PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE DIMENSIONS AS ANTECEDENTS TO SALESPEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, TURNOVER, SUCCESS BELIEFS, AND PERFORMANCE*

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Organizational climate plays an important role in a sales force environment. This study examines several dimensions of salespeople's climate perceptions relative to performance and job turnover using organizational commitment and success beliefs as mediator variables. Direct and indirect relationships between constructs are tested using data obtained from a sample of telecommunications service salespeople.

Study findings highlight the notion that salespeople's perceptions of a firm's senior management, immediate sales manager, support (non-sales) personnel, and the job directly and positively influence salesperson organizational commitment. In addition, a direct, positive relationship was observed between organizational commitment and salespersons' success beliefs and between salespeople's success beliefs and sales performance. A direct, inverse relationship between salespeople's organizational commitment and job turnover was also obtained.

Study results generally supported the proposed indirect mediating relationships. Through their direct relationships with organizational commitment, salespeople's climate perceptions of non-sales employees, sales managers, senior management, and the job itself were related indirectly and positively to success beliefs. Also, organizational commitment, through success beliefs, was associated indirectly and positively to performance. The posited indirect relationship between salesperson climate perceptions and job turnover via organizational commitment, however, was not found.

A variety of factors affect job responses (e.g., performance, turnover) of employees at any organizational level and position. Empirical research shows that an individual-level factor that can have an impact on salespeople's job-related outcomes in particular is psychological (organizational) climate (e.g., Brown and Leigh 1996; Tyagi 1982). Notwithstanding its importance, the impact of psychological climate on salespeople's performance and organizational commitment has been virtually ignored (see Brown and Leigh [1996] for an exception).

The paucity of work in the foregoing area is surprising for several reasons. First, extant work has ascertained that psychological climate has an effect on such salesperson outcomes as motivation (e.g., Tyagi 1982), satisfaction (e.g., Evans, Landry, and Zou 2007), empowerment (Martin and Bush 2006), and job involvement and effort (e.g., Brown and Leigh 1996). Given that salespeople's views of their work environment affect these foregoing job responses, logically one can presuppose that similar associations would hold for performance and organizational commitment. Second, examining relationships between psychological climate and performance and organizational commitment appears warranted owing to the fact that these latter two variables are the chief outcomes of interest to researchers in organizational behavior and to employers and employees (Colquitt, Lepine, and Wesson 2009). Therefore, ignoring these associations in a selling context appears questionable. Third,

managers can have an impact on an employee's psychological climate based on the interventions they take in helping shape the individual's climate (e.g., Evans, Landry, and Zou 2007). Therefore, sales managers should have interest in ascertaining the efforts they can take to enhance salespeople's work climate perceptions.

Accordingly, the present study proposes and tests a model that links the way a salesperson perceives the context or climate of a work organization to his or her performance and organizational commitment. Climate is posited to have a positive impact on salespeople's organizational commitment, which in turn is presumed to have a favorable effect on their success beliefs (a component of motivation). Success beliefs are posited to be positively associated with performance. Additionally, the linkage between organizational commitment and job turnover is examined to replicate previous work which has found that the former variable

is a strong predictor of the latter (e.g., Sager, 1990).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Psychological climate, organizational commitment, success beliefs, turnover, and performance of sales personnel are the study variables and represent a web of potential phenomena that are interrelated. Based on previous empirical work, specific relationships explored in the investigation are described below and depicted in Figure 1.

Dimensions of Psychological Climate

Psychological climate of an organization is an individual-level construct comprising descriptive beliefs or perceptions held concerning work experiences (e.g., Denison 1996; James and James 1989). It encompasses an individual's perceptions of the characteristics of the organization as well as the nature of the

Figure 1
Specific Relationships Explored
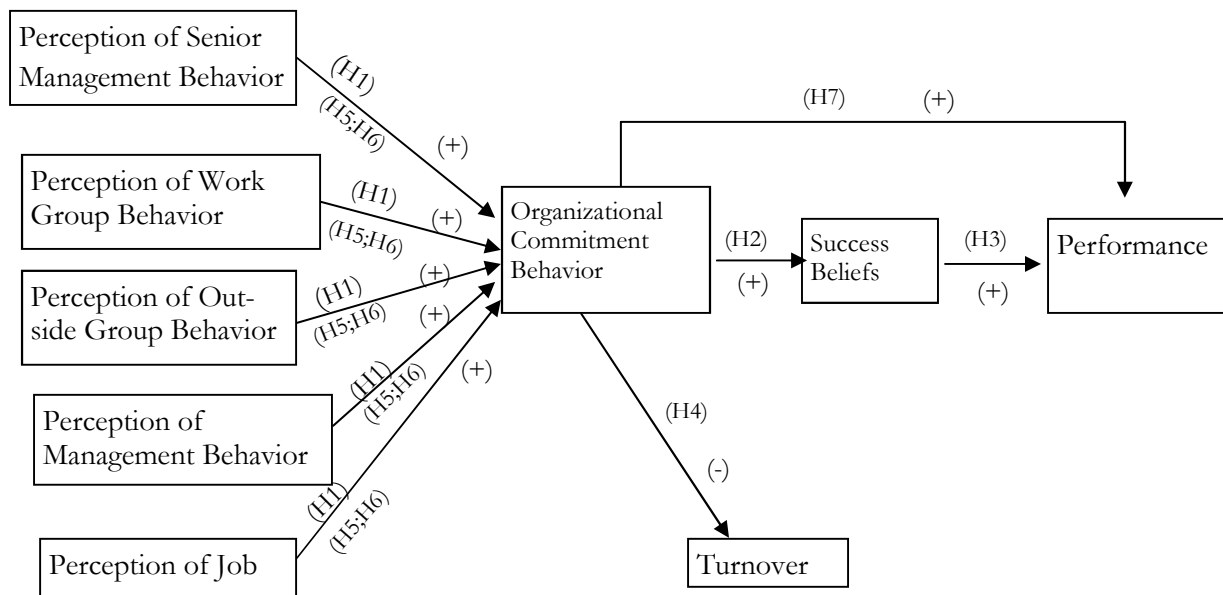
relationships that person has with those with whom he or she works (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1976). Employees appraise their work situation vis-à-vis whether it will be beneficial or harmful for their organizational well being (James and James 1989). As Brown and Leigh (1996, p. 359) aver: "It is important to study psychological climate because it is employee's perceptions and valuations of the environment…that mediates attitudinal and behavioral responses."

Scholars differ regarding the components of psychological climate (James et al. 2007). Distilling the work on psychological climate by Brown and Leigh (1996), Denison (1996), and James and James (1989), five climate dimensions were used in the present work:

(a) Perceptions of immediate work group behavior (i.e., behavior and attitudes of immediate coworkers)

(b) Perceptions of outside work group behavior (i.e., behavior and attitudes of extended or distal work groups in the organization)

(c) Perceptions of behaviors of the immediate manager or supervisor

(d) Perceptions regarding the "organization" itself (e.g., senior management behavior)

(e) Job-related perceptions (i.e., the job itself: its task components, customers, products, and performance objectives)

The dimensions of climate categories correspond to the argument James and James (1989) advance that people are able to categorize perceptions toward jobs, leaders, work groups, and individual/organizational interfaces into separate internal compartments.

Selected Consequences of Salespeople's Psychological Climate

Organizational Commitment. Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982, p. 27) define organizational

commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization." It comprises both a positive affective attachment to and a behavioral intention to continue working in organization and is a form of attachment extant between employees and their company (Jaramillo, Mulki, and Marshall 2003).

Success Beliefs. Bagozzi (1992, p. 182) characterizes *success beliefs* as the extent to which an individual believes that performing a goal-directed behavior results in success (´a la instrumentality of a behavior): "[an individual's] predictions that if one tries to perform a goal-directed behavior, success or failure will result." Success beliefs refer to an individual's *predictions* regarding the *consequences* of performing a behavior (i.e., achieving or not achieving the goal) (Bagozzi, 1992). They do not pertain to one's beliefs regarding ability to perform a behavior (self-efficacy) (Bagozzi and Warsaw 1990; Bandura 1977) or to feelings of success (the degree of felt success employees hold concerning their overall performance) (Brown, Cron, and Leigh 1993). Success beliefs have not been examined in prior work in sales.

Job Turnover. Job turnover refers to a salesperson's departure from membership in the firm. It is an extreme form of withdrawal whether voluntary or involuntary. In some cases turnover can have a salutary impact (e.g., when a poor performer opts to decamp from the company) (Jolson, Dubinsky, and Anderson 1987). When widespread, however, turnover of sales personnel can have a detrimental effect in an organization (Hair et al. 2009).

Job Performance. Salesperson performance can be defined as execution of salesperson behaviors and the results of those behaviors on the achievement of organizational goals.

Performance can be viewed on both behavior and outcome bases (Oliver and Anderson 1994). In addition, it can have an impact on such issues as selection, recruitment, training, compensation, and supervision of sales personnel (Hair et al. 2009).

Hypotheses

Relationship between Psychological Climate and Organizational Commitment. Researchers investigating antecedents of organizational commitment have ascertained that it is associated with several *contextual* variables: leader behavior (Morris and Sherman 1981), job characteristics (Hunt, Chonko, and Wood 1985), commitment to top management goals (Reichers 1986), person-job fit (Werbel, Landau, and DeCarlo 1996), person-organization fit (Vilela et al. 2007), attitudes toward work, manager, and coworkers (Sager 1990), and manager behaviors (Agarwal and Ramaswami 1993). As such, we propose that salespeople's perceptions regarding their immediate manager, coworkers and other work groups, upper management, and the job itself are positively related to organizational commitment (Sager and Johnston 1989). This expectation corresponds to scholars' belief that organizational commitment is an outcome of socialization (e.g., Dubinsky et al. 1986; Sparks and Schenk 2006). Therefore, salespeople's favorable perceptions of organizational climate involving the sales manager, other groups in the organization, fellow salespeople, and upper management developed through initial and ongoing socialization should heighten initial commitment to the organization (Muchinsky 2003).

Hypothesis 1: Salespeople's perceptions of their psychological climate are positively related to their organizational commitment.

Relationship between Organizational Commitment and Success Beliefs. As noted, Bagozzi (1992) characterizes success beliefs as to what extent an individual believes that performing a goal-directed behavior causes success. Blau and Boal (1987) promulgate that individuals possessing high organizational commitment *and* high job involvement (i.e., commitment to one's work) are more likely to exert *effort* toward completing task-related activities as well as toward maintaining group membership. Essentially, they herald that involved, committed employees ("stars") may be more motivated. The study model extends Blau and Boal's (1987) ideas in that instead of interacting with job involvement, organizational commitment influences performance of salespeople through *success beliefs.* We postulate that identification with the organization and willingness to expend effort toward its goals (i.e., commitment to an organization) lead a salesperson to actively attempt to search for, learn, and absorb information relevant to the selling task, thus heightening success beliefs.

Hypothesis 2: Salespeople's organizational commitment is positively related to their success beliefs.

Relationship between Success Beliefs and Sales Performance. Seligman (1998) theorizes that learned optimism—the evaluation of events and issues from a positive perspective—can be learned and that such learned optimism leads to rewards and fulfillment in a person's life. Indeed, sales researchers have proposed that optimism and positive emotions can influence salespeople advantageously (e.g., Dixon and Schertzer 2005; Sujan 1999), but negative emotions can have a deleterious impact (e.g., Verbeke and Bagozzi 2000). Bagozzi's (1992) notion of success beliefs reflects the idea that a salesperson can teach him/herself to be positive in **perspective.**

Success beliefs may affect one's "proximal motivation": "…self-regulated processes aimed at the initiation and execution of goal attainment actions" (Jaramillo et al. 2007, 59). Whether the individual actually achieves set goals is predicated on the goal-directed behavior chosen and factors that facilitate and impede goal setting (Bagozzi 1992). Schulman (1999) observes that optimistic expectations have been found to be related positively to motivation and performance for employees in several research populations, sales among them.

Hypothesis 3: Salespeople's success beliefs are positively related to sales performance.

Organizational Commitment and Turnover Behavior. Research findings across workplace contexts support a negative relationship between organizational commitment and intention to quit, a frequently used surrogate for turnover (e.g., Pettijohn, Pettijohn, and Taylor 2007). Moreover, organizational commitment has been ascertained to be a predictor of job turnover (e.g., Jaramillo et al. 2009). The study model proposes that organizational commitment mediates between climate dimensions and turnover.

Hypothesis 4: Salespeople's organizational commitment is inversely related to job turnover.

Support for Organizational Commitment and Success Beliefs as Mediator Variables. The study model suggests that organizational commitment and success beliefs are *mediator* variables (Figure 1). Specifically, organizational commitment is expected to mediate relationships between salespersons' climate perceptions and success beliefs *and* between climate perceptions and turnover behavior. Commitment is presumed to *strengthen* the relationship between climate dimensions *and* success beliefs and turnover. The

model also implies that salespeople's success beliefs mediate the relationship between organizational commitment and sales performance. Reasoning holds that success beliefs enhance the relationship between commitment and performance of sales personnel.

Findings from organizational behavior research support a direct relationship between organizational commitment and performance (e.g., Becker et al. 1996). Recent research in the selling domain has found that organizational commitment is positively associated with salesperson performance (Mulki et al. 2008). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of the organizational commitment-performance nexus observed that the link between the two variables is stronger for sales employees than for non-sales employees (Jaramillo, Mulki, and Marshall 2003). Notably, though, organizational commitment explained only six percent of the variance in job performance. This finding implies that other mediating factors (such as success beliefs) between the two variables account for some of the unexplained variance between organizational commitment and performance.

As such, the study model reflects the belief that commitment influences performance through success beliefs. Salespeople responding positively to the climate of their organization are presupposed to be more committed, to have stronger beliefs regarding their potential success in the market, and to be effective performers. Implications of the mediating role of the two variables are that the bulk of socialized influence for climate variables works through organizational commitment and that the impact of climate on performance works through organizational commitment and success beliefs. Hypotheses five and seven convey these

expectations. Hypothesis six clarifies the expectation that salespersons' organizational commitment mediates the influence of climate on retention of salespeople. A positive climate builds commitment, and commitment reduces turnover.

Hypothesis 5: Salespeople's organizational commitment mediates the relationship between salespeople's psychological climate perceptions and success beliefs.

Hypothesis 6: Salespeople's organizational commitment mediates the relationship between psychological climate perceptions and job turnover.

Hypothesis 7: Salespeople's success beliefs mediate the relationship between organizational commitment and salesperson performance.

METHOD

Participants and Survey Administration

Data were obtained through a survey of salespersons employed in the publishing arm of a large telecommunications firm. A salesperson in each district office was selected to administer the survey during a weekly sales meeting. The survey instrument tapped salespersons' climate perceptions regarding district sales managers, sales divisions, senior management, other work groups, and their job, as well as their withdrawal intentions. The company provided sales performance and employment status data.

The sample consisted of 343 salespersons drawn from fourteen sales divisions. Using an area canvass system, these salespersons sold *Yellow Page* advertising services to businesses. A total of 290 completed usable surveys were received, for an 85 percent response rate.

Questionnaire

The researchers reviewed relevant literature in sales management and organizational psychology to obtain the items that tapped the constructs of interest. The pre-survey process also included in-depth interviews with germane host company personnel. The final survey instrument contained 50 items designed to represent the seven constructs included in the proposed model. All survey items were responded to on a 7-point Likert-type format, anchored by 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree. Shown in Table 1 are the items used to represent the study constructs.

The measures tapping *psychological climate* came from a panoply of sources. Both perceptions of *work-group* behavior and of *outside group* behavior were based on operationalizations offered by Dubinsky et al. (1986), James and James (1989), and Strutton, Pelton, and Lumpkin (1993). Drawing from James and James (1989), Netemeyer et al. (1997), Sager, Yi, and Futrell (1998), and Tyagi (1985), items were developed to measure salespersons' perceptions of the *immediate sales manager's behavior*. Six items specific to the context were identified as representing a salesperson's perception of *senior management behavior*. Based on the work of Brown and Leigh (1996), James and James (1989), and Tyagi (1982), four items were used to represent salespeople's *job-related* perceptions.

The nine-item version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Porter, and Steers 1982) was adapted to measure *organizational commitment*. Based on the operationalizations offered by Bagozzi (1992), five items were developed to capture *success beliefs*. Year-to-date percentage of the budgeted sales target achieved by a salesperson—the host company performance index—was used as an index of *sales performance*.

Table 1
Scale Items and Construct Reliability

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceptions of Manager Behavior:	% = .93
My DSM coaches me on a regular basis.*	
My DSM effectively fends for our unit.*	
I can trust my DSM to back me on the decisions I make.*	
My DSM reinforces what I learned in XXX when I started.*	
My DSM explains the rationale behind any corrective counseling action.*	
My DSM listens to my side of any issue first.*	
I respect my DSM.*	
My DSM understands my personality.*	
My DSM manages all reps consistently.*	
My DSM gives me good suggestions regarding problems I encounter in selling.*	
I only hear from my DSM when something goes wrong. (R)	
My DSM holds my non-work obligations against me. (R)	
My DSM tries to schedule canvasses to fit around my personal needs.	
My DSM handles many of the details that would otherwise be dumped on me.	
Organizational Commitment:	% = .89
Taking a job with XXX was one of my better decisions in life.*	
I think about leaving XXX every day. (R)*	
I cannot see myself working for another company.*	
I doubt I will be with this company six months from now. (R)*	
I regularly circulate my resume to other employers. (R)*	
Once I have established a track record here, I will start looking for another job. (R)*	
I plan to search for another sales job in the near future. (R)*	
XXX has shown a great deal of commitment to me.	
I took this job knowing that I will probably leave in a year or two. (R)	
Perceptions of Senior Management Behavior:	% = .84
Senior management recognizes the contributions of the sales force.*	
Senior management makes decisions with the long run in mind.*	
Senior management sees that I have all the resources (technology, support) I need to sell.*	
I see little evidence that senior management trusts the sales force. (R)*	
Senior management cares about the opinions of sales reps, DSMs, and DMs.*	
My DM helps us see where our efforts fit into XXX's business strategy.	
Perceptions of Work Group Behavior:	
The atmosphere in my division helps me stay focused.*	% = .79
I look forward to hearing from other salespeople during the day.*	
The enthusiasm in my division is contagious.*	
People in this division care about one another.*	
In this division, issues and concerns are out in the open.*	
If I have a problem, there is always someone here who will help me.	
Others in my division took time to show me the ropes	

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Table 1 - continued
Scale Items and Construct Reliability

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceptions of Job:	% = .78
My goal is to provide the advertiser with a plan that will bring them more business.*	
I really feel the products we sell help independent business people succeed.*	
My sales efforts are very valuable to XXX.*	
My goal is to exceed the budget, that's all. (R)	
Perceptions of Outside Group Behavior:	% = .65
I have to fight the system outside the division to place orders. (R)*	
Non-sales groups within XXX delay me in selling my ads. (R)*	
I find it unpleasant to deal with account management. (R)*	
I spend a disproportionate amount of time each day contacting non-sales operating areas. (R)	
Reps in other divisions use XXX policy against me. (R)	
Success Beliefs:	% = .65
Performance targets are achievable*	
I am always uncertain that I will make budget. (R)*	
I am 80 percent confident that I can make or exceed the budget every pay period*	
I am confident I could move up in this organization if I so desire.	
I have trouble making budget because of outside responsibilities. (R)	

* Denotes items retained for structural model measurement.
 (R) denotes items that were reverse scored.
Note: DSM = District Sales Manager (first-line manager); DM = Division Manager (manages several districts).

Salesperson employment status (stayed with or left the firm) over the eight-month interval following administration of the survey was used to measure *turnover*.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

Initial factor analysis results revealed that ten of the fifty items in the measurement model cross-loaded on multiple constructs or failed to load sufficiently. Consequently, these ten items were eliminated from further analysis. Subsequent analyses conducted with the remaining forty items supported a seven-factor structure (eigenvalues > 1.0; 61 percent of total item variance explained). Item loadings corresponded to the hypothesized constructs, thus suggesting suitable dimensionality (Table 2).

Confirmatory factor analyses conducted as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), yielded acceptable model indices. Four items, though, exhibited unacceptably low squared multiple correlations and standardized loadings. After eliminating these four items, the re-specified 36-item measurement model generated the following indices: χ^2 (573 $\underline{n}$ = 290) = 892.19, p = .00; standardized RMR = .05; GFI = .86; AGFI = .83; NFI = .85; TLI = .93; CFI = .94; and RMSEA = .042. Thus, the overall measurement model fit was within ranges expressed by Hu and Bentler (1999) and Williams and Holahan (1994). Subsequent structural analyses of the seven constructs established their discriminant validity (Table 3).

Table 2
Summary of Loadings for the Measurement Model

Constructs and Items	Sq. Multiple R	Std. Loadings	t- Value	p <
Perceptions of Manager Behavior				
My DSM coaches me on a regular basis.	.46	.68	12.87	.001
My DSM effectively fends for our unit.	.70	.84	17.37	.001
I can trust my DSM to back me on the decisions I make.	.75	.87	18.31	.001
My DSM reinforces what I learned in XXX when I started.	.65	.81	16.35	.001
My DSM explains the rationale behind any corrective counseling action.	.48	.69	13.26	.001
My DSM listens to my side of any issue first.	38	62	11.44	.001
I respect my DSM.	.69	.83	17.16	.001
My DSM understands my personality.	.49	.70	13.45	.001
My DSM manages all reps consistently.	.51	.71	13.68	.001
My DSM gives me good suggestions regarding problems I encounter in selling.	.69	.83	17.11	.001
Organizational Commitment				
Taking a job with XXX was one of my better decisions in life.	.60	.78	15.34	.001
I think about leaving XXX every day. (R)	.79	.83	17.02	.001
I cannot see myself working for another company.	.34	.59	10.57	.001
I doubt I will be with this company six months from now. (R)	.70	.84	17.12	.001
I regularly circulate my resume to other employers (R)	.48	.69	13.05	.001
Once I have established a track record here, I will start looking for another job (R)	.42	.65	11.98	.001
I plan to search for another sales job in the near future. (R)	.73	.85	17.74	.001
Perceptions of Senior Management Behavior				
Senior management recognizes the contributions of the sales force.				
Senior management makes decisions with the long run in mind.	.71	.85	17.06	.001
Senior management sees that I have all the resources (technology, support) I need to sell.	.53	.73	13.73	.001
I see little evidence that senior management trusts the sales force. (R)	.43	.66	12.00	.001
Senior management cares about the opinions of sales reps, DSMs, and DMs.	.50	.71	13.18	.001
	.48	.69	12.81	.001
Perceptions of Work Group Behavior				
The atmosphere in my division helps me stay focused.	.61	.78	15.03	.001
I look forward to hearing from other salespeople during the day.	.26	.51	8.80	.001
The enthusiasm in my division is contagious	.72	.85	16.92	.001
People in this division care about one another.	.30	.55	9.51	.001
In this division, issues and concerns are out in the open.	.30	.55	9.52	.001
Perceptions of Job				
My goal is to provide the advertiser with a plan that will bring them more business.	.46	.68	11.58	.001
I really feel the products we sell help independent business people succeed.	.69	.83	14.39	.001
My sales efforts are very valuable to XXX.	.50	.71	12.17	.001

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Table 2—continued
Summary of Loadings for the Measurement Model

Constructs and Items	Sq. Multiple R	Std. Load-ings	t-Value	p <
Perceptions of Outside Group Behavior				
I have to fight the system outside the division to place orders. (R)	.34	.58	9.20	.001
Non-sales groups within XXX delay me in selling my ads. (R)	.61	.78	12.33	.001
I find it unpleasant to deal with account management. (R)	.25	.50	7.86	.001
Success Beliefs				
Performance targets are achievable.	.67	.82	14.20	.001
I am always uncertain that I will make the budget. (R)	.25	.50	8.25	.001
I am 80 percent confident that I can make or exceed the budget every pay period.	.25	.48	7.92	.001

Descriptive Goodness of Fit Indices:

χ^2 *(573 N = 290), p=.00*	892.19
Standardized RMR	0.051
GFI	0.86
AGFI	0.83
NFI	0.85
TLI	0.93
CFI	0.94
RMSEA	0.042

Structural Model Evaluations (Tests of H1 through H7)

A correlation matrix (Table 4) of the summated construct measures was generated and used to evaluate the theorized model. To facilitate path analysis, item loadings of λ=.99 and λ=.95, respectively, were inserted to represent the directly observed constructs, performance and turnover. The theoretical model exhibited the following fit indices: χ^2 (18 *n* = 290) = 67.21, *p* = .00; Standardized RMR = .06; GFI = .96; AGFI = .89; NFI = .89; CFI = .92; and RMSEA = .089.

Shown in Table 5 are the standardized path coefficients along with their *t*-values and statistical significance for the hypothesized relationships (H1 - H7). Portrayed in Figure 2 are the paths tested along with their standardized path coefficients. Coefficients tend to provide overall support for the proposed relationships. All relationships, direct or indirect, that included a path between perception of *work (sales) group*

behavior and *organizational commitment*, however, were *not* supported.

A path-by-path assessment of the structural model was undertaken, per Anderson and Gerbing (1988). A series of nested models was evaluated (Table 6), including the structural null, structural (hypothesized), and saturated models (Williams and Holahan 1994). Fit indices indicated the lowest AIC (112.78) and the lowest RMSEA (.06) for the hypothesized model.

Support existed for four of the five relationships tested under H1 (Table 5 and Figure 2). Salespersons' perceptions of the (a) behavior of non-sales employees, (γ_{12} = .19, t = 1.89, $p \leq$ .05), (b) behavior of salespersons' sales managers, (γ_{13} = .13, t = 2.11, $p \leq$ .025), (c) behavior of senior management, (γ_{14} = .31, t = 2.05, $p \leq$ .025), and (d) sales job (γ_{15} = .17, t = 2.71, $p \leq$ .005) were related directly and positively to organizational commitment. The posited direct, positive relationship between a

Table 3
Assessment of Discriminant Validity: Chi-Square Difference Tests

Models/Construct Pairs	Model χ^2	D χ^2	$p <$
Unconstrained Measurement Model (d.f. = 573): All constructs are independent.	892.19		
Constrained Models (d.f. = 574): Pairs of constructs constrained to one.			
Organizational Commitment & Perception of Manager Behavior	1840.93	948.78	.001
Perception of Senior Management Behavior & Perception of Manager Behavior	1382.47	486.28	.001
Perception of Senior Management Behavior & Organizational Commitment	1243.27	347.08	.001
Perception of Work Group Behavior & Perception of Manager Behavior	1212.63	316.44	.001
Perception of Work Group Behavior & Organizational Commitment	1186.30	290.11	.001
Perception of Work Group Behavior & Perception of Senior Management Behavior	1003.19	107.00	.001
Perception of Job & Perception of Manager Behavior	1127.55	231.36	.001
Perception of Job & Organizational Commitment	1110.94	214.75	.001
Perception of Job & Perception of Senior Management Behavior	1121.53	225.34	.001
Perception of Job & Perception of Work Group Behavior	1107.57	211.38	.001
Perception of Outside Group Behavior & Perception of Manager Behavior	1009.52	113.33	.001
	989.27		.001
Perception of Outside Group Behavior & Organizational Commitment		93.08	
Perception of Outside Group Behavior & Perception of Senior Management Behavior	954.91	58.72	.001
Perception of Outside Group Behavior & Perception of Work Group Behavior	996.10	99.91	.001
Perception of Outside Group Behavior & Perception of Job	1012.43	116.24	.001
Success Beliefs & Perception of Manager Behavior	990.16	93.97	.001
Success Beliefs & Organizational Commitment	923.70	27.51	.001
Success Beliefs & Perception of Senior Management Behavior	942.15	45.96	.001
Success Beliefs & Perception of Work Group Behavior	953.13	56.94	.001
Success Beliefs & Perception of Job	989.46	93.27	.001
Success Beliefs & Perception of Outside Group Behavior	941.63	45.44	.001

Note: Critical α = .00246; Critical χ^2 (1 d.f., p = .001) = 10.828; *p* = significance level.

salesperson's perceptions of the behavior of other salespersons (i.e., work group) in the organization and his or her organizational commitment was *not* supported (γ_{11} = .08, t = .60).

H2 received empirical support. A direct, positive relationship was observed between the extent to which a salesperson felt committed to the organization and possessed favorable success beliefs (β_{21} = .75, t = 11.93, p $\leq$ .001). Support was also provided for H3, which posited a direct and positive relationship between salespeople's success beliefs and sales performance (β_{32} = .44, t = 6.65, p $\leq$ .001). As H4 proposed, a direct, inverse relationship between a salesperson's organizational

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Table 4 **Correlation Matrix of Study Constructs**									
1. PERDSM	.93								
2. ORGCOM	.304**	.90							
3. PERSM	.288**	.483**	.85						
4. PERWGRP	.372**	.409**	.620**	.79					
5. PERJOB	.182**	.259**	.196**	.265**	.78				
6. PEROGRP	.132**	.318**	.459**	.255**	.036	.66			
7. SB	.174**	.572**	.424**	.338**	.177**	.377**	.64		
8. PERFORM	.118*	.276**	.052	.046	.095	.027	.378**		
9. TURNOVER	-.082	-.048	-.090	.059	-.027	-.105	.000	-.105	

*p < .05 (2-tailed); **p < .01 (2-tailed).

Note 1: PERDSM = Perception of Manager Behavior; ORGCOM = Organizational Commitment; PERSM = Perception of Senior Management Behavior; PERWGRP = Perception of Work Group Behavior; PERJOB = Perception of Job; PEROGRP = Perception of Outside Group Behavior; SB = Success Beliefs; PERFORM = Sales Performance TURNOVER = Voluntary Turnover.

Note 2: Composite reliability coefficients of multi-item measures are reported on the diagonal.

commitment and job turnover was found (β_{41} = -.11, $\underline{t}$ = -1.75, $\underline{p} \leq .05$).

Study findings generally supported the *indirect* mediating relationships proposed in H5 (Table 5). Through their direct relationships with organizational commitment, salespeople's perceptions of the (a) behavior of non-sales employees (γ = .14, $\underline{t}$ = 1.87, $\underline{p} \leq .05$), (b) behavior of sales managers (H (γ = .10, $\underline{t}$ = 2.08, $\underline{p} \leq .025$), (c) behavior of senior management (γ = .23, $\underline{t}$ = 2.03, $\underline{p} \leq .025$), and (d) job itself (γ = .13, $\underline{t}$ = 2.65, $\underline{p} \leq .025$) were related indirectly and positively to success beliefs. Only perceptions of the work group were *not* found to be significantly associated (p > .05) with success beliefs.

H6 did not receive empirical support. The indirect relationship between salesperson climate perceptions and job turnover via

organizational commitment was in the desired direction, but not significant (p > .05). H7, though, was confirmed. Specifically, organizational commitment, through success beliefs, was related indirectly and positively with performance (γ = .33, $\underline{t}$ = 6.37, $\underline{p} \leq .001$).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Study findings support the overarching proposition that organizational commitment and success beliefs mediate (i.e., serve as intermediary factors between) salespeople's psychological climate perceptions, job turnover, and performance. Apparently, salespeople develop a deeper commitment to the organization if they hold auspicious perceptions of their support personnel, immediate sales manager, senior management, and job. These findings undergird previous theoretical conceptualizations and empirical findings discussed in the socialization

Table 5
Path Model Estimation Results

Direct Relationships	H	Path	Std. Path Coeff.	t-Value	Sig. p ≤
Perceptions of Work Group Behavior					
PERWGRP -> ORGCOM	H1	γ11	.08	0.60	*n.s*
Perceptions of Outside Group Behavior					
PEROGRP -> ORGCOM	H1	γ12	.19	1.89	.050
Perceptions of Manager Behavior					
PERDSM -> ORGCOM	H1	γ13	.13	2.11	.025
Perceptions of Senior Management Behavior					
PERSM ->ORGCOM	H1	γ14	.31	2.05	.025
Perceptions of Job					
PERJOB -> ORGCOM	H1	γ15	.17	2.71	.005
Organizational Commitment					
ORGCOM -> SB	H2	β21	.75	11.93	.001
ORGCOM -> TURNOVER	H4	β41	-.11	-1.75	.050
Success Beliefs					
SB -> PERFORM	H3	β32	.44	6.65	.001

Indirect Relationships	Std. Path Coeff.	t-Value	Sig. p ≤
PERWGRP -> ORGCOM ->SB (H5)	.06	.60	*n.s*
PEROGRP -> ORGCOM -> SB (H5)	.14	1.87	.050
PERDSM -> ORGCOM -> SB (H5)	.10	2.08	.025
PERSM -> ORGCOM -> SB (H5)	.23	2.03	.025
PERJOB -> ORGCOM -> SB (H5)	.13	2.65	.025
PERWGRP -> ORGCOM -> TURNOVER (H6)	-.01	-.57	*n.s*
PEROGRP -> ORGCOM -> TURNOVER (H6)	-.02	-1.28	*n.s*
PERDSM -> ORGCOM -> TURNOVER (H6)	-.01	-1.35	*n.s*
PERSM -> ORGCOM -> TURNOVER (H6)	-.03	-1.33	*n.s*
PERJOB -> ORGCOM -> TURNOVER (H6)	-.02	-1.47	*n.s*
ORGCOM -> SB -> PERFORM (H7)	.33	6.37	.001

n.s. = Not significant

Figure 2
Path Estimates (Standardized Path Coefficients) for the Salesperson Performance
and Turnover Model
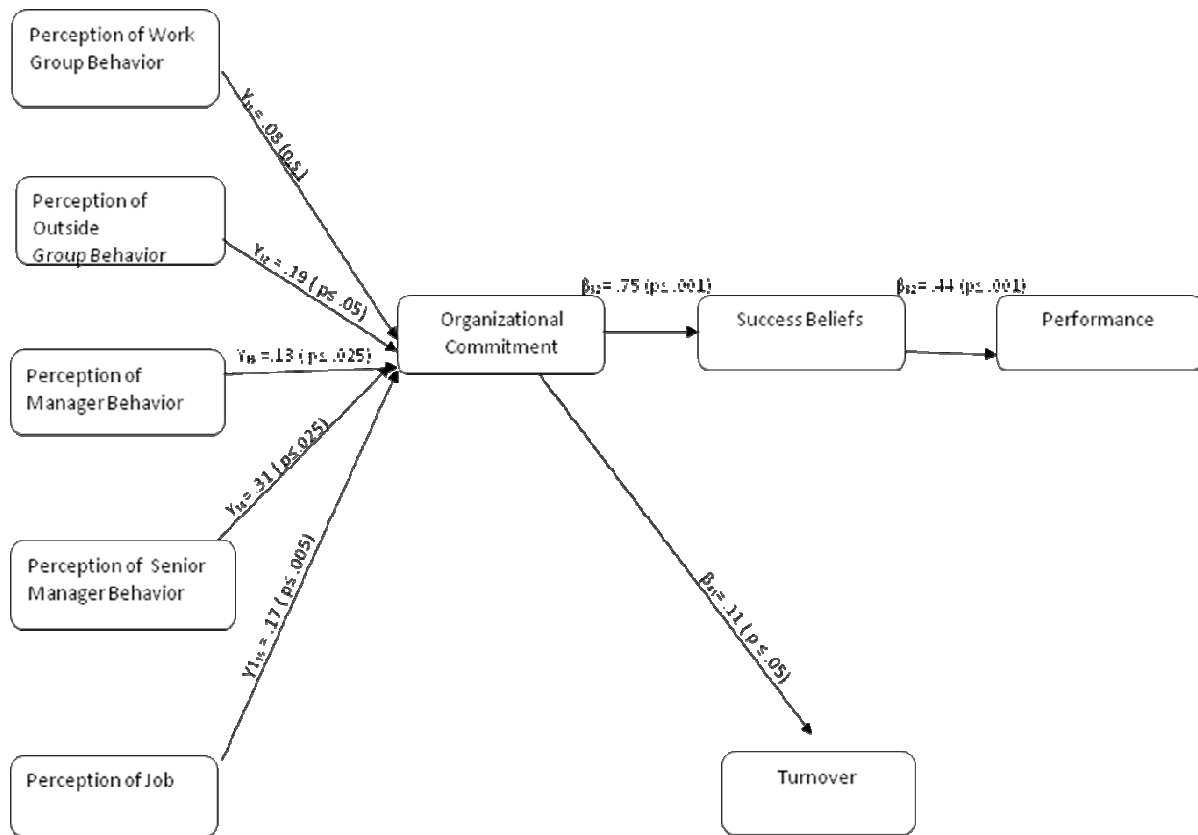
(e.g., Schneider and Reichers 1983; Van Maanen and Schein 1979) and organizational commitment (e.g., Caldwell, Chatman, and O'Reilly 1990) literatures. Empirical work in these two areas suggests the considerable impact that interactions with both managers and co-workers plays in shaping an employee's commitment to the organization.

Importantly, the behavior senior management models to the sales force has an effect on the image salespeople carry of the company and its products (Hair et al. 2009). The positive relationship observed between salespeople's perceptions of the actions taken by senior management and salespersons' organizational commitment is particularly relevant in light of the finding in this study that such a perception is

more instrumental in shaping commitment to the organization ($\gamma_{14} = .31$) than are perceptions regarding the actions of the immediate sales manager ($\gamma_{13} = .13$).

Salespeople's perceptions of the working situation with their immediate sales manager were found to have a beneficial impact on their commitment to the firm. Peradventure the favorable feelings sales personnel have toward their sales manager induces a personal loyalty toward that individual, particularly in a geographically-dispersed sales organization where the experienced commission salesperson functions in a semi-autonomous role. Such salutary affect may conduce to heightened loyalty to the manager and thus to enhanced organizational commitment. Further research is

Table 6
Nested Path Models (Comparing Model Fit)

Models	d.f.	χ²	AIC	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMS	Std. RMR	GFI	AGFI
Model(UF)	36	619.72	866.01	0	0	0	.28	.26	.61	.51
Model(SN)	26	340.45	396.01	.45	.25	.46	.21	.21	.78	.63
Model(T-1)	19	74.52	118.63	.88	.82	.90	.093	.064	.95	.88
Model(T-1A)	19	70.69	112.96	.89	.83	.91	.087	.063	.96	.89
Model(T)	18	67.21	112.78	.89	.83	.92	.089	.06	.96	.89
Model(T+1)	17	67.13	114.36	.89	.82	.91	.092	.061	.96	.89
Model(SS)	0	0								

Model(UF) = Model with no correlated factors and no relationships specified for latent variables. Model(SN) = Path model with correlated exogenous constructs but with no other relationships specified. Model(T-1) = Reduced path model in which the path from perception of identity to organizational commitment is deleted. Model(T-1A) = Reduced Model in which the path from perception of outside group behavior to organizational commitment is deleted. Model(T) = Model proposed in the study. Model(T+1) = Proposed model with an added path from perception of manager behavior to performance. Model(SS) = Fully saturated model.

necessary to explore this possibility.

The findings further indicate that salespeople who develop greater commitment to the organization also possess increased success beliefs and exhibit greater performance. These linkages are likely based on the nature of relationship expected between organizational commitment and sales performance.

Support for indirect relationships between salespeople's psychological climate perceptions and success beliefs suggests that climate dimensions, through their impact on organizational commitment, influence the extent to which salespeople feel positive and optimistic about achieving the outcomes of their job-related activities. The more favorable are salespeople's perceptions regarding (a) the behaviors and

actions of their immediate superior, (b) the dedication and direction of senior management, (c) the capabilities of employees in support departments, and (d) the nature of their own jobs, the greater is their commitment to the organization and the greater is their belief that performing sales-related activities will result in success.

As noted in the results section, perceptions of behaviors of the salespersons in the work group have little influence on salespersons' commitment to an organization. As compared to non-sales members of an organization, the interaction a salesperson has with other salespersons at the same level is typically limited. A salesperson's job necessitates spending a significant number of work hours interacting with current and potential customers and non-

sales (support) workers, thus leaving less time for interaction with other salespersons in the work environment. (Salespersons in the study sample, for instance, worked out of their cars on area canvasses or in separate offices). Such isolation may inhibit esprit de corps and impair social learning, thus not affording the favorable impact that salesperson propinquity could have on sales personnel vis-à-vis organizational commitment.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Study findings offer several suggestions for sales management practice. First, the study demonstrated the important influence both sales managers and non-sales co-workers play in shaping a sales employee's commitment to the organization. Sales organizations, therefore, need to exert efforts to strengthen interfaces between sales personnel and immediate and upper-level sales management, as well as with non-sales peers (e.g., order-processing personnel, customer service employees). Endeavors could include exchange of critical information among these key players via formal and informal meetings, written and electronic correspondence, social settings, and short-term job rotation. A major goal of such activities is to provide each party with the other member's work perspective.

Second, actions taken by senior management may well have greater influence on a salespersons' commitment to the organization than their immediate sales supervisor. This phenomenon may occur because the salesperson is likely to equate senior management with the mission, direction, and values of the organization. Salespeople might view their immediate sales manager, though, as an entity separate from sales organization. By articulating the firm's objectives and values, senior management affords sales personnel opportunity

to discern their fit with the company—the more compatible they are with the organization's milieu, the more enhanced is their commitment to the company.

Third, salespeople's perceptions of the work situation with their immediate sales supervisor can also have a positive impact on their commitment to the company. If salespeople possess favorable feelings toward their sales manager, they might well develop personal loyalty toward him or her. This enhanced fidelity to the manager may well foster augmented organizational commitment. Accordingly, sales supervisor deportment with sales subordinates should be mutually beneficial, supportive, and respectful.

Fourth, an organization should strive to develop commitment among new salespeople and, as well, provide sales training that reinforces new salespersons' beliefs that success is achievable. Efforts should be directed at increasing salespeople's confidence in their ability to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. Therefore, sales supervisors could provide basic sales training and ascertain which new salespeople are to receive that training. An implication is that basic selling training is needed in most contexts where new salespeople are indoctrinated.

Fifth, study results revealed that perceptions of behaviors of the salespersons in the work group have little influence on salespeople's organizational commitment. Because a salesperson tends to have limited interaction with other salespersons in the organization, the salesperson-sales manager interaction appears to become more relevant in determining the salesperson's relationship with the organization. Accordingly, the salesperson is likely to become more dependent on his or her immediate sales

manager rather than on other sales personnel for information, support, and feedback. Sales managers thus need to attend to their sales subordinates so that sales personnel will feel comfortable asking their sales manager for assistance.

Sixth, upper management efforts ultimately can assist to enhance success beliefs of salespersons and increase sales force retention. Organizational commitment can be enhanced by facilitating a positive psychological work climate. Ensuring that a salesperson's psychological climate is favorable involves regular and positive interactions with senior management, sales managers, and support personnel. Cespedes (1995) suggests structures and mediation that may facilitate perceptions of a more favorable work climate.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Because data were collected through a cross-sectional research design, any causal inferences made must be made with care. Accordingly, future research should be undertaken longitudinally. An intriguing research question is how salespeople's psychological beliefs change over time. Additionally, interest could focus on how those changes influence their work-related responses.

In using the findings, the nature of the sales force studied needs to be considered. Results of this study may, therefore, be more pertinent only to those sales forces where advertising is sold or where compensation is largely incentive-based (Yellow Page advertising in the current work). Conducting similar research with sales personnel drawn from several types of sales organizations will increase confidence in the

applicability of the results obtained.

The study model was deliberately under-specified. It omitted other antecedents of commitment identified in the literature (e.g., job satisfaction, job involvement, selected components of motivation) and therefore does not consider their impact on organizational commitment or their possible indirect impact on success beliefs, sales performance, and job turnover. Absence of key variables likely affected the goodness of fit indices for the model. One avenue for future research would be to include such antecedents and evaluate their direct and indirect influences on the constructs examined here.

Finally, the present study used solely an objective company index to measure sales performance. Salesperson performance, though, is multifaceted (Hair et al. 2009). Therefore, a useful extension to this study could involve the inclusion of both objective and behavioral dimensions.

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