

Deviant Behavior in Sales: Positive, Negative or Indifferent?

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This article presents a review of the approaches in the study of deviant behavior specifically within sales. Despite the attention surrounding deviant behavior, there is still additional research necessary to understand a salesperson's pre-disposition to engage in deviant behavior. Within the sales context, we review the literature on deviant behavior, theoretical approaches to understanding the behavior, and identify potential motivational variables for future exploration. We further propose why deviant behavior can be seen through different lenses by exploring the idea of positive, negative, and indifferent deviance. This research contributes to the sales literature by identifying what has been accomplished on this topic and further exploring the direction for future sales research and sales managers.

Ultimately, this paper contributes to the sales literature by proposing that indifference should not always be viewed as negative behavior. There are several factors that might need to be explored in order to truly ascertain the true outcomes of this behavior. Current literature often considers salesperson deviant behavior as a construct that is typically negative; however, we would suggest that factors such as varying salesforce environments, different firm structures and expectations, as well as fluctuating circumstances might lead to a salesperson's propensity to engage in deviant behavior, albeit with varying outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Firms typically find employee deviance to be inherently detrimental to their overall operations and potential future success (Ingram 2004; Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017). This type of behavior can ultimately create losses in otherwise successful sales firms when not monitored or controlled. Further, when firms encounter employee deviance, they incur costs that threaten the well-being of the organization. This problem is estimated to cost organizations upwards of \$200 billion annually. These costs vary in controllability, significance, and impact with monetary costs including absenteeism, turnover, and theft (Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017) and non-monetary costs including feelings of resentment, apathy, and loyalty among the employees (Kilduff, et al. 2016). As a final and perhaps most impactful possibility, employee deviance may lead to fraud, a decrease in stakeholder value, bankruptcy, or even the ultimate demise of the firm (Litzky, Eddleston and Kidder 2006). In particular, deviant behavior

is a problem that is prevalent in sales organizations (Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat 2014).

Deviant behavior can be defined as "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). With regard to sales, companies are spending an immense amount of time and energy recruiting individuals that possess the competitive qualities necessary to succeed within a company salesforce. Unfortunately, by today's standards in sales, there are fewer qualified salespeople in the workforce (Fogel, et al. 2012). As such, the pressure to succeed (Darrat, Amyx and Bennett 2010) as a sales representative might lead to factors that can contribute to deviant behavior and ultimately damage the firm. However, an important consideration remains. While deviant behavior resides outside the organizational norms, can these actions be viewed through different lenses?

This particular topic has attained a presence in the sales, personal selling, and management literature (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006; Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017; Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015; Darrat, Amyx and Bennett 2010). However, while deviant behavior has received attention from researchers (e.g. Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat 2014; Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017; Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015; Litzky,

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Eddleston and Kidder 2006), a review of the research reveals three important matters. First, researchers have found that the idea of deviant behavior is not always negative and in fact, some aspects of deviant behavior are somewhat revered (Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015). Therefore, we are suggesting that this construct is still somewhat ambiguous. Second, there still needs to be a discussion regarding the theoretical frameworks and the relationship between actions, performances, and outcomes. Finally, it is still unclear the role that various factors such as motivational variables can play in salesperson deviant behavior (Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015).

Within the sales literature in general, it is complicated to have a clear definition of deviant behavior and while other disciplines have examined this construct through a psychology, sociology, and management lens; an area often studied within the sales literature is ethics from a right or wrong lens (Ferrell, Johnston and Ferrell 2007). Yet, from the perspective of the firm or the salesperson, it is best to have a more narrow focus on the relationship to deviant behavior. One could argue that deviant behavior of a salesperson may be construed differently from three angles: positively, negatively, or entirely indifferent to an action within the firm. It is not surprising, and perhaps even intuitive that an unanswered question is the lack of clarity regarding the understanding the motivations and outcomes of deviant behavior. Therefore, an in-depth look into the existing literature is valuable with regard to deviant behavior and the relationship to motivational variables. Given this lack of clarity, our objective is fourfold: (1) to illustrate how deviant behavior can be interpreted through three lenses, (2) to provide an understanding of existing theoretical frameworks and research contributions, (3) to demonstrate the usefulness of different motivations in advancing sales and deviant behavior research, and (4) develop a foundation for critical evaluation and future research in this area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of workplace deviance is not new and has been studied in other disciplines such as psychology (e.g. Judge, LePine and Rich 2006; Marcus and Schuler 2004; Bennett and Robinson 2000; Oh, et al. 2011), and in management (e.g. Robinson and Bennett 1995; Amyx and Jarrell 2016). Deviance has been examined

from the consumer perspective as well as the company, firm, or operational perspective (Tao, Karande and Arndt 2016; Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017; Gillespie, Noble and Lam 2016). Additionally, research has examined deviance across various industries (e.g., Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015; Serviere-Munoz and Mallin 2013) and has even been explored from an international perspective (Oh, et al. 2011). Over the past 10 years, marketing specifically has identified the importance of studying the concept of deviant behavior in sales (e.g., Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017; Jelinek and Ahearne 2010; Darrat, Amyx and Bennett 2010). Factors such as cost (Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017), trust (Schwepker and Good 2012), work-family-conflict (Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat 2014), and counterproductive behavior (Marcus and Schuler 2004) have also been explored within marketing. The identification of this literature in other disciplines concerning workplace deviance considers many of the relationships, effects, and outcomes within the firm. Our goal is to continue a discussion specifically within the sales deviance literature by exploring how there can be differences in the interpretation of sales deviance when characterized as positive, negative, or indifferent.

At the outset, salesperson deviant behavior typically is viewed negatively, with literature positing that this behavior may lead to various negative consequences for both the salesperson and the firm (e.g., Amyx and Jarrell 2016). Companies often have clear-cut rules and regulations for salespeople regarding the consequences of actions that deviate from the expectations of the firm ranging from unethical to illegal activities. In this regard, it is somewhat easier to identify negative salesperson deviant behavior.

In contrast, deviant behavior could be viewed from the opposite perspective. For example, if a salesperson were to work hours “in excess” of his/her counterparts on a weekly basis, that individual would indeed be acting in a deviant capacity (deviating from the norm), yet the outcomes for that individual, and possibly the company, could be viewed positively. If the actions of the salesperson result in positive outcomes for the firm, these behaviors might be overlooked and even rewarded (Miao, Evans and Li 2017; Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015).

Finally, a more complicated question surrounds the fluctuating circumstances that have no clear ties to either positive or negative deviance and can create indifference among individuals and/or the firm regarding salespersons' deviant behaviors. An example would be an employee that never strays from the company norms but is often overshadowed by colleagues that engage in deviant behavior (typically viewed negatively) and yet are never reprimanded because the firm is indifferent to their actions. In this way, the salesperson's focus is to simply 'make the requisite sales calls' and become indifferent to the actions of their colleagues. In this case, the individual may choose to leave the company, change his/her behavior, or remain completely indifferent.

Given these differing perspectives, we suggest that to further understand deviant behavior, it is necessary to explore the theories that have been used to study this construct and consider how different frameworks might help explain the complex relationships between situations, individuals, motivations, actions, outcomes, and firm control and expectations.

Identification of Theories Related to Deviant Behavior

Several frameworks have been utilized to help explain deviant behavior; however, we want to be clear that we are not projecting which theories are most useful or relevant, are most timely, or even which theories are most rich in their explanatory power. Rather, in this overview, we are hoping to provide an understanding of existing theoretical frameworks and research contributions specifically within the sales literature in the study of deviant behavior.

Social Identity Theory (Tafjel and Turner 1986) assists in the explanation of how and why people associate within groups and their identification with other group members. It is suggested that members within an organization might exhibit different behaviors than other individuals and also others members of a particular organization with which they are affiliated. Within the sales literature specifically, Sparks and Schenk (2006) utilized social identity theory to study organizational citizenship and socialization communication while Umphress and Bingham (2011) also used this framework to examine situations in which deviant behavior might

be considered pro-organizational. From these works, it may be suggested that as salespeople form relationships and identify with groups within the firm, they are more likely to establish patterns and behaviors that support group and firm behavior. However, Darrat, Amyx, and Bennett (2010) relate this theory to work-family conflict and offer that when differing roles clash, an individual will take on the more valued role and engage in behavior necessary to protect that desired role.

Self-Control Theory (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990) suggests that deviant behavior is likely to decline as an individual matures. With this in mind, it is suggested that factors such as situational variables, particular motivations, and/or a lack of organizational control might be necessary to instigate or encourage deviant behavior (Marcus and Schuler 2004). In their study of counterproductive work behavior, and using self-control theory as a framework, Marcus and Schuler (2004, p.656) found that "developing a workforce consisting of sufficiently self-controlled individuals would be a highly effective countermeasure for problems associated with acts of general counterproductive behavior."

Attribution Theory (Heider 1958; Weiner 1980) suggests that individuals will seek to determine the causes of their behavior and others' behavior, utilize individual perspectives to assign a causal explanation, and these causes will influence future behavior. Adopted from a social psychology framework, attribution theory was examined in Dixon and Schertzer (2005) to study optimism and self-efficacy among salespeople after an individual failure and find that optimistic salespeople are more likely to plan to work harder and will likely attribute failure to an internal cause rather than blame someone/something else. Studying self-efficacy and competitiveness as variables, Krishnan, Netemeyer and Boles (2002) find support that having confidence in one's abilities is positively related to job performance.

Confidence can manifest itself in a variety of different ways and Brown (1990) examines the effects of differing attributes and tactics by salespeople to exact influence over buyers and suggests that a buyer's perception of the salesperson's intent may have a larger role in the relationship than the salesperson's actual intent. Brown further suggests that different behaviors, by different salespeople, may lead to making a good impression.

Taken together, and referred to as a “dilemma” by Brown, there are a number of situational variables and characteristics that may influence what actions and roles a salesperson undertakes in order to produce the desired effects. Hence, whether related to the salesperson’s behavior or individual attributes, either may lead to a form of deviant behavior undertaken in order to obtain desired outcomes.

Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura 1977) is related to attribution theory and posits that an individual’s belief in his/her abilities will produce a desired level of performance. Along with vicarious learning experiences and persuasion (Bandura 1994), self-efficacy theory was examined by Mulki, Lassk, and Jaramillo (2008) in their research on salesperson workloads and pay satisfaction and find that salespeople with confidence will utilize resources to get the job done and are less likely to feel overwhelmed or frustrated. As mentioned earlier, Krishnan, Netemeyer, and Boles (2002) take a note from Bandura (1977) and offer that self-efficacy is the confidence a person has in their ability to complete a desired job or task; and examine self-efficacy and competitiveness. Additionally, they offer that self-efficacy has both a direct as well as an indirect effect on performance, while effort is looked at as a mediator. Jaramillo and Mulki (2008) also examine effort as a variable and suggest that self-efficacy may play a large role in a salesperson’s efforts depending on the level of support from superiors and peers. From this, it can be suggested that there are many firm level, group level, and individual factors that may impact a salesperson’s confidence in their ability to complete a given task. Individuals who are satisfied, motivated and confident in their abilities are less likely to engage in organizational deviant behavior (Jaramillo and Mulki 2008).

Social Exchange Theory (Blau 1964) helps explain how parties involved in an exchange view the benefits provided and how that might influence future behavior. Amyx, Bhuian, Sharma, and Loveland (2008) used social exchange theory as a framework in their research on salesperson corporate ethical values. They argue that if a company treats their salespeople ethically, fairly and with respect, the salesperson is more likely to be satisfied with their position, thereby enhancing their performance. Additionally, the authors examine

organizational commitment and suggest that employees with high levels of commitment to the organization are more likely to exhibit positive behavior according to company expectations. Similarly, in the meta-analysis by Dalal (2005) on organizational citizenship and counterproductive work behavior, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are also reviewed and found similar support. Umphress and Bingham (2011) in their propositional development of employees’ ethics and pro-organizational behavior suggest that when employees demonstrate a strong commitment to the company, they may disregard social norms to engage in behaviors that benefit the group. Further, they argue that individuals may rationalize behavior in their efforts to benefit the organization.

Control Theory (Jaworski 1988) helps explain how differing influences (formal and informal) impact behaviors and outcomes. Jelinek and Ahearne (2010, p.305) “suggests that people conform to standard norms of behavior” when essential needs are being met. Schwepker and Good (2009) take a closer examination of formal controls and look at how different management methods might affect employee and group behavior while aiming to satisfy the firm’s overall objectives. Jelinek and Ahearne (2010) utilize control theory in their examination of competitiveness and workloads on salesperson deviance. The authors find that work overload may lead to deviant or counterproductive behaviors. It is also suggested that a proper ‘fit’ between the employee and the organization reduces the likelihood of a salesperson’s deviance. Schwepker and Good (2012) also examine controls in their research on trust, orientation, and quotas on salesperson’s performance. Although not examining deviant behavior specifically, the authors suggest that different variables and controls may lead to several unintended consequences. It can be offered that when outcomes are stressed without direction, oversight, or thought to how certain results are achieved, an opportunity for deviant behavior strongly exists.

The theories identified here are reflective of the body of research concerning deviant behavior in the sales literature as they relate to our perspective presented earlier regarding the three lenses of positivity, negativity, or indifference. However, we suggest that more work is

needed in this area to further our understanding of this paradigm. Additionally, it has been noted that researchers utilize many of the same theories in their studies and perhaps new theoretical domains should be explored (Williams and Plouffe 2007).

Perhaps equally important might be an exploration of the many motivational variables that have been used to study the sales and deviant behavior paradigm, beginning with a simple question – what are the motivational variables of interest? Further, is it clear that all of the behaviors are, as much of the literature suggests, negative? We posit that various motivational variables should be scrutinized to understand how they may lead to actions that can be viewed as a positive, negative, or altogether indifferent within sales. While we acknowledge that through these three viewpoints many, if not all, of these variables may be construed as leading to the proverbial “dark side” of sales; not all of the motivational variables may lead or cross over into negative deviant behavior.

Motivational Variables and Deviant Behavior

To date, only a select number of motivational variables have been used to study deviant behavior within sales (e.g., Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017; Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat 2014; Amyx and Jarrell 2016; Hamwi, Hartmann and Avila 2015). As such, we have identified motivational variables that are of notable importance in order to properly study the concept of deviant behavior as it relates to the sales representative. We suggest that Table 1 represents the motivational variables studied within deviant behavior and a subset that is also studied within the sales literature, while Table 2 represents an additional list of variables that we posit should be further explored to help us fully understand the salesperson behavior dynamic.

Table 1

| Motivational Variables within the Deviant Behavior Literature (Internal and External) | |
|---|---|
| Bureaucracy | (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006) |
| Competitiveness: <i>Intra-firm</i> | (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006) |
| Financial | (Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015) |
| “Fit” in the Organization** | (Valentine, Fleischman and Godkin 2015) |
| Impression Management** | (Judge, LePine and Rich 2006) |
| Internal and External Organizational Factors: <i>Future Orientation</i> ** | (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006); (Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat 2014) |
| Job Satisfaction** | (Valentine, Fleischman and Godkin 2015) |
| Leadership** | (Judge, LePine and Rich 2006) |
| Meaningfulness of Work | (Jelinek and Ahearne 2010) |
| Motivation** | (Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015) |
| Narcissism | (Judge, LePine and Rich 2006) |
| Networks** | (Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015) |
| Optimism** | (Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017) |
| Organizational Justice** | (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006) |
| Personal Traits** | (Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017) |
| Personality/Morals** | (Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017) |
| Role in the Firm: <i>Temporal</i> ** | (Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015) |
| **Studied within the deviant behavior framework and within sales | |

Table 2

| Motivational Variables Unexplored Within the Deviant Sales Literature | |
|---|---|
| Behavioral: | (Singh and Koshy 2010) |
| <i>Ability to Work with Customers</i> | (McFarland and Kidwell 2006); (Brown 1990); (Schwepker and Good 2012); (Mallin and Serviere-Munoz 2013); (Sangtani and Wood 2007); (Serviere-Munoz and Mallin 2013) |
| <i>Effort</i> | (Sangtani and Wood 2007); (Jaramillo and Mulki 2008); (Krishnan, Netemeyer and Boles 2002) |
| Capability Rewards | (Mulki, Lassk and Jaramillo 2008) |
| Compensation Models | (Litzky, Eddleston and Kidder 2006) |
| Competence | (Singh and Koshy 2010) |
| Competitiveness: | |
| <i>Team</i> | (Krishnan, Netemeyer and Boles 2002) |
| <i>Individual</i> | (Jelinek and Ahearne 2010) |
| <i>Intra-firm</i> | (Kilduff, Galinsky, Gallo and Reade 2016) |
| Conscientiousness | (Dalal 2005) |
| Consequences | (Umphress and Bingham 2011) |
| Ethical Behavior: <i>Individual</i> | (Lagace, Dahlstrom and Gassenheimer 1991); (Serviere-Munoz and Mallin 2013) |
| “Fit” in the Organization | (Jelinek and Ahearne 2010); (Litzky, Eddleston and Kidder 2006); (Hamwi, Hartmann and Avila 2015) |
| Organizational Culture | (Umphress and Bingham 2011); (Schwepker and Good 2009); (Ferrell, Johnston and Ferrell 2007) |
| Impression Management | (Brown 1990); (Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley 2017) |
| Internal & External Organizational Factors | (Singh and Koshy 2010); (Leo and Russell-Bennett 2012) |
| Job Characteristics | (Bhuian and Menguc 2002) |
| Job Satisfaction | (Bhuian and Menguc 2002); (Darrat, Amyx and Bennett 2010); (Amyx, Bhuian, Sharma and Loveland 2008) |
| Job Stress | (Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat 2014); (Amyx, Bhuian, Sharma and Loveland 2008) |
| Bullying | (Valentine, Fleischman and Godkin 2015) |
| Leadership | (Butler and Reese 1991); (Jaramillo and Mulki 2008) |
| Managerial Support | (Sangtani and Wood 2007) |
| Motivation | (Singh and Koshy 2010); (McFarland and Kidwell 2006); (Jaramillo and Mulki 2008) |
| Networks | (Seever, Skinner and Kelley 2007) |
| Optimism | (Dixon and Schertzer 2005) |
| Organizational Commitment | (Bhuian and Menguc 2002); (Umphress and Bingham 2011); (Mallin and Serviere-Munoz 2013); (Amyx, Bhuian, Sharma and Loveland 2008); (Jaramillo, Mulki and Marshall 2005) |
| Organizational Justice | (Litzky, Eddleston and Kidder 2006); (Amyx, Bhuian, Sharma and Loveland 2008) |
| Personal Traits: | (Leo and Russell-Bennett 2012); (Singh and Koshy 2010); (Ferrell, Johnston and Ferrell 2007) |
| <i>Introversion/Extroversion</i> | (Oh, Lee, Ashton and deVries 2011) |
| Personality/Morals | (Umphress and Bingham 2011); (Singh and Koshy 2010); (Oh, Lee, Ashton and deVries 2011); (Ferrell, Johnston and Ferrell 2007); (Hoffman, Howe and Hardigree 1991) |
| Quotas | (Schultz, Schwepker and Good 2013); (Schwepker and Good 2009) |
| Relationship Quality | (Lagace, Dahlstrom and Gassenheimer 1991) |
| Role in the Firm: | (Singh and Koshy 2010) |
| <i>Conflict</i> | (Mulki, Lassk and Jaramillo 2008) |
| <i>Ambiguity</i> | (Mulki, Lassk and Jaramillo 2008); (Mallin and Serviere-Munoz 2013); (Litzky, Eddleston and Kidder 2006); (Ferrell, Johnston and Ferrell 2007) |
| Self-efficacy | (Dixon and Schertzer 2005); (Krishnan, Netemeyer and Boles 2002); (Jaramillo and Mulki 2008); (Mulki, Lassk and Jaramillo 2008) |
| Situational Factors | (Singh and Koshy 2010); (Leo and Russell-Bennett 2012) |
| Skill Level/Cognitive Factors/Expertise | (Singh and Koshy 2010); (Lagace, Dahlstrom and Gassenheimer 1991) |
| Trust: <i>Organizational</i> | (Schwepker and Good 2012); (Litzky, Eddleston and Kidder 2006) |
| Work-Family Conflict** | (Darrat, Amyx and Bennett 2010); (Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat 2014) |
| Workloads | (Mulki, Lassk and Jaramillo 2008); (Jelinek and Ahearne 2010) |

The concept of deviant behavior itself presents challenges regarding the understanding the motivation behind why a sales representative would engage in deviant behavior. Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat (2014) found that work-family conflict can interfere with job satisfaction which can lead to negative deviant behavior both against the firm as well as the customer. Hochstein, Lilly and Stanley (2017) explored counterproductive workplace behavior to explore the motives behind engaging in deviant behavior and found results that can contribute to both positive and negative deviant behavior. The present approach does not discount previous literature addressing the motivations behind salesperson deviance. Specifically, our focus is to introduce the idea of deviant behavior from these three directives and attempt to clarify directions for the construct moving forward.

So What Stands Out: Positive, Negative or Indifferent?

Positive Deviant Behavior

It might be awkward if we did not acknowledge that the idea of positive deviant behavior sounds somewhat illogical; however, when considering motivational variables behind deviant behavior in sales, Hochstein, Bonney and Clark (2015, p. 304) discuss that “deviance considers the act and all reactions to it by others.” If, as the authors note, there can be positive social reactions in the case of positive deviations from the norm, then the window of opportunity for eliciting a positive reaction to an otherwise deviant behavior can be more commonplace than other types of deviant behavior. The concept of being willing to engage in actions in the interest of rivalry and competition (Kilduff, et al. 2016) is not new and is often rewarded in sales given the potential benefit to the firm. To date however, very little research has explored deviant behavior from the positive perspective and the idea of positive deviant behavior is almost certainly a movement away from traditional norms. For example, Jelinek and Ahearne (2010) found that the “fit” within the culture of an organization would increase positive perceptions in the workplace and, as such, may suppress behaviors that may harm the organization. The idea is that a strong “fit” within the organization would allow the employee to feel comfortable staying away from activities that are potentially harmful. Thus, if everyone around the organization is engaging in some form of deviant behavior, one might refrain from engaging in the action. It is worthwhile to note, however, that on occasion, actions within the firm become the “norm” of activity. This means that for self-preservation, the individual would stray from the norm to keep in line with the organization and continue to maintain an allegiance within the firm. That said, what about the need for survival within the firm? The prevailing question should be explored as to whether this would be considered a positive deviant behavior rather than the traditional idea of negative deviance.

Negative Deviant Behavior

Negative deviant behavior from a sales representative has been defined as violating organizational norms

(Robinson and Bennett 1995; Jelinek and Ahearne 2006a). An interesting question then is whether there are different circumstances that might elicit these actions. If there is a lack of trust within an organization, does this increase the likelihood of engaging in deviant behavior? For example, if an unrealistic quota is expected of sales representatives (Schwepker and Good 2012), does this lower trust within the organization and inadvertently lead to negative deviant behavior? Similarly, because salespeople are required to take on multiple roles or requirements within their job with the expectation of strong levels of performance, higher levels of trust among sales management leaders can create levels of ambiguity among sales representatives and may, in turn, lead to negative deviant behavior by salespeople in an effort to boost their performance evaluations. Additionally, salespeople may overinflate their work performed or value in an effort to boost their standing within a company. This self-appraisal process is not always acceptable or endorsed from salespeople when firms have strong criteria set in place (Morris, et al. 1991) and firm guidelines and rubrics may be met with resistance from the sales representative. These are motivational variables that are invariably tied into personal characteristics/traits.

Judge, LePine and Rich (2006) explored the idea of narcissism and found that while conscientiousness is a socially desirable trait, salespeople with narcissistic traits may overinflate their work, their value to the firm, and may be open to engaging in deceptive behavior. For example, in a specific task-oriented environment, salespeople with these traits might exaggerate their work hours or perhaps claim to be working from home when they are engaged in other activities. Additionally, in a leadership role, narcissistic salespeople may be more likely to engage in negative deviant behavior to get ahead or influence their performance evaluation (Judge, LePine and Rich 2006). In this context, negative deviant behavior is often the construct studied in sales, but there are still many unanswered questions with regard to motivations; exploratory in nature, Table 2 provides some direction and yet may not comprehensively address all of the motivational variables needed to fully develop this framework.

Indifferent Deviant Behavior

Likely the most indeterminate aspect of deviant behavior is the idea that salespeople could find themselves being, or acting, indifferent. Can a salesperson truly remain indifferent to deviant behavior? Further, is this then an act of deviance? The concept is that one simply chooses not to engage in the behaviors around them. A salesperson may, in fact, be aware that negative deviant actions are taking place, but chooses not to engage. As such, they neither identify the action to their manager (positive deviant behavior) nor engage in the action itself (negative deviant behavior). Speculation about the behavior may reflect a salesperson's lack of being informed about deviant behavior and potential consequences to an employee (Peterson 2015).

Jaramillo, et al. (2009) looked at turnover intention as it relates to retention, and similar to deviant behavior, the increased costs that voluntary turnover brings to an organization. Instances that lead to turnover could be occurring because the salesperson cannot or is not willing to conform to the actions of deviant behavior within the firm, and these situations may potentially lead to factors such as job dissatisfaction through job burnout (Shepherd, Tashchian and Ridnour 2011). Additionally, the salesperson may remain indifferent to the behavioral actions of others out of fear of being caught or afraid of the possible negative consequences of their actions such as getting fired. As such, they become indifferent to the act of deviant behavior to maintain a positive appearance and look toward leaving the firm as an alternative to engaging in the action itself. Each of these is a potential motivator for engaging in indifferent deviant behavior.

DISCUSSION

As the manuscript title posits, deviant behavior might be construed as positive, negative, or indifferent depending on the situation, the viewpoint, or perhaps even the results or consequences. It is proposed that further clarification surrounding this framework can only be achieved through continued thought and exploration. Our goal is to acknowledge and contribute to both the marketing and sales literature by presenting a concept of how deviant behavior is a lens through which different or even opposing actions could be considered. As such,

this framework provides opportunities for researchers to explore this research stream because although not an entirely new concept, deviant behavior has only truly been visible in sales literature over the past 10 years.

We contribute to both the marketing and sales literature by presenting a review of five theoretical paradigms utilized in the deviant behavior literature as well as provide an extensive list of the variables used both empirically and conceptually in this field. Broadly speaking, while the popular conception of deviant behavior continues to be viewed from a negative perspective, we also hope to continue the discussion of the antecedents, motivations, and consequences of deviant behavior while contributing to the literature by proposing that deviant behavior should not automatically be construed as detrimental to the salesperson, the firm, or the customer.

From a sociological and psychological perspective, the study of individual behaviors, relationships between salespeople, and interactions between salespeople and managers as well as with customers, is complex and dynamic. Our review of several theoretical frameworks used in the study of sales and deviant behavior yields some insight and might offer possibilities as to how research might proceed in the future. Additionally, while we recognize that deviant behavior has often been studied through a negative lens, it is proposed that more clarification is needed within the deviant behavior construct. Specifically, we offer that, as a foundation, deviant behavior could be viewed as negative, positive, or even perhaps indifferently. Our review might enable future researchers to develop a more holistic view of the deviant construct as well as potentially develop a more harmonious framework in order to fully understand this psychological and sociological paradigm within sales research.

While we agree that negative deviant behavior will stand out disproportionately, in an effort to provide practitioners some perspective on salesperson deviance, we have identified three different perspectives that are important to multiple levels including the firm, management, and the salesperson. Broadly, we are working toward enhancing practitioner awareness that salesperson deviance can operate on many levels. Each

level may not only induce specific deviant behaviors, but in fact may help to encourage or discourage such behaviors once identified.

In summary, we feel that this paper marks three contributions to the ongoing discussion in the sales literature regarding deviant behavior. First, we explore the concept that deviant behavior can be viewed through three very different perspectives. Second, we summarize the theoretical frameworks specifically used in the study of deviant behavior in the sales literature and offer initial insights into the relationship between these theories and how they help explain or relate behaviors to performances and outcomes among salespeople and their respective firms. Finally, we offer a suggestion to continue to build upon current research and explore the complex and intricate nature that differing motivations have upon salesperson actions, performances, and outcomes.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Several managerial implications would apply from this exploration of deviant behavior. At the outset, should sales organizations attempt to discourage negative deviant behavior within the salesforce? It is suggested that firms need to acknowledge that differing forms of deviant behavior are brought on by different circumstances, are either encouraged/discouraged through a variety of policies and programs, and may lead to vastly different outcomes. In this way, this paradigm is worthy of evaluation at the management level.

Second, it should be clear that deviant behavior, in its most negative form, can cost a firm financially. It would not be difficult to find daily media reports summarizing some form of firm deviant behavior or deviant acts (Robinson and Bennett 1995). The consequences for these behaviors can be varied and far-reaching. Salespeople may lose focus or motivation when faced with colleagues acting in such a manner or management failing to correct such behavior. At perhaps the opposite end of this spectrum, employees may change their demeanor or actions to improve their standing within the firm. These behaviors may even grow if unnoticed by management, are left unchecked by management, or even encouraged and supported by certain personnel at the management level. Perhaps shortsighted, deviant behavior might be supported by management as a

means to elicit increased sales or performance over a specific period with no attention paid to the potential long-term consequences of this behavior; consequences may include increased turnover, burnout, stress levels, and a feeling of distrust and ambiguity among the salesforce. Or perhaps worse, left unchecked, deviant behavior may lead to decreased levels of customer service and misguided or even fraudulent activity.

Considering the possibility of positive deviant behavior, several implications arise. With increased levels of satisfaction and motivation among employees, productivity will likely increase, as would trust and a sense of value to the company. Stress, on the other hand, would decrease, as would the need for management to spend valuable time on training programs or monitoring the salesforce. Through effective hiring practices and initial training programs, however, the firm is likely to reap the benefits of increased productivity and sales, as well as enhanced customer service and customer perceptions of the salesforce. Communication should improve throughout various levels of the company as well. In these ways, it could be posited that positive deviant behavior would almost act as a sort of differentiation among firms, or serve as a type of competitive advantage.

It is also noteworthy to consider that there is the potential for positive and indifferent deviant behavior to have consequences down the line. To understand the impact of deviant behavior, the sales organization should be more informed regarding the types of deviation that have taken place in the sales organization. Further, managers should consider how the salesforce either encouraged or discouraged from engaging in different forms of behavior. Finally, effective managers should identify the triggers within the organization that causes a salesperson to engage in differing acts.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While research within the sales literature has evolved from negative deviance (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006; Darrat, Amyx, and Bennett 2010), to positive deviance (Hochstein, Bonney, and Clark 2015), a potential void still remains to be developed in this literature stream surrounding the lens of indifference and deviant behavior in sales. Broadly speaking, while the popular

conception of deviant behavior continues to be viewed from a negative perspective, we hope to continue an important discussion by proposing that deviant behavior is not automatically detrimental to the salesperson, the firm, the customer, or even the firm. We are opening the door to the investigation of multiple stages and interpretations of deviant behavior. The development of three approaches to deviant behavior in sales is an important area for research, and the development of these approaches will contribute to linking factors associated with deviant behavior.

To fully understand this paradigm within sales research, future studies could evaluate the impact of a salesperson's deviant behavior from all three lenses and the subsequent impact on the firm. Our review illustrates how previous research has focused on negative deviant behavior and the impact on the firm, but examining the implication of positive deviant behavior has yet to receive enough attention to warrant a specific differentiator of deviant behavior. It will be useful to synthesize the various approaches and ideas behind deviant behavior to elicit a more comprehensive understanding.

Second, while our approach sheds light on deviant behavior, certain limitations should be taken into consideration given the subject matter of this paper. Variables discussed here can be studied independently in relation to deviant behavior while other variables may be considered more as moderators or mediators. Additionally, this research just scratches the surface of the complete literature regarding deviant behavior; we chose to focus on deviant behavior strictly in the sales literature domain. For example, it would be compelling research to develop a framework that includes the roles that differing ethics and cultures might play and how they relate to motivations, and possible actions. Additionally, the further application and use of different theoretical frameworks would shed light on many of these constructs.

At the outset of the paper, it was proposed that while the definition of deviance was often seen as negative (Swimberghe, Jones and Darrat 2014), research in this area should also further explore the concept of deviant behavior as it relates to both salespersons' effectiveness and salesperson's efficiency. Empirical work in this

area has yielded potentially conflicting and murky results that warrant further exploration (e.g., Hochstein, Bonney and Clark 2015). Although there are many aspects to the 'dark side of sales,' deviant behavior seems to cross multiple boundaries. As discussed, Table 2 may be a good place to start the exploration regarding motivational variables.

As sales organizations strive for success in competitive marketplaces, the idea of deviant behavior can become an important variable for the firm to consider. With deviant behavior tied to factors such as turnover, firms with high levels of turnover salesperson deviant behavior should be considered in terms of whether salespeople leave because they cannot and/or are not willing to conform to the actions of deviant behavior. Additionally, if deviant behavior is found to exist, are there current salespeople who become indifferent to these actions and do not report or engage in the behavior for fear of being caught?

Finally, the identification and study of various motivational variables have offered a fruitful basic understanding, but as of yet, the research is still reasonably unclear. Additionally, because deviance has been studied as both a dependent variable as well as an independent variable, work is still needed to fully understand both the construct and the behavioral paradigm. Through additional research, sales managers and the salesperson can gain a clearer understanding of deviant behavior, where the behavior comes from, how this behavior is employed by different individuals, what the potential outcomes might be, and whether the consequences are intended, unintended, positive, negative, or in the end warrant additional study. We focused our attention on the proposal that we should view deviance through three very different lenses, and with the hope that it might ignite a new perspective and additional research on a topic that is both interesting and complicated within sales and the workplace.

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