Thomas E. DeCarlo & Thomas W. Leigh

Impact of Salesperson Attraction on Sales Managers' Attributions and Feedback

The authors develop a model of how a salesperson's task and social attraction affect a sales manager's causal attributions explaining the salesperson's poor performance and the manager's corrective feedback based on these attributions. The authors' experimental results, based on a sample of 218 sales managers, suggest that (1) causal attributions, cognitive effort, and decision confidence are directly affected by task and social attraction; (2) the effects of task and social attraction on coercive feedback are mediated by internal attributions; and (3) external attributions play a partial, but negative, mediating role for nonpunitve feedback. The authors also find evidence that interpersonal affect directly influences manager feedback. Implications for research and practice are developed that recognize that appraisal processes are influenced by affect and attributional considerations, not simply bias and inaccuracy in rating performance itself.

> It may have been a company related change that caused the problem. It also could have been caused by a change in the decision maker who has had a previous bad experience with our company, or simply prefers another vendor.

> He did not work very hard ... [or] very smart. He did not earn the right to ask for the orders. He was lazy and did not try to use the team organization to his benefit. In addition, he does not work well with people. He does not have the respect of any other rep's in the office and most feel that he thinks he is above us.

Do sales managers objectively evaluate sales personnel? Or, do their affective relationships with sales personnel influence these evaluations? Consider the previous epigraphs (extracted from our study). In the first, the sales manager attributes the cause of poor performance to external causes. The sales manager and salesperson happen to have a positive relationship. In the latter, the sales manager attributes blame to internal causes—a lack of ability and effort. This sales manager and salesperson have a negative relationship. Ironically, these divergent judgments are based on identical performance data. Of course, sales managers always are exhorted to be objective in their evaluations (Gentry, Mowen, and Tasaki 1991).

Although objectivity may be more of a goal than an achievable reality, the importance of sales manager evaluations in influencing sales performance is clearly recognized. Supervisory feedback powerfully shapes salesperson performance (Jaworski and Kohli 1991). In fact, no single factor may influence work behavior more than performance evaluations and feedback (Anderson and Chambers 1985). Sales managers also rely on performance appraisals to guide their promotion, pay, training, and termination decisions (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994). Thus, the bases and processes driving sales manager evaluations, causal attributions, and feedback are "of obvious interest to salespeople" (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994, p. 361), as well as to the sales organization itself.

Salesperson and organizational interest in sales manager evaluations concern their perceived appropriateness, fairness, and equity. Salespeople may question, distort, or reject sales manager appraisals and feedback according to their own personal biases and self-evaluations (Jaworski and Kohli 1991). Thus, the basis of a sales manager's appraisal and the processes underlying it can determine the acceptance of managerial feedback. Moreover, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) indicate that perceived injustices can critically undermine salesperson motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. They argue that sales personnel should be well informed of evaluation-feedback mechanisms, especially if subjective factors such as organizational citizenship and interpersonal affect are involved. They further state that perceived injustices reduce organizational performance if scarce resources and time must subsequently be devoted to conflict resolution and organizational maintenance tasks (rather than selling and servicing customers). Hence, it is apparent that research concerning the bases and processes involved in salesperson evaluation, causal attributions, and feedback is potentially worthwhile.

We found the lack of empirical research on performance appraisal processes in either sales or leadership contexts to be striking. Hence, we develop and empirically test a model examining the impact of affective qualities of the sales manager–salesperson relationship on (1) sales managers' causal

Thomas E. DeCarlo is Assistant Professor of Marketing, Iowa State University. Thomas W. Leigh is Associate Professor of Marketing and Terry Research Fellow, University of Georgia. The authors are grateful to the firms that participated in the research project and thank the *JM* editor and reviewers for their many instructive suggestions.

attributions for poor performance and (2) their managerial feedback based on these attributions. We examine two affective dimensions: *task attraction,* that is, the desirability of the salesperson to the sales manager as a work partner, and *social attraction,* that is, the desirability of the salesperson to the sales manager as a friend and social partner. Our premise is that task and social attraction exert a strong influence over sales manager attributions and corrective feedback. We quote a Fortune 500 sales manager from our study:

> I hired three new salespeople. Each had the same ups and downs during the first six months, but one of the three I personally disliked. Despite the fact that he performed about the same as the other two, I evaluated him more negatively than the others. Within the year he quit. The next thing I heard he became [a competitor's] number one salesperson. I lost a good salesperson because of personal feelings.

The role of positive or negative affect in the sales manager–salesperson relationship in influencing causal attributions, attributional processes, and managerial feedback is important for many reasons. First, objectivity in sales performance evaluation is promoted as the standard, yet it is recognized that "the sales manager may attribute negative outcomes to the situation when evaluating a familiar or well-liked salesperson" (Gentry, Mowen, and Tasaki 1991, p. 35). This is the type of bias that can undermine job attitudes, sales performances, and salesperson career development.

Prior research suggests a role for affect when judging others in general (Crocker, Hannah, and Weber 1983; Regan, Strauss, and Fazio 1974) and in job evaluations (Kingstrom and Mainstone 1985; Tsui and Barry 1986); yet, research in sales contexts is limited. Dubinsky, Skinner, and Whittler (1989) report that a favorable a priori work history directly affects the relative number of internal (fewer) and external (greater) attributions for poor performance. Although explained as a base-rate effect, interpersonal affect may be responsible as well. The organizational citizenship model, for example, suggests that sales managers affectively value salespeople who enhance the sales manager's own job performance (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994).

Second, despite the existence of conceptual models of the role of affect in work domains or the professions, empirical research is lacking. For example, leadership models stress the potential moderating role of interpersonal familiarity and liking in determining sales managers' causal attributions of subordinates (Feldman 1981; Green et al. 1985; Green and Mitchell 1979). However, we found no empirical tests of these moderating effects. More important, despite calls for research on the cognitive processes underlying job evaluation (Feldman 1981; Ilgen and Feldman 1983), little has been conducted. In addition, performance appraisal models tend to be "cold" or ignore the role of affect in influencing cognitive processes, attributions, and feedback. A recent laboratory study, based on information processing theory, indicates that liking is an integral factor in teaching evaluations (Cardy and Dobbins 1986). The authors echo the call for more process-oriented research on the role of affect in real-world contexts.

Third, sales researchers suggest the need to examine the role of affective and cognitive processes in performance evaluations. For example, Jaworski and Kohli (1991) stress that the systematic attention to the cognitive processes that drive feedback, including salesperson acceptance of sales manager's evaluations, is essential. Similarly, Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) posit that several alternate processes may underlie their observation that organizational citizenship affects sales managers' performance appraisals: (1) the operation of norms of reciprocity, which cause the manager to reward salespeople who perform organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs); (2) a cognitive bias exists, because OCBs are likely to be distinctive, internally attributed, and remembered during evaluation tasks; and (3) a schema-driven affect view exists, in which salespeople who perform OCBs receive the benefit of positive affect (being prejudged a "good salesperson") in the appraisal process. This suggested role for affect is central to our study.

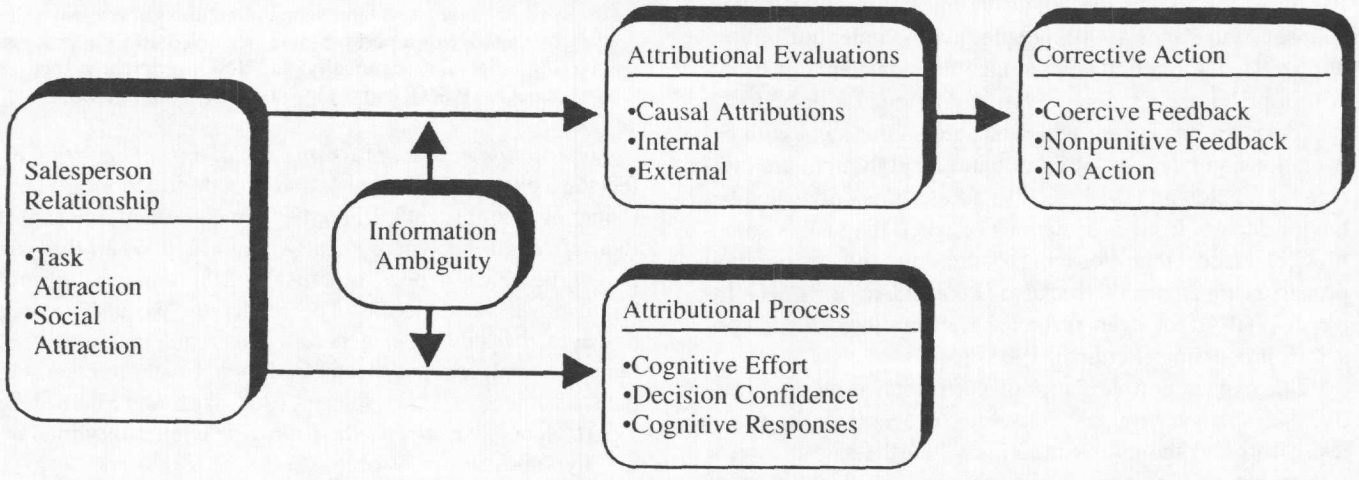
To summarize, sales managers' evaluations play a central role in affecting salesperson and sales force performance. Sales personnel and sales managers have an obvious interest in understanding the processes driving sales evaluations and feedback. Recent models in both sales and leadership stress the need for empirical research examining the role of interpersonal affect and causal attributions in appraisal contexts. Hence, we (1) develop our model of how task and social attraction affect the attributional process, attributional outcomes, and feedback, (2) present the hypotheses, design, analysis, and results of an empirical study on a sample of professional sales managers, and (3) discuss the implications of our results for further research and practice in sales contexts.

Theory and Hypotheses

The relevance of attribution theory (Heider 1958; Kelley 1967) to sales evaluations is well accepted (Dubinsky, Skinner, and Whittler 1989; McKay et al. 1991; Mowen et al. 1986). The general view (Gentry, Mowen, and Tasaki 1991) is that deviations from a priori expectations concerning salesperson performance cause sales managers to seek causal explanations, especially when a person fails (Wong and Weiner 1981). Failure drives managers to ask "why"; success leads them to ask "how" or "what do you think" (Gioia and Sims 1986). Accordingly, we develop our model in terms of the poor-performance context.

We employ Weiner's (1972, 1980) attributional model for achievement contexts. We examine the influence of task and social attraction—affective elements of the sales manager–salesperson relationship—on causal attributions, the attributional process, and managerial feedback. We also explore the role of information ambiguity regarding performance data that is available to the manager in this attributional process. In Figure 1, we illustrate the influence of task and social attraction on sales managers' attributions under varying conditions of information ambiguity. This model indicates direct effects of task and social attraction on sales managers' causal attributions; in turn, we expect these causal attributions to affect managerial feedback. Thus, the effect of task and social attraction on corrective feedback is

FIGURE 1
Attributional Model for the Poor Sales-Performance Context



expected to be mediated by sales managers' causal attributions (see Figure 1). The conceptual logic underlying our model and hypotheses follow.

Internal versus external causal attributions. Will task and social attraction affect sales managers' causal attributions? Very likely. As Mitchell, Green, and Wood (1981, p. 206, emphasis added) note,

> Any factor which makes a leader (sales manager) *psychologically closer* to the member (salesperson) should increase the tendency for the leader to make self-like attributions regarding the member ... anything that increases the *psychological distance* ... will increase the likelihood that the leader's attributions will be discrepant from the member's causal explanations of his or her own behavior.

Mitchell, Green, and Wood's comments describe a variant of the fundamental attribution bias, or, the tendency of people to credit themselves for success and blame the environment for failure. Here, poor performance by an attractive salesperson is attributed to an external cause (as if the sales manager were judging his or her own performance); however, a less attractive salesperson is held accountable for failure (as when the sales manager evaluates someone else's failure). In fact, performance-evaluation models posit a significant role for interpersonal attraction and affect-laden thought (Liden and Graen 1980; Mitchell, Green, and Wood 1981; Tanner and Castleberry 1990), especially when manager-subordinate contact is infrequent.

Salesperson–sales manager relationships are likely to involve both task and social attraction (McCroskey and McCain 1974). Task attraction, the sales manager's judgment of the salesperson's desirability as a work partner, is indicated by interpersonal confidence, an efficient working relationship, and the quality of on-the-job communications. Task attraction has been found to influence directly manager attributions, global evaluations, and promotions (Crouch and Yetton 1988; Fedor and Rowland 1989; Kingstrom and Mainstone 1985).

Social attraction, the salesperson's desirability as a friend and social partner, is indicated by liking, empathy, and personal friendship. The effects of social attraction on managerial evaluations are equivocal. Positive social attraction influences managers to provide positive evaluations and promotions (Crouch and Yetton 1988; Kingstrom and Mainstone 1985). However, in a close-supervision context, no such effect was found (Fedor and Rowland 1989). Because of the relative autonomy of sales personnel and the emphasis managers place on personal appearance and attitude (Futrell, Parasuraman, and Sager 1983; Jackson, Keith, and Schlacter 1983), we expect a relatively strong effect for social attraction in sales contexts.

What effect do task and social attraction have on sales managers' causal attributions? We expect positive task and social attraction to yield strong agreement that external causes are responsible for poor performance; however, negative task and social attraction should generate stronger agreement that internal causes (i.e., salesperson ability or motivation) are responsible. The psychological-distance model provides the most direct rationale. Salespersons who benefit from high task and social attraction are "psychologically close"; hence, sales managers are more likely to attribute these salespersons' poor performance to external causes. Salespersons who have lower task and social attraction are "psychologically distant"; hence, they are likely to be held personally accountable. The fundamental attribution bias model yields similar predictions (Jones and Davis 1965), especially because sales managers are relatively insensitive to external data when explaining poor performance (Dubinsky, Skinner, and Whittler 1989; Mowen et al. 1985). In summary,

> H_1: When evaluating the poor performance of a positive-, relative to a negative-, task-and-social-attraction salesperson, sales managers will be more inclined to make external than internal causal attributions as the cause of the salesperson's poor performance.

Thoughtful versus automatic attributional processing. Do task and social attraction affect the amount of effort and thought devoted to the attributional process? Again, very likely. According to the cognitive-miser notion (Bettman, Johnson, and Payne 1990), people favor simpler attributional processes. Essentially, when incoming data are consistent with a priori expectations, relatively automatic or heuristic processes are employed; when data are inconsistent with expectations, greater conscious attention and thought are indicated. As Feldman (1981, p. 129) notes, "It is only when behavior departs from expectations or when the task is somehow changed, that conscious attention and recognition processes are engaged" (see also Fiske and Taylor 1991). Interpersonal affect even influences attributions under conscious processing (Feldman 1981).

Our expectation is that poor performance by an attractive salesperson triggers conscious processing; however, less effort and thought is required when the salesperson is less attractive. The most direct explanation is heuristic processing. For task attraction, a representative heuristic is "People who have done well previously will do well again"; for social attraction, the heuristic is "Liked people are expected to do well." Poor performance by a salesperson who benefits from positive task or social attraction is inconsistent with these heuristics; hence, conscious processing is indicated. On the other hand, poor performance by a less attractive salesperson is consistent with the obverse of these heuristics; therefore, less effort and thought are necessary. Two alternate process models, fundamental attribution bias and psychological distance (Mitchell, Green, and Wood 1981), yield similar predictions of effortful processing when sales managers observe unexpectedly poor performance for high-attraction sales personnel.

For our hypothesis, we use thoughtfulness and perceived effort as indicators of the relative degrees of conscious processing. To indicate thoughtfulness, we employ cognitive responses (CRs). Despite their recognized role in consumer research (Hastak and Olson 1989; Wright 1980) and the suggestions that CRs are useful for both attributional (Weiner 1983) and organizational research (Larson 1984), we found no empirical applications. Consistent with the logic supporting H_1, we expect sales managers to provide more external and fewer internal CRs when the salesperson benefits from positive task and social attraction. We also expect perceived effort to be greater when the sales manager judges a poor-performing high-attraction salesperson.

We examine decision confidence as a corollary indicator of cognitive processing and expect decision confidence to be relatively high when the salesperson is low in task or social attraction. Higher confidence occurs because this scenario is consistent with expectations. However, poor performance by a high-attraction salesperson is unexpected. In such contexts, people "remember" schema-consistent information useful to resolving the attributional dilemma (Cohen 1981). Alternatively, external search for corroborating evidence might occur. Our study, however, precludes external search. Therefore, we expect decision confidence to be lower, because the sales manager's normal pattern of attributing cause externally is compromised. In summary, our hypothesis concerning attributional processing is,

H_2: When evaluating poor performance for a positive-, relative to a negative-, task-and-social-attraction salesperson, sales managers will report (a) more perceived effort in processing, (b) more externally and fewer internally focused thoughts (CRs), and (c) lower decision confidence.

Interaction effects of task and social attraction. What effects are expected when task and social attraction are congruent or incongruent? When they are congruent, we expect their effects to be synergistically magnified. When they are incongruent, we expect all causal attributions and attributional process indicators to be moderate. We also expect, however, that sales managers rely to a greater extent on task, than on social, schemas because of their greater relevance to the sales manager's own success (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994). Hence, we specify the following exploratory interaction hypothesis:

H_3: A significant task × social attraction interaction is expected such that

(a) the positive task and social conditions, relative to the negative task and social conditions, are expected to yield: (1) stronger agreement that external attributions are the cause, (2) weaker agreement that internal attributions are the cause, (3) more externally focused and fewer internally focused CRs, and (4) lower decision confidence.

(b) the positive task and negative social conditions, relative to the negative task and positive social conditions, are expected to yield: (1) stronger agreement that external attributions are the cause, (2) weaker agreement that internal attributions are the cause, (3) greater perceived effort, (4) more externally focused and fewer internally focused CRs, and (5) lower decision confidence.

Mediating effects of causal attributions on feedback. Do task and social attraction affect managerial feedback? If so, how are these effects realized? We posit that the effects of task and social attraction on feedback are indirect, that is, mediated by causal attributions. In other words, corrective feedback depends on whether the salesperson or the situation is blamed. In leadership models, a mediational role for causal attributions in the feedback process has been proposed, but not empirically tested (Green and Mitchell 1979; Ilgen and Feldman 1983; Mitchell, Green, and Wood 1981). Specifically, the effect of performance data on causal attributions is moderated by leader-member relations (or affect); causal attributions, in turn, influence leader feedback directly. Hence, causal attributions serve to mediate the effect of leader-member affect on managerial feedback.

In sales contexts, attributional models consistently predict that sales managers use ability, effort, task-difficulty, and luck cues to attribute poor performance to either the salesperson or the situation (Gentry, Mowen, and Tasaki 1991). These causal attributions, in turn, affect corrective actions. For example, Dubinsky, Skinner, and Whittler (1989) find that sales managers direct their actions to the salesperson when attributions are internal. Similarly, in a student experiment, McKay and colleagues (1991) report

that attributions to low effort increase the relative likelihood that coercive actions would be undertaken and attributions to low ability increase the relative likelihood that nonpunitive actions and transfer out of the district would occur. Although these results indicate that attributions affect feedback, the specific conclusion that low ability generates nonpunitive feedback is problematic. According to Weiner (1983), ability may be perceived as either stable and uncontrollable (e.g., intelligence) or unstable and controllable (e.g., skill). In the former, nonpunitive actions seem reasonable. In the latter, coercive action may be indicated. In fact, McKay and colleagues (1991) themselves note that low ability is more difficult to correct than low effort and, therefore, coercive action may be required.

In industrial-sales contexts, we are concerned with effort and ability as factors that are under salesperson control. We expect, therefore, that internal attributions to salesperson effort (e.g., motivation) and ability (e.g., skill) result in coercive feedback; whereas external attributions result in either nonpunitive action or no action. Hence,

H_4: Internal attributions to effort and ability will be positively related to coercive feedback.

H_5: External attributions will be positively related to nonpunitive feedback or no action.

The role of interpersonal affect in these models is equivocal. Gentry, Mowen, and Tasaki (1991) posit that salesperson familiarity indirectly affects corrective feedback through attributions. Dubinsky, Skinner, and Whittler (1989) propose a moderating role for interpersonal affect on the performance-attribution linkage, with subsequent effects on feedback. However, Tanner and Castleberry (1990) argue that interpersonal attraction affects corrective actions directly: psychologically close subordinates receive nonpunitive feedback; psychologically distant subordinates receive punitive feedback (Graen and Cashman 1975; Liden and Graen 1980). The logic is that "supervisors may have more to lose, in terms of the affective quality of their interpersonal relations with subordinates, when giving negative performance feedback to a liked subordinate" (Larson 1984, p. 52). Similarly, the norm-of-reciprocity explanation implies a direct effect of salesperson attraction; however, the schema-driven affect model of OCBs seems more consistent with the mediation model (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994).

We are interested theoretically in the role of causal attributions in mediating the effect of a salesperson's task and social attraction on sales manager feedback. Demonstrating this mediating role for causal attributions requires that (1) task and social attractiveness affect causal attributions directly (H_1), (2) casual attributions affect corrective feedback directly (H_4, H_5), and (3) any direct effect of task and social attraction on corrective feedback is eliminated or attenuated when casual attributions are added as explanatory variables in the attraction-feedback model. Thus, our mediation hypothesis is,

H_6: The inclusion of causal attributions as explanatory variables in the attraction-feedback model significantly attenuates the direct effects of task and social attraction on corrective feedback; moreover, (a) internal motivation and ability attributions significantly and positively mediate the effect of task and social attraction on coercive feedback and (b) external attributions significantly and positively mediate the effect of task and social attraction on nonpunitive feedback.

We do not specify hypotheses for the direct effects of task and social attraction on corrective feedback, because our model is formulated in full-mediation terms. However, direct effects are apparently consistent with vertical-dyad (Tanner and Castleberry 1990) and reciprocity views (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994). Thus, the empirical presence of direct effects of task and social attraction indicates that attention should be paid to these and other alternate views in further research.

Moderating effects of information ambiguity. Does information ambiguity moderate the effects of task and social attraction? Interpersonal affect is more likely to influence attributions when performance data is ambiguous, because then the evaluator's a priori stereotypes are operative (Lamber and Wedell 1991; Tversky and Kahneman 1974). We expect similar effects in sales contexts. Sales performance data are often uninformative or incomplete (Ferber 1983). Hence, sales managers may be likely to rely on salesperson affect in these circumstances.

Information ambiguity is the degree to which internal (salesperson) or external (situation) causes are indicated by the performance data. Information ambiguity is defined in terms of: *consensus,* the degree to which other salespeople perform similarly in similar situations; *distinctiveness,* the degree to which a salesperson's performance on this task is dissimilar from his or her performance in other tasks; and *consistency,* the degree to which the salesperson has performed similarly in the past. Our information-ambiguity conditions vary these information types. We expect that the effect of task or social attraction on causal attributions and external or internal CRs are moderated by information ambiguity (i.e., the $T_j \times I_k$ and $S_i \times I_k$ interactions are significant). Specifically, the effects of task and social attraction on causal attributions are significant and positive when the poor-performance scenario is ambiguous; however, these effects are negligible or smaller when the poor-performance scenario unambiguously indicates that the salesperson or the territory is responsible. Thus, our exploratory hypothesis is,

H_7: The effects of task and social attraction on (a) causal attributions and (b) external and internal CRs are expected to be greater under ambiguous, than under unambiguous, conditions.

The three-way interaction ($T_j \times I_k \times S_i$) is not theoretically of interest. We report these results only as an exploratory analysis.

Method

The field experiment employed a $2 \times 2 \times 3$ full-factorial, between-groups design, with task attraction, social attraction, and information ambiguity manipulated. Multi-item measures of managerial attributions, cognitive effort, decision confidence, and corrective action were developed as dependent variables (all 7-point scales were anchored by 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Cognitive re-

sponses were collected and coded for use as dependent measures. Manipulation checks were also taken. Practicing sales managers were randomly assigned to a single experimental cell and mailed a packet. The subsequent discussion details the experimental design and procedures, including operationalizations of the independent variables, sampling frame and realized sample, dependent measure development and purification (including CR coding), and manipulation check analysis.

Experimental Design and Treatments

The experiment required the development of independent treatments for task attraction (two levels), social attraction (two levels), and information ambiguity (three levels). The task and social attraction scenarios (see Appendix A) required each sales manager to select a familiar salesperson who best fit the relevant task × social attraction treatment to which he or she had been assigned. To strengthen the manipulations and enhance realism, each sales manager was asked to read the assigned scenario and write the salesperson's first name in the blank spaces in each of four sentences describing the salesperson (Gardner and Siomkos 1985).

To manipulate information ambiguity, we developed three distinct treatments to examine the effect of task and social attraction when (1) the performance data is ambiguous concerning causality, (2) the performance data unambiguously points to task difficulty as the external cause, and (3) the performance data unambiguously points to the salesperson as an internal cause. Empirically validated ambiguity scenarios are available (Hilton and Jaspers 1987; Hilton and Slugoski 1986). Typically, eight ambiguity conditions are specified by factorially varying consensus, distinctiveness, and consistency at two levels each (H = high; L = low).

We selected three of these cells as our treatments. High ambiguity is defined by *low consensus* (e.g., all other salespeople have performed as expected and retained their major accounts), *high distinctiveness* (e.g., despite losing the major account, this salesperson produced strong results with other customers), and *low consistency* (e.g., despite losing the major account, the salesperson performed well with other major accounts in the past). This LHL combination is ambiguous because it provides necessary, but not sufficient, information to draw either internal or external attributions (Hilton and Slugoski 1986; Jaspers 1983).

The two least ambiguous scenarios (Hilton and Jaspers 1987; Teas and McElroy 1986) were also selected. First, the task-difficulty (HHH) scenario, defined by high consensus, high distinctiveness, and high consistency, indicates that the salesperson's poor performance is similar to that of other sales personnel, is not consistent with his or her performance with other customers, and is consistent with his or her major account performances in previous years. Second, the personal-responsibility (LLH) scenario, defined by low consensus, low distinctiveness, and high consistency, indicates that the salesperson's poor performance is unusual relative to others, is similar to his or her poor performance with other customers, and is consistent with his or her poor major account performance in the past.

These scenarios were varied in a hybrid verbal and spreadsheet format (see Appendix A). Prior studies report distinct effects for the written or spreadsheet formats (Mowen, Brown, and Jackson 1980/81; Mowen et al. 1985; Mowen, Fabes, and LaForge 1986). For control, our scenarios use both verbal and spreadsheet methods. To enhance realism, actual sales and quota data from the participating companies are modeled in the scenarios.

Because our treatments are novel, we pretested them for clarity and difficulty with 14 sales managers enrolled in an executive masters of business administration (MBA) class. The modified scenarios were then pretested with 40 full-time MBA students. Significant main effects were noted for the task and social attraction treatments ($p > .001$) and the personal-responsibility and ambiguous scenarios ($p > .03$); however, the task-difficulty scenario required further modification. These revised scenarios were then reviewed in telephone interviews with 12 sales managers. At this stage, only minor refinements were suggested.

Data Collection Procedures

A three-wave mailing procedure was employed (Dillman 1978). Each sales manager was sent a survey packet, including (1) a letter describing the study purpose, (2) a letter from the senior sales executive or the Sales and Marketing Executive (SME) president endorsing the study, (3) the two-part questionnaire, and (4) a postage-paid return envelope. Sales managers were promised anonymity to encourage candid responses. One week later, reminder postcards were sent. After another three weeks, color-coded replacement questionnaires were mailed. To further boost response rates, each respondent was included in a lottery. Ten of the first 50 respondents received $50 each. To participate, managers simply attached a business card to their survey. To ensure confidentiality, business cards were separated from the surveys.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In Part I of the questionnaire, each manager was asked to read the attraction scenario, identify a salesperson who best fit the scenario, and then write the salesperson's first name in the scenario as the subject of four descriptive sentences. Sales managers were then asked to rate the salesperson on ten manipulation check items and specify how often they communicated with the salesperson. These steps were designed to make the role-playing exercise an active one (Gardner and Siomkos 1985; Geller 1978). Role playing is commonly used in studies such as ours (Forward, Cantor, and Kirsch 1976; Mowen et al. 1985). In Part II of the questionnaire, each manager was asked to read the poor performance scenarios and evaluate the salesperson by providing, in order, cognitive responses, causal attributions, cognitive effort and decision confidence, corrective actions, information-ambiguity checks, and sales manager demographics.

Sampling Frame and Realized Sample

The sample frame included 468 U.S. sales managers recruited from a Fortune 500 mailing equipment (ME) firm (all 289 managers), an office equipment (OE) firm (all 103 managers), and a southeast SME mailing list (79 sales man-

agers). The realized sample was 227 (a 48% response rate). Data were incomplete for 9 managers, so the net sample was 218 (46%). This sample includes 144 (49%) ME managers, 55 OE managers (53.4%), and 19 SME managers (25%). The SME participation was similar to the 25.5% reported by Singh (1993). The sample distribution across the 12 experimental cells ranged from a low of 14 (36%) to a high of 23 (59%) managers.

To assess the compatibility of the three samples, post hoc ANOVAs for several firm-level effects (ME versus OE versus SME) were conducted. No significant differences were found on internal ($F(2,196) = 1.58$, $p > .10$) and external ($F(2,196) = .839$, $p > .10$) attributions, the level of interaction with the salesperson for business reasons ($F(2,214) = 1.43$, $p > .10$), social reasons ($F(2,213) = .10$, $p > .10$), or percentage of quota obtained ($F(2,200) = .55$, $p > .10$). To test nonresponse error, the sample was divided into quartiles on the basis of the timing of the responses. The first and fourth (all of which were second-mail-out responses) quartiles show no significant mean differences on any of our dependent variables (Armstrong and Overton 1977).

Measure Development and Purification

Dependent measures. Task and social attraction were based on McCroskey and McCain's (1974) work; corrective feedback was based on McKay and colleagues' (1991) work. The remaining scales were developed for this study. Scale unidimensionality, reliability, and validity were assessed. First, each scale was factor analyzed to obtain a preliminary assessment of the dimensionality. Scales with multiple-factor solutions were then orthogonally rotated, and items with weak loadings (i.e., .3 or less) on their respective factor were eliminated. Second, dimensionality and discriminant validity were then assessed using confirmatory factor procedures (LISREL 7.16). Goodness-of-fit indices and t-values associated with individual items were used to identify the final set of items representing each construct. Sequential chi-square difference tests between various theoretically driven alternative models were performed to determine the best fitting model. Finally, internal consistency was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. Scale properties and results of the factor analysis are provided in Appendix B.[1]

Cognitive responses. We collected CRs as unaided causal explanations for why sales managers thought the salesperson performed poorly. We simply asked the sales managers to explain, in their own words, what factors may have caused poor performance. Four blank lines were provided for sales managers to write whatever thoughts came to mind. Two judges who were unaware of our hypotheses coded these CRs independently, using a master set of phrases developed for this study and based on Weiner's (1972) attribution categories. Because we expected this simple internal/external coding scheme to provide a response-set pattern with minimal distribution between the coders, Cohen's (1960) kappa is appropriate for interjudge reliability (Hughes and Garrett 1990). The overall Cohen's kappa of .851 indicates a high degree of intercoder reliability. The range of kappa's for each variable is between .45 to 1.00, with all t-statistics significant.

A total of 476, or a mean of 2.18 CRs per sales manager, was provided. The 369 (64%) internal CRs were distributed as salesperson strategy, 62 (16.8%); salesperson selling skills, 169 (45.8%); salesperson attitude or motivation, 64 (17.3%); salesperson knowledge, 48 (13%); and unique, 26 (7%). The 107 (36%) external CRs include business-related causes, 66 (61.7%); salesperson personal problems, 22 (20.6%); and unique 19 (17.8%).

Manipulation checks. To assess treatment efficacy, MANOVA was run with the full-factorial model. The main effects of task and social treatments are strongly significant (task: Wilks' Lambda = .3237, $F = 212.04$, d.f. = 2, 203, $p < 0.0$; social: Wilks' Lambda = .4373, $F = 130.6$, d.f. = 2, 203, $p < 0.0$). Furthermore, ω^2 was calculated to confirm relative effect size. The ω_t^2 for the task factor on task attractiveness is larger ($\omega_t^2 = .70$) than that for the social factor ($\omega_s^2 = .02$). Similarly, the ω_s^2 for the social factor on social attractiveness is larger ($\omega_s^2 = .52$) than that for the task factor ($\omega_t^2 = .07$). Therefore, confounding does not appear to be a serious problem (Perdue and Summers 1986).

Communications regularity between the sales manager and the salesperson was assessed with three scales. Sales managers reported a median of one interaction per day with the salesperson evaluated. Cross-tabulations show that the task factor is related significantly to frequency of interaction ($p < .05$); the social factor, however, is not. Using 7-point scales (1 = much less than average; 7 = much more than average), sales managers also rated how frequent their interaction with the salesperson was for both personal and business reasons. When task and social attraction are positive, sales managers report more personal interactions (social: $F = 68.52$, d.f. = 1, 213, $p < .001$, $\omega_s^2 = .24$; task: $F = 5.05$, d.f. = 1, 213, $p < .05$, $\omega_t^2 = .01$), and more business interactions (task: $F = 10.62$, d.f. = 1,213, $p < .01$, $\omega_t^2 = .05$; social: $F = 4.17$, d.f. = 1,213, $p < .05$, $\omega_s^2 = .01$). These results corroborate the efficacy of the attraction manipulations.

The manipulation checks for information ambiguity were single-item, 7-point scales for distinctiveness, consistency, and ambiguity. MANOVA using the full-factorial model shows a significant result only for the main effect of ambiguity (Wilks' Lambda = .415, $F = 37.20$, d.f. = 6,404, $p < .001$). The univariate contrasts are in the expected direction for distinctiveness ($F = 67.6$, d.f. = 2,213, $p < .001$) and consistency ($F = 56.6$, d.f. = 2,214, $p < .001$), but not for ambiguity. Hence, these results are mixed. Because the manipulation checks were collected last, the results may be attenuated. It may be that the measures most directly related to the actual treatments (i.e., consistency and distinctiveness) were less affected than the more general ambiguity item.

Experimental Results

We employed MANOVA using the full-factorial model to test the direct effects of information-ambiguity treatments

[1]Detailed results of these analyses are available on request from the authors.

Table 1
MANOVA Results for the Dependent Measures

	Dependent Variable Sets							
	Causal Attributions[a]		Cognitive Responses[b]		Cognitive Effort/Confidence[c]		Corrective Actions[d]	
Independent Variable	Wilks' lambda	F-ratio (d.f.)	Wilks' lambda	F-ratio (d.f.)	Wilks' lambda	F-ratio (d.f.)	Wilks' lambda	F-ratio (d.f.)
Task Attraction (T_j)	.63	39.68* (3,201)	.92	8.67* (2,205)	.96	4.26** (2,203)	.88	8.62* (3,201)
Social Attraction (S_i)	.85	11.38* (3,201)	.98	2.34*** (2,205)	.92	8.95* (2,203)	.92	5.64* (3,201)
Information Type (I_k)	.87	4.86* (6,402)	.92	4.43* (4,410)	.97	1.10 (4,06)	.95	1.67 (6,402)
$T_j \times S_i$	.96	2.74** (3,201)	.98	1.39 (2,205)	.94	5.53* (2,203)	.98	.91 (3,201)
$T_j \times I_k$	.97	1.20 (6,402)	.99	.18 (4,410)	.98	.79 (4,406)	.98	.41 (6,402)
$S_i \times I_k$	.97	.98 (6,404)	.97	1.44 (4,410)	.96	2.07*** (4,406)	.97	1.10 (6,402)
$T_j \times S_i \times I_k$	.98	.73 (6,402)	.98	.65 (4,410)	.98	.92 (4,406)	.94	2.15** (6,402)

[a]Dependent variables are internal motivation, internal ability, and external attributions.
[b]Dependent variables are total internal and external cognitive responses.
[c]Dependent variables are cognitive effort and decision confidence.
[d]Dependent variables are coercive actions, nonpunitive actions, and no action.
* = $p < .01$.
** = $p < .05$.
*** = $p < .10$.

and task and social attraction on causal attributions (internal motivation, internal ability, and external attributions), cognitive responses (internal, external), attributional process indicators (cognitive effort, decision confidence), and corrective actions (coercive, nonpunitive, no action). The multivariate results (see Table 1) show that (1) task attraction strongly affects all four dependent variable sets ($p < .05$), (2) social attraction strongly affects all sets ($p < .05$) except CRs ($p < .10$),[2] (3) the $T_j \times S_i$ interaction significantly influences causal attributions and attributional processes ($p < .05$), and (4) information ambiguity strongly affects causal attributions and CRs ($p < .01$). However, the expected second-order interactions involving information ambiguity are not significant. In addition, the third-order interaction of $T_j \times I_k \times S_i$ is significant only for corrective actions ($p < .05$). Because of these results, only the main effects and the $T_j \times S_i$ interactions are subsequently explored (see Table 2).

Causal attributions. Task and social attraction directly affect internal motivation attributions (task: F = 111.03, $p < .01$; social: F = 12.13, p < .01), internal ability attributions (task: F = 25.97, $p < .01$; social: F = 24.32, $p < .01$), and external attributions (task: F = 9.07, $p < .01$; social: F = 5.28, $p < .01$). As we expected, sales managers are more inclined to make external attributions and less inclined to make internal attributions when evaluating a salesperson who is more positive in task and social attraction.

The $T_j \times S_i$ interaction results are mixed. The $T_j \times S_i$ interaction affects internal motivation (F = 4.66, $p < .05$) and internal ability (F = 3.44, $p < .10$) directly, but is nonsignificant for external attributions. Recall that congruent levels of task and social attraction were expected to synergistically magnify causal attributions. Incongruent levels of task and social attraction were expected to result in more moderate ratings. The cell means for motivation and ability are consistent with these expectations. To illustrate, the mean ratings for internal motivation are, with H = high, L = low, T = task-attraction level, and S = social-attraction level, HTHS, 2.88; HTLS, 3.73; LTHS, 4.73; and LTLS, 5.09. The effects of task and social attraction are clearly magnified in the congruent conditions; the incongruent conditions show moderate results; and the ordering is consistent with the expectation that task attraction dominates social attraction in sales contexts.

[2]Because this is a multivariate test and because of the exploratory nature of our study, MANOVA results with $p < .10$ are considered significant.

TABLE 2
ANOVA Results for the Dependent Measures

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables: Task Attraction (T_j) High mean (s.d.)	Task Attraction (T_j) Low mean (s.d.)	Task Attraction (T_j) F-ratio (d.f.)	Social Attraction (S_i) High mean (s.d.)	Social Attraction (S_i) Low mean (s.d.)	Social Attraction (S_i) F-ratio (d.f.)	Information Type (I_k) Amb[a] mean (s.d.)	Information Type (I_k) Task[b] mean (s.d.)	Information Type (I_k) Pers mean (s.d.)	Information Type (I_k) F-ratio (d.f.)	Task × Social Interactions HTHS mean (s.d.)	HTLS mean (s.d.)	LTHS mean (s.d.)	LTLS mean (s.d.)	F-ratio (d.f.)
Internal Motivation	3.28 (1.30)	4.96 (1.14)	111.03* (1,203)	3.76 (1.51)	4.33 (1.41)	12.13* (1,203)	3.94^{AB} (1.47)	3.68^{A} (4.45)	4.46^{B} (1.35)	7.99* (2,203)	2.88^{A} (1.21)	3.73^{BC} (1.25)	4.85^{BD} (1.06)	5.09^{BD} (1.22)	4.66** (1,203)
Internal Ability	3.54 (1.49)	4.48 (1.33)	25.97* (1,203)	3.52 (1.44)	4.46 (1.40)	24.32* (1,203)	3.59^{A} (1.48)	4.05^{B} (1.47)	4.22^{AB} (1.47)	4.47** (2,203)	2.97 (1.40)	4.21 (1.31)	4.22 (1.17)	4.78 (1.45)	3.44*** (1,203)
External Attributions	3.46 (1.03)	3.00 (1.05)	9.07* (1,203)	3.42 (1.00)	3.06 (1.10)	5.28* (1,203)	3.25^{AB} (.84)	3.48^{A} (1.13)	3.02^{B} (1.16)	3.14** (2,203)	3.71 (.96)	3.15 (1.04)	3.06 (.95)	2.95 (1.17)	ns
Internal Thoughts	1.54 (1.43)	1.89 (1.31)	3.41*** (1,206)	1.67 (1.50)	1.71 (1.26)	ns	1.49^{A} (1.23)	1.45^{A} (1.17)	2.14^{B} (1.64)	6.46* (2,206)	1.48 (1.65)	1.61 (1.13)	1.92 (1.25)	1.84 (1.39)	ns
External Thoughts	.69 (.96)	.24 (.57)	16.18* (1,206)	.61 (.93)	.35 (.70)	4.56** (1,206)	.65 (.92)	.40 (.88)	.43 (.68)	2.72*** (2,206)	.88 (1.07)	.48 (.76)	.27 (.56)	.20 (.58)	ns
Cognitive Effort	5.48 (1.19)	5.07 (1.48)	6.65** (1,204)	5.61 (1.14)	4.94 (1.47)	19.28* (1,204)	5.35 (1.41)	5.13 (1.51)	5.42 (1.08)	ns	5.66 (1.12)	5.28 (1.25)	5.54 (1.17)	4.53 (1.62)	3.32*** (1,213)
Decision Confidence	4.23 (1.35)	4.59 (1.39)	4.80** (1,204)	4.20 (1.28)	4.62 (1.46)	6.91* (1,204)	4.27 (1.52)	4.59 (1.28)	4.31 (1.32)	ns	4.28^{B} (1.24)	4.17^{B} (1.48)	4.10^{B} (1.34)	5.17^{A} (1.24)	10.41* (1,212)
Coercive Feedback	1.82 (.84)	2.36 (1.10)	18.11* (1,203)	1.86 (.94)	2.28 (1.11)	10.35* (1,203)	2.08 (1.18)	1.93 (.90)	2.15 (.88)	ns	1.58 (.76)	2.09 (.85)	2.20 (1.04)	2.54 (1.15)	ns
Nonpunitive Feedback	6.24 (.75)	6.00 (.83)	5.01** (1,203)	6.29 (.69)	5.95 (.87)	10.42* (1,203)	6.10 (.85)	6.05 (.74)	6.29 (.71)	ns	6.35 (.68)	6.13 (.81)	6.22 (.70)	5.80 (.83)	ns
No Action Feedback	2.16 (1.24)	1.86 (1.06)	3.49*** (1,203)	1.91 (1.06)	2.16 (1.29)	2.90*** (1,203)	2.10 (1.37)	2.00 (1.01)	1.89 (1.11)	ns	2.04 (1.16)	2.30 (1.33)	1.75 (.90)	1.99 (1.21)	ns

[a]Amb = Ambiguous information scenario.
[b]Task = Task difficulty information scenario.
[c]Pers = Person responsibility information scenario.
Note: Capital letters in the independent variables columns indicate significant differences in planned contrasts using Tukey procedures. Significant mean differences ($p < .05$ or better) are presented as two groups. The first group of significant mean differences is presented using the letters A versus B. The second group is presented using the letters C versus D. Means with the same letter, no letter, or BC-BD combination are not significantly different ($p > .05$).
*$p < .01$.
**$p < .05$.
***$p < .10$.

Information ambiguity affects all causal attributions directly (internal motivation: $F = 7.99$, $p < .01$; internal ability: $F = 4.47$, $p < .01$; external: $F = 3.14$, $p < .05$). Sales managers agree more strongly that internal motivation is the problem when the personal-responsibility scenario (LLH) is compared to the task-difficulty (HHH) scenario (personal-responsibility mean = 4.46; task-difficulty mean = 3.68). In addition, sales managers agree more strongly that internal ability is the problem when the personal-responsibility (LLH) scenario is compared to the ambiguous scenario (personal-responsibility mean = 4.22; ambiguous mean = 3.59). However, the task-difficulty scenario does not differ significantly from either of these conditions. Finally, sales managers agree more strongly that external attributions are responsible when the task-difficulty scenario is compared to the personal-responsibility scenario (task-difficulty mean = 3.48; personal-responsibility mean = 3.02); yet, no significant differences in either case compared to the ambiguous scenario are noted. Thus, the hypothesis that ambiguous performance information moderates the effects of task and social attraction on causal attributions is not supported. The effects of the two unambiguous treatment contrasts on attributions are not significantly different from the ambiguous treatment's. These results suggest that the effects of social and task attraction on causal attributions are more general than we expected.

Cognitive responses. Task attraction affects external ($F = 16.18$, $p < .01$), but not internal, CRs directly. As we expected, the mean number of external CRs is higher (.69 versus .24) when task attraction is more positive. Social attraction affects only external CRs ($F = 4.56$, $p < .05$); and the number of external CRs is greater (.61 versus .35) when social attraction is more positive. These results corroborate our prior causal attribution observations, though the results are generally weaker.

Information ambiguity affects only the internal CRs directly ($F = 6.46$, $p < .01$). The personal-responsibility scenario generates significantly more internal CRs than do the other scenarios (personal-responsibility mean = 2.14; task-difficulty mean = 1.45; ambiguous mean = 1.49). This result is similar to that noted for the internal motivation and ability attributions.

Attributional processes. Task and social attraction directly affect both cognitive effort (task: $F = 6.65$, $p < .05$; social: $F = 19.28$, $p < .01$) and decision confidence (task: $F = 4.80$, $p < .05$; social: $F = 6.91$, $p < .01$). As we expected, sales managers report expending less cognitive effort when evaluating a poor-performing salesperson who is less attractive (task means = 5.07 versus 5.48; social means = 4.94 versus 5.61) than one who is more attractive. They also report greater decision confidence when evaluating the less-attractive salesperson (task means = 4.59 versus 4.23; social means = 4.62 versus 4.20). The $T_j \times S_i$ interaction affects decision confidence ($F = 10.41$, $p < .01$) strongly. The results show that relative to the other combinations of task and social attraction managers' decision confidence is significantly higher when the poor-performing salesperson is unattractive (i.e., LTLS). Overall, these results are consistent with our expectations that evaluating a poor performer who benefits from task and social attraction is a relatively difficult and thoughtful attributional task compared to evaluating a less-attractive poor-performer.

Corrective feedback. We demonstrate that task and social attraction strongly affect causal attributions directly. To assess mediation, we show that task and social attraction (in the absence of the mediating causal attributions) affect corrective feedback directly. Task and social attraction strongly affect coercive feedback (task: $F = 18.11$, $p < .01$; social: $F = 10.35$, $p < .01$) and nonpunitive feedback (task: $F = 5.01$, $p < .05$; social: $F = 10.42$, $p < .01$), but do not significantly affect no action. Sales managers are less likely to use coercive feedback and more likely to provide nonpunitive feedback when the salesperson is positive in task and social attraction.[3]

The mediating role of causal attributions. To show that the effects of task and social attraction on corrective feedback are indirect, rather than direct, we employ two parallel procedures. Building directly on the analysis presented, we calculate the direct-effect sizes (F-ratios, ω^2) when ANCOVA is run with coercive and nonpunitive feedback as dependent variables and causal attributions as covariates. For coercive feedback, we find large ω^2 effect-size reductions for task (74%) and social (59%) attraction. For nonpunitive action, these reductions are only 29% for task and 7% for social attraction. Hence, we find strong evidence for causal attributions as mediators in the coercive model but not in the nonpunitive model. The relatively strong mediating role of attributions on coercive feedback may be because these actions are onerous (i.e., salary reduction or job termination), and justifiable cause seems reasonable.

Path analysis is useful when summarizing these direct and indirect effects (see Table 3).[4] Task attraction directly affects internal attributions negatively (motivation = –.558, $p < .001$; ability = –.312, $p < .001$) and external attributions positively (.206, $p < .01$). Social attraction directly affects internal attributions negatively (motivation = –.202, $p < .001$; ability = –.310, $p < .001$) and external attributions positively (.166, $p < .05$). In the no-mediation model, task and social attraction directly affect coercive action negatively (task: –.276, $p < .01$; social: –.215, $p < .01$) and nonpunitive action positively (task: .166, $p < .01$; social: .189, $p < .01$). The empirical question is whether these direct effects of task and social attraction on feedback remain when causal attributions are introduced as mediators.

For each mediation model, the causal attributions add significantly to the explained variance (coercive: $\Delta R^2 = 5.4\%$, $p < .01$); nonpunitive: $\Delta R^2 = 6.5\%$, $p < .01$). In the coercive-feedback model (Figure 2), internal motivation (.191, $p < .05$) and internal ability (.144, $p < .05$) affect the use of coercive feedback positively. More important, task at-

[3]Examination of the significant $T_j \times S_i \times I_k$ interaction indicates that the effect is for corrective action only ($F = 3.66$, $p < .05$); the source of the interaction effect is the main effect of task and social attraction, so the data is best interpreted using the main effects (Winer 1971).

[4]Including information ambiguity in these regressions does not appreciably change the results.

traction no longer affects coercive feedback directly and the direct effect of social attraction is reduced (–.147, $p < .05$). The total effect of task attraction on coercive feedback is estimated at –.152, the sum of the motivation (–.588 × .191) and ability (–.312 × .144) indirect paths. The total effect of social attraction on coercive feedback is estimated at –.159, which is the direct effect (–.147) plus the indirect effects through attributions of motivation (–.202 × .191) and ability (–.310 × .144).

For nonpunitive feedback, task and social attraction retain their direct positive effects (task: .178, $p < .05$; social: .218, $p < .01$). External attributions are related negatively to nonpunitive feedback (–.270, $p < .01$). In retrospect, this unexpected result may be logical, because attributions to external events do not necessarily indicate that the sales manager should counsel or encourage the salesperson, unless the salesperson's productivity or attitude is in question. In summary, task and social attraction increase the use of nonpunitive feedback directly; external attributions lessen the use of such feedback (see Dubinsky, Skinner, and Whittler 1989). The total effect of task attraction is estimated to be .122 (the direct effect of .178 minus the indirect effect of –.056), and the total effect of social attraction is .173 (the direct effect of .218 minus the indirect effect of –.045).

Discussion

Sales manager evaluations shape sales force performance and guide promotion, pay, training, and termination decisions. Yet empirical research concerning sales manager performance appraisals is surprisingly limited. We draw on prior conceptual and anecdotal evidence to develop and test a model that demonstrates the role of interpersonal affect and causal attributions in sales manager evaluation and feedback processes. These results have important implications for business practice. At the same time, our results provide interesting stimulation for further research, especially concerning how affect directly and indirectly influences performance appraisal processes and feedback choices. Our discussion reviews our findings and provides specific implications for business practice and further research.

Interpersonal affect and causal attributions. Do task and social attraction affect sales managers' causal attributions? The answer appears to be yes. And the specific results tell a simple, yet powerful, story. When poor performance is at issue, sales managers are influenced by interpersonal affect in assessing its cause. Specifically, sales managers more willingly attribute cause externally when the salesperson benefits from either task or social attraction and internally when the salesperson is lower in either task or social attraction. Moreover, internal attributions are magnified when task and social attraction are jointly examined. The salesperson who benefits from both task and social attraction is especially unlikely to have his or her motivation questioned. Finally, these interaction results for internal motivation support the view that sales managers stress task over social schemas when attributing cause (Futrell, Parasuraman, and Sager 1983; Jackson, Keith, and Schlacter 1983). In total, these results are important because they confirm prior con-

TABLE 3
Path Analysis Results: Standardized Regression Coefficients (t-value in parentheses)

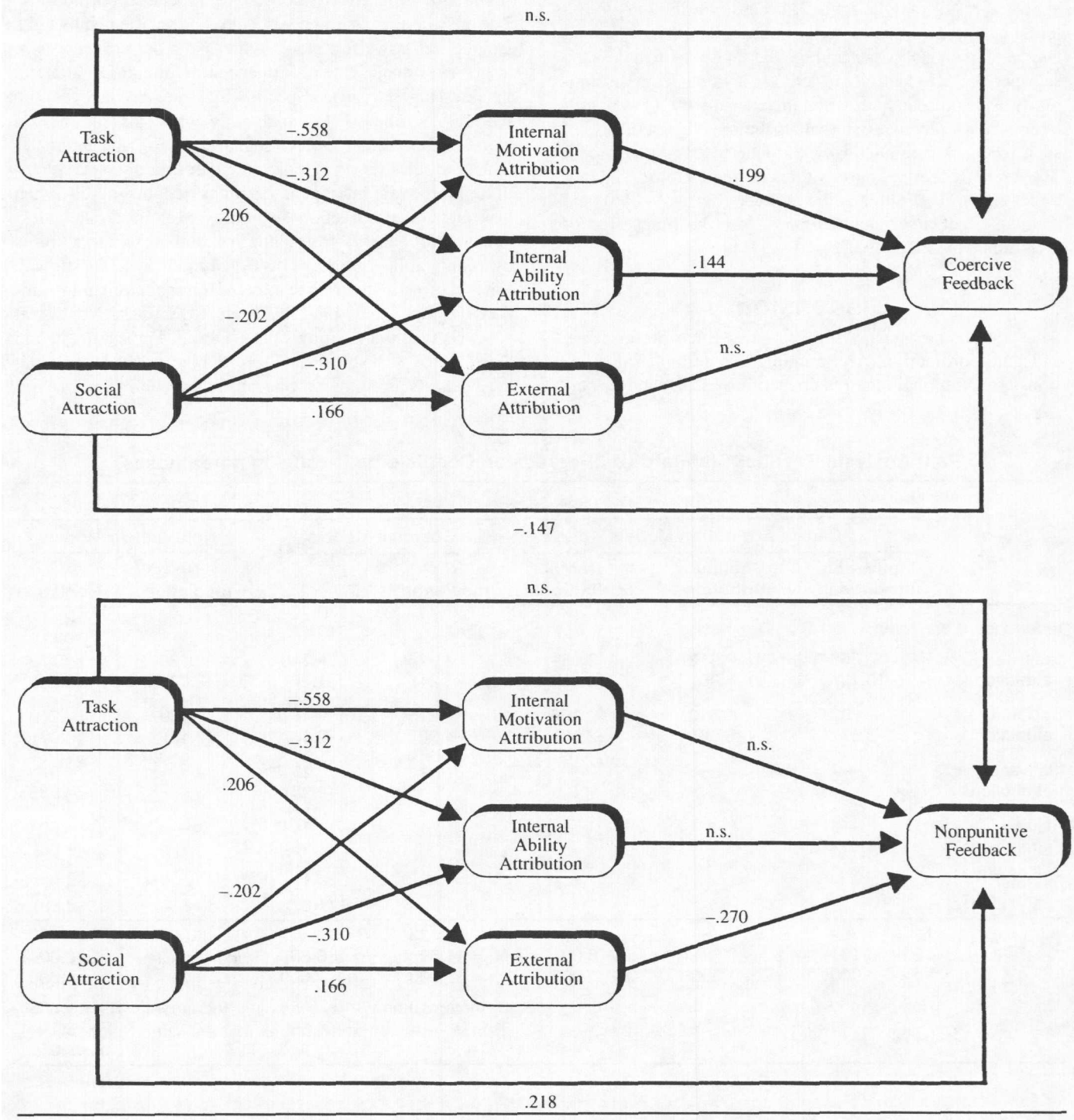
	Dependent Variables						
	Causal Attribution Models			**Coercive Models**		**Nonpunitive Models**	
	Motivation attributions	**Ability attributions**	**External attributions**	**No mediation**	**Mediation**	**No mediation**	**Mediation**
Independent Variables							
Task attraction	–.558[a] (–10.12)	–.312[a] (–5.06)	2.06[a] (3.10)	–.276[a] (–3.31)	–.146 (–1.86)	.166[a] (2.82)	.178[b] (2.21)
Social attraction	–.202[a] (–3.67)	–.310[a] (–5.03)	.166[b] (2.50)	–.215[a] (–4.26)	–.147[b] (–2.13)	.189[b] (2.48)	.218[a] (3.07)
Motivation attributions	—	—	—	—	.191[b] (2.28)	—	–.073 (–.085)
Ability attributions	—	—	—	—	.144[b] (1.98)	—	–.004 (–.05)
External attributions	—	—	—	—	.114 (1.69)	—	–.270[a] (–3.89)
	R^2 = .354 F = 58.16 $p <$ .000	R^2 = .195 F = 25.63 $p <$ .000	R^2 = .07 F = 8.00 $p <$ .000	R^2 = .123 F = 14.59 $p <$ .000	R^2 = .177 F = 8.89 $p <$ .000	R^2 = .063 F = 7.07 $p <$ .01	R^2 = .128 F = 6.06 $p <$ .000
				Incremental	R^2 = .054 F = 4.58 $p <$ .01	Incremental	R^2 = .065 F = 5.11 $p <$ .01

[a] = $p < .01$.
[b] = $< .05$.

ceptual and anecdotal views concerning the likely role of affect in causal attribution contexts. Furthermore, they suggest that sales managers attribute cause differently depending on a priori affect for the salesperson in question, and they provide the basis for expecting that causal attributions play a role in mediating managers' feedback choices.

Interpersonal affect and the attributional process. Do task and social attraction affect the amount of effort and thought devoted to the attributional process? Again, the answer appears to be yes. More important, the results provide further support for the attributional-process model. When poor performance is at issue, sales managers report more effort in attributing cause when the salesperson benefits from either task or social attraction. Moreover, they report less decision confidence when evaluating the poor performance of a salesperson who benefits from task or social attraction.

FIGURE 2
Path Analysis Models for Corrective and Nonpunitive Feedback



Decision confidence is especially strong when both task and social attraction are lacking. When judging such a salesperson, the sales manager is highly confident in attributing cause internally.

We collected CRs as freely elicited indicators of causal attributions and the amount of thought invested in the attributional process. To our knowledge, CRs have not been examined in managerial evaluation tasks. Hence, a base rate on the number of CRs was not available. We found an average of 2.18 thoughts per sales manager; total CRs are not affected by task or social attraction. However, sales managers provide a greater number of external CRs when the salesperson benefits from task or social attraction. These results corroborate (1) the prior results for the causal attributions, (2) the results that the sales manager finds it more difficult to judge failure by a relatively attractive salesperson, and (3) the usefulness of CRs in research concerning performance appraisals.

In general, these process results support the attributional model. In conjunction with the causal attributions results, these process indicators provide strong support for the view that interpersonal affect is not only integral (Cardy and Dobbins 1986) to the sales evaluation process, but also operates in a fashion consistent with the expectations model of the attribution process (Gentry, Mowen, and Tasaki 1991). It should be noted, however, that the predictions of alternative-process models (i.e., the vertical-dyad model for example) have been neither specified nor empirically tested. Thus, more attention to the underlying processes involved in managerial evaluations and feedback is needed (Jaworski and Kohli 1991).

Interpersonal affect and corrective feedback. Do task and social attraction affect the corrective feedback process? If so, how are these effects realized? Subject to further empirical research, it appears that both direct and indirect effects (through causal attributions) are operative. For our purposes, it is important to reiterate that task and social attraction (1) affect internal and external attributions directly and (2) in the absence of the mediating role of these causal attributions, affect coercive and nonpunitive feedback directly. Hence, the conditions necessary for examining the mediating effects of causal attributions were met.

For corrective feedback, we find relatively strong mediating effects for internal motivation and internal ability attributions. The direct effects of task attraction on coercive feedback are eliminated in the mediation model. The direct effects of social attraction are attenuated strongly but remain significant. In other words, our results provide evidence for the mediating role of causal attribution as a process explanation for coercive feedback. This is especially true for task attraction. However, the presence of a direct effect of social attraction indicates that other process explanations may be operative and must be examined in additional research.

For nonpunitive feedback, we find a mediating effect for external attributions. Contrary to our expectations, however, this effect is negative, and both task and social attraction show strong direct effects. This result, in retrospect, may be explained by external attribution of cause not being sufficient to motivate sales managers to counsel or coach the salesperson. In fact, unless the salesperson's productivity or job attitudes are at risk, external attributions might provide a convenient rationale for the sales manager to conserve personal time and resources. In either case, Weiner's (1983) admonitions concerning the complexities of designing attributional field studies should be revisited. This result also reiterates the need to examine alternative-process models that may be operative in driving feedback choices.

Information ambiguity. Does information ambiguity moderate the effects of task and social attraction? Maybe not. We found only main effects for information ambiguity. This may indicate that interpersonal affect plays a stronger role than was implied in the literature. Alternatively, our manipulations may require further refinement. Yet, because of its prominent role in previous attributional research, more attention to information ambiguity in sales-evaluation contexts is indicated.

Managerial Implications

Sales managers are exhorted to be objective in their performance appraisals (Gentry, Mowen, and Tasaki 1991); yet, realistically, a host of subjective factors influence these appraisals. To counteract these subjective biases (or halo effects), a variety of performance-rating formats and procedures (e.g., behavioral anchored scales) have been suggested. Hence, the fact that interpersonal affect plays a role in sales evaluations in our study is not surprising. The managerial relevance of our results derives from insights concerning the processes involved in how affect influences sales evaluations and, perhaps independently, feedback choices. As Atkin and Conlon (1978) note, meaningful advancements in appraisal practices require a process-oriented understanding of raters' information processing (see also Cardy and Dobbins 1986).

Our results indicate that more than subjective rating bias is involved in performance appraisal and feedback. They suggest that when salespersons benefit from a priori task and social attraction, sales managers actively and selectively discount internal responsibility while bolstering external explanations. That sales managers report greater effort and lower decision confidence when making this judgment supports this view. The implication is that the influence of affect in appraisals is more than perceptual; hence, though methods for improving ratings accuracy may be useful, they do not solve the problem alone. Programs to improve performance appraisals must consider perceptual, attributional, and affective processes.

Sales managers' use of coercive feedback is influenced by causal attributions. Coercive feedback is less likely to be used when the salesperson benefits from positive task or social attraction, apparently because internal attributions are suppressed. On the other hand, the less-attractive salesperson is likely to receive coercive feedback because internal motivation and ability provide logical and convenient explanations. One implication is that the same failure is evaluated differently for more- and less-attractive salespersons. To the degree that this behavior is perceived as unjust, this sort of managerial feedback problem can undermine sales-

person motivation and performance (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994).

Another managerial implication stems from the roots of this motivational effect. A reasonable assumption is that salespeople conduct self-evaluations (Jaworski and Kohli 1991) and compare themselves with other salespeople (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994). If the sales manager avoids coercive feedback when task attraction is positive—which our mediation results suggest—then the sales manager's tolerance of failure may be perceived as just (i.e., the salesperson has earned the benefit of the doubt). In fact, avoiding the use of coercive feedback in this situation, or even when the salesperson is a novice (i.e., task attraction is unknown), may trigger a positive motivational cycle (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994). On the other hand, the failure to use coercive action, when it is justified, may undermine the expectancies and instrumentalities underlying motivation. In summary, task attraction may be functionally positive in performance contexts, especially if salespersons are informed that these issues are considered in assessing short-term performance (see Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994).

The motivational consequences of failing to use coercive feedback because of the mediation of social attraction are potentially ominous. Managerial tolerance of a "liked" salesperson's failure is likely to be perceived as unjust, which may trigger a negative motivational cycle that (1) weakens instrumentalities relating performance to rewards or sanctions and (2) generates perceived inequities and negative job attitudes or behaviors (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994). Hence, the effects of social attraction require particular attention in the evaluation and feedback process.

Coercive feedback is onerous. Hence, the strong role of social and task attraction and the mediating role of internal attributions appear consistent with the need for justification before taking these actions. However, it should also be noted that social attraction reduces the use of coercive feedback directly. In addition, both task and social attraction affect the use of nonpunitive feedback directly. One potential implication is that regardless of causal attributions sales managers use supportive, rather than coercive, feedback with liked salespersons. The underlying basis for social attraction and the consequences of differential feedback choices should be carefully considered by managers—and should be investigated in further studies.

Traditional programs for improving appraisal processes focus on removing affect as a source of bias (Cardy and Dobbins 1986). Our perspective is that various methods of improving performance evaluations should be tried, including role-plays designed to help pinpoint evaluation errors (Latham and Wexley 1977), training in the use of behaviorally anchored rating scales, use of field notes to provide concrete behavioral indicators (Bernadin and Walter 1977), and development of historical territory and personal data files. However, effective performance appraisal also requires understanding the more complex attributional and feedback choice processes. The issues are how is a shared understanding of the process of attributing cause to performance outcomes to be developed, what are the functional and dysfunctional roles of task and social attraction in sales appraisals, and how are perceived injustices to be handled.

Research Directions and Limitations

Our model stresses the attribution process for the poor-performance context. Yet, distinct attributional processes may be involved in appraising success versus failure (Gioia and Sims 1986). Empirical examination of the more general model of success and failure, including the role of affect and other cognitive biases (Weiner 1980), is indicated. We found few process models examining success and positive feedback. Positive feedback, especially if it is behavioral, informs the salesperson how to improve sales performance and enhances motivation; negative feedback informs, but has a questionable effect on motivation (Jaworski and Kohli 1991). In either case, further research concerning the processes underlying both positive and negative feedback is needed.

Our model specifies a direct effect of salesperson attraction on causal attributions. The model is entirely reconcilable, conceptually and mathematically, with models examining both success and failure. Hence, salesperson attraction could be modeled as a moderator of the linkage between sales performance and causal attribution (Green and Mitchell 1979). This would provide an assessment of the role of affect in both success and failure contexts. We encourage further attention to cognitive effort, information search, decision confidence, cognitive responses, and process measures. Systematic research aimed at understanding when and under what conditions thoughtful or heuristic attributional processes are involved in performance appraisals is essential.

A variety of affective and cognitive heuristics may be operative in salesperson-evaluation and achievement contexts. Further conceptual specification of the domain of interpersonal affect is indicated. In addition, a variety of cognitive heuristics, including salesperson familiarity, prior work history, and organizational citizenship behaviors, may operate through the attributional process. It is important to note that affective and cognitive moderators may have either functional or dysfunctional effects on appraisals and feedback. For example, we typically think of bias as being negative (i.e., favoritism) and having negative consequences (i.e., conflict). However, positive affect may cause a sales manager to stick with a salesperson during difficult periods or avoid punitive measures that might yield premature turnover. Furthermore, heuristics are often employed exactly because they yield good decisions under normal circumstances (Cialdini 1984). Finally, increased use of team-based selling may indicate a complex role for interpersonal affect, including functional effects for social attraction itself. Hence, research examining the positive aspects of affect and heuristics in sales-performance contexts is indicated.

Our results suggest that task and social attraction may operate through differential processes. Task attraction, because it is work related, may follow the attributional model; social attraction, because of its personal basis, may not. The

vertical-dyad (Tanner and Castleberry 1990) or norm-of-reciprocity (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994) views may account for the direct effects we noted. We believe that the attribution model is powerful in explaining sales managers' immediate performance evaluations, as well as their more permanent perceptions of salesperson capabilities and traits; however, alternate models may influence feedback choices.

A variety of moderators other than affect may be operative in feedback selection. Salesperson work history, credibility, seniority, and influence with senior managers are examples of potential moderators of the attribution-feedback linkage. A particularly salient and practically relevant class of moderators might be the mental models held by sales managers with respect to how feedback affects salesperson performance (Fiol and Huff 1992). These job-related cognitions may be a better predictor of feedback use than the general personality or cognitive style of the sales manager.

Sales manager feedback must be accepted by sales personnel if performance is to be affected (Jaworski and Kohli 1991). Hence, a particularly important research issue involves salesperson self-evaluations. Specifically, empirical research concerning the similarities and distinctions in how sales managers and sales personnel attribute cause is indicated. Attribution theory suggests that there are fundamental differences in how cause is assigned, depending on whether the self or someone else is being evaluated. Thus, sales manager and salesperson attributions may systematically differ in ways that may affect the acceptability of feedback, as well as perceptions of fairness and justice.

Two research limitations should be noted. First, our sales managers responded to a single episode that varied in consensus, distinctiveness, and consistency performance data. Additional studies might systematically vary the breadth and depth of performance. Increasing the type and amount of information available, the manner in which it was presented, or its strength or extremity can help assess fully the causal reasoning processes, attributions, and contingencies involved in sales evaluations. The purpose of the sales evaluation could also be varied to better control or examine the effects of evaluation tasks on how managers interpret available performance data.

Second, the dependent variables were drawn from prior research. The internal-attributions scales show good measurement properties. However, our external-attribution scales show relatively low reliability. In addition, the corrective feedback measures may not sample fully the domain of sales manager actions relevant to these contexts. Hence, though our measures appear adequate, further attention is needed. Replication with other sales manager samples and use of longitudinal research designs are needed to increase generalizability and provide a more stringent test of the causal and potentially reciprocal role of affect and attributions in the feedback process (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994).

APPENDIX A

PART I: Task and Social Attraction Manipulation

High Task/High Social Cue

I work well with (insert first name) _____ and consider our work relationship to be very effective. If I need something done, I can count on him/her. I respect and trust _____'s work ethic and ability.

In addition, _____ is very similar to me socially and would probably fit into my circle of friends. I personally like _____ and we have a very good social relationship outside the office (or could have if circumstances allowed).

High Task/Low Social Cue

I work well with (insert first name) _____ and consider our work relationship to be very effective. If I need something done, I can count on him/her. I respect and trust _____'s work ethic and ability.

PART II: Performance Ambiguity Manipulation

You recently learned that (write in name) _____ lost a major account this past quarter. The loss of this account will substantially decrease your region's future sales revenue. *Meeting quota for you, or this salesperson, is unlikely without this account.* Below are the performance numbers for the evaluation:

Ambiguous Information Cues		Sales Volume: First Quarter	Sales Volume: Previous Year
Major Accounts:			
•You have determined that (write in name) _____ lost a major account this quarter (see data in left column):	Actual (Quota)	$ 500 (45,000)	
•Despite the recent lost account last quarter, this person performed well with major accounts last year (see data in far right column):	Actual (Quota)		$136,000 (135,000)
Other Accounts (excluding major accounts):			
•Despite the problem with the lost account, this person has produced strong sales volumes for other customer groups:	Actual (Quota)	31,000 (30,000)	89,000 (90,000)
Comparison Performance Data for All Other Salespeople on Your Sales Staff:			
Major Accounts:			
•Other salespeople have performed well with their major accounts on average:	Actual (Quota)	45,000 (45,000)	
•All other salespeople have performed as expected and have retained their major accounts on average:	Actual (Quota)		135,500 (135,000)

APPENDIX A
Continued

Despite our good working relationship, _____ is completely different from me socially and would not fit into my circle of friends. Because _____ has an abrasive and unpleasant personality, we could never have a close personal relationship.

		Sales Volume: First Quarter	Sales Volume: Previous Year
Other Accounts (excluding major accounts):			
•The average salesperson has performed very well with other customer groups:	Actual (Quota)	$30,000 (30,000)	$89,000 (90,000)

Low Task/High Social Cue

I do not work well with (insert first name) _____ and consider our work relationship to be very ineffective. If I need something done, I cannot count on him/her. I do not respect nor trust _____'s work ethic and ability.

Despite our poor working relationship, _____ is very similar to me socially and would probably fit into my circle of friends. I personally like _____ and we have a very good social relationship outside the office (or could have if circumstances allowed).

Person Responsibility Information Cues		Sales Volume: First Quarter	Sales Volume: Previous Year
Major Accounts:			
•You have determined that (write in name) _____ lost a major account this quarter (see data in left column):	Actual (Quota)	$ 500 (45,000)	
•This salesperson also had a history of losing large accounts (see data in far right column):	Actual (Quota)		$ 20,500 (135,000)
Other Accounts (excluding major accounts):			
•This person has not performed as expected for other customer groups:	Actual (Quota)	3,000 (30,000)	30,000 (90,000)

Low Task/Low Social Cue

I do not work well with (insert first name) _____ and consider our work relationship to be very ineffective. If I need something done, I cannot count on him/her. I do not respect nor trust _____'s work ethic and ability.

In addition to our poor working relationship, _____ is completely different from me socially and would not fit into my circle of friends. Because _____ has an abrasive and unpleasant personality, we could never have a close personal relationship.

Comparison Performance Data for All Other Salespeople on Your Sales Staff:			
Major Accounts:			
•Other salespeople have performed well with their major accounts on average.	Actual (Quota)	45,000 (45,000)	
•All other salespeople have performed as expected and have retained their major accounts on average:	Actual (Quota)		135,000 (135,000)
Other Accounts (excluding major accounts):			
•The average salesperson has performed very well with other customer groups:	Actual (Quota)	30,000 (30,000)	89,000 (90,000)

Task Difficulty Information Cues		Sales Volume: First Quarter	Sales Volume: Previous Year
Major Accounts:			
•You have determined that (write in name) _____ lost a major account this quarter (see data in left column):	Actual (Quota)	$500 (45,000)	
•The data indicates this person has had a continual problem with these types of accounts (see data in far right column):	Actual (Quota)		$20,500 (135,000)
Other Accounts (excluding major accounts):			
•Despite problems with major accounts, this person has produced strong sales volumes for other customer groups:	Actual (Quota)	31,000 (30,000)	89,000 (90,000)

		Sales Volume	
		First Quarter	Previous Year
Comparison Performance Data for All Other Salespeople on Your Sales Staff			
Major Accounts:			
•Other salespeople on average have lost major accounts, similar to this salesperson's lost account.	Actual (Quota)	$500 (45,000)	
•All other salespeople have also performed poorly Y-T-D on major accounts.			$21,000 (135,000)
All Accounts (excluding major accounts):			
•Despite problems with major accounts, the average salesperson has performed very well with other customer groups.		30,000 (30,000)	89,000 (90,000)

Note: Task appears first in each of these scenarios in this appendix. However, social preceded task in one-half of the market surveys to avoid any order bias. These scenarios were not included in this Appendix A.

APPENDIX B

Factor Analysis of Task/Social Attraction (% of variance explained = .74)

Factor: Task Attraction (α = .92)	Factor Loadings F1		IIC[a]
I have confidence in this salesperson's ability.	**.82**	.18	.81
This person is an effective problem solver.	**.86**	.26	.83
He (she) appears to goof-off when in the field.	**.79**	.15	.70
If I wanted to get things done, I could depend on this person.	**.89**	.19	.85
I couldn't get anything accomplished with this person.	**.82**	.18	.75
Factor: Social Attraction (α = .90)	**F2**		**IIC**
I think he (she) could be a friend of mine.	.16	**.87**	.80
It would be difficult to meet and talk with this person.	.29	**.74**	.69
He (she) just wouldn't fit into my circle of friends.	.14	**.82**	.73
I would like to have a friendly chat with this person.	.22	**.77**	.69
We could never establish a personal friendship with each other.	.18	**.90**	.86

Goodness-of-Fit Summary for Attraction Scale

Model	DF[b]	χ^2	GFI[c]	AGFI[d]	RMSR[e]
Model 1: Error-Only Model	45	1507.72	.297	.141	1.589
Model 2: One-Factor Model	35	548.22	.575	.332	6.14
Model 3: Two-Factor Model	34	79.29	.938	.899	.131
χ^2 Difference Tests					
Model 1–Model 3		11			1428.43 ($p < .01$)
Model 1–Model 2		10			959.50 ($p < .01$)
Model 2–Model 3		1			463.71 ($p < .01$)

Factor Analysis of Causal Attributions (% of variance explained = .60)

I would probably look to blame the lost major account on ...

Factor: Internal Attributions-Motivation (α = .83)	Factor Loadings F1			IIC
a lack of sufficient effort.	**.84**	.05	−.09	.70
working less effectively than the average representative.	**.81**	.12	−.19	.69
the fact that s/he is an unmotivated individual.	**.74**	.28	−.01	.80
this person's usual reluctance to make the required number of sales calls to maintain the types of accounts.	**.74**	.21	−.16	.80

Goodness-of-Fit Summary for Attribution Scale

Model	DF	χ^2	GFI	AGFI	RMSR
Model 1: Error-Only Model	55	679.58	.544	.452	.861
Model 2: One-Factor Model	44	246.42	.811	.716	.352
Model 3: Two-Factor Model	43	208.22	.834	.745	.234
Model 4: Three-Factor	41	92.12	.930	.887	.224

APPENDIX B
Continued

Factor: Internal Attributions-Ability (α = .73)	Factor Loadings F2			IIC
inadequate selling skills for major account presentations.	.23	**.85**	−.02	.68
inadequate product knowledge to sell to this type of customer.	.13	**.80**	−.04	.55
not possessing the personality to develop, or keep strong customer relations.	.21	**.65**	−.10	.46
Factor: External Attributions (α = .54)			**F3**	**IIC**
the lack of our product's competitive advantage in this type of market.	−.05	−.02	**.80**	.46
our support staff, or service department, provided poor service to this customer.	.03	−.24	**.68**	.30
inadequate support provided to this salesperson to maintain the necessary market/ product knowledge.	−.26	.39	**.53**	.27
the excessive competitive intensity in this type of market.	−.30	−.03	**.51**	.28

χ^2 Difference Tests

Model 1–Model 4	14	587.46 ($p < .01$)
Model 2–Model 4	3	154.30 ($p < .01$)
Model 3–Model 4	2	116.10 ($p < .01$)

Factor Analysis of Attributional Process Indicators (% of variance explained = .73)

Factor: Cognitive Effort (α = .77)	Factor Loadings F1		IIC
I would be very careful before I made conclusions in this particular situation.	**.79**	−.19	.58
I would make sure I had all the facts before I made a decision in this case.	**.87**	.02	.60
It is difficult to make a decision without more data.	**.77**	−.34	.62
Factor: Confidence (α = .61)		**F2**	**IIC**
My confidence in this evaluation is high.	−.01	**.90**	.45
The performance information provides adequate information to base a conclusion of this particular salesperson's problems.	−.36	**.75**	.45

Goodness-of-Fit Summary for Attributional Process Scale

Model	DF	χ^2	GFI	AGFI	RMSR
Model 1: Error-Only Model	10	281.61	.604	.406	.893
Model 2: One-Factor Model	5	42.25	.923	.768	.211
Model 3: Two-Factor Model	4	14.34	.975	.905	.108

χ^2 Difference Tests

Model 1–Model 3	6	267.27 ($p < .01$)
Model 1–Model 2	5	239.36 ($p < .01$)

Factor Analysis of Corrective Actions (% of variance explained = .60)

Factor: Coercive Actions (α = .80)	Factor Loadings F1			IIC
Threaten to fire this salesperson.	**.74**	−.24	−.14	.66
Scold this salesperson.	**.75**	.07	.05	.53
Fire this salesperson.	**.68**	−.26	−.10	.58
Deduct a portion of salary.	**.68**	−.40	.07	.64
Threaten to deduct salary.	**.61**	−.36	−.20	.56
Transfer this salesperson to another territory.	**.66**	.09	.24	.43

Goodness-of-Fit Summary for Corrective Actions Scale

Model	DF	χ^2	GFI	AGFI	RMSR
Model 1: Error-Only Model	55	634.39	.535	.442	.476
Model 2: Two-Factor Model	43	110.57	.912	.865	.138
Model 3: Three-Factor Model	41	80.43	.937	.899	.092

Factor: Nonpunitive Actions (α = .71)	Factor Loadings			
		F2		IIC
Counsel this salesperson.	−.22	**.80**	−.07	.60
Meet with this salesperson to discuss possible problems.	.07	**.78**	−.05	.50
Encourage this salesperson to improve.	−.11	**.69**	−.29	.51
Factor: No Action (α = .53)			**F3**	**IIC**
Do nothing at all.	.04	−.08	**.83**	.38
Take no immediate action.	−.07	−.19	**.74**	.38

		χ^2 Difference Tests
Model 1–Model 3	14	553.96 ($p < .01$)
Model 1–Model 2	12	523.82 ($p < .01$)
Model 2–Model 3	2	30.14 ($p < .01$)

[a]IIC = Interitem correlations.
[b]DF = Degrees of freedom.
[c]GFI = Goodness-of-fit index.
[d]AGFI = Adjusted goodness-of-fit index.
[e]RMSR = Root mean square residual.

REFERENCES

Armstrong, J. Scott and Terry Overton (1977), "Estimating Nonresponse Bias in Mail Surveys," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14 (August), 396–402.

Atkin, Robert S. and Edward J. Conlon (1978), "Behaviorally-Anchored Rating Scales: Some Theoretical Issues," *Academy of Management Review*, 3 (January), 119–28.

Anderson, Paul F. and Terry Chambers (1985), "A Reward/Measurement Model of Organizational Buying Behavior," *Journal of Marketing*, 49 (Spring), 7–23.

Bernadin, H. John and C. S. Walter (1977), "Effects of Rater Training and Diary Keeping on Psychometric Error in Ratings," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 62 (February), 64–69.

Bettman, James R., Eric J. Johnson, and John W. Payne (1990), "A Componential Analysis of Cognitive Effort in Choice," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 45 (February), 111–39.

Cardy, Robert L. and Gregory H. Dobbins (1986), "Affect and Appraisal Accuracy: Liking as an Integral Dimension in Evaluating Performance," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71 (4), 672–78.

Cialdini, Robert (1984), *Influence: The New Psychology of Modern Persuasion*. New York: Quill.

Cohen, Claudia (1981), "Person Categories and Social Perception: Testing Some Boundaries of the Processing Effects of Prior Knowledge," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40 (March), 441–52.

Cohen, Jacob (1960), "A Coefficient of Agreement for Nominal Scales," *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 20 (Winter), 37–46.

Crocker, Jennifer, Darlene B. Hannah, and Renee Weber (1983), "Person Memory and Causal Attributions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44 (January), 55–66.

Crouch, Andrew and Philip Yetton (1988), "Manager-Subordinate Dyads: Relationships Among Task and Social Contact, Manager Friendliness and Subordinate Performance in Management Groups," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 41 (February), 65–82.

Dillman, Donald A. (1978), *Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Dubinsky, Alan J., Stephen J. Skinner, and Tommy E. Whittler (1989), "Evaluation of Sales Personnel: An Attribution Theory Perspective," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 9 (Spring), 9–21.

Fedor, Donald B. and Kendrith M. Rowland (1989), "Investigating Supervisor Attributions of Subordinate Performance," *Journal of Management*, 15 (September), 405–16.

Feldman, Jack M. (1981), "Beyond Attribution Theory: Cognitive Processes in Performance Appraisal," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 66 (April), 127–48.

Ferber, Robert C. (1983), "Solving Sales Management Problems with Quantitative Research," in *Sales Manager's Handbook*, Edwin E. Bobrow and Larry Wizenberg, eds. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin, 477–98.

Fiol, C. Marlene and Anne S. Huff (1992), "Maps for Managers: Where Are We? Where Do We Go From Here?" *Journal of Management Studies*, 29 (May), 267–85.

Fiske, Carol and Shelley E. Taylor (1991), *Social Cognition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Forward, John, Rachelle Canter, and Ned Kirsch (1976), "Role-Enactment and Deceptive Methodologies: Alternative Paradigms?" *American Psychologist*, 31 (August), 595–604.

Futrell, Charles A., A. Parasuraman, and Jeffrey Sager (1983), "Sales Force Evaluation With Expectancy Theory," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 12 (April), 125–29.

Gardner, Meryl P. and George J. Siomkos (1985), "Toward A Methodology for Assessing Effects of In-Store Atmospherics," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 13, Richard Lutz, ed. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 27–31.

Geller, Daniel M. (1978), "Involvement in Role-Playing Simulations: A Demonstration with Studies on Obedience," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36 (March), 219–35.

Gentry, James W., John C. Mowen, and Lori Tasaki (1991), "Salesperson Evaluation: A Systematic Structure for Reducing Judgmental Biases," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 11 (Spring), 27–38.

Gioia, Dennis A. and Henry P. Sims, Jr. (1986), "Cognition-Behavior Connections: Attribution and Verbal Behavior in Leader-Subordinate Interactions," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 37 (April), 197–229.

Graen, George and James F. Cashman (1975), "A Role-Making Model of Leadership in Formal Organizations: A Developmental Approach," in *Leadership Frontiers*, James Hunt and Lars L. Larson, eds. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 143–65.

Green, Stephen P. and Terence R. Mitchell (1979) "Attributional Processes of Leaders in Leader-Member Interactions," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 23 (December), 429–58.

Green, Susan K., Mary Ann Lightfoot, Carole Bandy, and Dale Richard Buchanan (1985), "A General Model of the Attribution Process," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 6 (June), 159–79.

Hastak, Manoj and Jerry C. Olson (1989), "Assessing the Role of Brand-Related Cognitive Responses as Mediators of Commu-

nication Effects on Cognitive Structure," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (March), 444–56.

Heider, Fritz (1958), *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Hilton, Denis, J. and Joseph M. F. Jaspars (1987), "The Explanation of Occurrences and Non-Occurrences: A Test of the Inductive Logic Model of Causal Attribution," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 26 (September), 189–201.

——— and Ben R. Slugoski (1986), "Knowledge-Based Causal Attribution: The Abnormal Conditions Focus Model," *Psychological Review*, 93 (January), 75–88.

Hughes, Marie Adele and Dennis E. Garrett (1990), "Intercoder Reliability Estimation Approaches in Marketing: A Generalizability Theory Framework for Quantitative Data," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 27 (May), 185–95.

Ilgen, Daniel R. and Jack M. Feldman (1983), "Performance Appraisal: A Process Focus," in *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Barry M. Staw, ed. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press Inc., 141–97.

Jackson, Donald W., Jr., Janet E. Keith, and John L. Schlacter (1983), "Evaluation of Selling Performance: A Study of Current Practices," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 3 (November), 43–51.

Jaspers, Joseph M. F. (1983), "The Process of Attribution," in *Attribution Theory: Social and Functional Extensions*, Miles R. C. Hewstone, ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Jaworski, Bernard J. and Ajay K. Kohli (1991), "Supervisory Feedback: Alternative Types and Their Impact on Salespeople's Performance and Satisfaction," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28 (May), 190–201.

Jones, Edward E. and Keith E. Davis (1965), "From Acts to Dispositions: The Attribution Process in Person Perception," in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Leonard Berkowitz, ed. New York: General Learning Press, 219–66.

Kelley, Harold H. (1967), "Attribution Theory in Social Psychology," in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, David Levine, ed. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 192–238.

Kingstrom, Paul O. and Larry E. Mainstone (1985), "An Investigation of the Rater-Ratee Acquaintance and Rater Bias," *Academy of Management Journal*, 28 (September), 641–53.

Lamber, Alan J. and Douglas H. Wedell (1991), "The Self and Social Judgment: Effects of Affective Reaction and 'Own Position' on Judgments of Unambiguous and Ambiguous Information About Others," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61 (December), 884–97.

Larson, James R., Jr. (1984), "The Performance Feedback Process: A Preliminary Model," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 33 (February), 42–76.

Latham, Gary P. and Kenneth N. Wexley (1977), "Behavioral Observation Scales for Performance Appraisal Purposes," *Personnel Psychology*, 30 (Summer), 255–68.

Liden, Robert C. and George Graen (1980), "Generalizability of the Vertical Dyad Linkage Model of Leadership," *Academy of Management Journal*, 23 (September), 451–65.

McCroskey, James C. and Thomas A. McCain (1974), "The Measurement of Interpersonal Attraction," *Speech Monographs*, 41 (August), 261–66.

McKay, Sandra, Joseph F. Hair, Jr., Mark W. Johnston, and Daniel L. Sherrell (1991), "An Exploratory Investigation of Reward and Corrective Responses to Salesperson Performance: An Attributional Approach," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 11 (Spring), 39–48.

Mitchell, Terence R., Stephen G. Green, and Robert E. Wood (1981), "An Attributional Model of Leadership and the Poor Performing Subordinate," in *Research in Organizational Behavior*, Larry L. Cummings and Barry M. Staw, eds. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press Inc., 197–234.

Mowen, John C., Keith J. Fabes, and Raymond W. LaForge (1986), "Effects of Effort, Territory Situation, and Rater on Salespeople Evaluation," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 6 (May), 1–8.

———, Stephen W. Brown, and Donald W. Jackson, Jr. (1980/81), "Cognitive Biases in Sales Management Evaluations," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 1 (Fall/Winter), 83–88.

———, Janet E. Keith, Stephen W. Brown, and Donald W. Jackson, Jr. (1985), "Utilizing Effort and Task Difficulty Information in Evaluating Salespeople," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22 (May), 185–91.

Podsakoff, Phillip M. and Scott B. MacKenzie, (1994), "Organizational Citizenship Behaviors and Sales Unit Effectiveness," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31 (August), 351–63.

Perdue, Barbara C. and John O. Summers (1986), "Checking the Success of Manipulations in Marketing Experiments," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28 (November), 317–26.

Regan, Dennis T., Ellen Straus, and Russell Fazio (1974), "Liking and the Attribution Process," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 10 (July), 385–97.

Singh, Jagdip (1993), "Boundary Role Ambiguity: Facets, Determinants, and Impacts," *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (April), 1–31.

Tanner, John F., Jr. and Stephen B. Castleberry (1990), "Vertical Exchange Quality and Performance: Studying the Role of the Sales Manager," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 10 (Spring), 17–27.

Teas, Kenneth R. and James C. McElroy (1986), "Causal Attributions and Expectancy Estimates: A Framework for Understanding the Dynamics of Salesforce Motivation," *Journal of Marketing*, 50 (January), 75–86.

Tsui, Anne S. and Bruce Barry (1986), "Interpersonal Affect and Rating Errors," *Academy of Management Journal*, 29 (September), 586–99.

Tversky, Amos and David Kahneman (1974), "Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases," *Science*, 185, 1124–31.

Weiner, Bernard (1972), *Theories of Motivation: From Mechanism to Cognition*. Chicago: Markham.

——— (1980), "A Cognitive (Attribution)-Emotion-Action Model of Motivated Behavior: An Analysis of Judgments," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39 (February), 186–200.

——— (1983), "Some Methodological Pitfalls in Attributional Research," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 75 (August), 530–43.

Winer, B. J. (1971), *Statistical Principles in Experimental Design*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Wong, Paul T. P. and Bernard Weiner (1981), "When People Ask 'Why' Questions, and the Heuristics of Attributional Search," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40 (April), 650–53.

Wright, Peter (1980), "Message-Evoked Thoughts: Persuasion Research Using Thought Verbalizations," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 7 (September), 151–75.