expectations of A, fulfill expectations of B, compromise, or avoidance (Miller and Shull 1962).  Given the research problem, one of these alternatives is not pursued because it is not in the purview of the study and that is the fulfillment of the expectations of the employing organization. However, the other three potential actions are of great interest because these represent some deviation from the prescribed actions that would have been appropriate for full pursuit of the strategy behind the directive. This deviation holds the potential for significant impact on the performance of the organization as at least one branch of that organization pursues a course of action possibly not fully in line with the strategy chosen by organizational management. We propose directive modification as a construct that measures boundary spanner pursuit of any of the remaining three courses of action by capitalizing on the information asymmetries that naturally exist in the boundary spanning job function.

The other aspect of role stress that boundary spanners often face is role ambiguity. Role ambiguity occurs when the individual is uncertain as to the expectations of other actors in the social context (Singh 1998). Communication can be quite complicated because the receiver must discern the true message taking into account what was said, what was intended, and what implications are to be made, all the while trying to filter out any noise that would obstruct the message's transmission (Mohr and Nevin 1990). For example, the direct supervisor represents a potentially significant source of noise in the process of communicating a directive to boundary spanners. Most (if not all) directives do not originate with the direct supervisor. Instead, directives are often instigated at the same level as the strategy initiates (e.g. upper level management). Thus, the direct supervisor acts more as a filter for the message. His or her biases and beliefs about the relative merits of the message itself as well as the possible impact it will have on his/her success in the organization all open the door for ambiguity concerning the expectations surrounding the directive. Additionally, role conflict contributes to increased role ambiguity for salespeople (Miao and Evans 2007).

Role stress creates pressure for the boundary spanner when faced with a directive from management. The boundary spanner must balance various demands and expectations along with deciphering how to optimally fulfill his/her role within the organization. Taking into account all of these considerations, the boundary spanning employee is often led to pursue a course of action not in keeping with the exact directive issued by the organization. We assert that directive modification is a form of coping mechanism with which boundary spanners balance the different role demands placed upon them. Additionally, directive modification behavior can be potentially seen as a product of the ambiguity created by the organization’s internal communication system. Up to this point, the extant literature regarding role stress has found consistent results with respect to attitudinal outcomes such as job satisfaction (Teas 1983). However, a consistent influence of role conflict and role ambiguity on more behavioral outcomes such as performance has been elusive (Nygaard and Dahlstrom 2002). Directive modification represents a potentially significant consideration in these obscure relationships.

Whereas agency theory assumes that the agent only considers self-interest in behavioral decisions, role theory allows for the consideration of other parties such as external partners and employer. Again, the boundary spanner is ultimately concerned with self, so that assumption is not broken. However, the priority of self in the case of a boundary spanner is expressed in the concerns of these partner entities, for which agency theory does not account. Therefore, role theory allows us to consider the motivations to engage in directive modification behavior based on the boundary spanner's simultaneous roles as an advocate for self, external partners, and the parent organization.

*Equity Theory*

Another deficiency of agency theory in addressing the phenomenon in question is that the boundary spanning employee must make some assessment of the directive and whether or not it should be accepted. To address this perspective, we introduce equity theory to the current research. Equity theory posits that individuals judge whether work conditions are equitable by assessing a ratio of inputs to outputs and then comparing that ratio to some referent other, usually a coworker (Adams 1965; Livingstone et al. 1995). If there is insufficient information to make a comparison with a coworker or other peer, individuals will compare the ratio with their previously held expectations or even their past selves before the current work condition originated (Netemeyer et al. 1997).

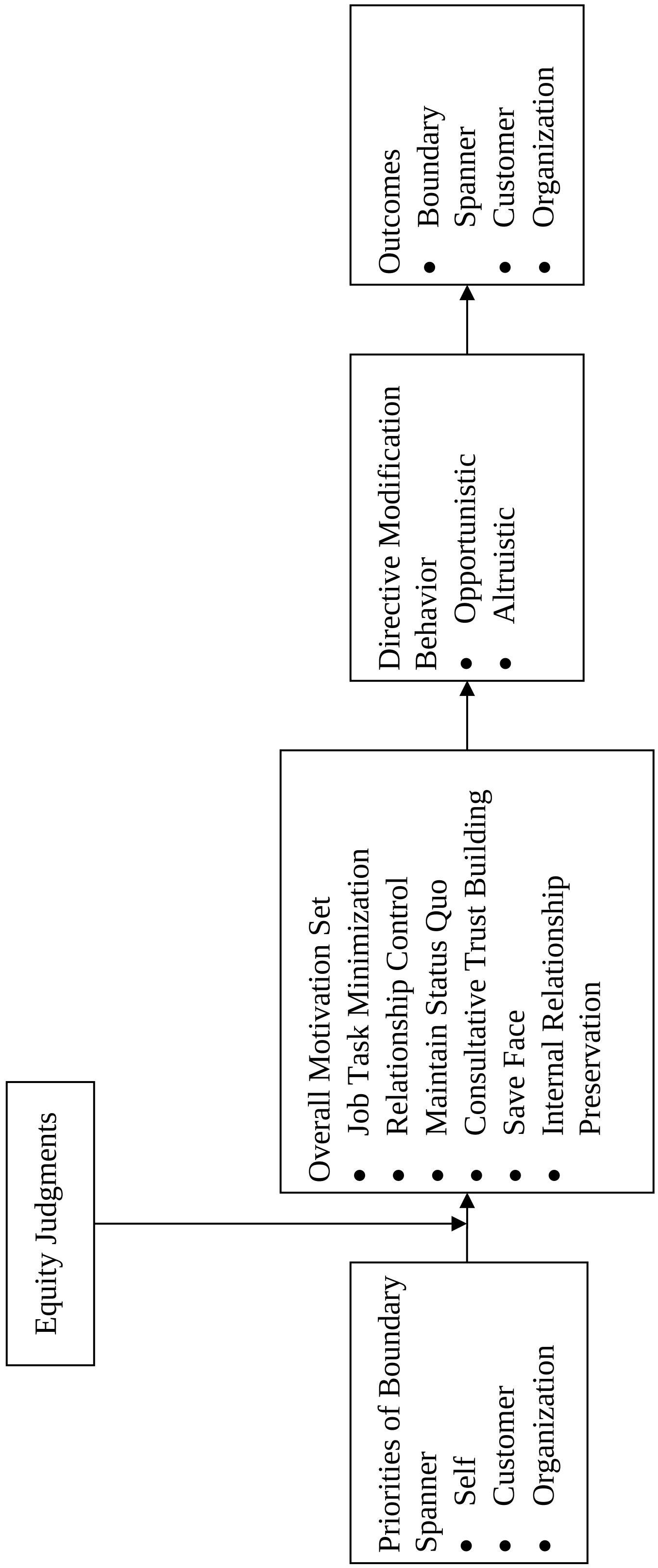
We consider the directive from organizational management as a revision of the current work condition for the boundary spanner. Given the limited information that would be available to a boundary spanner when a directive is first introduced, we propose that the boundary spanning employee will compare the current ratio of outputs to inputs with the anticipated ratio if the directive is fully accepted. If there exists a considerable difference between these two ratios, then the boundary spanner will be motivated to engage in directive modification behavior in order to lessen the gap.

Applying equity theory and role theory in conjunction to this basically agency theory dilemma results in complicated considerations for boundary spanners. As a representative of him-/herself, the employer, and external partner(s), the boundary spanner must assess and prioritize each party's outcomes from the directive. Combining these three theories produces the model depicted in figure 1. We propose that the boundary spanner has a set of priorities a priori the introduction of the directive by the organization, which combine to form an overall motivation set. The equity judgments of the boundary spanner regarding the directive moderate this relationship, making certain priorities more or less salient. The motivation set leads to directive modification behavior, which can be opportunistic or altruistic in nature depending on the particular motivation being pursued. Finally, the directive modification behavior has an impact on relevant outcomes for the boundary spanner, the employer, and the customer.

**OVERALL MOTIVATIONS**

With so many roles and factors surrounding the boundary spanner's duties, the overall motivation set of boundary spanners to engage in directive modification can be quite complex. From role theory, we identify three relevant entities for the motivations of a boundary spanner: self, parent organization, and external partner. These relevant parties create different expectations of the boundary spanner as well as different motivations for engaging in directive modification. In addition, boundary spanners must consider both the short-term and long-term ramifications of their decisions. The combination of various role functions along with short- and long-term considerations creates six potential motivations for boundary spanners to modify

**Figure 1: Theoretical Model**



organizational directives.  Table 1 depicts each of these six potential motivations. Drawing from existing literature and theories, the following discussion argues for each distinct motivation for boundary spanners to engage in directive modification behavior.  These motivations are proposed to derive from the core boundary spanning function and therefore be common, in basis, to all boundary spanners.

**Table 1:  Boundary Spanner Motivations for Directive Modification**

| **Focus of the Boundary Spanner** | **Short-term Motivations** | **Long-term Motivations** |
|---|---|---|
| **Boundary Spanner** | Job Task Minimization | Relationship Control |
| **Customer** | Maintain Status Quo | Consultative Trust Building |
| **Employer** | Save Face | Internal Relationship Preservation |

It should be noted that while the following discussion applies illustrations from the sales context, this is not intended to imply that salespeople are the same as all other boundary spanners.  The sales job role is somewhat unique, particularly in that incentivized reward is often a significant portion of the overall compensation for the sales employee (Hill and Lewicki 2007).  This commission structure can influence the motivations of salespeople to engage in particular actions as well as the overall motivation basis of a salesperson (Cattell 1966).  We do assert that these motivations exist on some level for all boundary spanners, but it must be acknowledged that some of them may be more or less salient for boundary spanners other than salespeople.

Given these six possible motivations, we posit that at least one of these motivations will be active for a boundary spanner when he/she disagrees with a directive from his/her organization.  These motivations are not mutually exclusive, so more than one motivation may be present, creating the motivation set for the boundary spanner. The following discussion argues for each motivation as well as the types of directives for which each motivation is particularly relevant.

*Job Task Minimization*

Probably the most basic motivation for boundary spanners in general is the desire for the highest compensation or, more accurately, the least amount of effort expended for a given compensation level, which we have labeled job task minimization. For some boundary spanners, this motivation comes down to a basic desire to not expend any extra effort toward their job function than will be required by the directive. For others, though, this can become a complicated calculation because many boundary spanner rewards are based on their performance (i.e. commissions and bonuses) instead of effort alone. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory poses work force motivation as a three-part equation. Employees will be motivated if three elements are present: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy is the belief that effort leads to performance. Instrumentality is the belief that performance leads to reward. Valence is the belief that the reward leads to satisfaction or that the reward is desirable.

With few exceptions, the introduction of a directive by the employing organization disrupts at least some part of this set of equations for boundary spanners. Embracing a new directive from the parent organization requires effort from the boundary spanner. So, an equivalent amount of overall effort from the agent most likely leads to less performance because additional effort is now directed toward the directive instead of tasks directly related to production (e.g. selling or following up with customers). This reduced performance level ultimately decreases rewards and overall satisfaction for the boundary spanning agent. If, however, the boundary spanner can find some way to circumvent the directive, then he/she can devote more effort to core activities, thus creating more rewards and satisfaction for him-/herself.

This, at least, is true in the short-term. Admittedly, some directives (e.g. software adoption or a refined job process) are designed to improve boundary spanner efficiency in the long-term. However, research indicates that boundary spanning agents tend to have a rather short-term orientation with some aspects of their job function (Homburg and Jensen 2007; Rouzies et al. 2005). Agency theory assumes bounded rationality for individuals. It can prove challenging to convince these agents of the benefits associated with a directive that fall outside that individual's typical cognitive framework. So, even directives aimed at creating long-term benefits for some party can fall victim to this motivation.

Recall that agency theory also asserts that the agent is risk averse and the organization is risk neutral (Eisenhardt 1989). So, even in the face of prospective future gains tied to the directive, boundary spanners could still be strongly motivated to engage in directive modification because there is a risk that the promised long-term gains may never materialize. This result would leave the employee with only short-term losses as a result of pursuing the directive. As individuals, boundary spanners will be reluctant to take the risk of producing such an outcome. Instead, they likely will seek out some version of the directive that most closely resembles the current outcome state and/or minimizes the risk of loss. As a risk neutral entity, it is highly unlikely that the organization has chosen the directive that poses little to no risk, particularly for the boundary spanning agent. Posed with this predicament, employees will be motivated to pursue directive modification in order to decrease the risk of wasted effort associated with the directive.

The combination of opportunity costs from higher effort requirements and perceived risks created by a directive from the parent organization generates motivation for boundary spanners to engage in directive modification. In their personal quest for the highest compensation, organizational agents will balance the opportunity costs as well as risks involved when considering how they will pursue a new directive. Because all directives require some form of effort from the boundary spanner, they will each have the potential of being modified based on this motivation.

*Partner Relationship Control*

Some time ago, the literature addressing the basic function of the boundary spanners, especially the sales force, shifted from a focus on the product to a focus on understanding and meeting customer needs (Spiro et al. 2008). This new focus on building a long-term partnership with external entities is broadly labeled relationship marketing. As the face of many of their organizations, boundary spanners play a critical role in building and managing relationships with partners (Weitz and Bradford 1999). So, boundary spanning employees spend a good deal of their time and effort making sure that the relationship with valuable partners remains strong.

Transaction cost analysis (TCA), which is closely related to agency theory, includes the notion of asset specific investments (Rindfleisch and Heide 1997; Williamson 1991). Asset specific investments are any investments made by a party that cannot be redeployed outside a particular partnership or relationship (Williamson 1991). Because these investments cannot be reapplied in a different setting, they create dependence by the investing party on the exchange partner. The time spent by a boundary spanner to develop a relationship with an external partner can be considered to be an asset specific investment. Previous literature has used this notion of asset specific investments in customer relationships involving salespeople (Weiss and Anderson 1992). So, the character of the boundary spanning function naturally creates a tie between the boundary spanner and the external partner. Additionally, a critical part of relationship marketing is the commitment that both parties feel toward each other (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Deepening the relationship creates additional commitment between two parties. Therefore, the current job description of boundary spanning agents creates commitment toward the partner.

This combination of investment in the relationship with an external partner and commitment to that external partner imbues a high value on the relationship in the eyes of the boundary spanner. In fact, the current emphasis on relationship development by boundary spanning professionals has lead some sales agents to identify themselves as the salesperson *to* particular customers rather than the salesperson *for* a particular employer. So, the attitude can become, "no matter who I work for, X will always be my customer." This attitude poses a higher risk of harm for the parent organization if that salesperson finds employment with a competing firm.

The likely result of this attitude is that boundary spanners will be highly protective of their relationships with external partners and attempt to create some form of exclusivity in communication with that partner. The increased involvement of other parties, particularly the parent organization, in the relationship with an external partner would weaken the boundary spanner's grip on this valuable asset. Some directives can threaten this control by the boundary spanner, prompting him or her to modify that directive in order to protect this long-term asset.

*Maintain Status Quo*

As we covered earlier, boundary spanner actions are not exclusively motivated by their own interests. Other entities, such as external partners and the employer, heavily influence the boundary spanning employee. When considering the interests of an external partner, boundary spanners may be motivated to modify organizational directives as a means of fulfilling a desire (perceived or genuine) of the external partner to persist with the current business arrangement. Recall that agency theory assumes agents to be risk averse (Eisenhardt 1989; Fama 1980). This risk aversion often can be connected with a reluctance by boundary spanning employees to embrace change (Ahearne et al. 2010; Davis et al. 1989). Additionally, bounded rationality is assumed for all parties. In the absence of information to the contrary, individual boundary spanners are likely to assume that external partners share in their risk aversion and would therefore be opposed to voluntarily engaging in actions that alter the existing status quo. In the interest of assisting the external partner in achieving this assumed common goal, boundary spanners will be inclined to engage in directive modification behavior.

In addition, some directives by the parent organization may be ill-timed for an external partner. Part of relationship marketing is being sensitive to partners' needs (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Even if the boundary spanner is willing to embrace a directive, full acceptance of that directive may have to be shelved in the short-term because doing otherwise would imply a disregard for the partner's situation, injuring the relationship. For example, an external partner currently engaged in a major software overhaul would be unlikely to agree to simultaneously transition additional software applications tied to the partnership with the boundary spanner's organization.

*Consultative Trust Building*

Long-term relationships with partners result in commitment and trust by both parties toward each other (Morgan and Hunt 1994). This means that the boundary spanner will be committed to the welfare of the partner and will trust the partner, while the partner will reciprocate those same sentiments toward the boundary spanning agent. This commitment and trust between the two parties represents an important long-term asset in the current business environment. Trust in the frontline employees influences customer loyalty (Sirdeshmukh et al. 2002). The loyalty of important external partners, such as customers, is a prime asset that the boundary spanner and his/her employer both covet (Palmatier et al. 2007a). With this trust from the partner being so valuable, boundary spanning employees will be averse to take actions that could violate and/or decrease the partner's trust in the future. Thus, they may seek to modify directives that threaten to damage the relationship between the boundary spanner and the partner.

Additionally, the current job function of boundary spanners can lead to a consultative role for the employee with respect to the partner that can be quite critical to the success of the relationship (Spiro et al. 2008). Sales consultants, for example, create value for customers by focusing on the discovery of latent needs and the optimal fulfillment of those needs (Pelham 2009). In this role of consultant, therefore, the boundary spanner advises the external partner on how to more efficiently and effectively conduct its business. In the pursuit of fulfilling the needs of the external partner, boundary spanners will necessarily filter out those ideas and actions that will not meet that end goal. As a result, a boundary spanning employee may be willing to modify a directive if it is inequitable for the customer in order to maintain or even strengthen the perceived trust in the relationship. What the employer perceives as beneficial for external partners may not be perceived that way by frontline employees because of their different knowledge and familiarity with the situation. Also, the parent organization may deem it a reasonable exchange to experience a negative impact on the relationship with the partner in order to fulfill some other goal that will hopefully garner greater positive results for the parent organization or the entire relationship. Even equipped with that knowledge, boundary spanners may still engage in directive modification because it reinforces that individual's trustworthiness to the external partner.

*Save Face*

Along with self-interests and the interests of external partners, boundary spanners are also concerned with the interests of their employer. At times, the parent organization may introduce a directive that the boundary spanner believes is not feasible and will cast both he/she and the organization in a negative light in the eyes of other participants in the industry. Boundary spanners will be motivated to prevent such an occurrence. Even though the organization may be willing to subject itself to such short-term stumbles in the interests of long-term growth, the boundary spanning agent may not be so willing.

We propose that this motivation to modify organizational directives represents an counterintuitive form of organizational citizenship behavior. Because of the unique aspects of their role in the organization, boundary spanning employees are sometimes posed with "exception-to-the-rule" situations where their own discretion must be applied. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is voluntary behavior by individuals that is outside the normal role of the employee and supports the organization (Organ 1988). Two dimensions of OCB relevant to the current research are organizational loyalty and individual initiative (Podsakoff et al. 2000). Organizational loyalty includes behaviors aimed at defending the organization's reputation and promoting the organization as effectively as possible to external entities (Graham 1991; Moorman and Blakely 1995). Individual initiative entails performing functions above and beyond the requirements of the prescribed job role (Moorman and Blakely 1995).

When a directive seems to contradict a boundary spanning employee's desire to express organizational loyalty, that person's individual initiative may motivate him/her to modify the directive. In such an instance, the employee must choose between complying with the directive and effectively representing the parent organization to external parties. Since many boundary spanning job functions, such as sales, focus on short-term results (Homburg and Jensen 2007), these employees will likely choose the latter alternative to prevent any embarrassment for the organization. Thus, they will be motivated to modify directives that are inequitable to their own organization.

*Internal Relationship Preservation*

The internal departments within the parent organization represent an often unconsidered set of vital partnerships for boundary spanners. Successful boundary spanning agents not only build relationships with external partners, but they also cultivate interactions with individuals and groups within their own organization (Plouffe and Barclay 2007; Steward et al. 2010). We propose that these internal relationships also provide motivation for boundary spanners to engage in directive modification.

When an organization comes up with a new strategy, the resulting directives rarely apply to only the boundary spanning force. Either through direct communication with other departments or conjecture on the boundary spanner's part, the boundary spanning employee likely projects how the directive issued to him/her may also affect other groups within the parent organization. How the directive affects these other groups can influence the boundary spanner's directive modification behavior. A boundary spanner may be motivated to preserve and foster relationships with internal members of the parent organization in other departments. If accepting a directive will create problems for an internal partner, the boundary spanner will be motivated to seek out modified versions of the directive. Additionally, the boundary spanner may seek to create indebtedness from internal partners by deviating from the directives. The norm of reciprocity suggests that when one partner in a relationship acts in the interest of the other partner, that other partner will feel an obligation to reciprocate such deeds (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). By "bending the rules" for an internal partner, the boundary spanner can create an atmosphere where the partner feels obligated to respond in kind in the future. Therefore, boundary spanning employees will be motivated to engage in directive modification behavior in order to prevent inequities for their partners within the parent organization.

*Summary*

We have argued that boundary spanners may be motivated to engage in directive modification for a number of reasons. One final point to be made about these motivations is that they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As individuals, boundary spanners can have multiple motivations active at any given time. In fact, it is possible that all six motivations could be generated by a single directive from the parent organization. Understanding these six basic motives of boundary spanners helps to reveal the divided loyalties that boundary spanners must navigate when faced with a directive from their organization.

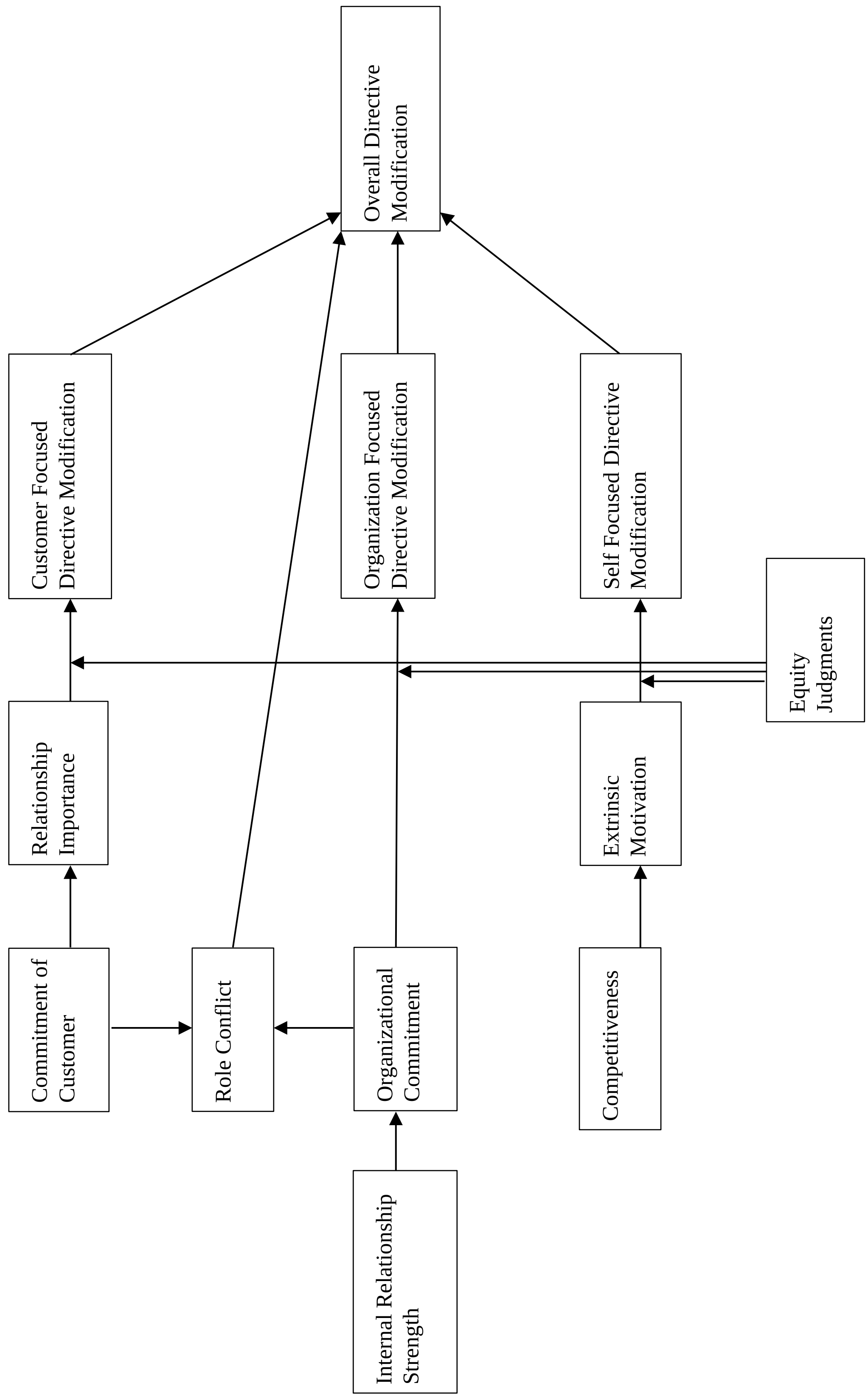
## RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the previous discussion, we propose to empirically test the model in figure 2. This model depicts constructs relevant to each role the boundary spanner is asked to fill. Each of these is hypothesized to influence directive modification intentions focused on that particular priority. These three subcategories of focused directive modification intentions are then hypothesized to contribute to an overall directive modification construct. Equity considerations regarding a specific directive from organizational management are hypothesized to moderate some of these relationships. Each hypothesis is argued in the following section.

*Customer Commitment*

Moorman et al (1992, p. 316) define commitment as “an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship.” Commitment is a bilateral construct in the buyer-

**Figure 2: Empirical Model**



seller relationship in that both parties will have a particular level of commitment to the other, which may or may not be equivalent to the reciprocal commitment from the other party. In the salesperson-customer context, the salesperson not only realizes his/her level of commitment to the customer but also perceives a level of commitment from the customer. This customer commitment to the salesperson can be a very valuable asset for the salesperson. Commitment is an integral part and indicator of the quality of the relationship with the customer (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Wong and Sohal 2002). The value of these highly committed customers stems from the fact that deeper relationships often correlate with future purchase intentions (Dwyer et al. 1987). Because salespeople's wages are often tied to incentive-based commissions, future purchases from customers will be quite valuable to any salesperson. Additionally, previous research has recognized that salespeople will value and covet deeper relationships with certain customers (Palmatier et al. 2007b; Weiss and Anderson 1992).

The value associated with these committed customers has two primary results in the current research context. First, the relationship with these customers will become more important to the salesperson. Salespeople understand that it is less costly in terms of time and effort to keep current customers rather than find new ones. Therefore, salespeople will prioritize committed customers because they are very likely to be associated with future commissions and income.

Second, valuable customers can contribute to the role conflict perceived by the salesperson. Role conflict is defined as "the degree of incongruity or incompatibility of expectations associated with the role." (Behrman and Perreault 1984, p. 12) One key influence on role conflict is the level of "felt" conflict by the salesperson. Sales reps will perceive more role conflict as they "feel" that factors determining their job outcomes are beyond their control, a phenomenon also referred to as locus of control (Behrman and Perreault 1984). As a customer's value increases, the salesperson will feel less and less control over how he/she must interact with the customer. This higher value of a customer compels the salesperson to automatically defer to the wishes of the customer rather than truly being able to weigh the potential other consequences of such a decision. Therefore, a committed customer will positively contribute to the perceived role conflict of the salesperson.

*H1: The perceived commitment of the customer toward the salesperson will have a positive influence on the importance of that relationship to the salesperson.*

*H2: The perceived commitment of the customer toward the salesperson will have a positive influence on role conflict perceived by the salesperson.*

The departments and individuals within the parent organization represent an often unconsidered set of vital partnerships for salespeople. Successful boundary spanning agents not only build relationships with external partners, but they also cultivate interactions with individuals and groups within their own organization (Plouffe and Barclay 2007; Steward et al. 2010). By deliberately engaging with these constituents within the organization, the salesperson develops stronger relationships with these key individuals and groups. This investment in internal relationships within the organization represents an asset specific investment by the salesperson in that it cannot be redeployed if the relationship changes, such as would be the case if the salesperson left the organization to work for another firm.

Transaction cost theory as well as other extant literature indicates that asset specific investments by one party will increase the commitment of that party to the receiver of the investment (Heide and John 1988; Rindfleisch and Heide 1997). While this literature focuses on the relationship between two organizations, other research has applied this principle to individual boundary spanners, such as salespeople (Weiss and Anderson 1992). In the current research context, we therefore hypothesize that the asset specific investments made by a boundary spanner in order to strengthen relationships with other employees in the parent organization will create commitment on the part of the boundary spanner to the parent organization as a whole.

*H3: The strength of relationships with people or groups within the parent organization will have a positive influence on the organizational commitment of the salesperson to his/her parent organization.*

Almost all of the extant literature that examines role conflict and organizational commitment either avoids a direct link between the two constructs or tests role conflict as an antecedent to organizational commitment (e.g. Dubinsky and Mattson 1979; Hollet-Haudebert et al. 2011; Singh 1998). Although there has been some degree of mixed results, there seems to be reasonable agreement that role conflict has a negative effect on organizational commitment of employees (Dubinsky and Mattson 1979).

The unique function of the boundary spanner within an organization, though, seems to suggest that a contrary directionality may occur within that specific job context. One of the critical roles of the boundary spanning force in the success of a parent organization is as an advocate for the customer (Homburg and Jensen 2007).

Higher levels of commitment to the parent organization would seemingly contradict this role. A boundary spanner who is highly committed to his/her parent organization would place its expectations at a higher priority than the customer's, thus creating conflict between the role the salesperson is implicitly asked to perform (customer advocate) and the one he/she feels obligated to perform (commitment to the parent organization).

While empirical evidence to this point seems to indicate a negative relationship between these two constructs, there have been few if any tests of the relationship we suggest. Role theory seems to suggest that commitment to the parent organization will create increased levels of role conflict for boundary spanning employees because their "script" would otherwise more often focus on representing the customer's interests. Additionally, the role of the boundary spanner has changed in recent years, becoming more complex and customer focused (Brown et al. 2005). As boundary spanners have embraced this new role, it is rational to expect that this relationship between commitment to the parent organization and role conflict may also be changing. Therefore, we posit hypothesis 4.

*H4: Commitment to the parent organization by the boundary spanner will have a positive influence on the amount of role conflict perceived by the boundary spanner.*

Extant literature indicates that commitment to the parent organization is a positive and significant predictor of organizational citizenship behavior (O'Reilly and Chatman 1986; Schappe 1998). Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been defined as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the [parent] organization." (Organ 1988) Based on the previous discussion of the motivation set that drives organization focused directive modification (OFDM), we argue that this modification behavior is a type of OCB because it fits Organ's widely accepted definition. A boundary spanner engaging in OFDM is motivated to either save face for the parent organization or assist other constituents within the parent organization. In this case, the boundary spanning employee is using his/her own discretion, is not being directly rewarded for the behavior, and is attempting to improve organizational function of the employer. Since organizational commitment positively predicts OCB, we expect the same positive relationship between commitment to the parent organization and OFDM.

*H5: Commitment to the parent organization by the boundary spanner will have a positive influence on the intentions of the boundary spanner to engage in organization focused directive modification behavior.*

As was previously discussed, role conflict is focused on disparate expectations for the salesperson and has a number of antecedents. The extant literature has also considered a number of potential outcomes of role conflict. For example, it has been shown to impact job satisfaction (Jaramillo et al. 2006) and emotional exhaustion (Lewin and Sager 2009). While some expected consequences of role conflict have been largely confirmed in previous literature, one consequence that has seen mixed results is salesperson performance. While some studies have shown the often anticipated negative relationship (Lysonski 1985), others have indicated a positive impact of role conflict on performance (Behrman and Perreault 1984).

One possible explanation for these inconsistent findings is that salespeople are not often passive recipients of role conflict. Given their typically high levels of autonomy, salespeople have the opportunity to take actions to blunt or negate the role conflict that other parties create. Nonis et al (1996) investigated salesperson tactics for dealing with role conflict. In addition, other researchers have posited that salespeople may engage in various behaviors to deal with role conflict that could benefit the organization, thus accounting for the inconsistent link between role conflict and performance (Goolsby et al. 1992).

Along with those investigated in previous literature, we posit that directive modification behavior could be included in this list of tactics for countering perceived role conflict. Given the autonomy that boundary spanners are often granted, it is not unreasonable to expect them to utilize this freedom to find compromises between the conflicting demands that create role conflict. Engaging in directive modification can be considered a way of finding compromise by attempting to obey the spirit of the law while violating the letter of the law. Therefore, we assert that the more role conflict that a boundary spanner experiences, the more he/she will be inclined to resort to directive modification as a mediation tactic.

*H6: Perceived role conflict by the boundary spanner will have a positive influence on the intentions of the boundary spanner to engage in directive modification behavior.*

An important customer relationship for a salesperson will necessarily be one that is at least reasonably strong. A salesperson would not hold a relationship in high regard if it were not stable and of somewhat higher quality. Therefore, one can assume that a relationship that is important to the salesperson will also have many of the indicators of strong relationships such as commitment, trust, and quality. Previous research has indicated that these relational constructs have a positive relationship with loyalty (Palmatier et al. 2006). Additionally, Sirdeshmukh et al (2002) found that trust creates value in a relationship and loyalty is an outcome of both trust and value. We can realistically assess that salespeople will find value in established relationships with customers. There are several examples of research that has found a link between value and loyalty (Payne and Holt 2001; Ravald and Grönroos 1996).

In almost all of the existing literature, relationship loyalty is considered from the perspective of the customer, i.e. the customer is loyal to the supplier. For example, Plank et al (2006) define loyalty in terms of the buyer's desire to continue doing business with a supplier. This, however, should not dictate that loyalty be a one-way construct. Loyalty can flow in both directions, including salesperson loyalty to a customer.

By extension of the above definition, we can assume that salesperson loyalty to a customer will include the salesperson's motivation to continue doing business with that customer. Recall that the primary motivations for customer focused directive modification (CFDM) include maintaining the status quo and consultative trust building. A directive from the parent organization may threaten the customer relationship by imposing alterations with which the boundary spanner does not fully agree. Additionally, boundary spanners will likely be suspicious of directives altering the relationship with "their" (not the parent organization's) customer, increasing the likelihood of directive modification behavior. Salespeople may also seek to solidify the relationship with a customer by building trust through consultative actions (Newell et al. 2011) that may include rejecting part or all of a directive from the parent organization. Therefore, the importance of a customer relationship to the salesperson can directly affect that salesperson's willingness to engage in directive modification behavior.

*H7: The importance of a customer relationship to the boundary spanner will have a positive influence on the intentions of the boundary spanner to engage in customer focused directive modification behavior.*

Trait competitiveness by individuals is considered to indicate a desire to compete with and be victorious over others (Spence and Helmreich 1983). The boundary spanning occupation (sales in particular) tends to attract people who are higher in trait competitiveness than those who make many other vocational choices (Churchill et al. 1979). Additionally, competitive boundary spanners have been linked to higher performance and success levels than their less competitive counterparts (Brewer 1994; Krishnan et al. 2002). In order to truly compete, individuals must determine a method of keeping score in order to determine the winner. For individuals in the boundary spanning context, this often means a focus on outcome-based measures of performance because these measures are easily compared and objectively measured.

In the extant literature, boundary spanner motivation is often divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ingram et al. 1989). Intrinsic motivation is associated with enjoyment of the task itself while the extrinsically motivated individual focuses on external rewards such as recognition and income as the drivers of behavior (Anderson and Oliver 1987). From these definitions and previous research, we can conjecture that extrinsically motivated boundary spanners will focus on outcome-based measures of performance. Because both trait competitiveness and extrinsic motivation focus on outcome-based measures of performance, we can expect a correlation between the two constructs. Further, because trait competitiveness is considered to be a somewhat fixed characteristic of an individual regardless of their occupation and that extrinsic/intrinsic motivation is based more on the task to be performed, we posit that trait competitiveness is an antecedent to extrinsic motivation.

*H8: Trait competitiveness in the boundary spanner will positively influence boundary spanner extrinsic motivation.*

With its strong tie to outcome-based performance measures, extrinsic motivation represents a potential influence on self focused directive modification (SFDM). Boundary spanners that are primarily extrinsically motivated are focused on some type of quantifiable result that will bring about a reward (Amabile et al. 1994; Anderson and Oliver 1987; Ingram et al. 1989). To be clear, this "result" could be an input that satisfies a behavioral control such as cold calls made to new customers, or it could be an output that satisfies an outcome control such as dollar value sold. In either case, the boundary spanner is motivated to generate a result (outcome) to satisfy the employer's goals which in turn yields a reward for the boundary spanner.

Directives to which a boundary spanner is opposed represent a potential obstacle to the individual being able to generate the desired result as efficiently as before the directive was introduced. For example, the organization may direct salespeople to complete a new information sheet for each sale completed. This type of directive will consume the time of the boundary spanner, preventing him or her from directing more effort toward generating relevant results. Prior research indicates that extrinsically motivated individuals view the necessary actions to gain the external reward as being "negative, chorelike experiences" (Choi and Fishbach 2011, p. 545). So, minimizing the effort required to achieve certain results would likely take precedence over adhering to a directive that the organization may not be able to fully monitor. Additionally, extrinsically motivated boundary spanners will consider achieving the outcome as paramount and will be more willing to sacrifice the organizational directive if it gets in the way of gaining the highest potential outcome.

*H9: Extrinsic motivation will positively influence boundary spanner intentions to engage in self focused directive modification behavior*.

Recall that we are assuming in the current research that there is some level of disagreement from the boundary spanner with regards to the directive. If this disagreement does not exist, the boundary spanner would have no reason to modify the directive and such cases would fall outside the scope of this research. From this assumption, we can also therefore declare that the directive(s) subject to potential modification behaviors create the potential for a diminished state of utility for one or more of the boundary spanner, the customer, or the parent organization. Based on the generally accepted definition, the directive consequently can be stated to create a state of inequity for one of the three aforementioned parties (Livingstone et al. 1995; Netemeyer et al. 1997)

In our previous discussion, we concluded that boundary spanners have some degree of concern for self, the customer, and the parent organization simultaneously if for no other reason than fulfillment of their role expectations. The existence of inequity for one of these parties will create a proportional amount of stress for the boundary spanner that he/she will seek to avoid or resolve (Adams 1963; 1965). This desire by the boundary spanner to resolve the stress he/she is experiencing due to the looming inequity will make the offended party more prominent in the mind of the boundary spanner compared to the others. This increased salience will moderate the relationship between direct antecedents of directive modification behavior and the behaviors themselves such that greater inequity will increase the antecedent's influence over the likelihood of directive modification behaviors. We offer the following three hypotheses with respect to the equity judgments of the salesperson.

*H10a: In cases where the customer faces higher levels of inequity than the salesperson or the organization, the impact of customer relationship importance on customer focused directive modification intentions will be increased.*

*H10b: In cases where the organization faces higher levels of inequity than the customer or salesperson, the impact of organizational commitment on organization focused directive modification intentions will be increased.*

*H10c: In cases where the salesperson faces higher levels of inequity than the customer or organization, the impact of extrinsic motivation on self focused directive modification intentions will be increased.*

Finally, we consider the three aforementioned types of directive modification (customer focused, organization focused, and self focused) to be parts of a single construct depicting the level to which a directive will be altered by the sales force. This overall construct portrays the amount of modification a directive will undergo when it is enacted by the frontline employees of an organization. Whether altruistic or opportunistic in nature, an organizational directive will be subjected to varying amounts of potential modification.

*H11: Intentions of the salesperson to engage in customer focused directive modification behavior, organization focused directive modification behavior, and self focused directive modification behavior will contribute to the overall intentions of the salesperson to engage in directive modification behavior.*

## DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### SCALE DEVELOPMENT

To date, there is no scale in the extant literature designed to measure directive modification behavior in boundary spanning employees. In order to develop and validate such a scale, the current research generally follows the guidelines set forth by Churchill (1979). With the definition and dimensions of directive modification already established in the previous discussion, the next step is to generate scale items for empirical testing.

*Item Generation*

Prior to item generation, eight qualitative interviews were conducted with sales professionals in different industries. Table 2 summarizes the notable findings from these interviews. The respondents varied in job function within their organizations from sales agent to vice president of global sales in order to get the perspectives of frontline employees as well as those who manage those individuals. Regardless of their current position, each respondent had significant experience (5 years or more) as a frontline salesperson from which to draw. Each individual was asked to share personal examples (i.e. themselves or other employees they observed) of instances

**Table 2: Qualitative Study Findings**

| | |
|---|---|
| General findings | • Each interviewee was readily able to provide stories of times that either they or other coworkers had engaged in directive modification behaviors<br>• Two of the participants claimed that they did not believe they had the right to engage in modification behaviors. However, one of those respondents did have a story of an occasion when he modified an organization's directive because "it wasn't right."<br>• Salespeople will often actively and openly try to find ways around a directive if it seems to have a negative impact on efficiency with respect to the situation before the directive.<br>• Salespeople are often resistant to a directive if they do not see the benefit/purpose for it.<br>• Salesperson involvement in the directive decreases the likelihood of modification. |
| CFDM-related findings | • Modification occurs if the directive threatens some kind of injury to the customer.<br>• "It doesn't matter who I work for, [company X] will always be my customer."<br>• Salespeople don't always embrace new products because it jeopardizes the customer and, in turn, the salesperson's credibility with the customer.<br>• Even if management is committed to selling new products, it is not clear if management is committed to supporting those new products for the customer. |
| OFDM-related findings | • Salespeople will at times get the impression that the organization has become too focused on directives to please a very few and lose sight of the true goal of making sales.<br>• "I realized my company wasn't ready to answer the questions that customer would ask, so I didn't mention the new product." |
| SFDM-related findings | • Modification occurs if the directive threatens commissions.<br>• "Salespeople are like water; they find the path of least resistance."<br>• Salespeople will sometimes engage in self-destructive behavior to communicate to management how objectionable a directive is.<br>• Salespeople sell to the compensation plan, making all other guidance subordinate.<br>• Salespeople are aware of directives that make them less valuable to the organization.<br>• Directives that increase monitoring and supervision often encounter resistance |

when salespeople did not comply with employer directives including the perceived motivations behind that behavior. Each respondent was readily able to share multiple examples of such behavior.

Based on the qualitative interviews and extant literature, a pool of 21 semantic differential scale items was generated to assess the three types of directive modification behavior previously discussed. These 21 items consisted of 3 sets of 7 similar items. A common opening phrase was used for each set to distinguish the intended dimension to be measured. So, the first set of 7 items began with the phrase, “Compared to my individual goals, including those assigned by my employer (e.g. quotas) and those I have personally set for myself, I would treat the directive as…” in order to capture self focused directive modification behavior. This opening phrase was then followed by each semantic differential scale item with different endpoints such as “very important…not important at all” and “something to be circumvented…something to be accepted.” After the respondent completed those 7 items, a new opening phrase was applied to designate the next dimension and the same 7 ending phrases from the previous set were repeated. This was done in the third set of items as well. The list of items were subjected to a review by a panel of five academic experts as well as pre-tested on a group of sales students. Some of the specific wording was altered, but otherwise all items were retained to measure each type of directive modification behavior.

**SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION**

The data were collected through an online survey of business-to-business sales agents. The sample consisted of a prescreened panel of volunteers from across the

United States. An electronic survey company – US Sample, Inc. – facilitated contact with the respondents and helped to enlist their participation. Data collected through online panels has begun to appear regularly in many high-quality business journals (e.g. Darrat et al. 2010; Punj 2006). Although there are still opponents to its use, there are a number of advantages such as access to a nationwide sample as well as improved data accuracy since the data is input electronically, thus removing some possibilities of coding errors by the researcher (Birnbaum 2004). Additionally, comparison of online and paper-and-pencil data collections indicate similar covariance structures for both methods (Stanton 1998).

Respondents were offered a cash equivalent worth $6.00 for their participation in this survey. Of the 4,120 invitations sent, a total of 1,036 panel members responded to the survey resulting in a response rate of 25.15%. Because the panel was not exclusively business-to-business salespeople, a qualifying question was asked to eliminate B2C salespeople, which left 406 responses. To screen respondents that were not paying attention, an item was inserted asking the respondent to leave the answer blank. Responses were also eliminated if the participant did not take a minimum amount of time to complete the survey. After these steps, a total of 304 usable responses remained for analysis and an effective response rate of 7.37%.

A scenario-based questionnaire was employed for this study. The scenarios are provided in Appendix B. Respondents were asked questions regarding their current attitudes and employment situation. Then, respondents were instructed to randomly choose the customer with whom they had most recently completed a sale and answer a set of questions regarding that sales relationship. Once those sections were completed, a scenario was introduced, and the respondent was asked a number of questions to gauge how they would respond in such a situation. After the first scenario was introduced, a second, different scenario was introduced, and participants were asked the same set of questions based on this second scenario.

The scenarios utilized in this study describe a situation in which the parent organization has introduced a new product to the market and has directed its sales agents to prioritize promoting this product to all existing customers. A new-product introduction was selected for a number of reasons. First, given the rate of innovation and change in today's market, most salespeople have experienced a new product introduction even if they have only been with their organization briefly. By utilizing a scenario that draws from salesperson past experiences, responses will be more representative of the reality of the salesperson function rather than being based on hypothetical intentions of respondents that may or may not be realistic. Second, a new product introduction scenario depicts the exact situation we wish to investigate in the current research. While management may direct the salesperson to actively sell a new product to customers, there is no opportunity for organizational supervision or monitoring to assure the salesperson accepts those directives. In a new product introduction, the organization must trust the salesperson to accept the directive. Third, a new product introduction directive presents the opportunity for a spectrum of reactions by the salesperson. A salesperson can neglect the new product altogether, mention it in passing, advise the customer against it, and a host of other possible modifications of the directive. By using this scenario, we believe we can more readily measure the continuum of modification possibilities, whereas many other scenarios would only allow for full acceptance or full rejection of the directive. Fourth, a new product introduction depicts some of the strategic implications of directive modification for the organization. If salespeople are not promoting a new product as management believes they are, then the organization is effectively following a different strategy than management espouses. Finally, a new product introduction allows for brief and realistic scenarios depicting inequity for the customer, the organization, and the salesperson. Additionally, these scenarios can be readily combined or separated to achieve the necessary treatments for the current research. Each scenario was subjected to a panel of academic experts to assure it described a situation in which one or more of the customer, organization, or boundary spanner him-/herself were facing a more difficult or challenging situation due to the new product introduction.

Given the three relevant entities we have discussed, a total of eight possible treatments emerge (all combinations of 3 inequity situations). These treatments are depicted in Table 3. For purposes of efficiency and parsimony of the project as a whole, some of the treatments were excluded from this data collection. Treatment 8 falls outside the scope of this research as we are assuming some type of disagreement related to the directive. If there is equity for all relevant parties, then there seems to be no reason for directive modification according to our theoretical basis.

Treatment 2 depicts an inequity situation for only the salesperson. Although within the scope of the current research, including this treatment would essentially be a repetition of existing literature. Much of the literature on agency theory in general and salesperson rule-breaking in particular focuses on the self-interested behavior of

**Table 3: Treatment Combinations**

| Treatment | Customer inequity | Self inequity | Organization inequity |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Yes | No | No |
| 2 | No | Yes | No |
| 3 | No | No | Yes |
| 4 | Yes | Yes | No |
| 5 | Yes | No | Yes |
| 6 | No | Yes | Yes |
| 7 | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 8 | No | No | No |

the salesperson. Our goal is more to focus on deviant behavior motivated by more than just self-interests. Our theoretical basis would assert that a salesperson facing inequity for him-/her-self would behave in a self-interested manner. Testing those assertions would essentially result in a replication of a substantial amount of extant literature and offer little if any new insights to boundary spanner behavior. Therefore, treatment 2 was excluded.

Finally, treatment 7 can be considered somewhat repetitive within the current research. Treatment 7 would involve inequity for all three major parties. While the simultaneous presence of all three inequity conditions may produce slightly different results, the added knowledge does not seem to justify its inclusion. Treatments 4, 5, and 6 consider each possible combination of two of the three inequity conditions. So, each inequity condition will be considered in the presence of the other inequity possibilities, although not simultaneously. For example, customer inequity will be presented in conjunction with organization inequity. It will also be presented in conjunction with self inequity. Considering both of these treatments in conjunction allows us to make inferences regarding the simultaneous presence of all three inequity conditions. While this does not perfectly replicate the presence of all three inequity conditions, it does provide a form of proxy for treatment 7. Therefore, treatment 7 offers little additional insight within the purview of this research and was deemed impractical.

Excluding treatments 2, 7, and 8 resulted in five total treatments/scenarios to be included in the survey. Because respondents were asked to answer questions based on two scenarios independent of each other, a number of steps were taken to prevent cross-contamination effects. First, the order of the two scenarios introduced was randomized in order to prevent any order effects. Additionally, each scenario was exposed equally in combination with all other possible scenarios. So, treatment 1 appeared an equal number of times in conjunction with treatments 3, 4, 5, and 6.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

In the first step of assessing the scale of directive modification, the 21 items were factor analyzed using the principal factor analysis method in the SAS software package. The principal factor analysis method was chosen over the maximum likelihood method because the data is not expected to be normally distributed. This initial step in the factor analysis is intended to ascertain the number of factors appropriate for the data. Two factor extraction methods were utilized to determine the number of factors to retain: the scree plot test and the percentage of variance method. These methods were chosen over the more commonly used Kaiser rule (eigenvalues > 1) because the Kaiser rule has shown to yield unreliable results and is more appropriate for principal components analysis (Costello and Osborne 2005; Velicer and Jackson 1990). The scree plot test examines a graphical display of the eigenvalues of the factor analysis to search for the point at which the eigenvalues level off (Cattell 1966). The percentage of variance method analyzes the shared variance (communality) amongst the items to determine the common factors (Hill and Lewicki 2007).

Utilizing the above extraction methods, an exploratory factor analysis with an oblique rotation was performed on the 21 items from the survey. These extraction methods and rotation were chosen because they allow the factors to be related to each other and result in some correlation between them (Hatcher 1994; Walsh and Beatty 2007). This initial test resulted in a five-factor solution. However, two of these factors indicated a low amount of variance explained, and the entire solution held a good deal of cross-loading of factors. The cross-loading variables were removed from the analysis. Once these items were removed, a clear three-factor solution emerged utilizing a total of 9 items from the survey. Recall that the 21 items are a series of combinations of 3 opening phrases and 7 ending phrases. The 9 items that emerged from the factor analysis were the same 3 end phrases combined with the 3 opening phrases. Table 4 shows the items included in the final factor solution along with their factor loadings.

## CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Next, the 9-item, 3-factor structure that emerged in the exploratory factor analysis was submitted to a confirmatory factor analysis. An inspection of model fit revealed reasonable, if mixed, results. The relevant fit indices are included in Table 5. Although the RMSEA is noticeably higher than the generally accepted cutoff of 0.08

**Table 4: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results**

| | Factor Loading |
|---|---|
| **Factor 1: Self focused directive modification intentions** *Compared to my* ***individual goals****, including those assigned by my employer (e.g. quotas) and those I have personally set for myself, I would treat the directive to promote this product as…* | |
| A rule to be broken…….A rule to be followed | 0.60578 |
| Something to be circumvented…….Something to be accepted | 0.58006 |
| A loose guideline…….A rule set in stone | 0.64018 |
| **Factor 2: Customer focused directive modification intentions** *Compared to my role as an* ***advocate for this customer****, I would treat the directive to promote this product as...* | |
| A rule to be broken…….A rule to be followed | 0.78768 |
| Something to be circumvented…….Something to be accepted | 0.80083 |
| A loose guideline…….A rule set in stone | 0.73971 |
| **Factor 3: Organization focused directive modification intentions** *Compared to my role as an* ***employee that looks out for the best interests of my organization,*** *I would treat the directive to promote this product as...* | |
| A rule to be broken…….A rule to be followed | 0.81175 |
| Something to be circumvented…….Something to be accepted | 0.83019 |
| A loose guideline…….A rule set in stone | 0.79365 |

**Table 5: CFA: Relevant Fit Indices**

| Statistic | Value |
|---|---|
| GFI | 0.8929 |
| RMSEA | 0.1391 |
| CFI | 0.9523 |
| NNI | 0.9285 |
| Chi-square | 304.8931 |

(Hatcher 1994), other indices such as CFI and NNI indicate a good fit for the model. Additionally, each item loaded significantly on its designated factor.

The composite reliability of each factor and factor loadings of each item in the model are displayed in Table 6. The numbers indicate that the 3 dimensions are reliable and that each item significantly loads onto its dimension. The composite reliability for each factor exceeds 0.918, well above the generally accepted minimum of 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Hatcher 1994).

**Table 6: Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Factor Loadings**

| | CR | AVE | Factor Loading |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Factor 1: Self focused directive modification intentions** *Compared to my **individual goals**, including those assigned by my employer (e.g. quotas) and those I have personally set for myself, I would treat the directive to promote this product as…* | 0.918 | 0.898 | |
| A rule to be broken…….A rule to be followed | | | 0.60578 |
| Something to be circumvented…….Something to be accepted | | | 0.58006 |
| A loose guideline…….A rule set in stone | | | 0.64018 |
| **Factor 2: Customer focused directive modification intentions** *Compared to my role as an **advocate for this customer**, I would treat the directive to promote this product as...* | 0.936 | 0.923 | |
| A rule to be broken…….A rule to be followed | | | 0.78768 |
| Something to be circumvented…….Something to be accepted | | | 0.80083 |
| A loose guideline…….A rule set in stone | | | 0.73971 |
| **Factor 3: Organization focused directive modification intentions** *Compared to my role as an **employee that looks out for the best interests of my organization,** I would treat the directive to promote this product as...* | 0.935 | 0.923 | |
| A rule to be broken…….A rule to be followed | | | 0.81175 |
| Something to be circumvented…….Something to be accepted | | | 0.83019 |
| A loose guideline…….A rule set in stone | | | 0.79365 |

Content validity and construct validity were used as the criteria for determining the validity of the directive modification scale (Ping 2004). Construct validity is composed of two parts: discriminant validity and convergent validity. Based on the qualitative results and high inter-item correlations, the directive modification scale appears to be content valid.

Discriminant validity was tested in two ways. First, a chi-square difference test was conducted (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). The chi-square of the standard measurement model in which all factors are allowed to covary was compared to the chi-square of measurement models in which the correlation between two of the factors was fixed. This test was run for each possible pair of factors. In each instance, the difference between chi-square values for the standard model and modified model were significant at the $p=0.001$ level, indicating discriminant validity. Second, the factors were subjected to a variance extracted test in which the average variance extracted for two factors is compared to the square of the correlation between them (Fornell and Larcker 1981). For each possible pairing, the variance extracted of both variables exceeded the squared correlation between them, also suggesting discriminant validity.

Convergent validity was subjected to multiple analytical tests as well. First, the average variance extracted of each dimension was calculated. Each of these values exceeded the recommended 0.50 threshold, signifying that the measure explains significantly more variance than does measurement error (Fornell and Larcker 1981). This indicates convergent validity. Additionally, the t tests for each factor loading were assessed. In all cases, the calculated t-values were 26.5929 or higher also suggesting convergent validity.

*Independent Variables*

All constructs besides the directive modification items were either verbatim or modified versions of previous research. Any modifications made to scale items from previous research were done so only to fit the situation of the survey with the goal being to change each item as little as possible from the original research from which it was pulled. A full list of single-item measures that made up each construct along with the appropriate citation is provided in Table 7.

**HYPOTHESIS TESTS**

Table 8 summarizes the tests of each hypothesis. Because a scenario-based questionnaire was used for the current research, the data was treated as experimental data for analysis. As was previously mentioned, each respondent was asked to answer questions regarding two scenarios that he/she were to treat as unrelated. This creates a repeated measures data collection with a within-subjects and a between-subjects factor. Given this mixed design, a mixed model was chosen to test hypotheses 1 through 9 because there is the potential for both fixed effects and random effects.

Mixed models are more flexible and robust than traditional regression or structural equation models because they incorporate the influence of both fixed effects and random effects that may emerge due to the repeated measures design of the survey. By accounting for a portion of the error variance in a fixed-effects model, a mixed model can be expected to produce "more efficient estimates and more powerful tests." (Adams 1963, p. 13) Additionally, mixed effects models are more effective at handling unbalanced designs and lead to more detailed coefficient estimates by utilizing the maximum likelihood method. The SAS programming language was used to test the mixed model. The procedure PROC MIXED was utilized to account for the random effects that could be caused by the different pairings of scenarios.

## Table 7: Single-Item Measures for Constructs

| Construct | Item |
|---|---|
| Role Conflict (Nygaard and Dahlstrom 2002; Rizzo et al. 1970) | I receive incompatible requests from two or more people at work. |
| | I receive assignments without the resources to complete the task. |
| | I work under incompatible policies and guidelines. |
| | I have to work under vague directives or orders. |
| | I have to do things that should be done differently. |
| | I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently. |
| Internal Relationship Strength (Steward et al. 2010) | I frequently interact with members of other departments in my organization. |
| | I have close relationships with other employees in my organization. |
| | My interaction with other employees within the organization is important. |
| Organizational Commitment (Mowday et al. 1979) | I am glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined. |
| | I really care about the fate of this organization. |
| | For me, this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work. |
| | I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for. |
| | This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance. |
| Trait Competitiveness (Krishnan et al. 2002) | It annoys me when other people perform better than I do. |
| | In my job, I like to outperform my coworkers. |
| | I am a competitive person at work. |
| | Performing better than other salespeople in this firm is important to me. |
| Extrinsic Motivation (Tyagi 1985) | It is important for me to have high job security. |
| | It is important for me to have high earnings in my job. |
| | I am motivated to earn special awards and recognition from my employer. |
| | I place a high priority on earning the respect of my supervisor. |
| | I want greater freedom to do what I wish in my job. |
| Customer Commitment (Anderson and Weitz 1992) | This customer has a strong sense of loyalty to me. |
| | This customer is committed to doing business with me. |
| | This customer would defend me if someone criticized me. |
| Relationship Importance (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Mowday et al. 1979) | I intend to maintain a relationship with this customer. |
| | The relationship with this customer deserves my maximum effort. |
| | For me, this is the best of all possible customers to do business with. |

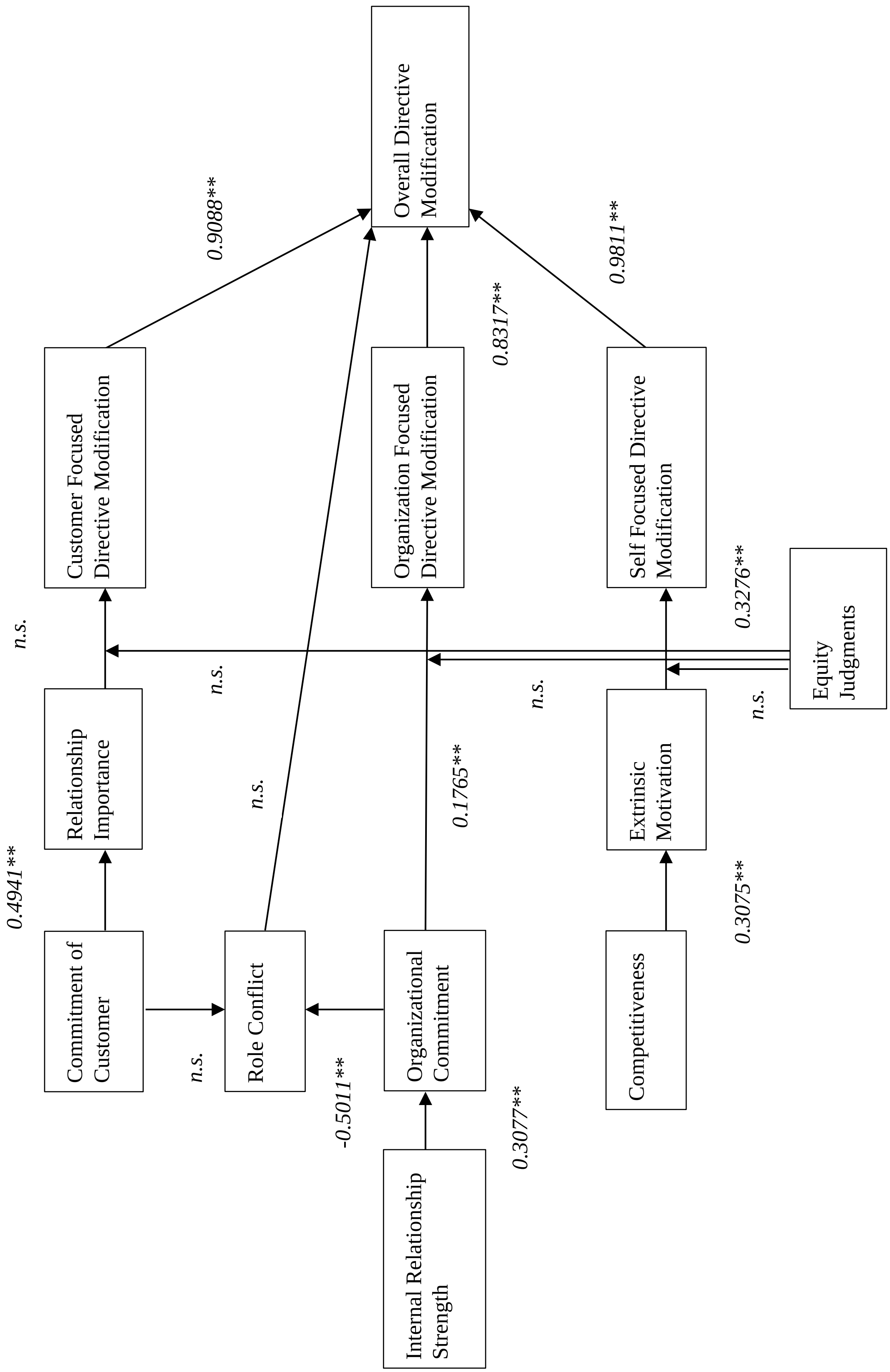
**Table 8: Summary of Hypothesis Tests**

| Hypothesis | Supported? | Solution Estimate |
|---|---|---|
| H1: Customer commitment → Relationship importance | Yes | 0.4941** |
| H2: Customer commitment → Role conflict | No | -- |
| H3: Internal relationship strength → Organizational commitment | Yes | 0.3077** |
| H4: Organizational commitment → Role conflict | No | -0.5011** |
| H5: Organizational commitment → OFDM | Yes | 0.1765** |
| H6: Role conflict → DM | No | -- |
| H7: Relationship importance → CFDM | No | -- |
| H8: Trait competitiveness → Extrinsic motivations | Yes | 0.3075** |
| H9: Extrinsic motivation → SFDM | Yes | 0.3276** |
| H10a: Customer inequity moderates H7 | No | -- |
| H10b: Organization inequity moderates H5 | No | -- |
| H10c: Self inequity moderates H9 | No | -- |
| H11: OFDM, CFDM, and SFDM → DM | Yes | NA |

** -- indicates significance at the p<0.01 value

Figure 3 summarizes the results of our hypothesis tests. The first 9 hypotheses were tested using a mixed model. Of those first 9, hypotheses 1, 3, 5, 8, and 9 are all supported at the 0.001 significance level. H4 is contraindicated with a negative relationship instead of the hypothesized positive relationship, although the relationship is significant at the 0.001 level. Finally, the data yielded insignificant results for H2, H6, and H7. Regarding the hypotheses that were supported by the data analysis, it is important to note that two of the three primary branches of the model are supported. That is, antecedents to both organization focused directive modification and self focused directive modification are supported by our findings. Therefore, we have not only established the existence of these variables in the factor analysis, but that they are

**Figure 3: Empirical Model with Results**



nomologically valid as they are related to constructs currently in the marketing literature.

One item to note on the hypotheses that were confirmed is the strength of the antecedent relationship to self focused directive modification compared to the antecedent relationship to organization focused directive modification. Although these two coefficients in the mixed model analysis are not perfectly comparable, the results suggest a stronger relationship to self focused directive modification. While we are focusing on exploring presently unconsidered motivations for directive modification, it is not surprising to see a strong indication that extrinsically motivated salespeople will modify directives for self interest because much of our research on salespeople would suggest this relationship. The strength of this relationship, however, should not diminish the significant finding that organizational commitment is a driver of organization focused directive modification.

H4 displays a negative relationship instead of the positive relationship that was hypothesized. While this is a disappointing result, it is not entirely surprising. As we discussed earlier, previous research has indicated a negative relationship between these two constructs (e.g. Dubinsky and Mattson 1979). We hypothesized that this relationship would be positive because we are surveying boundary spanners. Additionally, it seemed reasonable that the increased customer focus of the current boundary spanning role in businesses would have served to create a positive relationship. The data indicates that is not the case.

Hypothesis 2 asserts that the perceived commitment of the customer toward the salesperson will increase the perceived role conflict for that salesperson. While it is dangerous to garner definitive findings from insignificant results, the absence of an influence in this case may point to an interesting finding regarding the current attitudes of salespeople. In the preliminary qualitative investigation of the current research, some of the interviewees indicated the prevalence of an attitude from salespeople that customer relationships were permanent even if employer relationships may not be. That is, "company X is my customer no matter who I sell for." The lack of significant empirical results along with this anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that perhaps role conflict is not a function of incompatible requests in general as Behrman and Perreault (1984) depict. Instead, we may more accurately consider role conflict as anything that conflicts with customer requests because salespeople consider customer requests to be of the highest priority that everything else must be worked around.

The lack of support for H6 is surprising in that one would expect role conflict to positively influence a salesperson's willingness to modify organizational directives. One potential explanation for this lack of results could be that directive modification behavior goes beyond just being a coping mechanism for role conflict as we previously proposed. Instead, directive modification may be considered an established norm of professional salespeople. If that is the case, a salesperson would engage in directive modification regardless of perceived role conflict. So, this behavior may be one that salespeople engage in because the opportunity exists rather than because it is necessary to resolve role conflict.

Finally, the data does not support hypothesis 7, which purports that the importance of a customer relationship would positively influence a salesperson's willingness to engage in customer focused directive modification. This is an unexpected result, but it may still serve to advance our understanding of this phenomenon. H7 implicitly suggests that the willingness of a salesperson to engage in customer focused directive modification is more of a state-dependent construct in that it varies from customer to customer. Behavioral science research sometimes distinguishes between trait characteristics, which are relatively stable in an individual, and state characteristics, which are more situation-specific (Chaplin et al. 1988). Hypothesis 7 implies a salesperson will be less willing to modify organizational directives for less important customers and vice versa, which would make directive modification a state-dependent behavior. Perhaps, instead, directive modification is a trait-dependent characteristic and salespeople are willing to modify directives for any and all customers regardless of their importance. If this phenomenon is as prevalent as some of our anecdotal evidence suggests, then salespeople may not consider modifying organizational directives to be some level of “extra” service that could be provided to customers. Instead, they may consider it to be a standard level of service that should always be offered. If that is the case, we can expect antecedents of customer focused directive modification to be of a more permanent nature to the employment situation or the individual salesperson (e.g. level of supervision or customer orientation).

One other consideration to be noted regarding the insignificant results surrounding hypothesis 7 is the new product scenario utilized in the current research. One of the reasons for choosing this scenario is that it depicts a minimal supervision situation for the salespeople. Very rarely will a supervisor be able to find out the extent to which a salesperson promoted a new product to any particular customer. At this early step in research of the directive modification phenomenon, we have sought to minimize potentially confounding factors, of which the influence of the supervisor likely is a significant one. This design decision, however, leaves open an alternate possible explanation for the insignificant findings regarding H7. With no apparent risk of negative consequences in the scenario, salespeople may be willing to modify directives for all customers without discrimination. However, the presence of risk may produce different results. If there are potential consequences for modification behavior, would the salesperson still be willing to indiscriminately do so for all customers? The more likely narrative is that the salesperson would pick and choose the occasions when he/she would engage in modification behavior, weighing the risk/reward potential. Unfortunately, this is not a determination that can be made in the current research context.

Hypothesis 10 asserts that the equity perceptions of the salesperson in a given situation will moderate the influence of relationship importance, organizational commitment, and extrinsic motivation on CFDM, OFDM, and SFDM respectively. To test this moderation effect, a dummy variable was created to indicate the inequity condition that each scenario was designed to create. This dummy variable was then inserted into the mixed model as an interaction term to assess any additional effects created by our inequity treatments. Each test failed to produce significant results, indicating a lack of support for H10 a, b, and c. Given the lack of support for H7, one could reasonably expect that H10a would also yield no significant results. The lack of support for H10b and H10c could be seen as further implications that directive modification may be more of a trait-dependent behavior by salespeople rather than one that varies from situation to situation.

One other item of note regarding the moderation tests is the manipulation checks. A manipulation check was posed to respondents after each scenario to assure it created the desired mindset in respondents. This 4-item construct is based on the work of Colquitt (2005). Only those manipulation checks that were relevant to the scenario were posed. So, a scenario intended to portray only customer inequity did not include items to test impressions of organization inequity. A t-test was utilized to test if respondent scores were significantly different from a neutral response. The manipulation checks for the customer inequity scenario showed a significant difference at the $p=0.001$ level. However, manipulation checks of organization and self inequity did not indicate a statistically significant difference.

One obvious potential explanation for these insignificant results would be that the scenarios were inadequate to produce the desired result in the mind of the respondents. Were that the case, however, we would expect a consistent failure across all inequity conditions. Instead, the customer inequity checks indicate a strong difference from a neutral response. Moreover, these strong findings are true for the overall construct as well as each item that makes up the construct. This lack of consistency in the manipulation checks gives us reason to at least explore an alternative explanation.

Given these mixed results on the manipulation checks, another viable explanation that should be considered is that customer equity/inequity is held to a different standard than self or organization equity/inequity, at least in a new product introduction.  So, the salesperson may believe a customer should be spared from the problems and difficulties of a new product introduction.  However, he/she may consider that the organization and him-/her-self will have to endure some problems stemming from a new product launch.

Finally, H11 posits that customer focused, organization focused, and self focused directive modification load onto a single latent variable of overall directive modification.  To test this hypothesis, a second-order confirmatory factor analysis was performed using SAS PROC CALIS.  The relevant fit indices are displayed in Table 9, and the factor loadings from the second-order CFA are displayed in Table 10.  All three factor loadings of CFDM, OFDM, and SFDM on an overall Directive Modification construct were significant, indicating support for H11.

**Table 9:  2nd-Order CFA:  Relevant Fit Indices**

| Statistic | Value |
|---|---|
| GFI | 0.8929 |
| RMSEA | 0.1391 |
| CFI | 0.9523 |
| NNI | 0.9285 |
| Chi-square | 305.8879 |

**Table 10:  2nd-Order CFA Standardized Results for Linear Equations**

| Construct | Loading | T-value |
|---|---|---|
| CFDM | 0.9088 | 70.4296 |
| OFDM | 0.8317 | 50.3739 |
| SFDM | 0.9811 | 87.9099 |

**POST HOC ANALYSIS**

With the data yielding mixed results, an alternative model was tested to validate the division of directive modification into the three proposed distinctions of customer, organization, and self focused behavior. The alternative model is depicted in figure 4. In this rival model, all antecedent constructs are hypothesized to have a direct relationship to the overall directive modification measure. These relationships were tested using the same mixed model analysis as hypotheses 1 through 9. The results are displayed in table 11.

**Figure 4: Alternative Model**

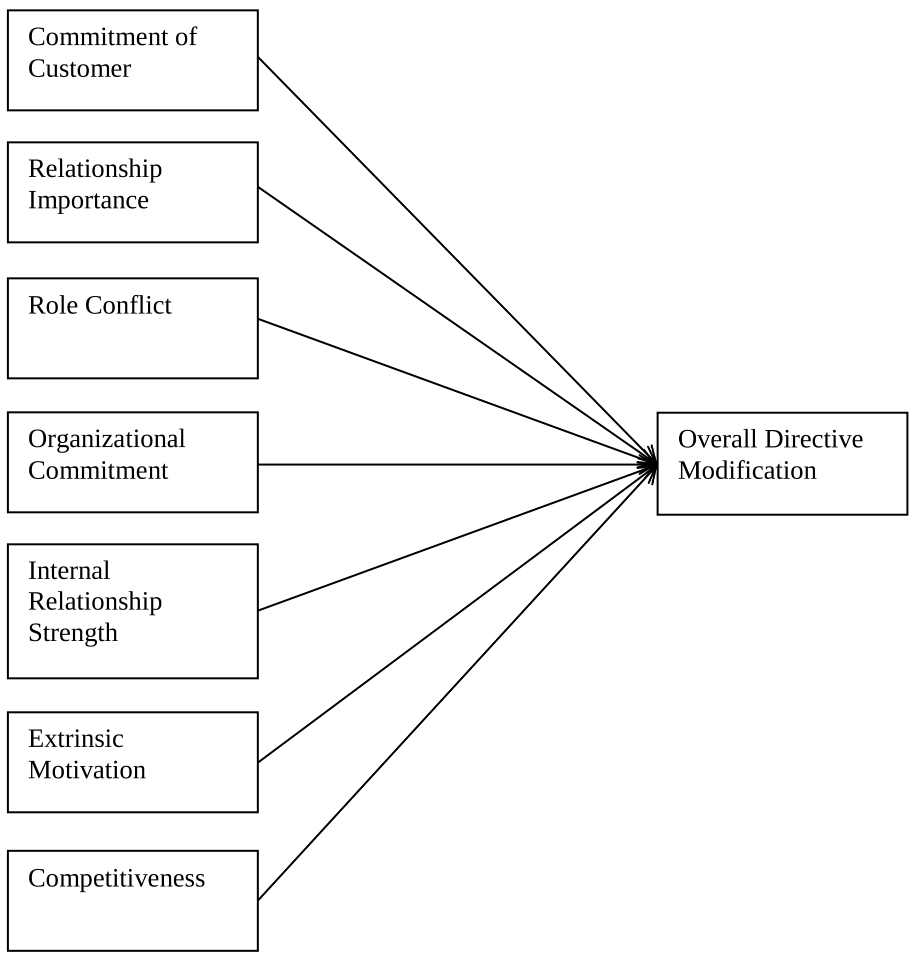


**Table 11: Alternative Model Results**

| Variable | Solution Estimate |
|---|---|
| Customer Commitment | Not Significant |
| Relationship Importance | Not Significant |
| Role Conflict | Not Significant |
| Internal Relationship Strength | Not Significant |
| Organizational Commitment | Not Significant |
| Trait Competitiveness | Not Significant |
| Extrinsic Motivation | 0.3006** |

** -- indicates significance at the $p<0.001$ value

The primary issue to be compared between the two models is the number of statistically significant relationships indicated by the data. As the current research proposes a new conceptualization of directive modification into three separate bases for motivation, the original model should be able to provide a more detailed depiction of the causation of directive modification by boundary spanners. In the alternative model, the only antecedent that displays a significant effect on the overall directive modification measure is extrinsic motivation. All other relationships are insignificant. Additionally, the coefficient associated with extrinsic motivation is lower in the alternative model than in the original model. This indicates that some of its explanatory power is reduced in the rival model. Although all of the relationships in the original model are not significant, there are a number more significant relationships than the rival model exhibited. These results suggest that the model in figure 2, with its distinction between different kinds of directive modification, is a more accurate depiction of the true boundary spanner situation than the rival model displayed in figure 4.

Based on the extant literature and existing theories, we have conjectured to this point that directive modification behavior, particularly the customer focused directive modification, is a phenomenon that varies according to the situation of the boundary spanner. However, some of the results of the current research cast doubt on this conceptualization, at least in new product introduction conditions. Given the lack of support for H6 and H7 as well as the potential explanations for those results, there is some indication that directive modification behavior may be a more regular behavior than we first considered.

If directive modification is a trait-dependent behavior for salespeople, then the model depicted in figure 2 would be incorrect, particularly with respect to the placement of the role conflict construct. In general, perceived role stress derives from the consistent or permanent perceptions of the salesperson and his/her job function (Behrman and Perreault 1984). If directive modification in any of its forms is an activity the salesperson feels is a regular part of the job function, then role stress derives from it rather than contributing to it. Instead of being an antecedent to directive modification behavior, perceived role conflict would be an outcome of directive modification in this case. Further, we would expect directive modification to have a negative influence on role conflict as it would serve as a means of "splitting the difference" between conflict expectations.

With this in mind, we propose 4 new hypotheses as a post hoc test to serve as a proxy for the consistency with which salespeople engage in directive modification.

*H12a: Overall directive modification will negatively influence role conflict.*

*H12b: Customer focused directive modification will negatively influence role conflict.*

*H12c: Organization focused directive modification will negatively influence role conflict.*

*H12d: Self focused directive modification will negatively influence role conflict.*

Each of the above hypotheses was submitted to mixed model analysis consistent with the techniques employed earlier. Table 12 summarizes the results. H12b is the only hypothesis that generates any support from the data, although that support can be considered somewhat weak. Still, these results suggest that customer focused directive modification behavior is more of a trait behavior than a state behavior as we first considered.

**Table 12: Results of H12 Test**

| **Hypothesis** | **Supported?** | **Solution Estimate** |
|---|---|---|
| H12a: DM → Role conflict | No | -- |
| H12b: CFDM → Role conflict | Yes | -0.06265* |
| H12c: OFDM → Role conflict | No | -- |
| H12d: SFDM → Role conflict | No | -- |

* -- indicates significance at the p<0.1 value

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The current research explores the persistent issue of boundary spanner behavior from a new perspective. Instead of considering this behavior as exclusively opportunistic in nature, we investigate the possibility that behavior outside of that endorsed by the organization may be an expression of opportunistic or altruistic behavior. This research applies a multi-theoretic approach and defines a new conceptualization of this phenomenon as directive modification. Additionally, the current research posits a number of motivations beyond self-interests as well as empirically tests a number of hypotheses based on these motivations through a scenario-based questionnaire.

This research has a number of managerial implications. First, this new conceptualization of directive modification behavior allows that managers may wish to permit or even encourage some forms of this behavior in particular circumstances and conditions. Until now, deviation from organizationally-prescribed actions has generally been discouraged. However, we have empirically verified that different motivations for directive modification exist based on the interests of the boundary spanner him-/her-self, the customer, or the organization itself. If managers know that their boundary spanners are seeking to help the organization or customer, then it may be in the best interests of the organization to turn a blind eye to this behavior on a case by case basis.

Additionally, directive modification could be considered by managers as a form of double-loop learning. Individuals engaged in double-loop learning adapt and potentially question the efficacy of goals that are set before them (Argyris and Schon 1978). This type of learning is probably the more difficult for organizations to achieve (Argyris 1991) even though it has been linked to a stronger relationship orientation in organizations (Chaston et al. 2000). With many organizations seeking a relationship orientation from their boundary spanning employees, directive modification may be a positive signal to management. On a related note, this research may also influence the level of specificity of organizational directives in various situations. If an organization feels it would benefit from its boundary spanners engaging in directive modification as a result of that employee's tacit knowledge, it may seek to set forth directives that create more of a framework for boundary spanner behavior rather than a highly specific directive. By doing so, the boundary spanner is allowed some flexibility to find the best alternative for the customer (and possibly organization) while still pursuing the employer's desired general strategic outcome.

Additionally, the empirical results indicate that organizational commitment contributes positively to a salesperson's predilection to engage in organizational focused directive modification. By increasing organizational commitment and the strength of internal relationships, its antecedent, the organization increases the chances that a boundary spanner will be motivated to modify directives in order to protect his/her own organization. This creates an extra level of protection and filtering of directives that could otherwise potentially injure the organization when put into practice.

Also, we have found evidence that suggests that this behavior may be more of a trait characteristic than we first anticipated, at least in a new product introduction situation. This finding is important to managers because it indicates that this behavior may be identifiable in boundary spanners before the hiring decision is made. So, managers may be able to identify those applicants that are more or less inclined toward certain types of directive modification behavior. This could prove to be a valuable tool in developing a sales force that enacts organizational strategy in whatever way management deems best.

This research also contains some significant research contributions and implications. First, the current research expands our understanding of boundary spanner behavior. In the extant literature, employee deviation from organizationally prescribed actions is primarily treated as self-interested behavior that is detrimental to the organization (e.g. Ball et al. 1994; Lawrence and Robinson 2007; Perrone et al.

2003). However, a stream of literature has recently emerged that allows for the notion that deviation from organizational directives by employees could benefit the organization (Parks et al. 2010). Directive modification extends this new stream of literature to explore the unique situation that boundary spanners face. By overlapping agency theory and role theory, we consider a complex web of motivations and obligations that drive boundary spanner directive modification. Not only is the distinction of customer, organization, and self focused directive modification argued for from a multi-theoretic grounding, it is also empirically verified in our data collection.

Second, the current research explores and empirically tests the drivers of these different types of directive modification through a scenario-based questionnaire. The results of our data analysis indicate that organizational commitment and extrinsic motivation are statistically significant drivers of organizational and self focused directive modification respectively. Additionally, some of the other results of our analysis suggest that directive modification behavior, particularly customer focused directive modification, may be of a more trait-specific nature than was first theorized.

Third, this is the first research effort exploring the three primary drivers of motivation for boundary spanners as they relate to directive modification behaviors. By establishing that these three distinct forms of directive modification exist and have greater explanatory power than an overall directive modification measure, we have laid the groundwork for a number of future research endeavors to more accurately explore and understand the nature of boundary spanner behavior as it relates to organizational directives. The current research provides direction for a unifying framework and scale items on which future research can be based.

**LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research has some limitations that temper some of the conclusions that can be made while opening the door for a vast array of future research projects. First, this research employed a new product introduction scenario. While this was a reasonable format for the first exploration of this phenomenon, it is possible that some of the results are driven by the particular conditions imposed by this scenario. Future research should seek different situations in which to explore this phenomenon. Additionally, it would be preferable to survey boundary spanners currently dealing with organizational directives they perceive as disagreeable rather than relying exclusively on scenario-based surveys. Our manipulation checks did not indicate inequity impressions from the respondents. Although we consider this to be an explainable result as we discussed earlier, it obviously would be preferable to empirically test that explanation rather than relying on conjecture.

Another limitation that future research could/should resolve is the absence of an antecedent for customer focused directive modification. Although we establish the presence of this phenomenon through exploratory factor analysis, the model tests did not indicate a statistically significant predictor of that behavior. Finding the drivers of this particular type of modification will serve to more firmly entrench these constructs in the extant literature. This avenue of exploration is especially salient because this kind of directive modification could be one of the most beneficial for the employing organization.

While the results of the current research were inconclusive in some respects, the potential for future research possibilities is quite plentiful. As was mentioned before, future research can seek to confirm or refute some of the assertions that are made in this paper based on insignificant results. Also, the hypotheses in this paper should be tested on other boundary spanner employees to assess the generalizability of them. It is possible that the insignificant results of the current research will prove to be significant in the face of some other boundary spanning function.

Additionally, there are a number of possible influences over directive modification behavior that we were not able to explore in this initial research project. For example, there are a number of potential social influences over directive modification behavior. In the qualitative portion of this study, the role of the sales manager repeatedly arose as a significant impact on this phenomenon. The sales manager may implicitly or explicitly indicate the level of importance and follow-up related to a directive. If salespeople understand that a directive will not be enforced, then the opportunity for this behavior is increased. Also, directives are often passed down from upper management to the sales manager, who is then expected to communicate the directive to the sales force. In these cases, the sales manager him-/her-self may engage in directive modification as well as the sales employees. The potential implications for organizational strategy are amplified as the directives are subjected to a prospective "double filter" process at the supervisor and frontline level.

Along with the influence of the supervisor, other salespeople may hold an influence over the potential for directive modification. Most members of a sales force understand who the top salesperson is. Does the behavior of this implied leader hold potential sway over the rest of the sales employees?  Also, the amount of communication amongst sales force members may affect the modification of a directive as individuals are able to exchange information on how they avoid the directive (more modification) or how they have incorporated the directive into their daily role function (less modification).

Another area of potential future exploration is the outcomes of directive modification.  Based on Homburg and Jensen's (2007) work, we theorize that this behavior can benefit the organization.  This should be empirically tested to see the relative advantages and/or disadvantages of this behavior by boundary spanners such as salespeople.  Moreover, future research endeavors can explore other outcomes of directive modification such as the potential resolution of role stress or increased job satisfaction.  This type of behavior could help to explain some of the mixed empirical results in the extant literature such as a link between role stress and salesperson performance.

The current research offers an initial step to better understanding the behaviors of boundary spanners and the ways that they affect the expression of organizational strategy both positively and negatively.  While many questions are still left to be explored, we have conclusively verified that the phenomenon of directive modification does exist and is expressed as more than just self-interest on the part of the boundary spanning employee.  By better understanding these and other individual-specific motivations, organizations can better understand how to select and manage their employees for optimal results for both the individual and the firm as a whole.

## REFERENCES:

Adams, J. Stacy (1965), "Inequity In Social Exchange," in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Leonard Berkowitz, ed. Vol. Volume 2: Academic Press.

Adams, J. Stacy (1963), "Towards an Understanding of Inequity," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 67 (5), 422-36.

Ahearne, Michael, Son K. Lam, John E. Mathieu, and Willy Bolander (2010), "Why Are Some Salespeople Better at Adapting to Organizational Change?," Journal of Marketing, 74 (3), 65-79.

Amabile, Teresa M., Karl G. Hill, Beth A. Hennessey, and Elizabeth M. Tighe (1994), "The Work Preference Inventory: Assessing Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivational Orientations," Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 66 (5), 950-67.

Anderson, Erin and Richard L. Oliver (1987), "Perspectives on Behavior-Based versus Outcome-Based Salesforce Control Systems," Journal of Marketing, 51 (4), 76.

Anderson, Erin and Barton Weitz (1992), "The Use of Pledges to Build and Sustain Commitment in Distribution Channels," Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), 29 (1), 18-34.

Anderson, James C. and David W. Gerbing (1988), "Structural Equation Modeling in Practice: A Review and Recommended Two-Step Approach," Psychological Bulletin, 103 (3), 411-23.

Argyris, Chris (1991), "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," Harvard Business Review, 69 (3), 99-109.

Argyris, Chris and Donald A. Schon (1978), Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Atuahene-Gima, Kwaku (1997), "Adoption of New Products By the Sales Force: The Construct, Research Propositions and Managerial Implications," Journal of Product Innovation Management, 14 (6), 498-514.

Ball, Gail A., Linda Klebe Trevino, and Jr Henry P. Sims (1994), "Just and Unjust Punishment: Influences on Subordinate Performance and Citizenship," Academy of Management Journal, 37 (2), 299-322.

Barney, Jay B. (2007), Gaining and Sustaining Competitive Advantage (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Behrman, Douglas N. and William D. Perreault (1984), "A Role Stress Model of the Performance and Satisfaction of Industrial Salespersons," Journal of Marketing, 48 (4), 9-21.

Biddle, B. J. (1986), "Recent Development in Role Theory," Annual Review of Sociology, 12, 67-92.

Birnbaum, Michael H. (2004), "Human Research and Data Collection via the Internet," Annual Review of Psychology, 55 (1), 803-32.

Brewer, Geoffrey (1994), "Mind reading:  What Drives Top Salespeople to Greatness," Sales & Marketing Management, 146 (5), 82-92.

Brown, Steven P., Kenneth R. Evans, Murali K. Mantrala, and Goutam Challagalla (2005), "Adapting Motivation, Control, and Compensation Research to a New Environment," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 25 (2), 156-67.

Cattell, Raymond B. (1966), "The Scree Test for the Number of Factors," Multivariate Behavioral Research, 1 (2), 32.

Chaplin, William F., Oliver P. John, and Lewis R. Goldberg (1988), "Conceptions of States and Traits: Dimensional Attributes with Ideals as Prototypes," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54 (4), 541-57.

Chaston, I., B. Badger, and E. Sadler-Smith (2000), "Organizational learning style and competences," European Journal of Marketing, 34 (5/6), 625.

Choi, Jinhee and Ayelet Fishbach (2011), "Choice as an End Versus a Means," Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), 48 (3), 544-54.

Churchill, Gilbert A. (1979), "A Paradigm for Developing Better Measures of Marketing Constructs," Journal of Marketing Research, 16 (1), 64-73.

Churchill, Gilbert A., Neil M. Ford, and Orville C. Walker Jr (1979), "Personal Characteristics of Salespeople and the Attractiveness of Alternative Rewards," Journal of Business Research, 7 (1), 25-50.

Costello, Anna B. and Jason W. Osborne (2005), "Best Practices in Exploratory Factor Analysis:  Four Recommendations for Getting the Most from Your Analysis," Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 10 (7), 9.

Crosby, Lawrence A., Kenneth R. Evans, and Deborah Cowles (1990), "Relationship Quality in Services Selling: An Interpersonal Influence Perspective," Journal of Marketing, 54 (3), 68.

Darrat, Mahmoud, Douglas Amyx, and Rebecca Bennett (2010), "An Investigation into the Effect of Work-Family Conflict and Job Satisfaction on Salesperson Deviance," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 30 (3), 239-51.

Davis, Fred D., Richard P. Bagozzi, and Paul R. Warshaw (1989), "User Acceptance of Computer Technology: A Comparison of Two Theoretical Models," Management Science, 35 (8), 982-1003.

Dubinsky, Alan J. and Bruce E. Mattson (1979), "Consequences of Role Conflict and Ambiguity Experienced by Retail Salespeople," Journal of Retailing, 55 (4), 70.

Dwyer, F. Robert, Paul H. Schurr, and Sejo Oh (1987), "Developing Buyer-Seller Relationships," Journal of Marketing, 51 (2), 11.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. (1989), "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," Academy of Management Review, 14 (1), 57-74.

Fama, Eugene F. (1980), "Agency Problems and the Theory of the Firm," Journal of Political Economy, 88 (2), 288-307.

Fornell, Claes and David F. Larcker (1981), "Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error," Journal of Marketing Research, 18 (1), 39-50.

Goolsby, Jerry R., Rosemary R. Lagace, and Michael L. Boorom (1992), "Psychological Adaptiveness and Sales Performance," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 12 (2), 51.

Graham, Jill W. (1991), "An essay on organizational citizenship behavior," Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal, 4 (4), 249-70.

Guenzi, Paolo and Gabriele Troilo (2006), "Developing Marketing Capabilities for Customer Value Creation through Marketing-Sales Integration," Industrial Marketing Management, 35 (8), 974-88.

Hatcher, Larry (1994), A Step-by-Step Approach to Using SAS for Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling. Cary, NC: SAS Institute Inc.

Heide, Jan B. and George John (1988), "The Role of Dependence Balancing in Safeguarding Transaction-Specific Assets in Conventional Channels," Journal of Marketing, 52 (1), 20-35.

Hill, Thomas and Pawel Lewicki (2007), "Statistics: Methods and Applications." Tulsa, OK: StatSoft.

Hollet-Haudebert, Sandrine, Jay Prakash Mulki, and Christophe Fournier (2011), "Neglected Burnout Dimensions: Effect of Depersonalization and Personal Nonaccomplishment on Organizational Commitment of Salespeople," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 31 (4), 411-28.

Homburg, Christian and Ove Jensen (2007), "The Thought Worlds of Marketing and Sales: Which Differences Make a Difference?," Journal of Marketing, 71 (3), 124-42.

Hultink, Erik Jan and Kwaku Atuahene-Gima (2000), "The Effect of Sales Force Adoption on New Product Selling Performance," Journal of Product Innovation Management, 17 (6), 435-50.

Ingram, Thomas N., Keun S. Lee, and Steven J. Skinner (1989), "An Empirical Assessment of Salesperson Motivation, Commitment, and Job Outcomes," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 9 (3), 25.

Jaramillo, Fernando, Jay Prakash Mulki, and Paul Solomon (2006), "The Role of Ethical Climate on Salesperson's Role Stress, Job Attitudes, Turnover Intentention, and Job Performance," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 26 (3), 271-82.

Jelinek, Ronald and Michael Ahearne (2006a), "The ABC's of ACB: Unveiling a clear and present danger in the sales force," Industrial Marketing Management, 35 (4), 457-67.

Jelinek, Ronald and Michael Ahearne (2010), "Be Careful What You Look for: The Effect of Trait Competitiveness and Long Hours on Salesperson Deviance and Whether Meaningfulness of Work Matters," Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice, 18 (4), 303-21.

Jelinek, Ronald and Michael Ahearne (2006b), "The Enemy Within: Examining Salesperson Deviance and Its Determinants," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 26 (4), 327-44.

Krafft, Manfred (1999), "An Empirical Investigation of the Antecedents of Sales Force Control Systems," Journal of Marketing, 63 (3), 120-34.

Krishnan, Balaji C., Richard G. Netemeyer, and James S. Boles (2002), "Self-Efficacy, Competitiveness, and Effort as Antecedents of Salesperson Performance," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 22 (4), 285-95.

Lawrence, Thomas B. and Sandra L. Robinson (2007), "Ain't Misbehavin: Workplace Deviance as Organizational Resistance," Journal of Management, 33 (3), 378-94.

Lewin, Jeffrey E. and Jeffrey K. Sager (2009), "An investigation of the influence of coping resources in salespersons' emotional exhaustion," Industrial Marketing Management, 38 (7), 798-805.

Livingstone, Linda Parrack, James A. Roberts, and Lawrence B. Chonko (1995), "Perceptions of Internal and External Equity as Predictors of Outside Salespeoples' Job Satisfaction," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 15 (2), 33-46.

Lutz, Richard J. and Pradeep Kakkar (1976), "Situational Influence in Interpersonal Persuasion," Advances in Consumer Research, 3 (1), 370-78.

Lysonski, Steven (1985), "A Boundary Theory Investigation of the Product Manager's Role," Journal of Marketing, 49 (1), 26-40.

Malshe, Avinash (2010), "How Is Marketers' Credibility Construed within the Sales-Marketing Interface?," Journal of Business Research, 63 (1), 13-19.

Malshe, Avinash and Ravipreet S. Sohi (2009a), "Sales Buy-In of Marketing Strategies: Exploration of Its Nuances, Antecedents, and Contextual Conditions," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 29 (3), 207-25.

Malshe, Avinash and Ravipreet S. Sohi (2009b), "What Makes Strategy Making across the Sales-Marketing Interface More Successful?," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 37 (4), 400-21.

Miao, C. Fred and Kenneth R. Evans (2007), "The Impact of Salesperson Motivation on Role Perceptions and Job Performance: A Cognitive and Affective Perspective," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 27 (1), 89-101.

Miller, Delbert C. and Fremont A. Shull (1962), "The Prediction of Administrative Role Conflict Resolutions," Administrative Science Quarterly, 7 (2), 143-60.

Mohr, Jakki and John R. Nevin (1990), "Communication Strategies in Marketing Channels: A Theoretical Perspective," Journal of Marketing, 54 (4), 36-51.

Moorman, Christine, Gerald Zaltman, and Rohit Deshpande (1992), "Relationships Between Providers and Users of Market Research: The Dynamics of Trust Within and Between Organizations," Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), 29 (3), 314-28.

Moorman, Robert H. and Gerald L. Blakely (1995), "Individualism -- Collectivism as an Individual Difference Predictor of Organizational Citizenship Behavior," Journal of Organizational Behavior, 16 (2), 127-42.

Morgan, Robert M. and Shelby D. Hunt (1994), "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing," Journal of Marketing, 58 (3), 20.

Mowday, Richard T., Richard M. Steers, and Lyman W. Porter (1979), "The measurement of organizational commitment," Journal of Vocational Behavior, 14 (2), 224-47.

Netemeyer, Richard G., James S. Boles, Daryl McKee, and Robert McMurrian (1997), "An Investigation Into the Antecedents of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors in a Personal Selling Context," Journal of Marketing, 61 (3), 85-98.

Newell, Stephen J., Joseph J. Belonax, Michael W. McCardle, and Richard E. Plank (2011), "The Effect of Personal Relationship and Consultative Task Behaviors on Buyer Perceptions of Salesperson Trust, Expertise, and Loyalty," Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice, 19 (3), 307-16.

Nonis, Sarath A., Jeffrey K. Sager, and Kamalesh Kumar (1996), "Salespeople's use of Upward Influence Tactics (UITs) in Coping with Role Stress," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 24 (1), 44.

Nygaard, Arne and Robert Dahlstrom (2002), "Role Stress and Effectiveness in Horizontal Alliances," Journal of Marketing, 66 (2), 61-82.

O'Reilly, Charles and Jennifer Chatman (1986), "Organizational Commitment and Psychological Attachment: The Effects of Compliance, Identification, and Internalization on Prosocial Behavior," Journal of Applied Psychology, 71 (3), 492-99.

Organ, Dennis W. (1988), Organizational Citizenship Behavior:  The Good Soldier Syndrome. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Palmatier, Robert W., Rajiv P. Dant, Dhruv Grewal, and Kenneth R. Evans (2006), "Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Relationship Marketing: A Meta-Analysis," Journal of Marketing, 70 (4), 1.

Palmatier, Robert W., Lisa K. Scheer, and Jan-Benedict E. M. Steenkamp (2007a), "Customer Loyalty to Whom? Managing the Benefits and Risks of Salesperson-Owned Loyalty," Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), 44 (2), 185-99.

Palmatier, Robert W., Lisa K. Scheer, and Jan-Benedict E. M. Steenkamp (2007b), "Customer Loyalty to Whom? Managing the Benefits and Risks of Salesperson-Owned Loyalty," JMR, Journal of Marketing Research, 44 (2), 185.

Parks, Judi McLean, Li Ma, and Daniel G. Gallagher (2010), "Elasticity in the 'Rules' of the Game: Exploring Organizational Expedience," Human Relations, 63 (5), 701-30.

Payne, Adrian and Sue Holt (2001), "Diagnosing Customer Value: Integrating the Value Process and Relationship Marketing," British Journal of Management, 12 (2), 159.

Pelham, Alfred M. (2009), "An exploratory study of the influence of firm market orientation on salesperson adaptive selling, customer orientation, interpersonal listening in personal selling and salesperson consulting behaviors," Journal of Strategic Marketing, 17 (1), 21-39.

Perrone, Vincenzo, Akbar Zaheer, and Bill McEvily (2003), "Free to Be Trusted? Organizational Constraints on Trust in Boundary Spanners," Organization Science, 14 (4), 422-39.

Ping, Robert A. (2004), "On Assuring Valid Measures for Theoretical Models Using Survey Data," Journal of Business Research, 57 (2), 125.

Plank, Richard E., Stephen J. Newell, and David A. Reid (2006), "Organizational Buyers and Conflict: The Impact of Conflict on Ongoing and New Purchasing Situations," Journal of Purchasing & Supply Management, 12 (1), 2-13.

Plouffe, Christopher R. and Donald W. Barclay (2007), "Salesperson navigation: The intraorganizational dimension of the sales role," Industrial Marketing Management, 36 (4), 528-39.

Podsakoff, Philip M., Scott B. MacKenzie, Julie Beth Paine, and Daniel G. Bachrach (2000), "Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Critical Review of the Theoretical and Empirical Literature and Suggestions for Future Research," Journal of Management, 26 (3), 513-63.

Porter, Michael E. (1985), Competitive Advantage:  Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance. New York: Free Press.

Porter, Michael E. (1996), "What Is Strategy?," Harvard Business Review, 74 (6), 61-78.

Punj, Girish (2006), "Structural Modeling in Marketing: Some Future Possibilities," Marketing Science, 25 (6), 622-24.

Ramaswami, Sridhar N., Srini S. Srinivasan, and Stephen A. Gorton (1997), "Information Asymmetry Between Salesperson and Supervisor: Postulates from Agency and Social Exchange Theories," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 17 (3), 29-64.

Ravald, Annika and Christian Grönroos (1996), "The Value Concept and Relationship Marketing," European Journal of Marketing, 30 (2), 19-30.

Rhoades, Linda and Robert Eisenberger (2002), "Perceived Organizational Support: A Review of the Literature," Journal of Applied Psychology, 87 (4), 698-714.

Rindfleisch, Aric and Jan B. Heide (1997), "Transaction cost analysis: Past, present, and future applications," Journal of Marketing, 61 (4), 30.

Rizzo, John R., Robert J. House, and Sidney I. Lirtzman (1970), "Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations," Administrative Science Quarterly, 15 (2), 150-63.

Robinson, Sandra L. and Rebecca J. Bennett (1995), "A Typology of Deviance Workplace Behaviors: A Multidimensionsal Scaling Study," Academy of Management Journal, 38 (2), 555-72.

Rouzies, Dominique, Erin Anderson, Ajay K. Kohli, Ronald E. Michaels, Barton A. Weitz, and Andris A. Zoltners (2005), "Sales and Marketing Integration: A Proposed Framework," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 25 (2), 113-22.

Rouzies, Dominique, Anne T. Coughlan, Erin Anderson, and Dawn Iacobucci (2009), "Determinants of Pay Levels and Structures in Sales Organizations," Journal of Marketing, 73 (6), 92-104.

Schappe, Stephen P. (1998), "The influence of job satisfaction, organizational commitment," Journal of Psychology, 132 (3), 277.

Secord, Paul F. and Carl W. Backman (1964), "Interpersonal Congruency, Perceived Similarity, and Friendship," Sociometry, 27 (2), 115-27.

Shaw, Marvin E. and Philip R. Costanzo (1982), Theories of Social Psychology (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Singh, Jagdip (1998), "Striking a Balance in Boundary-Spanning Positions: An Investigation of Some Unconventional Influences of Role Stressors and Job Characteristics on Job Outcomes of Salespeople," Journal of Marketing, 62 (3), 69-86.

Sirdeshmukh, Deepak, Jagdip Singh, and Barry Sabol (2002), "Consumer trust, value, and loyalty in relational exchanges," Journal of Marketing, 66 (1), 15.

Spence, Janet T. and Robert L. Helmreich (1983), Achievement-Related Motives and Behaviors. San Francisco, CA: W.H. Freeman.

Spiro, Rosann L., Gregory A. Rich, and William J. Stanton (2008), Management of a Sales Force (12th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Stanton, Jeffrey M. (1998), "An Empirical Assessment of Data Collection Using the Internet," Personnel Psychology, 51 (3), 709-25.

Steward, Michelle, Beth Walker, Michael Hutt, and Ajith Kumar (2010), "The Coordination Strategies of High-Performing Salespeople: Internal Working

Relationships that Drive Success," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 38 (5), 550-66.

Strahle, William M., Rosann L. Spiro, and Frank Acito (1996), "Marketing and Sales: Strategic Alignment and Functional Implementation," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 16 (1), 1-20.

Teas, R. Kenneth (1983), "Supervisory Behavior, Role Stress, and the Job Satisfaction of Industrial Salespeople," Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), 20 (1), 84-91.

Troilo, Gabriele, Luigi M. De Luca, and Paolo Guenzi (2009), "Dispersion of Influence Between Marketing and Sales: Its Effects on Superior Customer Value and Market Performance," Industrial Marketing Management, 38 (8), 872-82.

Tyagi, Pradeep K. (1985), "Relative Importance of Key Job Dimensions and Leadership Behaviors in Motivating Salesperson Work Performance," Journal of Marketing, 49 (3), 76-86.

Vargo, Stephen L. and Robert F. Lusch (2004), "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing," Journal of Marketing, 68 (1).

Velicer, Wayne F. and Douglas N. Jackson (1990), "Component Analysis versus Common Factor Analysis: Some Issues in Selecting an Appropriate Procedure," Multivariate Behavioral Research, 25 (1), 28.

Viswanathan, Madhubalan and Eric M. Olson (1992), "The Implementation of Business Strategies: Implications for the Sales Function," Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 12 (1), 45.

Vroom, Victor H. (1964), Work and Motivation. New York: Wiley.

Walsh, Gianfranco and Sharon E. Beatty (2007), "Customer-Based Corporate Reputation of a Service Firm: Scale Development and Validation," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 35 (1), 127-43.

Weiss, Allen M. and Erin Anderson (1992), "Converting From Independent to Employee Salesforces: The Role of Perceived Switching Costs," Journal of Marketing Research, 29 (1), 101-15.

Weitz, Barton A. and Kevin D. Bradford (1999), "Personal selling and sales management: A relationship marketing perspective," Academy of Marketing Science. Journal, 27 (2), 241.

Williamson, Oliver E. (1991), "Comparative Economic Organization: The Analysis of Discrete Structural Alternatives," Administrative Science Quarterly, 36 (2), 269-96.

Wong, Amy and Amrik Sohal (2002), "An examination of the relationship between trust, commitment and relationship quality," International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 30 (1), 34.

## APPENDIX: INDIVIDUAL SCENARIOS

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION (INCLUDED WITH ALL SCENARIOS)

Suppose your employer has decided to add a new product to the portfolio of products the sales force sells. This new product is related to your organization's current industry, but it is not a direct extension of an existing product line. There is uncertainty as to whether this new product represents a permanent shift in the industry or if it is a trend that will be replaced in about 5 years. Management has repeatedly emphasized that all salespeople must heavily promote this product to all existing customers as well as any new customer contacts. A quota has been set with respect to this new product, but you do not feel it will be challenging to achieve. This new product has a commission potential similar to the other products that you currently sell, so there is not significant financial motivation for selling this new product over other products. The training on this product is done individually, therefore you have not had a chance to discuss this new product with any other salespeople in your company.

### CUSTOMER INEQUITY SCENARIO

After your training on the product, you start to believe that the product is probably not going to be beneficial for your customer (the one you identified earlier in this survey). The problem is that the product would be difficult and potentially costly for your customer to adopt, and it would only deliver marginal results for them. You feel that you could convince them to purchase this product, but you are fairly certain it will cause them headaches internally in the future.

### ORGANIZATION INEQUITY SCENARIO

After your training on the product, you start to believe that your organization may not have thoroughly refined this product. In your opinion, then product has some basic flaws that will possibly cause unintended consequences when put into "real-life" use. Additionally, your company has instituted a generous return policy for this new product, and items returned due to defect do not negatively impact your commission from the original sale. So, promoting this new product will likely cost your organization money because of the potentially high number of returns. You are confident that your customer would not be upset with you if the product had to be returned.

**SELF INEQUITY SCENARIO**

You believe that this product will be difficult for you to effectively sell. The amount of information that you need to be able to provide to each of your clients is going to be time-consuming for you to generate. You estimate that selling this new product will create an additional 4-5 hours of work for you each week beyond your normal work week.