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**ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SALES PERFORMANCE:  
A TEST OF THE SOCIAL STYLE MODEL**

by

**Frank M. Gambino**

**A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Education  
Department of Educational Leadership**

**Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
December 1993**

## **ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SALES PERFORMANCE: A TEST OF THE SOCIAL STYLE MODEL**

**Frank M. Gambino, Ed.D.**

**Western Michigan University, 1993**

The Social Style Model served as the central theoretical framework of this study. The purpose of this study was twofold:

1. To assess whether performance evaluations of salespeople are related (a) to their social styles, (b) to the social styles of the sales managers who supervise their work, or (c) to the differences between their social styles and the styles of their sales supervisors.
2. To test the assumption that self-evaluations of social style are often significantly different from evaluations supplied by others who are familiar with a person's behavior.

Two types of empirical data were collected: (1) measures of three social style variables--assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility--for salespeople and sales supervisors, and (2) measures of salespeople's overall job performance. Job performance was assessed using both self-ratings and supervisory ratings on five constructs of sales performance: (1) ability to meet sales objectives, (2) technical knowledge and application of that knowledge, (3) control of company expenses, (4) information processing, and (5) presentation skills. Social style was assessed using

self-, peer and supervisory ratings.

Mail surveys were sent to 47 sales directors (supervisors) and to 170 sales account executives (salespeople) at four Midwestern food brokerage organizations. A nonprobability judgment sample was used to select the four participating organizations for this study. The survey had a response rate of 77%.

The study found a positive correlation between salesperson versatility and job performance; however, supervisory versatility was not related to salesperson performance. Evidence was found that salesperson job performance was significantly different by the social style of the salesperson, but not significantly different by the social style of the supervisors. The study suggests that the more similar a salesperson be to his or her supervisor's social style, the more likely one is to receive more favorable performance evaluations.

Self-reports were found to differ significantly from supervisory evaluations for overall measures of sales performance. Self-ratings for assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility were found significantly different, in an upward direction, from both peer and supervisory ratings. Peer ratings were found to differ significantly, in an upward direction, from supervisory ratings.

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**Gambino, Frank Michael, Ed.D.**

**Western Michigan University, 1993**

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## **DEDICATION**

**To my three daughters, Jenna, Jillian, and Julie-Ann. May the memories of my absence during the writing of this research be replaced with new memories of love and adventure.**

**Love Dad.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

So many people have touched my life and contributed in some way to making the research you are now holding possible. Like a puzzle, each person contributed a vital piece that made the end product a reality.

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Frank M. Gambino

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"People who have a greater awareness of the communicative significance of actions...can be more successful...in work that involves the persuasion, leadership, and organization of others...Most can benefit from a greater awareness of their social style, the effect it has on casual and brief interactions with others, or its more general effect on their social life."

---Albert Mehrabian

Author of *Silent Messages*

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Both leadership and personal selling are influence processes. Harry Truman underscored this when he observed that persuasion is what Presidents spend most of their time doing (Neustadt, 1960). Effective leaders persuade their followers to undertake specific actions. Effective salespeople persuade customers to purchase specific products.

Analyzing the individual styles of effective leaders has long intrigued academicians and practitioners (Butler & Reese, 1991). A similar interest--the individual styles of effective sales supervisors and productive salespeople--has long held the interest of those who study sales management. Indeed, it is hardly coincidental that there has been, as Weitz (1981) noted, a number of parallels in the history of research in the leadership and sales management areas.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, researchers began paying more attention to the influence of situational factors on leader effectiveness. Fielder's Contingency Theory, for example, focuses on how leader effectiveness is influenced by specific "task" and "relationship" factors (Fielder, 1978). The Hershey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Model (1982) is another popular paradigm that focuses on task and relationship variables.

The situational approach, Weitz (1981) said, also provides a useful framework for the analysis of behavior in the sales environment. This study's central theoretical framework, the Social Style Model developed by Wilson Learning (Wenschlag, 1989), is rooted in situational leadership theory. The present study focused specifically on the social styles of sales supervisors and the salespeople whose work they supervise. Because leadership, sales management, and personal selling are all influence processes, the findings of this study may be especially relevant to those whose interests reside in any one or all of these areas. Social style and communication style are referred to interchangeably in the literature as well as in this study.

The purpose of this first chapter is to outline briefly the major topic of this study, to identify its major objectives, and to structure the overall research problem of the study in terms of specific hypotheses. The methodology employed is also described.

### Background of the Research Problem

Sheth wrote in 1975 that the extent of empirical research on buyer-seller interaction, from the perspective of interpersonal communication, was sparse. A number of others continued to agree with this assessment (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Notarantonio & Quigley, 1990; Spiro & Perreault, 1979; Weitz, 1984; Williams & Spiro, 1985).

Empirical work has focused primarily on the content dimension of buyer-seller



communication (Notarantonio & Quigley, 1990). Increasing attention, however, has been paid to social style. This was a welcome development because, as Sheth (1975) and others (Dwyer et al., 1987; Weitz, 1984) underscored, satisfactory exchange normally takes place if and only if the buyer and the salesperson are compatible with respect to both the content and style of communication. Success in selling depends on successful interpersonal communication--and if we want to understand what accounts for a successful sales transaction, the role of social style cannot be ignored. The same can be said, of course, about successful leadership and successful sales management. Both content and style must be studied.

Sheth (1975) noted that vast literature on interpersonal relationships and small group communication exists. This literature, he said, could prove to be valuable and it has been in exploring the role of social style in buyer-seller interactions. A number of different interpersonal communication frameworks and models have attracted attention. One model in particular, the Social Style Model, has found favor among authors of textbooks on personal selling as well as corporate sales training professionals.

According to the Social Style Model, two behavioral characteristics--assertiveness and responsiveness--define the distinctive social styles people use during interactions with others. These two dimensions categorize an individual into one of the four quadrants of a Social Style Matrix (see Figure 1). An understanding of the Social Style Model can help a person increase his or her effectiveness in dealing with others (Brennan, 1983; Cunningham, 1988; Jackson, 1985; Manning & Reece, 1992;

Marks, 1985; Pederson, Wright, & Weitz, 1988).

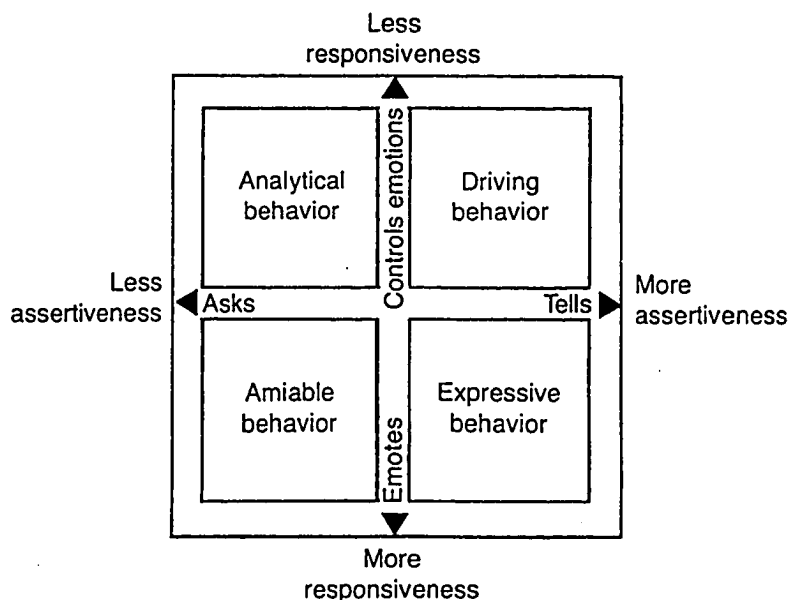


Figure 1. Social Style Matrix (Merrill & Reid, 1981).

Source: Merrill, D. W. & Reid, R. H. (1981). Personal Styles and Effective Performance, p. 53. Copyright by Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Company.  
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Although the genesis of social style theory can be traced back as far as Jung, most references are made to the seminal work of Merrill and Reid (1981) and Wilson Learning (Wenschlag, 1989). Other than their work, however, there has been very little in the way of published empirical studies assessing the Social Style Model with salespeople from an actual work setting. A major objective of the present study was to use the Social Style Model to assess whether style differences are related to differences in performance evaluations given by sales supervisors to the salespeople

they supervise. Primary data to test the study's research hypotheses were collected from sales supervisors and salespeople in selected food brokerage organizations.

### The Social Style Model

The Social Style Model developed by Wilson Learning (Wenschlag, 1989) is rooted in situational leadership theory as well as the work on communication styles by Merrill and Reid (1981). The Wilson Learning version of the Social Style Model has received considerable attention in the sales management literature. It is used by a number of the leading sales training organizations in the U.S. The Social Style Model serves as the central theoretical framework of this study. While a number of different labels have been applied to the two key dimensions of the Social Style Model, the conceptual base is largely the same. The two key variables, as indicated above, are assertiveness and responsiveness.

Assertiveness, represented on the horizontal axis in Figure 1, is defined by Knapp (1978, p. 285) as the "observable and measurable effort" one makes to control and influence others. Snavely (1978) referred to assertive behavior in terms of stating opinions and beliefs with assurance, confidence, or force. Wenschlag (1989) defined assertiveness as the degree to which a person is perceived as attempting to influence the thoughts and actions of others.

Assertive people tend to be forceful, independent, and competitive. A person classified high in assertiveness is generally a "take charge" type of person. The high-assertive supervisor or leader is more likely to act in an authoritative manner--"telling

individuals what to do"--while the less-assertive manager or leader is more likely to "ask" or seek individuals' consensus. Less-assertive individuals tend not to seek direct control of others' actions (Snavey, 1978).

The second dimension of the Social Style Model is responsiveness, and it is represented on the vertical axis in Figure 1. Responsiveness indicates how much feeling a person tends to display to others (Merrill & Reid, 1981). The responsive individual openly expresses his or her emotions through verbal and nonverbal behavior. Responsive people tend to express their feelings freely, while people who are less responsive tend to control the outward expression of emotions.

Margerison (1979) stated that high responsiveness reflects a person's preference for spending time interacting with other people. Low responsiveness, in contrast, is an indicator of a person's desire to work in an environment where he or she spends more time alone than interacting with others.

When assertiveness and responsiveness are considered simultaneously, as Figure 1 illustrates, four distinct communication or "social" styles result (Merrill & Reid, 1981). Figure 1 thus provides a framework for categorizing individuals' dominant social styles. These four social styles are labeled: Analytical, Driver, Expressive, and Amiable. As Figure 1 shows, Analyticals are individuals low in both responsiveness and assertiveness. Amiables are high in responsiveness but low in assertiveness. Expressives are high in both responsiveness and assertiveness. Lastly, Drivers are low in responsiveness but high in assertiveness.

Knapp (1978) suggested that there are four "specialties" associated with each

social style.

1. The Driver is seen as a control specialist. This person is highly assertive but tends to control emotional responses--and much of his or her behavior is task-oriented.

2. The Expressive is seen as a social specialist. Much of his or her behavior is seen as impulsive.

3. The Amiable is seen as a support specialist, which reflects his or her high responsiveness and low assertiveness.

4. The Analytical, like the Driver, is a task-oriented individual. But he or she is not assertive--and is referred to as a technical specialist.

Manning and Reece (1992) listed the following key characteristics of the four social styles:

1. Expressive: excitable, outspoken, enthusiastic, stimulating; wants to create a social relationship quickly and usually feels more comfortable in an informal atmosphere.

2. Analytical: reserved, cautious, displays a preference for orderliness, expresses measured opinions, seems difficult to get to know.

3. Amiable: gives the appearance of being quiet and reserved, listens attentively to others, makes decisions in a deliberate and thoughtful manner, seldom draws attention to what he or she has accomplished.

4. Driver: tends to be aggressive, pushy, impatient, and opinionated; may appear to be quite busy; may give the impression of not listening; displays a serious

attitude.

Merrill and Reid (1981) provided a lengthy list of the common characteristics of each of the four social styles. These characteristics are discussed in detail in Chapter II.

Having described the Social Style Model and the key characteristics of the four social styles defined by the Model, there are two other important features of social style theory that need to be discussed here: social style congruency and social style versatility.

### Social Style Congruency

Everyone, it is assumed, has one most preferred and habitually used social style. This style can, however, serve as a barrier to effective communications with others (Merrill & Reid, 1981). When one interacts with someone with a different social style, the likelihood of tension increases because people with different social styles manage interpersonal conflict differently. This, according to Merrill and Reid (1981), decreases the likelihood of a productive relationship. In other words, it is assumed that if there is congruency between social styles, a productive relationship is more likely (Weitz, 1984).

When the social styles of a buyer and a seller are not congruent, it will be more difficult, presumably, to establish rapport (Manning & Reece, 1992) and any number of common mistakes might be made. In a sales setting, for example, the dialogue may be too fast (or too slow). The prospect may be given too much (or too

little) information. The salesperson may ask for decisions too quickly (or too slowly). The salesperson may provide personal assurances when the prospect instead wants concrete evidence. The salesperson may misuse time by demonstrating his or her expertise when the prospect would prefer to know the salesperson's trustworthiness.

McIntyre, Lewis, and Meloche (1992) agreed with Merrill and Reid that style congruency is important. Customers, they said, prefer salespeople who are similar to them in terms of social style. Some question this assumption, however. Mayo, Lee, and Reck (1991), for example, found that although subjects in their study may have had preferences in their choice of people to whom they would sell a product, these preferences were most often for customers with different social styles.

Researchers in such fields as counseling, education, and communications have suggested that some differences in social styles lead to more productive interactions than when there is total congruence of styles. Style differences, the reasoning goes, allow each partner to bring different strengths to an interaction that may offset the weaknesses of the other party (Garrison, 1970; Howes, 1983; Jackson, 1985; Mendelsohn, 1966; Mendelsohn & Geller, 1965, 1967; Nutt, 1986; Yeakley, 1982, 1983). For example, an Analytical's innate caution and deliberate tempo, when coupled with a Driver's impatience and desire to get things done quickly, may result in more effective decision making.

### Social Style and Versatility

When an Analytical and a Driver interact, there is the potential for tension.

As suggested above, however, it is possible for them to work together effectively. This requires what is called style flexing or versatility. Those who can modify their social styles to conform, to one degree or another, to the styles of those with whom they interact are said to be versatile. They are able to communicate more effectively because of this versatility (Manning & Reece, 1992; Pederson et al., 1988).

Versatility requires one to understand his or her own normal communication style and to recognize the communication styles of those with whom they interact. These skills can be learned--and one can also learn to adapt or modify his or her own communication behavior. Salespeople, for example, can be taught the rules (cues) for classifying customers as well as the "contingency sales approaches" to use when interacting with customers whose social styles differ from their own (Weitz, 1984).

Knowledge of social styles can be especially important to supervisors and executives whose leadership responsibilities require them to supervise, monitor, and motivate subordinates who function with considerable autonomy. This could include teachers, college professors, and research scientists, as well as salespeople. Understanding social styles enables a leader--for example, a principal, a dean, a department head, a sales manager--to exercise versatility in interpersonal communications with subordinates.

In addition to responsiveness and assertiveness scales, Merrill and Reid (1981) developed a separate scale for measuring versatility. Their research found that high achievers display a great deal more style flexibility than others. Other researchers reported that versatility varies among different social styles (Snively, 1978).



Lashbrook, Knutson, Parsley and Wenbrug (1976) found that the two responsive social styles (Amiables and Expressives) are perceived as more versatile than the two less responsive styles (Analyticals and Drivers). Sullivan (1977) not only found versatility to be greater among the more responsive styles, but also reported that Expressives are the most versatile of the four social styles.

### Importance and Purpose of the Study

The Social Style Model has attracted considerable attention in the sales and sales management literature, and many believe it offers a practical framework for improving interpersonal communications. There has been very little in the way of published empirical work, however, that evaluates social style theory or tests the underlying assumptions of the Merrill and Reid and Wilson Learning formulations of the Social Style Model. Moreover, little, if anything, has been written about social style theory as it relates to the interaction between sales supervisors and the salespeople whose work they supervise.

The purpose of this study was twofold:

1. To use the Wilson Learning version of the Social Style Model to assess whether the performance evaluations of salespeople are related (a) to their social styles, (b) to the social styles of the sales managers who supervise their work, or (c) to the differences between their social styles and the styles of their sales supervisors.

This objective will fill an important void in the current literature by shedding light on the nature of the interpersonal relationship between sales supervisors and the

salespeople they supervise. This relationship has not been studied from the perspective of interpersonal communications or social style. The findings of this study should be of importance to those interested in social style theory, the sales management function, and leadership.

2. To test one of the key underlying assumptions of the Social Style Model; that is, the assumption that self-evaluations of social style are often significantly different from evaluations supplied by others who are familiar with a person's behavior (Merrill & Reid, 1981).

This is an important methodological issue that warrants attention in this as well as other social style studies. Previous research on the issue of self-reports vs. third-party reports has been mixed (Mayo et al., 1991).

### Research Hypotheses

The following five central research hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between a sales supervisor's perception of a salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's performance evaluation of that person.

2. Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between a sales supervisor's composite versatility score and the performance evaluations given to his or her salespeople.

3. Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant difference between supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles match their

supervisors' social styles and supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles do not match those of their supervisors.

4. Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant difference in mean performance scores for supervisory-rated and self-rated measures of performance when social styles between the supervisor and salesperson match versus do not-match.

5. Hypothesis 5: There will be a significant difference in supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople, related to differences in the social styles of the sales supervisor.

Each of these hypotheses dealt with the performance evaluations of salespeople and the relationship of these evaluations with the social styles of the salespeople and the sales managers who supervise their work.

Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8 dealt with self-reports vs. third-party reports of social style. As indicated above, these three hypotheses have methodological significance to this study.

6. Hypothesis 6: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for responsiveness and mean responsiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

7. Hypothesis 7: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for assertiveness and mean assertiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

8. Hypothesis 8: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for versatility and mean versatility scores given by peers and supervisors.

### General Statement of Methodology

To test the eight research hypotheses listed above, the study was designed to gather and to analyze social style and performance evaluation data from sales supervisors and salespeople working for four different Midwestern food brokerage firms. Questionnaires were mailed to a total of 217 potential respondents. One hundred sixty-seven usable questionnaires were returned from 127 salespersons and 40 sales supervisors. The high response rate, 77%, was largely the result of the fact that the chief executive officers of the four food brokerage firms supported and encouraged participation in the study by their sales staffs.

Wilson Learning's Social Style Model served as the central theoretical framework for the present study. Permission was received from Wilson Learning Corporation to use its copyrighted Social Impressions questionnaire. This instrument (which measures responsiveness, assertiveness, and versatility) was one major section of the survey questionnaire developed for this study. Both salespeople and sales supervisors were asked to complete the 30-item Likert-type scales on the Social Impressions instrument; this provided a self-report of social style and versatility for each respondent.

Respondents were also asked to evaluate, using the Social Impressions instrument, the social styles of others in their organizations. Each salesperson was asked to evaluate the social style of the sales manager who supervised his or her work, as well as the social styles of two or three other salespeople reporting to the

same sales supervisor. Each sales supervisor, on the other hand, was asked to complete the Social Impressions instrument for each salesperson whose work he or she supervised; in most cases, a sales supervisor was responsible for supervising three or four salespeople.

The purpose of the second major section of the survey questionnaire developed for the present study was to obtain measures of the job performance of the salespeople in the study sample. An adapted performance evaluation instrument from Behrman and Perreault (1982) called the Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory was used by both the salespeople and the sales supervisors. This instrument allowed each salesperson to provide a self-evaluation of his or her own job performance on five key performance categories. Sales supervisors were asked to rate the performance of each salesperson whose work he/she supervised on the same five performance categories.

### Organization of the Study

This first chapter has outlined briefly the major topic of the study, identified its major objectives, and structured the overall research problem of the study in terms of specific hypotheses. It has also described the methodology in general terms.

Chapter II reviews relevant literature dealing with the development and evolution of the Social Style Model, as well as the application of social style theory to personal selling. Literature that addresses leadership and pertinent performance evaluation issues is also reviewed.

The methodological design of the study is described in Chapter III. The statistical procedures employed in the study are discussed in Chapter III and Chapter IV (Statistical Analysis and Findings). Chapter V discusses the conclusions, summary and the implications of the study and identifies suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The study of leadership is characterized by an interesting mix of scholarship, ranging from biographies to psychological profiles. One stream of research on leadership that has attracted perhaps the greatest amount of attention focuses on the unique qualities or traits of effective leaders. Levison and Rosenthal (1984) interviewed the chief executive officers of a number of leading U.S. corporations and identified five specific qualities of an effective leader: (1) the ability to take charge, (2) a strong self-image and a powerful ego ideal, (3) supportive interaction with customers, employees, and others, (4) provides permission to take risks, and (5) is a thinker as well as a doer.

Management theorist Peter Drucker (1973) suggested that successful leaders exhibit a blend of four different kinds of managerial styles. It is rare, Drucker said, to find a perfect combination of all four styles in one person. However, the effective leader will be, to one degree or another, a "people" person, a "thought" person, an "action" person, or a "front" person. These four styles are roughly analogous to the four social styles (Amiable, Analytical, Driver, and Expressive) examined in this study.

Another popular stream of research on leadership focuses on the "techniques"

of leadership. Bennis and Nanus (1985), for example, stated that successful leaders (a) manage attention, (b) manage meaning, (c) manage trust, and (d) manage self.

These and other lists of effective leadership traits are remarkably similar to the characteristics of successful salespeople discussed in the personal selling and sales management literature. This should not be surprising. Both leadership and personal selling are influence processes (Filley, House, & Kerr, 1976). A leader persuades his or her followers to undertake specific actions. A salesperson persuades customers to purchase specific products.

Given the similarity of leadership and personal selling, it is not surprising, Weitz (1981) stated, that the history of research in the two areas has shown remarkable parallels as well. Literature from both disciplines--as well as from the field of communications--is relevant to the present study and is reviewed in this chapter.

The first section of this chapter presents a detailed overview of theoretical and empirical work dealing with the Social Style Model. The second section examines the Social Style Model developed by Wilson Learning (Wenschlag, 1989), which served as the central theoretical framework of this study. The third section of the chapter reviews leadership literature dealing with performance evaluation issues. In the fourth section of this chapter, reliability and validity issues related to the scales used in this study are reviewed.



## Social Style

When psychologists, communication theorists, and others refer to communication style or social style, they are referring to comprehensive, enduring, and observable patterns of interpersonal behavior. These behaviors include everything a person does that is directly observable, including both verbal and nonverbal actions (Bolton & Bolton, 1984; Merrill & Reid, 1981; Norton, 1978, and Wenschlag, 1989). Unlike personality, communication style does not rely on assumptions about one's personal values, beliefs, perceptions, or motivations. Social style, in contrast, focuses on and is described exclusively by observable behaviors. In addition to being directly observable, social style differs from personality in another important way (Darling, 1991). Unlike personality, one can deliberately manipulate his or her social style (Norton, 1978). By manipulating one's social style--that is, by adapting one's style to the needs and styles of those with whom he or she interacts--communication effectiveness can be significantly enhanced (Barbour & Goldberg, 1974). This explains a large part of the increased theoretical and empirical interest in social styles evident in recent years.

There is widespread agreement that two crucial dimensions of observable interpersonal behavior determine and describe one's social style. As noted in Chapter I, these two dimensions of social style are assertiveness and responsiveness. The degree to which a person is perceived as being assertive and responsive determines that person's social style (Alberti & Emmons, 1971; Bolton & Bolton, 1984).

The genesis of Social Style Theory is found in earlier studies of leadership effectiveness. The evolution of this theory follows three different streams of research (Filley et al., 1976), and it is traced in the following sections.

### The Trait Approach

The first research approach, the so-called trait approach, focused on the search for personal traits that differentiate effective and ineffective leaders. Researchers sought to identify correlates of success from among such variables as age, height, weight, sex, race, appearance, education, marital status, number of dependents, club memberships, and other personal characteristics. A recent review of the leadership literature concludes, however, that personal traits have generally proven to be poor predictors of leadership performance or success (Yukl, 1989).

Much of the early empirical work on successful professional selling took the same trait approach (Weitz, 1981). The results here, too, have at best been equivocal (Churchill, Ford, Hartley & Walker, 1985).

### The Behavioral Approach

The search for an explanation of leadership success has also relied on the study of observable behavioral patterns of successful leaders. It is from this behavioral orientation that the first distinct references to social or communication styles are made (Kreitner, 1983; Merrill & Reid, 1981).

In the pursuit of a "one-best-style" theory, the U.S. Office of Naval Research

supported leadership research at Ohio State University in the late 1940s. The Ohio State studies focused on broad issues of effectiveness and the impact of leader behavior on the actions of individual subordinates. This research identified 150 descriptive behaviors which effective leaders seemed to have in common. From these 150 behaviors, two critical dimensions of effective leadership behavior were identified. These two variables--"consideration" and "initiating behavior"--were used to develop a matrix for classifying basic leadership styles. This matrix is shown in Figure 2.

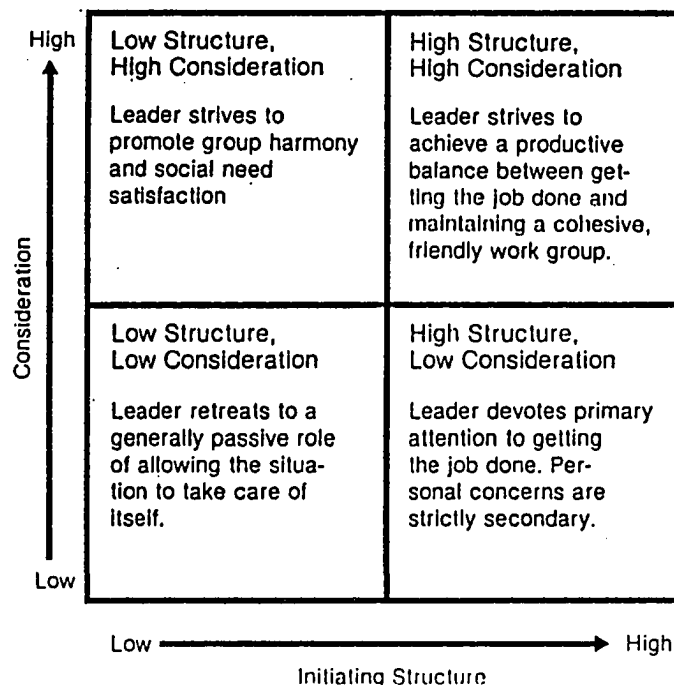


Figure 2. Classification Framework for Basic Leadership Styles (Kreitner, 1983).

Source: Kreitner, R. (1983). Management, (2nd ed.), p. 395. Copyright by Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.  
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A number of studies have been conducted to determine whether any one of the styles suggested by the framework in Figure 2 best describes the behavioral pattern of successful leaders. Results from these studies were mixed and somewhat disappointing (Fleishman, 1953; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Yukl, 1989).

A variation of the Ohio State model was later developed by Blake and Mouton (1980). The two key variables in the modified model are "concern for people" and "concern for production." One version of this modified model is called the "Grid for Sales Excellence" (Blake & Mouton, 1980). The two key variables in this modified model are measured on nine-point scales and are labeled "concern for the customer" and "concern for the sale." These variables are measures of relationship and task orientations. It should be noted that Blake and Mouton are among the few who agreed that there is a "one-best-style" of leadership. They contended that leaders who score high both on the relationship and the task variables are much more likely to score high on performance measures as well.

While the research at Ohio State University was taking place, similar studies were being conducted at the University of Michigan. This research focused on the interactions among leader behaviors, group behaviors, and employee satisfaction and performance. Like the Ohio State studies, however, this research did not find support for a "one-best-style" theory (Elbert & Discenza 1985; Kreitner, 1983; Yukl, 1989).

In the 1960s, James Taylor, a staff psychologist at Martin Marietta Corporation, tried improving on the Ohio State studies (Tracom, 1991). Taylor replaced the long list of descriptive phrases used in the Ohio State studies with a list

of 150 adjectives that provided accurate and reliable descriptions of individual behavior. Factor analysis reduced these 150 adjectives to five behavioral descriptors: (1) self-confident, (2) considerate, (3) conforming, (4) rigid, and (5) thoughtful. Taylor's work relied on self-perceptions of one's behavior, and it was his adjective list that Merrill and Reid (1981) adopted when they began work in earnest in the late 1960s on a series of communication style studies. Unlike Taylor, however, Merrill and Reid used the perceptions of others to describe a person's behavioral pattern. This led to a set of behavioral clusters that differed significantly from Taylor's.

Specifically, Merrill and Reid identified three critical variables: (1) assertiveness, (2) responsiveness, and (3) versatility. Although different labels are sometimes used when writing about social style, these three variables are generally regarded as the major determinants of one's social style. Together, these three variables define distinct patterns of behavior. Merrill and Reid reported that individuals in their studies tended to rely consistently on the same patterns of behavior when interacting with others (i.e., individuals have unique social style preferences when they interact with others).

### The Situational Approach

The inability of the trait and behavioral approaches to identify a one-best-style of leadership led to a third stream of research (Fielder, 1967; Filley et al., 1976; Hershey & Blanchard, 1982; Yukl, 1989). Beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, researchers took a new approach and included more situational and work

environment factors into their analyses.

Perhaps the most widely researched of the situational theories, Fielder's Contingency Theory, focused on the leadership dimensions of task and relationship motivation. Fielder and Chemers (1974) contended that there are leaders and then there are situations--and the challenge is to match the right style of leader to the situation.

The Hershey and Blanchard (1982) Situational Leadership Model, another situational model popular among industry training practitioners, also focused on task and relationship variables. The model prescribed situationally correct leadership styles based on the maturity level of one's subordinates. Maturity is defined as a subordinate's willingness, ability, and readiness to focus on a task or objective. The degree to which a manager adjusts his or her leadership style to the maturity level of his or her subordinates is referred to as adaptability. The Hershey and Blanchard Model identified four distinct leadership styles, and these are portrayed in Figure 3 (Hershey & Blanchard, 1982).

In addition to the Hershey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Model, there are other popular theories that have focused on situational determinants of leadership effectiveness. These include the Normative Decision Theory (Vroom & Jago, 1988) and Path Goal Theory (Evans, 1970; House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974). These models share a common assumption: Successful leadership occurs when a leader's style matches the situation. Situational-leadership researchers reject the one-best-style theory and stress the need for leaders to be versatile and adaptable to their work

environment (Fielder, 1977; Hershey & Blanchard, 1982; Kreitner, 1983). There is considerable disagreement between those who advocate the situational leadership approach and those who advocate the one-best-style models such as the Managerial Grid developed by Blake and Mouton (1980). Some are troubled by the conceptual weaknesses shared by the situational leadership models. These weaknesses include:

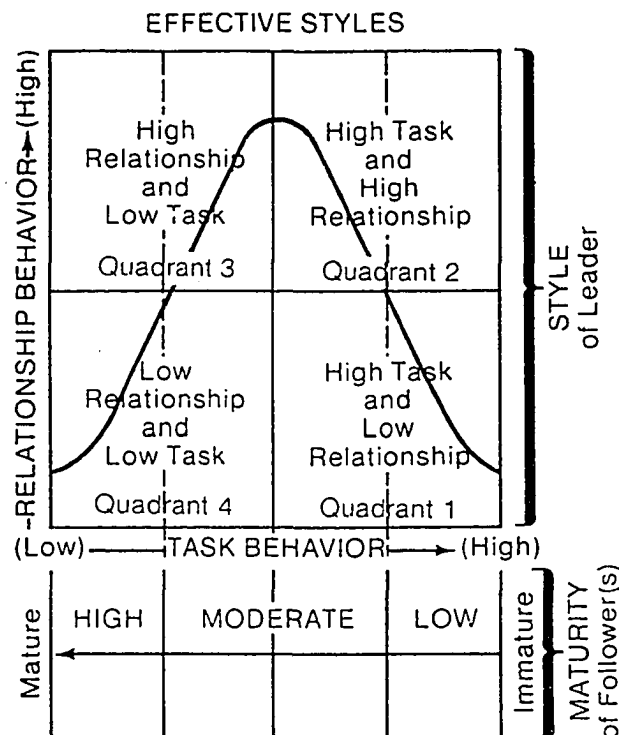


Figure 3. Hershey & Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model (Hershey & Blanchard, 1982).

Source: Hershey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1982). Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources, p. 200. Copyright by Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.  
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ambiguous constructs, oversimplification, lack of intervening explanatory processes, complexity in application, and methodological problems (Yukl, 1989). Others are troubled by the absence of empirical support for the situational leadership models (Butler & Reese, 1991).

In the sales management literature, support exists for the position that one general style of leadership is superior to the situational leadership format. One example of this is the Dimensional Model of Sales Management Behavior described by Buzzotta and Lefton (1982). Others disagree with the notion that one-best-style applies to sales management activities--and directly or indirectly underscore the importance of how sales supervisors and salespeople communicate with each other; that is, on their social styles. Churchill, Ford, and Walker (1985), for example, stated that sales supervisors must tailor their leadership styles to the needs of the people they supervise. Elaborating on this point, Castleberry and Tanner (1986) underscored the importance of the social environment in which a sales force functions--and how this affects the behavior of both sales supervisors and salespeople.

### The Social Style Model

Social Style Theory does not support the one-best-style leadership style argument. Rather, it suggests that the ability to adapt to the situations in which one is placed may very well be the key to leader or management success (Bolton & Bolton, 1984; Merrill & Reid, 1981; Wenschlag, 1989).

As outlined in Chapter I, the Social Style Model developed by Wilson



Learning (Wenschlag, 1989) is the central theoretical framework of this study. The Social Style Model is rooted in situational leadership theory and the seminal work on communication style by Merrill and Reid (1981). The Wilson Learning Model and variations of it are discussed in many of the leading sales and sales management texts and is used by many of the leading sales training organizations in the United States.

This second section of Chapter II reviews personal selling and sales management literature that focused on the application of the Social Style Model to the personal selling function. This review sets the stage for understanding how the Social Style Model might be useful for evaluating the relationships that exist between sales supervisors and professional salespeople.

### Social Style Defined

Social style is a two-dimensional construct that seeks to explain interpersonal communication behavior. The goal of Social Style Theory and research has been to develop and test a simple but effective mechanism for individuals to describe their partner's behavior so they can communicate appropriately (Snaveley & Clatterbuck, 1980). Similar classification systems can be found in the literature by Knapp (1978), Merrill and Reid (1981), Buzzotta and Lefton (1982), and Bolton and Bolton (1984).

The Wilson Learning version of the Social Style Model uses 30 descriptive phrases, each with a seven-point Likert-type scale to measure an individual's assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility. The assertiveness and responsiveness measures are used, in turn, to establish one's dominant social or communication style

(Wenschlag, 1989). The Social Style Profile, discussed in Chapter I, is again reproduced as Figure 4. The 30 descriptive phrases and scales used to classify individuals are shown in Figure 5.

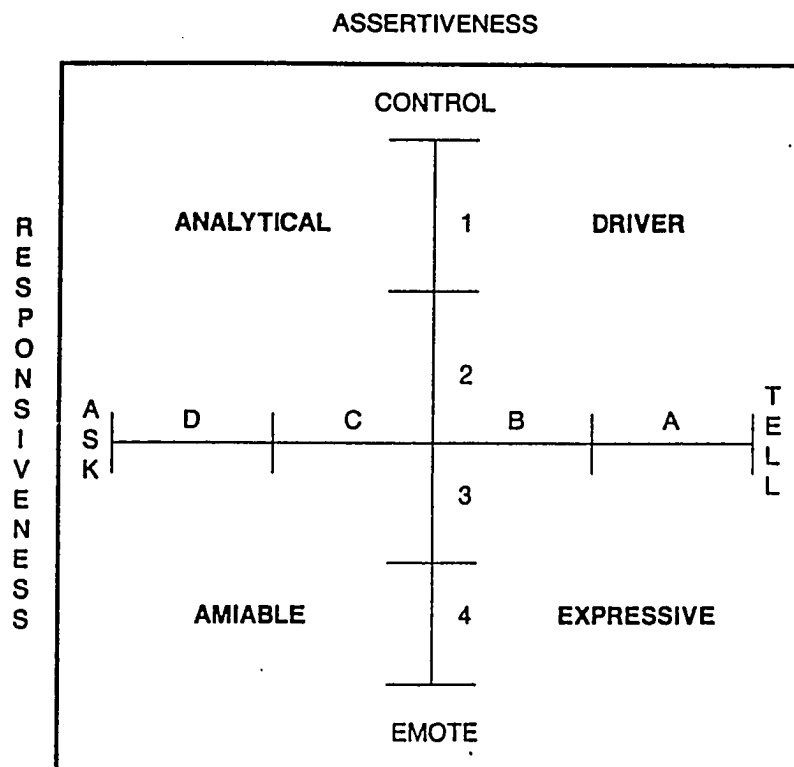


Figure 4. Social Style Profile (Wenschlag, 1989).

Source: Wenschlag, R. (1989). The Versatile Salesperson, p. 32. Copyright by New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.  
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### Social Style Profile Social Impression Survey

Name of the Person who asked you to complete this form: \_\_\_\_\_

Below is a set of words or phrases commonly used in describing people. For each word or phrase, please use the scales to rate the person who asked you to complete this form. Circle the response that most closely fits how you see this person. Remember, you are always making relative judgments when responding to the scales. There are no absolutes, no right answers or wrong answers. Please make sure that you have responded to every scale.

		I see this person as:							I see myself as		
		low							less same more		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3
1.	Is sociable										
2.	Desires to control										
3.	Is trustworthy										
4.	Is flexible										
5.	Needs to compete										
6.	Is willing to negotiate										
7.	Is willing to relate										
8.	Is fair										
9.	Shares feelings										
10.	Has a sense of what is just										
11.	Is warm										
12.	Is a risk-taker										
13.	Is open-minded										
14.	Is aggressive										
15.	Is quiet										
16.	Is reliable										
17.	Is willing to change										
18.	Is dynamic										
19.	Is open										
20.	Is dependable										
21.	Is versatile										
22.	Is approachable										
23.	Takes charge										
24.	Is adaptable										
25.	Is loyal										
26.	Is assertive										
27.	Is tough minded										
28.	Is people oriented										
29.	Is able to cope with situations										
30.	Make people feel comfortable										

Figure 5. Wilson Learning Adjective List and Scales for Social Style Development (1991).

Source: Copyright by Eden Prairie, MN: Wilson Learning Corporation.  
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### Assertiveness and Responsiveness

When the assertiveness and responsiveness dimensions are combined, as suggested by Merrill and Reid (1981), Wenschlag (1989), and others, a two-dimensional matrix results in the identification of four distinct social styles. As Figure 4 indicates, these four social styles are labeled: (1) Analytical, (2) Driver, (3) Expressive, and (4) Amiable. The matrix provides a medium for organizing the dominant behaviors of individuals into four primary social or communication styles.

As shown in Figure 4, Analyticals, located in the upper-left quadrant, are individuals low in both responsiveness and assertiveness. Amiables, located in the lower left-hand quadrant, are high in responsiveness but low in assertiveness. Expressives, located in the lower right-hand quadrant, are high in both responsiveness and assertiveness. Lastly, Drivers, located in the upper right-hand quadrant, are low in responsiveness but high in assertiveness (Knapp, 1978; Merrill & Reid, 1981; Wenschlag, 1989).

Knapp (1978) reported a number of "specialties" for each social style. A Driver's "specialty," for example, is reflected by his or her task-oriented behavior. Drivers are highly assertive but tend to control emotional responses. Drivers are seen as command or control specialists. Expressives are seen as impulsive, but being more relationship-oriented than the Driver, they are perceived as social specialists.

Amiables are seen as soft, personal, and supportive, reflecting high responsiveness, but they display low assertiveness. Amiables are relationship-

orientated are seen as support specialists. Finally, Analyticals are perceived to be controlled and reserved. They are task-oriented, but not in an assertive manner. Analyticals are the technical specialists. Merrill and Reid (1981) provided an in-depth view into the common characteristics of each of the four social styles as depicted in Table 1.

Manning and Reece (1992) offered their perspective into the key characteristics of each of the four social styles. Expressive individuals, Manning and Reece stated, are generally quite excitable, outspoken, enthusiastic, and very stimulating. The Expressive wants to create a social relationship quickly and usually feels more comfortable in an informal atmosphere. Some of the verbal and nonverbal clues that identify the Expressive person are: (a) appears quite active, (b) takes the social initiative in most cases, (c) likes to encourage informality, and (d) expresses emotional opinions.

Driver individuals tend to be aggressive, pushy, impatient, and opinionated. Some of the verbal and nonverbal clues that identify the Driver style include: (a) often appears to be quite busy, (b) may give the impression of not listening, (c) displays a serious attitude, and (d) voices strong opinions.

The Analytical individual tends to examine all the facts carefully before arriving at a decision. Like a cautious scientist, this individual wants to gather all available information and weigh it carefully before taking a position. Due to the Analytical's low assertiveness and low responsiveness, this individual is generally reserved and cautious. Some of the verbal and nonverbal clues that identify the

Table 1  
Social Style Characteristics

ANALYTICAL	DRIVER
<p>Doesn't let feelings hang out. Disciplined. Meticulous--neatly arranged office. Proper Dress. Gathers facts--studies them seriously. Appears to lack enthusiasm. May seem to have analysis paralysis. Will shy away from personal involvements. Disciplined about time and is slow to act. Avoids risks. May appear to nit-pick everything. Expresses measured opinions. Difficult to get to know. Cautious pace. Asks about details. Organized desk. Wall contain charts, graphs, and job-related pictures. Functionally decorated office. Formal seating arrangement that precludes contact.</p>	<p>Cool and tough. Detached and hard. Often runs over things to get results. Independent. Competitive in relationships. Difficult to get close to. Exercises power and control over people and situations. Appears to treat people as things. Businesslike and impersonal. Impatient--Disciplined in use of time. Risk Taker. Likes to make own decisions. Enjoys having power. Strong Opinions. Fast pace. Serious. Not a good listener. Firm Handshake. Desk appears busy. Wall contains achievement awards or planning calendar. Seating --formal, suggests dominance. Office decorated to suggest power/control.</p>
AMIABLE	EXPRESSIVE
<p>Easygoing Friendly Backslapper Warm and Cooperative Close relationship and friendships are important. Likes to belong to groups. Isn't concerned with controlling others. Interested in people as people--their interests, hobbies, family, mutual friends, etc. Concerned more with opinions than facts. Appears slow to take action. Undisciplined about time. Loves to talk and socialize. Is not a risk taker. Has a need to feel safe in decisions. Shares personal feelings. Prefers first names. Great listener. Desk displays family or group pictures, or pastoral settings. Decorates in open, airy, friendly, bright manner. Seating arrangement open and informal.</p>	<p>Warm Personality Communicative Competitive Builds close relationships Stimulating Talks in terms of people instead of things. Has an opinion on everything. Not interested in details. Fast to act. Not concerned with use of time. Very changeable. Takes Risks. Spontaneous. Dramatic. Enthusiastic. Emphatic. Disorganized and cluttered desk. Walls contain awards, motivational or personal slogans, or stimulating posters. Decorates in open, airy, friendly, bright manner. Seating indicates openness and contact.</p>

Source: Adapted from Merrill, D., & Reid, R. H. (1981). Personal Styles and Effective Performance. Copyright by Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Company.

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Analytical's style include: (a) controls emotional expression, (b) displays a preference for orderliness, (c) tends to express measured opinions, and (d) seems difficult to get to know.

The Amiable individual finds it easy to listen and usually doesn't express his or her views in a forceful manner. Low visibility generally characterizes the life-style of Amiables. They complete their tasks in a quiet, unassuming manner and seldom draw attention to what they have accomplished. Some of the verbal and nonverbal clues that identify the Amiable style are: (a) gives the appearance of being quiet and reserved, (b) listens attentively to other people, (c) tends to avoid the use of power, and (d) makes decisions in a thoughtful and deliberate manner.

#### Social Style Bias/Importance of Style Congruence

Several authors have suggested it is dangerous to label any one style as "good" or "bad," as each style has certain strengths and weaknesses that are dependent on the given situation (Merrill & Reid, 1981; Weiss & Mohr, 1992; Wenschlag, 1989). While no one style is considered best, there is the belief that a social style bias occurs when one's social style differs from the social style of another. The rationale for this is the belief that we understand, have empathy for, and are attracted to people who are similar to us. This theory suggests that we are better able to understand the needs and problems of others, communicate more effectively, and have greater influence over those with similar styles, personalities and backgrounds as our own. Manning and Reece (1992) suggested that the theory of behavioral or social-style bias is based

on four theoretical assumptions. These four assumptions are:

1. Individuals differ in their behaviors much as they do in their physical characteristics. Individual behaviors such as voice projection, eye contact, facial expressions, posture, decision making and other non-verbal behaviors are as different as one's personal characteristics such as height, weight, race, and physique.

2. According to Jung (1923), one's social style begins to develop almost at birth. By age five, most individuals have developed a distinct and identifiable style which remains relatively constant throughout life.

3. Most individuals exhibit distinct behaviors that allow researchers to categorize them into one of several communication categories or styles. While individuals may exhibit an infinite number of personality traits, they can be grouped into a small number of behavioral categories.

4. Judgments are often made based on how others perceive us. Thus, the behaviors that comprise our social style are important in determining how we will be received by others.

The literature regarding the importance of style congruence within relationships is divided. Jung's (1923) theory of psychological types was one of the first to postulate that because people differ systematically in what they perceive and in conclusions they come to, then, as a result, they may show corresponding differences in their interests, values, needs, and motivations.

Evans (1963) hypothesized that similarity between the characteristics of the buyer and seller would lead to greater sales. Though his findings were inconclusive,



his research popularized the dyadic approach. Churchill, Collins, and Strand (1975) found a positive correlation between buyer/seller similarity and purchase behavior of the buyer; however, only 2% of the variance in the purchase amount could be explained by buyer/seller similarity.

Merrill and Reid (1981) found support for the contention that people with differing social styles manage their interpersonal relationships in dissimilar manners. Their findings suggest that everyone has one most preferred or dominant social style and that when interactions between individuals with dissimilar social styles occur the likelihood of tension increases. Weitz (1984) stated that where congruency exists in styles, a productive relationship is more likely. Manning and Reece (1992) suggested that when the social styles of two individuals are not congruent, it will presumably be more difficult to establish rapport.

Anderson (1991) said that when social style differences between individuals are present, tension or conflict is likely to occur in reference to the pace and/or priority placed on actions within a work environment. Pace is defined as the speed in which a person moves. Individuals high in assertiveness prefer a fast pace in thinking, talking, and decision making, while those low in assertiveness prefer a slower pace. Priorities identify what an individual considers important. Individuals low in responsiveness are more likely to consider goals, objectives and task attainment as important, while individuals high in responsiveness are more likely to place a higher priority on relationships with other people. Table 2 illustrates how individual styles compare to each other and where potential areas of conflict and agreement are likely.

Table 2

**Paired Social Styles--Potential  
Agreement and Conflict**

STYLE MATCHUP	SHARED QUALITIES	AREA OF AGREEMENT	AREA OF CONFLICT
Amiable with Expressive	High Responsiveness	Priorities	Pace
Analytical with Driver	Low Responsiveness	Priorities	Pace
Amiable with Analytical	Low Assertiveness	Pace	Priorities
Expressive with Driver	High Assertiveness	Pace	Priorities
Amiable with Driver	None	None	Pace & Priorities
Expressive with Analytical	None	None	Pace & Priorities

Source: Anderson, R. (1991). Professional Personal Selling, p. 209. Copyright by Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Publishing.  
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McIntyre et al. (1992) supported the importance of congruence in styles between sales personnel and buying prospects. They suggested that prospects prefer sales people who are similar in communication (social) styles and least prefer sellers who are opposite from their style. The basis for these assumptions is that people are inflexible and will not adjust to the style differences of others. Sheth (1975) proposed that for a satisfactory relationship to exist, both the buyer and seller must be compatible in content and style of communication. Content compatibility focuses on what the buyer wants versus what the seller is offering. Both content and style

compatibility are influenced by personal, organizational, and product-related factors.

An organization's culture may influence the type of products and behaviors that are acceptable. Lashbrook, Lashbrook, Bacon, Salinger and Thomas (1978) found positive support for having dissimilar social styles on a debate team. Their findings suggest that the differing styles of team members bring positive results in performance due to the differences in debate preparation. The team approach, as used in debate, may provide an analogous environment such as that found in the sales management environment.

Several studies crossing various disciplines have found that social style diversity allows individuals with differing strengths to complement the unique capabilities of their communication partner (Garrison, 1970; Howes, 1983; Jackson, 1985; Mendelsohn, 1966; Mendelsohn & Geller, 1965, 1967; Myers & Myers, 1980; Nutt, 1986; Yeakley, 1982, 1983;). Other research has suggested that when given an opportunity to select one's partner, the preference is frequently for a partner with a different style, lending some credence to the cliché that "opposites attract" (Mayo et al., 1991; Weitz, 1981).

The implications of the above research might suggest that sales supervisors should hire individuals with similar social style characteristics as the prospects they call upon. Since salespeople generally do not have the luxury of selecting their buyers based on social style, the practical nature of this was debated by Churchill, Ford and Walker (1990). Given this reality, salespeople must be able to adapt to the people and environment in which they are selling.

### Adaptive Selling and Versatility

Personal selling, unlike other marketing and communication vehicles, allows the sales message to be adjusted to fit the situation and/or customer. Thompson (1973) said there is no one sales situation and, therefore, no one way to sell. The need for flexibility allows the salesperson to maximize the potential of each sales situation in a unique way.

The practice of adaptive selling has been defined as "the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation" (Weitz, Sujaan & Sujaan, 1986, p. 175). Those not practicing adaptive selling are more likely to deliver the same message, presentation and behaviors, regardless of the situation.

Leigh and McGraw (1989) contended that experienced and effective salespersons have sophisticated knowledge structures that let them categorize selling situations more effectively and efficiently on the basis of similarity to other 'remembered' situations. They are then able to apply the activities and behaviors of an appropriate selling approach to each selling situation. This knowledge is referred to as declarative knowledge, and allows the experienced salesperson to recognize and classify customers and/or situations to better adapt to the selling situation (Churchill et al., 1990). Szymanski (1988) found that successful salespeople are more effective at categorizing customers than non-successful salespeople. The importance of adaptability throughout the sales process is highlighted in Figure 6.

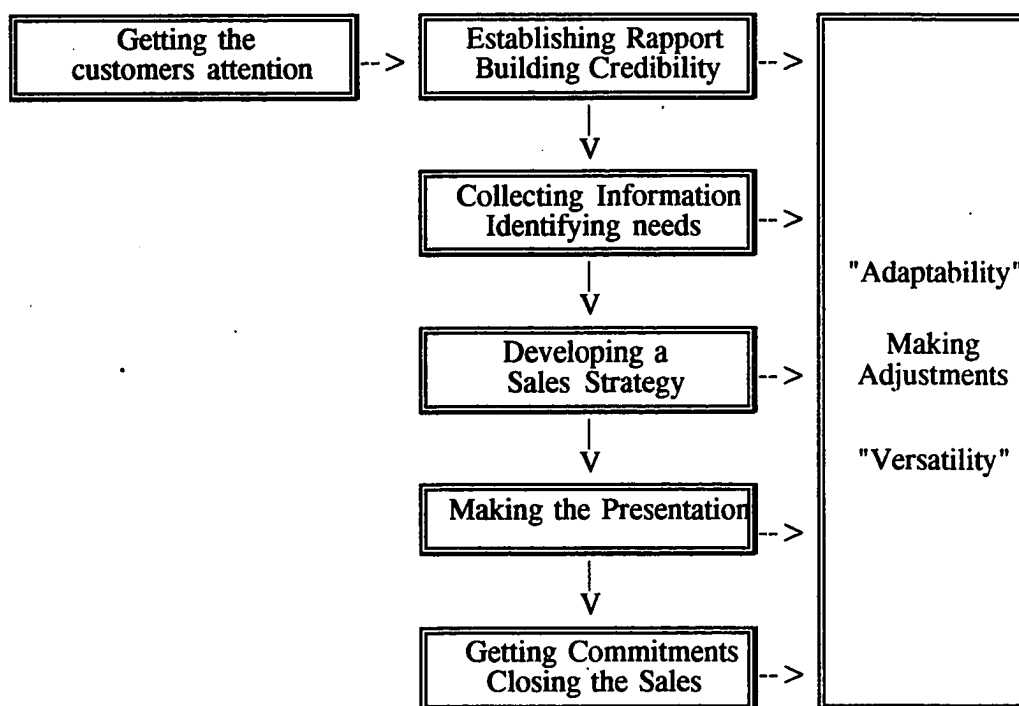


Figure 6. The Adaptive Selling Process (Weitz, Castleberry, Tanner, 1992).

Source: Weitz, B.A., Castleberry, S.B., & Tanner, J.F. (1992). Selling: Building Partnerships, p. 105. Copyright by Burr Ridge, IL: Richard D. Irwin, Inc.  
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Versatility has been defined as the extent others see us as adaptable, resourceful and competent in our interpersonal relationships with others. In other words, people endorse our behavior, and our actions demonstrate a concern for tension in the relationship. Wenschlag (1989) suggested there are two forms of tension: relationship tension and task tension. Relationship tension relates to the existing affiliation, sociability, openness, and warmth that exist between two parties.

Versatility requires constant monitoring of one's behavior and then altering actions or behaviors to minimize tension in the relationship. Task tension relates to the energy required to keep the sales relationship goal directed. Merrill and Reid (1981) suggested that how tension is managed and behaviors controlled determines one's effectiveness and success in dealing with others, regardless of style.

Knowledge of social style is important to the exercise of adaptive behavior or versatility. Research suggests that differences in styles may result in differences in versatility and that some styles may more easily be adapted to the behavior of others (Snaveley & Clutterbuck, 1980). In a study by Lashbrook, Lashbrook, Parsley, and Wenburg (1977), more responsive styles (Amiables and Expressives) were found to be more strongly perceived as versatile than assertive styles (Analyticals and Drivers). Sullivan (1977) supported these findings and found that the Expressive style, in particular, was perceived as the most versatile of the four styles. Snaveley (1978) found versatility related to both assertiveness and responsiveness; however, the relationship between versatility and responsiveness was stronger. In a follow-up study, Snaveley (1978) found support for the Expressive style as the most versatile, followed by Amiables, Drivers and Analyticals.

Sheth (1975) found that adapting one's style is more difficult than changing the content of an interaction, because style orientations are often deep rooted in personality variables, early socialization, and personal life styles. Sheth proposed, as others have, that when styles are highly incompatible within sales dyads, it may be best to end the relationship and find individuals with more compatible styles to

link. Fielder (1977) suggested it may be more efficient to move leaders to more suitable situations than to attempt to change their style from task-orientation to relationship-oriented. Table 3 provides a sampling of versatility indicators, contrasting the traits of individuals possessing low to high levels of versatility.

Table 3  
Indicators of Versatility

LOW VERSATILITY	HIGH VERSATILITY
Limited adaptability to others' needs	Able to adapt to others' needs.
Specialist	Generalists
Well-defined interests	Broad interests
Firm of principle	Negotiates issues
Predictable	Unpredictable
Single-minded	Looks at many sides of issue

Source: Weitz, B. A., Castleberry, S. B., & Tanner, J. F. (1992). Selling: Building Partnerships, p. 116. Copyright by Burr Ridge, IL: Richard D. Irwin, Inc.  
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Several authors have noted that researchers have not given empirical support to the study of versatility within the professional selling environment. More typically the research focus has been on the identification of universally effective selling behaviors. This research approach, as in the leadership literature, has been largely unsuccessful (Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Weitz, 1979; Weitz et al., 1986).

Weitz et al. (1986) found a significant relationship between "working smarter"

and performance. "Working smarter" was operationalized as the practice of adaptive selling. Spiro and Weitz (1990) found a relationship between self-measures of adaptability and sales performance; however, management ratings for the same two variables did not correlate. The Spiro and Weitz self- and supervisory performance instruments were not the same and consequently did not assess identical measures of performance. In the present study, identical self- and supervisory measures for performance and versatility are employed.

To summarize, versatility provides the important linkage when social styles differ between communication partners. Those who can readily modify their styles to conform to the styles of those with whom they interact should be able to communicate more effectively. Manning and Reece (1992) stated that versatility requires people to understand their own social style and to identify the social styles of those with whom they interact. These skills can be learned. One can learn to adapt or modify his or her behavior. Salespeople can learn how to identify the social styles of customers. They also can be taught "contingency sales approaches" to use when encountering customers whose social styles differ from their own (Weitz, 1984). High achievers, Merrill and Reid (1981) reported, display a great deal of style flexibility. Weitz et al. (1992) contended that salespeople who are able to demonstrate flexibility in their interactions with buyers should be more successful. McCall and Lombardo (1983) identified the inability to adapt to administrators with different styles as a major contributor to failures in management. The present study examines whether the performance evaluations of salespeople are related to (a) their



versatility or (b) to the versatility of the sales supervisors who supervise their work. Salesperson success, in this study, is reflected in the performance evaluations received by their sales supervisor.

### Self-Perceptions Versus Peer/Other Perceptions

Ingrasci (1981) suggested that caution should be used when using self-assessments for social style, since individuals very rarely see themselves as others do. Merrill and Reid (1981) suggested that self-report data is only useful for the purpose of providing feedback on how people see themselves. They contend that self-perceptions are significantly different from perceptions of others. Luft (1969) suggested that most individuals are unaware of how they are perceived by others. Bolton and Bolton (1984, p.39) suggested, "We do not see ourselves as others do." Differing from this point of view, Mayo et al. (1991) found significant correlation between third-party evaluations and self-evaluations for assertiveness and responsiveness.

### Summary

Until recently, the extent of empirical research on buyer-seller interaction, from the perspective of interpersonal communication, was relatively sparse (Sheth, 1975). Empirical work primarily focused on the content of buyer-seller communication--while the role of communication style was largely ignored (Notarantonio & Quigley, 1990).

Many of the same points can be made about the interactions that take place between sales supervisors and the professional salespeople they supervise. There has been very little empirical research focusing on the communications between sales supervisors and salespeople. Also, there have been virtually no empirical studies focusing on the impact of social styles on the relationship between sales supervisors and salespeople.

Increasing attention is now being paid to communication or social style. This is a welcome development because, as Sheth and others (Dwyer et al., 1987; Weitz, 1984) underscored, satisfactory exchange normally takes place if and only if the buyer and the salesperson are compatible with respect both to the content and style of communication. Success in selling, as Chapter I suggested, depends on successful interpersonal communication between a salesperson and a customer, and on successful interpersonal communications between a sales manager and the salespeople he or she supervises. To understand what accounts for a productive relationship between a salesperson and a sales manager, the role of social style cannot be ignored. This, of course, is a central focus of the present study.

#### Review of Performance Evaluation Issues

Predicting and describing performance is an integral part of human resource management. Because of this, the measurement of performance has, for many years, held the attention of researchers in a number of fields, including leadership, industrial psychology, and sales management. In the sales management area, escalating costs

and fundamental changes in corporate organizational structures have led to an increased awareness of the importance of the sales manager's performance appraisal. For management and sales personnel alike, performance appraisals render important information about how well objectives are being met and what measures need to be taken to improve overall performance (Jackson, Keith, & Schlacter, 1983; Rosenbloom & Anderson, 1984).

There is little disagreement on the importance of performance evaluations. There is a great deal of debate, however, about which approach most accurately measures performance (Landy & Trumbo, 1980). Literature points in several different directions, showing a number of factors affecting the performance evaluation process. These factors can include the age and sex of the rater, the rater's job experience, the relationship the rater has to the person being evaluated, and how much the rater knows about that person's job.

Since a major objective of the present study was to assess the relationship between a salesperson's social style and performance evaluations and the social styles of his/her sales manager, it is necessary to review the relevant literature dealing with the performance evaluation process. The next section presents a general overview of the performance evaluation process, followed by an assessment of the research that has attempted to identify the most reliable ways of evaluating employee performance. The last section examines research on the relationship between supervisor ratings and self-ratings of sales performance--an issue of special relevance to this study.

### Performance Evaluation Criteria

The ideal performance measurement, according to most authorities, would include a combination of quantitative, qualitative, and personnel criteria. Quantitative criteria--such as the number of sales calls made or the sales volume produced by a salesperson--tend to be easy to measure, standardize, and administer. Qualitative measures--such as product knowledge or attitudes toward customer service--are more subjective, ambiguous, and difficult to evaluate fairly. Personnel criteria--such as absenteeism and tardiness--are often poor measures of performance for salespeople due to record keeping inadequacies, and the salesperson's less structured work environment.

There are two types of quantitative performance measures: input measures and output measures. Input measures include items such as the number of sales calls made, number of new items presented, and average expenses. Output measures include items such as sales volume, number of new items accepted, and number of cases sold.

Sales supervisors normally emphasize output measures--often without regard for situational differences such as unequal account sizes, territorial differences, unequal market potentials, differences in customer mix or product mix, and unique competitive factors (Morris, Davis, Allen, Avila, and Chapman, 1991). These kinds of factors, however, sometimes have a major influence on an individual salesperson's performance. Churchill et al. (1985) caution that researchers must account for

situation-specific variables, such as those identified here, when they attempt to explain variations in performance between salespeople and across different occupational fields.

Researchers thus confront a double-barrelled dilemma. For proprietary reasons, quantitative performance measures are often very difficult to obtain. Even when they are available, quantitative performance measures are often misleading because of situation-specific factors like those discussed above.

Consequently, many industry practitioners as well as academic researchers come to depend on qualitative rather than quantitative measures of sales performance. Qualitative measures include such factors as a salesperson's attitude, product knowledge, organizational abilities, presentation skills, and customer relations aptitudes (Morris et al., 1991). While qualitative measures like these are often more readily available to researchers than quantitative performance measures, their subjectivity is a major concern (Landy & Farr, 1980).

Behrman and Perreault (1982) noted that sales supervisors are often unable, and sometimes unwilling, to discriminate between different performance levels among salespeople. The sales manager, they said, must avoid letting preconceptions or personal biases interfere with objective performance evaluations. At the same time, qualitative performance criteria can be ambiguous, and a sales manager and a salesperson may define job performance and expectations differently. This can, of course, cause considerable tension (Morris et al., 1991)--as can perceptions that other sales supervisors, using similar criteria, are more lenient when evaluating other salespeople. This makes the measurement and analysis of sales performance all the

more difficult.

Despite these problems, qualitative criteria are still widely used as measures of performance. In a comprehensive review of the performance evaluation literature, Landy and Farr (1980) found extensive use of qualitative measures. In an examination of performance evaluation studies published in the Journal of Applied Psychology and Personnel Psychology between 1950 and 1955, Guion (1965) reported that 81% of the studies used qualitative ratings as a measure of performance. Blum and Naylor (1968) sampled studies from the Journal of Applied Psychology from 1960 through 1965 and found that 46% measured performance using qualitative criteria. Landy and Farr (1976) reported that 89% of 196 police departments in major metropolitan areas used subjective supervisory ratings as the primary means of performance evaluation. Landy and Trumbo (1980) reviewed studies in the Journal of Applied Psychology between 1965 and 1975 and reported that subjective ratings were used as the primary performance criteria in 72% of these studies.

To establish the validity of qualitative performance measures, considerable research has been conducted. A wide variety of issues have been explored (Landy & Farr, 1980) and research that is most relevant to the present study is summarized in the following sections. The last of these sections examines research on the relationship between supervisor ratings and self-ratings of sales performance, an issue of special relevance to this study.

### Rater's Personal Characteristics and Evaluation Tendencies

Among the most widely measured variables in performance evaluation research have been various personal characteristics of raters. Landy and Farr (1980) placed these studies into three different classes: (1) studies that focus on the personal characteristics of the rater (e.g., demographics, job experience, and leadership style), (2) studies that focus on the type of rater (e.g., supervisor, peer, self-, or subordinate), and (3) studies that focus on the rater's knowledge of the people they evaluate and the specific jobs these people perform.

Personal characteristics include such variables as the rater's age, height, sex, weight, race, appearance, education, marital status, and number of dependents. Among the personal characteristics that have attracted the most attention as possible sources of variation in performance evaluations is the sex of the rater. The research findings here, however, have been mixed. A number of studies report no consistent observed relationship between the gender of raters and their evaluations of others' performances (Centra & Linn, 1973; Elmore & LaPointe, 1974, 1975; Jacobson & Effertz, 1974; Rosen & Jerdee, 1973). Lee and Alvares (1977) found that rater gender is associated with how one describes behavior, but not with actual performance evaluations. Two separate studies, one by London and Poplawski (1976) and another by Hamner, Kim, Baird, and Bigoness (1974) found that females gave higher ratings than males when evaluating performance. London and Poplawski used college students in a simulated work setting and reported that females gave higher ratings on

some dimensions of performance but not on overall performance. Comer and Jolson (1991) raised the question of gender bias. They found that sales supervisors perceived female salespeople to be comparable to their male counterparts in terms of interpersonal skills. However, female salespeople were rated lower in terms of sales abilities. Swan, Rink, Kiser and Martin (1984), in contrast, found that women rated higher on 7 of 11 behavioral attributes deemed to be significantly different across genders.

The effect of race on ratings has also been the subject of a number of studies. Crooks (1972) found that supervisory raters, in a majority of cases, gave higher evaluations to subordinates of their own race than to subordinates of a different race. Hamner et al. (1974) reported similar results, but the effect accounted for only 2% of the rating variance. In two other studies, Dejung and Kaplan (1962) and Cox and Krumboltz (1958) reported that black supervisors gave higher ratings to black subordinates. In an industrial setting, Schmidt and Johnson (1973) found no effect for race in an examination of peer ratings.

In a study of the effects of rater age on performance evaluations, Mandell (1956) reported that younger supervisors were more stringent in evaluating subordinates than older supervisors. Klores (1966), on the other hand, found no age effects to explain differences in performance evaluations.

Cascio and Valenzi (1977) found a statistically significant relationship between supervisory ratings and the educational level of supervisors. The rating variance was so modest, however, that Cascio and Valenzi concluded that variations in rater



education have no pragmatic consequence.

#### Rater's Job Experience and Evaluation Tendencies

The findings of studies that examined the relationship between a supervisor's job experiences and his or her performance evaluation tendencies are mixed. An early study by Jurgensen (1950), for example, found that the reliability of ratings improved with the experience of those conducting performance evaluations. A contrasting view was offered by Mandell (1956), who reported that raters with more than four years of experience as supervisors tend to be more lenient in their ratings than raters with less experience. Klores (1966) observed no significant effect of rater experience on performance evaluation tendencies. Cascio and Valenzi (1977) found a significant effect, but it accounted for only a small percentage of total rating variance.

#### Rater's Leadership Style and Evaluation Tendencies

Taylor, Parker, Martens, and Ford (1959) found that supervisors who were more task-oriented gave lower ratings to subordinates. Klores (1966) noted greater leniency among supervisors who were more relationship-oriented than supervisors who were more structure-oriented. Supervisors who were structure-oriented exhibited more range in their ratings and gave more weight to the planning and organization functions when evaluating their subordinates' overall performance.

### Personality Characteristics and Evaluation Tendencies

Personality factors and their relationship to performance evaluation tendencies have also been studied (Landy & Farr, 1980). Here, too, findings are mixed. Graham and Calendo (1969) found no relationship between supervisory ratings of job performance and the personality characteristics of those whose work was evaluated. Elmore and LaPointe (1975) reported that student ratings of college instructors' performance are positively correlated with students ratings of instructor warmth.

### Role of the Rater and Evaluation Tendencies

A number of studies have compared subjective supervisory performance ratings to objective operational measures such as output rate (Latham & Wexley, 1977), error rates (Bass & Turner, 1973), and absenteeism (Bass & Turner, 1973). One's performance can also be evaluated by his or her peers--or one can evaluate his or her own performance. There has been very little research, however, examining performance evaluations when they are conducted by one's peers or self-report evaluations.

### Rater Knowledge of Job

To evaluate the performance of a subordinate, a supervisor needs a minimum level of knowledge about the subordinate's job and what is required to perform that job competently (Landy & Farr, 1980). Several studies have concluded that the

minimum level of job knowledge a supervisor needs is rarely displayed by anyone other than a first-line supervisor. Berry, Nelson, and McNally (1966), Borman and Dunnette (1975), and Campbell, Dunnette, Arvey, and Hellervik (1973) analyzed performance ratings by supervisors at different levels within an organization and found only modest agreement among them when they rated the same employees. Whitla and Tirrell (1953) found that first-level supervisors' ratings more accurately predict job knowledge of subordinates than do the ratings of second- or third-level supervisors. Zedeck and Baker (1972) reported better construct validity for ratings by first-level supervisors than for those by second-level supervisors. Wagner and Hoover (1974) and Amir, Kovarsky, and Sharan (1970) found that individuals with more knowledge of the job requirements of an employee being evaluated do much better at predicting future performance than individuals with less knowledge of the job requirements.

The above findings serve to underscore a serious problem faced by sales supervisors, who are generally required to evaluate the performance of their salespeople. Evaluations by sales supervisors, according to Bolanvich and Kirkpatrick (1943), often leave a lot to be desired. Many sales supervisors are not trained in the evaluation process and most salespeople perform much of their work beyond the view of the sales manager. The sales manager may have little first-hand knowledge of what an individual salesperson does to represent the company--and, thus, may have to rely almost entirely on quantitative data that shows up in monthly or quarterly sales reports (Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Cocanaugher & Ivancevich, 1978).

### Supervisory Versus Peer Ratings

It has been generally found that there are significant differences between supervisory performance evaluations and those provided by peers. Springer (1953), Rothaus, Morton, and Hanson (1965), and Zedeck, Imparato, Krausz and Oleno (1974) found that peers are more lenient in their ratings than are supervisors. Klieger and Mosel (1953) and Springer (1953) reported less inter-rater agreement with peer ratings than with supervisory ratings. Gordon and Medland (1965) observed greater reliability for peer ratings of leadership than supervisory ratings.

Booker and Miller (1966) found agreement between peer and instructor ratings of students in Reserve Officer Training Corps programs. Springer (1953) and Borman (1974), however, found more agreement within supervisory and peer rating groups than between these two groups. Borman (1974), Zedeck et al. (1974), and Zammuto, London and Rowland (1982) suggested rating differences between supervisory and peer groups may be the result of different valuative criteria or views of job performance--and do not necessarily suggest that either type of rating is invalid or unreliable, even when they do not correlate highly. This viewpoint may have special significance when interpreting the results of the present study.

### Supervisory Versus Self-Ratings

Some argue that a good deal of research on performance is flawed because it relies on self-report measures that may have an upward bias. Others believe that self-

report measures are more than satisfactory. Even if self-report measures are biased, it is argued, there is no reason to suspect that the amount of bias varies in anything but a random fashion (Churchill, et al., 1985). Research, in either case, is inconclusive (Thorton, 1980). A number of studies show a significant correlation between supervisory and self-ratings (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). A number of other studies report significant differences between self- and supervisory performance appraisals (Heneman, 1974; Holzbach, 1978; Steel & Ovalle, 1984).

Behrman and Perreault (1982) contended that salespeople know best the details and requirements of their jobs, as well as how proficiently they actually perform. Self-reports of performance can also be a source of valuable information about on-the-job difficulties and problems--information that might not otherwise come to the attention of management (Bassett & Meyer, 1968; Lawler, 1967).

Spiro and Weitz (1990) used two different measures to study salesperson performance: supervisory and self-measures of performance. They found self-ratings to be significantly higher than supervisory ratings, however, the two instruments were not same scale measures of performance. Goolsby, Lagace, and Boorum (1992) and Kohli (1989) used the self-report measures of sales performance developed by Behrman and Perreault (1982). In both instances, concern about potential self-report bias was noted. In neither case, however, were supervisory evaluations utilized to test the significance of the bias. Churchill et al. (1985) found empirical support for the argument that the size of correlations between predictors of performance and various performance criteria is not inflated when self-report measures are used.

Avila, Fern, and Mann (1988) also used the Behrman and Perreault self-report scales, along with supervisory evaluations of performance. Ingram, Lee, and Skinner (1989) used self-report performance measures developed by Churchill, Ford, and Walker (1974), together with six items adapted from Behrman and Perreault (1982) with an acceptable .78 coefficient alpha reliability.

### Self-, Peer, and Supervisory Ratings

Studies by Lawler (1967) and Klimoski and London (1974) examined differences between self-, peer, and supervisory ratings of performance. Lawler found that supervisory and peer ratings exhibit greater convergent and discriminant validity than self-ratings. Thornton (1980) countered that it is difficult to form any firm conclusions regarding self-ratings and discriminant validity because of: (a) small sample sizes, (b) incomplete analyses, and (c) the difficulty of meeting the three requirements of discriminant validity established by Campbell and Fiske (1959). Holzbach (1978) found no evidence of discriminant validity with self-ratings, and three separate studies (Charest, Coward, & Goodman, 1969; Heneman, 1974; Williams & Seiler, 1973) reported that only the first and second conditions required for discriminant validity, as specified by Campbell and Fiske, could be satisfied.

Klimoski and London (1974) supported earlier findings by Guion (1965) who reported that each rater type (self-, peer, and supervisory) is unique concerning the use of information. Supervisors, they reported, were less able to discriminate between items related to competence and those items related to effort; peer and self-

ratings were able to make this distinction.

### Self-Reports in Sales Research

Thornton's review article (1980) noted that a preponderance of research suggests that individuals rate themselves higher than they are rated by others. This finding is reported for a number of different occupations, including clerks (Mascitti, 1978), technical employees (Kirchner, 1965; Klimoski & London, 1974), supervisors (Waldman & Thornton, 1978), and executives (Holzbach, 1978; Thornton, 1968).

Prien and Liske (1962), Parker, Taylor, Barrett, and Martens (1959), and Kirchner (1965) reported that self-raters display more leniency and less variability than supervisory ratings. In contrast, Heneman (1974) found less leniency among self-raters than among supervisory raters. Landy and Farr (1980) and Thornton (1980) suggested, however, that sample bias from Heneman's mail survey may have influenced his findings.

Kirchner (1965) and Heneman (1974) observed more of a halo effect in supervisory ratings than in self-ratings. On the other hand, Parker et al. (1959) found no differences in halo effect. They also reported only moderate agreement between supervisory ratings and self-ratings. Kirchner's findings were similar. These mixed findings have led some to suggest that certain rater groups may be more susceptible to some form of rater error (i.e., halo or leniency). Studies by Parker et al. (1959) and Thornton (1968) found greater leniency errors for subordinates' ratings than for supervisory ratings. Self-ratings have also frequently been found to display less total

variance (Thornton, 1980).

Others have postulated that differences in self-ratings and supervisory ratings may be caused by perceptual differences and the weights assigned to different performance evaluation criteria (Klimoski & London, 1974; Latham & Wexley, 1981; Lawler, 1974). Research findings lend support to the contention that subordinates often place greater emphasis on their personal skills and technical competence when providing self-ratings, whereas supervisors often stress output and results (Parker et al., 1959; Zammuto et al., 1982). It has also been suggested that employees who experience role ambiguity are not likely to evaluate their performance using the same performance criteria as those who supervise them (Chonko, Howell, & Bellenger, 1986). Behrman and Perreault (1982) said role ambiguity is the degree to which a salesperson is uncertain about others' expectations with respect to (a) the job, (b) the best ways to fulfill known role expectations, and (c) the consequences of different aspects of role performance.

Brief, Aldag, and VanSell (1977) were unable to identify demographic characteristics, or task and role variables as potential moderating variables that affect and explain differences in self-ratings and supervisory ratings. Parker et al. (1959) asked members of a study sample to provide self-ratings of their performance and then to estimate how they thought their supervisors would rate them. The estimated ratings correlated more strongly with actual supervisory ratings than did the self-appraisals of performance.

Parker et al. (1959) and Steel and Ovalle (1984) suggested that self-raters are



capable of producing ratings that agree with appraisals prepared by their immediate supervisors. The key, they say, is the instructions given the rater. Churchill et al. (1985) concluded that while other more objective measures of performance may be preferred on conceptual grounds, the tendency by some to discount self-report evaluations, based on an assumed "natural" upward bias, seems to be unwarranted.

Because of the problems associated with supervisory evaluations of salespeople, a number of sales research studies have relied instead on self-reports of overall performance by salespeople. Behrman and Perreault (1982) identified five circumstances when self-report evaluations are appropriate in sales research: (1) when it is possible to insure that each salesperson's responses will be confidential, (2) when much of the salesperson's efforts are not directly observable by his or her manager, (3) when aspects of performance are not reflected in quantitative data, (4) when multi-company samples are used, and (5) when a reliable scale has been developed to tap different aspects of performance.

The present study uses a modified version of the self-report sales performance scale developed by Behrman and Perreault. This scale has been used in a number of other sales research studies (Avila et al., 1988; Goolsby et al., 1992; Ingram et al., 1989; Kohli, 1989), and its use in this study is justified by the fact that all five of the above conditions are met.

The Behrman and Perreault sales performance scale measures five aspects of industrial sales performance. These five performance criteria are: (1) the ability to meet sales and target objectives for the company, (2) technical knowledge in

combination with effective use of this knowledge, (3) quality of information provided back to the company, (4) efforts at controlling unnecessary or excessive company expenses, and (5) ability to deal with customers and make good sales presentations in the sales call situation.

Each of these five performance criteria is measured by a composite of no less than five individual items, or a total of 31 individual scale items. These individual scale items, modified for use in the present study, are as follows:

1. Ability to Meet Sales and Target Objectives for the Company
  - a. Producing a high market share for your company in your territory
  - b. Making sales of those products with the highest profit margins
  - c. Generating a high level of dollar sales
  - d. Quickly generating sales of new company products
  - e. Identifying and selling to major accounts in your territory
  - f. Producing sales or blanket contracts with long-term profitability
  - g. Exceeding all sales targets and objectives for your territory during the year
2. Technical Knowledge in Combination with Effective use of This Knowledge
  - a. Knowing the design and specifications of company products
  - b. Knowing the applications and functions of company products
  - c. Being able to detect causes of operating failure of company products
  - d. Acting as a special resource to other departments that need your assistance

- e. Keeping abreast of your company's production and technological developments
  - f. When possible, troubleshooting system problems and conducting minor field service to correct product misapplication and/or product failures
3. **Quality of Information Provided Back to the Company**
- a. Carrying out company policies, procedures, and programs for presenting information
  - b. Providing accurate and complete paperwork related to orders, expenses, and other routine reports
  - c. Recommending on your own initiative how company operations and procedures can be improved
  - d. Submitting required reports on time
  - e. Maintaining company specified records that are accurate, complete, and up to date
4. **Efforts at Controlling Unnecessary or Excessive Company Expenses**
- a. Operating within the budgets set up by the company
  - b. Using expense accounts with integrity
  - c. Using business gift and promotional allowances responsibly
  - d. Spending travel and lodging money carefully
  - e. Arranging sales call patterns and frequency to cover your territory economically.
  - f. Entertaining only when it is clearly in the best interests of the company to do so
  - g. Controlling costs in other areas of the company when taking sales orders
5. **Ability to Deal with Customers and Make Good Sales Presentations in the Sales Call Situation**

- a. Listening attentively to identify and understand the real concerns of your customer
- b. Convincing customers that you understand their unique problems and concerns
- c. Using established contacts to develop new customers
- d. Communicating your sales presentation clearly and concisely.
- e. Making effective use of audiovisual aids to improve your sales presentation
- f. Working out solutions to a customer's questions or objections

### Reliability and Validity of Measurement Scales

#### Reliability of Scales

Reliability is a statistical measure of the consistency with which individuals respond to the same test items or scales. It is, in other words, a statistical measure of the extent to which a test item or scale is free of variable errors (Tull and Hawkins 1990). Reliability can be assessed using four basic methods, and it has been reported to be high for the scales making up the Social Style model and for the scales in the Behrman and Perreault self-monitoring performance instrument.

#### Social Style Scales

Using data from more than 8,200 social style profiles, Wilson Learning reported high internal reliability for each dimension of the Social Style Model. Coefficient alpha, a measure of split-half reliability, exceeded .80 for each dimension

of the model; this is a high figure for subjective data.

Wilson Learning also reported the results of calculating inter-rater reliabilities for varying numbers of raters (Wiley & Lashbrook, 1984). When there are five raters, reliabilities approached .80 or higher on all dimensions of the Social Style Model. With as few as three raters, reliabilities were still near or above .70. With fewer than three raters, however, there was a substantial reduction in reliability. (In the present study, the number of raters profiling the social styles of sales supervisors and account executives ranged from three to five.)

Merrill and Reid (1981), who developed the original Communication Style Model, reported split-half reliability of .93 for the assertiveness scale, .91 for the versatility scale, and .70 for the responsiveness scale. Merrill and Reid also assessed inter-rater reliability and reported correlations of .49 and .44 for the responsiveness and assertiveness scales, respectively, but only .30 for the versatility scale.

Mayo et al. (1991), using an adaptation of the Wilson Learning's Social Style Model, employed two methods to evaluate the reliability of the Model's assertiveness and responsiveness scales. Internal consistency was evaluated using the split-half procedure, and coefficient alpha exceeded .8, which Nunnally (1978) says indicates high reliability. In addition, item-to-total statistics from SPSSx indicated that deleting one or more scale items would not have increased any of the coefficient alpha. Mayo et al. (1990) also reported evidence of reliability for the assertiveness and responsiveness scales using the test-retest method. The test-retest correlation was .847 for the assertiveness scale and .783 for the responsiveness scale, showing that

scores on the two scales were stable over time.

### Job Performance Scales

Behrman and Perreault (1982) reported strong evidence of reliability for the six scales in the self-monitoring performance instrument--the Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory. All alpha coefficients, reflecting overall split-half reliability, were over .75. Split-half reliability for a subsample in the Behrman and Perreault study, selected for test-retest purposes, was equal to .93, while the test-retest correlation was .70. All of these findings, Behrman and Perreault concluded (1982), fall within accepted standards for behavioral research. They support the conclusion that the scales in the self-report performance instrument used in the present study are reliable.

### Validity of Scales

As indicated above, the component scales of the Social Style Model are generally thought to be reliable. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the scales to be judged valid. Validity is more difficult to measure than reliability, and it addresses this question: Is a scaling procedure--or a measuring instrument generally--measuring what a researcher wants to measure?

Campbell and Fiske (1959) said that to demonstrate (construct) validity, it must be shown that a scale correlates highly with other variables with which it should theoretically relate (convergent validation). In addition, it must be shown that the

scale does not significantly correlate with variables from which it should differ (discriminant validation). The literature presents some evidence that the major dimensions of the Social Style Model display both convergent and discriminant validity. Behrman and Perreault also indicated that there is evidence of validity for the major components of their self-monitoring performance instrument.

### Social Style Scales

Wilson Learning (Wiley & Lashbrook, 1984) concluded that, based on Pearson product-moment correlations, assertiveness is not highly correlated with any of the other dimensions of the Social Style Model. Responsiveness was, however, found to be highly correlated with versatility. Thus, independence of the assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility scales was in part confirmed. The independence of the assertiveness and responsiveness scales thus demonstrates discriminant validity--and "combining assertiveness and responsiveness into a 'social style' is uncomplicated by intercorrelations" (Wiley & Lashbrook, 1984, p. 5).

Merrill and Reid (1981) reported on a study by General Electric staff psychologists in 1968 that showed a positive correlation of .64 between assertiveness, as measured by the Social Style Model, and an independent measure of aggressiveness. This was clear evidence of convergent validity for the assertiveness scale.

In a separate study, Merrill and Reid (1981) reported convergent validity for the Social Style Model's versatility scale. Versatility scores were compared to (a) on-

the-job competence and (b) attitude on the job for a sample of office workers in three insurance companies. The sample was divided into male and female groups--and, for both groups, Merrill and Reid found positive correlations ranging from .44 to .52 between versatility and the competence measure, and versatility and the attitude measure.

"Since characteristics of subjects and the measuring instrument can each contribute variation to scaling results, more than one instrument and more than one subject characteristic should be used in convergent-discriminant validation work" (Green, Tull, & Albaum, 1988, p. 252). It was this reasoning that led Campbell and Fiske (1958) to develop the Multi-Trait Multi-Method Matrix (MTMM) approach, which has become one of the most commonly used statistical approaches for assessing construct validity (Tull & Hawkins, 1990). In their exploratory study of the Social Style Model, Mayo et al. (1991) used MTMM to evaluate the construct validity of the assertiveness and responsiveness scales. They reported significant evidence of convergent validity both for the assertiveness and responsiveness scales. Only partial support for discriminant validity was reported, however.

Empirical evidence provides general support for the validity of the major dimensions of the Social Style Model. Convergent validity is indicated by the General Electric study, Merrill and Reid (1981), and Mayo et al. (1991). Discriminant validity is indicated by Wilson Learning (Wiley & Lashbrook, 1984), and partial support for discriminant validity is indicated by Mayo et al. (1991).



### Job Performance Scales

To assess the validity of five components of the Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory, Behrman and Perreault (1982) examined correlations between self-reports of performance and manager's performance appraisals as well as internal data provided by participating firms. The internal data included information on actual sales produced by salespeople, as well as expense, quota, and budget information. Behrman and Perreault (1982) concluded that "the self-report measure correlates significantly with manager's evaluations, profitability data, internal company ratings, and a need for achievement measure" (p. 365). None of the relationships was particularly strong, but in combination, Behrman and Perreault said, the findings clearly support the validity of the overall scale.

### Summary

This chapter was presented in four sections. The first gave a detailed overview of theoretical and empirical work of the Communication Style Model. The second section examined the Social Style Model developed by Wilson Learning (Wenschlag, 1989), which serves as this study's central theoretical framework. The third section reviewed leadership literature relating to performance evaluations. The last section reviewed the reliability and validity issues related to the scales used in this study.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter describes the research design employed in this study. The sample design is discussed first and this includes a description of the study's population and sample size and data collection procedures. The second section reviews the data requirements and questionnaire design. The final section of the chapter identifies the statistical techniques used to test the study's research hypotheses.

#### Sample Design

##### Study Population

Subjects for this study were sales account executives and sales directors from four food brokerage organizations with offices located throughout the Midwestern United States. Food brokers are sales agents for producers of food, packaged goods, and other consumer products. These producers may be located anywhere in the world. Food brokers refer to these manufacturers, processors, and other producers as their "principals" (National Food Brokers Association, 1991). Food brokers are local marketing specialists. They arrange for the sale and distribution of their principals' products to all the buyers in their "territory." These buyers may work for wholesale grocers (e.g., Spartan Foods, Foodland, Certified Grocers), retail chains

(e.g., Kroger, Jewel, K-Mart) , or independently-owned retailers.

Brokers also sell to food service distributors (e.g., Gordon Food Service and Sysco) whose customers include restaurants, fast food outlets, hospitals, schools, and others operating in the food consumed away-from-home market segment. The food manufacturer or processor relies on the broker organization as the authority on local market conditions. Food brokers typically represent a number of non-competing manufacturers, each carrying a variety of products.

The buyer depends on the food broker, to one extent or another, as a reliable source of a wide selection of products. The buying organization (i.e., retailer, wholesaler, independent or foodservice distributor) is referred to as an account. Sales account executives are generally assigned to buying accounts and are the primary contact for that account. The sales account executive is responsible for all sales transactions and activities with his/her buying accounts. In addition, sales account executives often have "principal" accounts where they are the key contact person with those particular suppliers. (For purposes of the present study, sales account executives are referred to as salespeople.)

Sales account executives typically report to a sales director or sales manager. The sales director is usually responsible for a business unit within the brokerage (i.e., perishables, grocery, frozen/dairy, foodservice), in addition to supervising several salespeople. This responsibility generally includes accountability for sales, item distribution, supplier standards, communication and follow-through with principals and account executives within his or her business unit. For the firms that participated

in this study, the salespeople reported to the sales directors of their respective organizations. (For purposes of the present study, sales directors are referred to as sales supervisors.)

### Study Sample

A nonprobability judgement sample of four organizations was selected for this study. A judgement sample is often referred to as a "purposive sample" in that the sample, which is hand-picked by the researcher, is expected to meet the research purpose (Churchill, 1992). The sample selected by the researcher for this study was drawn with the expectation that the sample would be representative of the population of interest. The four organizations in this study have sales offices in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa, and were ranked either number one or two in brokerage sales in their respective home markets. Churchill (1992) stated that judgement samples can be used productively as long as the researcher understands their potential limitations.

A total of 217 mail questionnaires were sent to 47 sales supervisors and to 170 salespeople at four Midwestern food brokerage organizations. A total of 167 usable questionnaires were returned from 40 sales supervisors and 127 salespeople, for a response rate of nearly 77%.

### Data Requirements and Questionnaire Design

As indicated in Chapter I, the central research hypotheses tested in the present

study dealt with the relationship between a salesperson's social style and performance evaluations and the social style of his/her sales supervisor. The empirical focus of the study, as outlined above, was on the performance and social styles of salespeople and sales supervisors in four large Midwestern food brokerage organizations.

Basically, two types of empirical data were needed for this study: (1) measures of the three social style variables--assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility--for salespeople and sales supervisors, and (2) measures of salespeople's overall job performance. Each of these data categories is discussed below.

### Social Style Variables

Each salesperson's assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility were measured using the Social Impressions Questionnaire developed by Wilson Learning (Wiley and Lashbrook, 1984). The Social Impressions Questionnaire employs 30 descriptive statements with five-point Likert-type scales which range from "Disagree" to "Agree" for each descriptive statement. These measures allowed each respondent's social style to be categorized using Wilson Learning's version of the Social Style Model.

Each salesperson responding to the survey was asked to provide a self-assessment of their assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility by completing a Social Impressions Questionnaire. Salespeople were also asked to complete a Social Impressions Questionnaire on each salesperson in his or her work unit and on their immediate sales supervisor. Supervisors responding to the survey were asked to provide a self-assessment of their own assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility

by completing a Social Impressions Questionnaire. Supervisors also completed a Social Impressions Questionnaire on each salesperson under his or her direct supervision. Thus, between three and five Social Impressions Questionnaire were collected for each survey respondent.

A concern pertaining to the amount of time required to complete the survey forms lead to a revision of the instrument (see Appendix A) to allow for simultaneous measurement of several individuals on one form. Wilson Learning has utilized this process when requesting respondents to provide multiple impressions. This change allowed the respondent to evaluate up to four individuals on a single social style instrument, rather than having to use separate instruments for each individual being evaluated. The simultaneous measurement of others also allowed for more discriminant comparisons of behaviors. That is, one might expect that if the rater perceives a difference in the level of behavior between ratees, the scoring of such differences in behavior may be reflected more distinctly when the two individuals are compared and evaluated simultaneously rather than separately.

### Job Performance Measure

Each salesperson's overall job performance was assessed using an adaptation of the Self-Monitoring Scale developed by Behrman and Perreault (1982). This instrument, referred to as the Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory, measured five constructs of job performance: (1) ability to meet sales objectives, (2) technical knowledge and application of that knowledge, (3) control of company

expenses, (4) information processing, and (5) presentation skills. Each of these five constructs was measured using a series of five to seven descriptive statements with seven-point Likert-type scales. These scales allowed each salesperson's job performance to be rated on a seven-point scale ranging from "Needs to be Improved" to "Outstanding." There was a total of 30 individual scale items to measure the five components of sales performance.

Each salesperson in the survey was asked to provide a self-assessment of his or her overall job performance. Sales supervisors were also asked to assess the job performance of each salesperson under his or her direct supervision. Thus, two job performance evaluations were collected for each salesperson using the adapted Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory Questionnaire developed by Behrman and Perreault. This represented a modification from Behrman and Perreault's approach, which used different instruments for self- and supervisory-measures of performance. Behrman and Perreault used the more detailed Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory Questionnaire for self-assessments whereas the supervisors used more global ranking data to measure the same five criteria. The modification used in this study allowed for direct comparisons of like data for self-assessments and supervisor assessments of sales performance.

As indicated above, each sales supervisor in this study was requested to assess the job performance of each salesperson under his or her direct supervision. In most cases, this meant that each sales supervisor evaluated either three or four subordinates. Behrman and Perreault were concerned with the amount of time

required for a supervisor to evaluate several subordinates, and they addressed this issue by requesting only global performance ranking data from supervisors. In the present study, it was deemed important to have sales supervisors evaluate their subordinates using the same 30 scale items the salespeople used for their self-assessments of performance. To address the response time concerns noted by Behrman and Perreault (1982) the performance evaluation instrument (See Appendix B) was designed to allow for simultaneous evaluations, similar to the process employed with the Social Impressions Questionnaire. This change, eliminated the need for a sales supervisor to fill out separate evaluation forms for each salesperson who reported to them. It also insured that the supervisory measurement scales for performance were the same as the self-rating measures for performance. As with the Social Impressions Questionnaire, the simultaneous evaluation of salespersons performance within a work group allowed for more discriminant comparisons of performance by the supervisor.

A third data input was comprised of demographic characteristics of respondents (i.e., age, gender, work experiences, and work relationships between sales supervisors and salespeople). The demographic data was obtained through nine questions positioned at the beginning of the questionnaire.

#### Questionnaire Design and Pretesting

Two versions of the nine-page study questionnaire were developed, one for distribution to sales supervisors and one for distribution to salespeople in the four



participating study firms. The questionnaire consisted of two major sections, corresponding to the two major data requirements discussed above: social style data and job performance data.

Social style data (i.e., measures of assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility) were requested from respondents on an instrument adapted from the Social Impressions Questionnaire developed by Wilson Learning, which granted permission to use the copyrighted instrument in this study.

Job performance data measured five constructs: (1) ability to meet sales objectives, (2) technical knowledge and application of that knowledge, (3) control of company expenses, (4) information processing, and (5) presentation skills. These were assessed using an adaptation of the Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory scale developed by Behrman and Perreault (1982). Permission was granted to use the copyrighted instrument in this study.

In an effort to avoid possible item ambiguity and to obtain feedback regarding the performance categories used by Behrman and Perreault, the performance evaluation instrument was reviewed by a number of practitioners as well as academics who specialized in sales management and sales performance research. Executives from each of the study's participating firms reviewed the 30 individual performance measures for item clarity, proper categorization, and relevancy to the food brokerage selling function. Minor modifications were made to a small number of the 30 items to reflect the differences between industrial sales--the focus of Behrman and Perreault's work--and consumer product sales more common in the food brokerage

industry. One individual scale item was deemed not relevant to the food brokerage selling function and was removed from the job performance instrument.

A fifth food brokerage firm, with a similar organizational structure as the four participating study firms, served as a pre-test. The purpose of the pre-test was to determine respondent ease in answering the questionnaire, to identify any ambiguous statements which might need revision, and to estimate the amount of time required to complete the survey. The pre-test participants were sales supervisors and salespeople, positions utilized in the present study. All participants in the pre-test returned the questionnaires, recommending minor or no changes.

#### Data Collection Process

Organizational charts and job descriptions were obtained from each of the four participating food brokerage firms. The researcher agreed to survey all sales supervisors and salespeople from these firms. An advance notice was sent in a letter from each company to each survey participant encouraging their participation in this study.

Data was collected from the salespeople and their sales supervisors using self-administered mailed questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed through inter-office mail with a cover letter from the researcher. This letter acknowledged that each organization had endorsed the study. A total of 217 mail questionnaires were sent to 47 sales supervisors and to 170 salespeople in early November of 1992.

Each questionnaire was individually coded to allow the researcher the ability

to link corresponding data to the appropriate respondent (i.e., peer impressions, supervisory impressions and performance evaluations). The coding process also provided protection for respondent anonymity. No names were written on the questionnaires. Where a respondent was requested to provide input (performance or social style) pertaining to another person or even themselves, a code card was used to complete that portion of the questionnaire. A detachable card (see Appendix C) was affixed to each questionnaire for this purpose. The names and codes on the code card corresponded to codes assigned to the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were returned directly to the researcher by mail using a self-addressed stamped envelope. As mentioned above, the coding system allowed the researcher to link corresponding data to the appropriate respondent. Due to the data requirements of this survey, it was essential to be able to integrate data from peers and supervisory responses with salesperson responses.

A total of 196 questionnaires were returned from 40 sales supervisors and 156 salespeople, and 15% of these, or 29 questionnaires, were judged unusable. Some of the reasons questionnaires were deemed unusable were: (a) if a large portion of the instrument was not completed, (b) if an insufficient number of social impression instruments were returned--a minimum of three per respondent was required, or (c) if a salesperson's supervisor did not return a questionnaire with the needed performance data. Since the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between job performance and social style, the data requirements noted earlier had to be met for the questionnaire to be usable. As indicated earlier, salespeople (see

Appendix A), were requested to complete social style impression profiles on three peers, a self-appraisal, and a supervisor profile. In addition, a self-appraisal of performance was requested. The instrument for the sales supervisors (Appendix B) requested that the respondent complete a social style impression profile for each salesperson under his or her direct supervision and a self-appraisal of social style. In addition, the sales supervisor was asked to evaluate the performance of all salespeople reporting to him/her. A total of 167 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 77%.

### Statistical Techniques

#### Testing of Research Hypotheses

As indicated in Chapter I, Hypotheses 1 through 5 dealt with performance evaluations of salespeople and the relationship of these evaluations with the social styles and versatility of salespeople and their supervisors.

The first hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) can be expressed in statistical form:

H<sub>10</sub>: The correlation coefficient between a sales supervisor's perception of a salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's performance evaluation of that person is equal to zero.

$$\rho_{Sv_1, Sp_1} = 0$$

H<sub>11</sub>: There is a relationship between a sales supervisor's perception of a

salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's performance evaluation of that person.

$$\rho_{Sv_1, Sp_1} > 0$$

The second hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) can be expressed in statistical form as:

H<sub>2a</sub>: The correlation coefficient between a sales supervisor's composite versatility and the performance evaluations given to his or her salespeople is equal to zero.

$$\rho_{cvs, Sp_1} = 0$$

H<sub>2a</sub>: There is a relationship between a sales supervisor's composite "versatility" scores and the performance evaluations given to his or her salespeople.

$$\rho_{cvs, Sp_1} > 0$$

where

$\rho$  =  
a measure of the strength of the relationship between i and j, a variable i and a variable j

$i$  = supervisor-rated criteria

$Sv_1$  =  
Salesperson versatility score, supervisor-rated  $i$

$cvs$  =  
composite versatility score of supervisor, as evaluated by his or her salespeople.

$Sp_1 =$   
Salesperson performance score, supervisor-rating  $_1$ .

The procedure for testing Hypothesis 1 and 2 is Pearson Product Moment correlations. The purpose of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient is to assess the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. The coefficient ranges from -1 to +1. The absolute value of the coefficient indicates the strength of the linear relationship (Norusis, 1990; Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1988). Correlation was used in the present research to determine the linear relationship between versatility and performance.

The third hypothesis (H3) can be expressed in statistical form as:

H<sub>3a</sub>: There is no difference between supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles match their supervisors social style and supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles do not match those of their supervisors.

$$XSp_{1y} = XSp_{1n}$$

H<sub>3b</sub>: There will be a significant difference between supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles match their supervisors social style and supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles do not match those of their supervisors.

$$XSp_{1y} \neq XSp_{1n}$$

The fourth hypothesis (H4) can be expressed in statistical form as:

H<sub>4o</sub>: There is no difference in supervisor-rated and self-rated performance score means when social styles between the sales supervisor and a salesperson match versus do not match.

$$\sum(XSp_{1y} - XSp_{2y}) = \sum(XSp_{1n} - XSp_{2n})$$

H<sub>4a</sub>: There will be a significant difference in mean performance scores for supervisory-rated and self-rated measures of performance when social styles between a sales supervisor and a salesperson match versus do not match.

$$\sum(XSp_{1y} - XSp_{2y}) \neq \sum(XSp_{1n} - XSp_{2n})$$

where

<sub>1</sub>=supervisor rated criteria

<sub>2</sub>=self-rated criteria

**Sp<sub>1</sub>**=

Salesperson performance score, supervisor-rating (<sub>1</sub>).

**Sp<sub>2</sub>**=

Salesperson performance score, self-rating (<sub>2</sub>)

**y,n**=

subscripts denoting matching (y) or non-matching (n) social style categories.

The procedure for testing Hypothesis 3 and 4 was the t-test. In this study, t-tests for groups were used to analyze the mean difference in self-rated performance scores and the mean rating of supervisory-rated performance scores when social styles of the sales supervisor did not match the social styles of the salesperson. Additionally, t- tests for independent samples were used to analyze the mean

differences in performance scores when social styles of the sales supervisor did not match the social styles of the salesperson.

The fifth hypothesis ( $H_5$ ) can be expressed in statistical form as:

$H_{5o}$ : There will be no difference in supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople, related to differences in the social styles of the sales supervisor.

$$XSp_{1d} = XSp_{1e} = XSp_{1s} = XSp_{1a}$$

$H_{5a}$ : There will be a significant difference in supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople, related to differences in the social styles of the sales supervisor.

$$XSp_{1d} \neq XSp_{1e} \neq XSp_{1s} \neq XSp_{1a}$$

where

$_1$  = supervisor rated criteria

$Sp_i$  =

Salesperson performance score, supervisor-rating ( $_1$ ).

$d, e, s, a$  =

subscripts denoting specific social style categories (Driver, Expressive, Supportive, Analytical)

The procedure for testing Hypothesis 5 was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the difference between two or more means. ANOVA was used in the present research to determine the differences in performance scores by sales supervisors of different social styles.

The sixth hypothesis ( $H_6$ ) can be expressed in statistical form as:



H<sub>6</sub>: There is no difference between mean self-rating scores for responsiveness and mean responsiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

$$XSr_1 = XSr_2 = XSr_3$$

H<sub>6a</sub>: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for responsiveness and mean responsiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

$$XSr_1 \neq XSr_2 \neq XSr_3$$

The seventh hypothesis (H<sub>7</sub>) can be expressed in statistical form as:

H<sub>7</sub>: There is no difference between mean self-rating scores for assertiveness and mean assertiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

$$XSa_1 = XSa_2 = XSa_3$$

H<sub>7a</sub>: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for assertiveness and mean assertiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

$$XSa_1 \neq XSa_2 \neq XSa_3$$

The eighth hypothesis (H<sub>8</sub>) can be expressed in statistical form as:

H<sub>8</sub>: There is no difference between mean self-rating scores for versatility and mean versatility scores given by peers and supervisors.

$$XSV_1 = XSV_2 = XSV_3$$

**H<sub>8</sub>:** There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for versatility and mean versatility scores given by peers and supervisors.

$$XSv_1 * XSv_2 * XSv_3$$

where

**XSr**=mean Salesperson responsiveness rating score

**XSa**=mean Salesperson assertiveness rating score

**XSv**=mean Salesperson versatility rating score

1,2,3=1 = Supervisor-rating 2 = Self-rating, 3 = Peer-rating

The procedure for testing Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8 was MANOVA, which is an extension of analysis of variance and is used to test a set of means whereby ANOVA tests a single mean. In Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8 MANOVA was used to test the differences in means between raters (self-, peer, and supervisory ratings).

### Summary

This chapter presented the research design used in this study. The sample design was discussed first and this included a description of the study's population, sample size and data collection procedures. The second section reviewed the data requirements and questionnaire design. The final section of the chapter identified the statistical techniques used to test the study's research hypotheses. Chapter IV will discuss the results and statistical analysis of the findings.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

As previously noted, the purpose of this research was twofold:

1. To use the Wilson Learning version of the Social Style Model to assess whether the performance evaluations of salespeople are related (a) to their social styles, (b) to the social styles of the managers who supervise their work, or (c) to the differences between their social styles and the styles of their sales supervisors.
2. To test one of the key underlying assumptions of the Social Style Model: that is, the assumption that self-evaluations of social style are often significantly different from evaluations supplied by others who are familiar with a person's behavior.

This chapter reports the findings of this study and is divided into three major sections. The first section provides a general description of the study's sample. This includes descriptive statistics of respondents' demographic characteristics, work experiences, and working relationships with their supervisors. The second section presents the statistical analysis and findings for each of the study's five central research hypotheses. These dealt with salesperson performance evaluations and the versatility and social styles of the salespeople and sales managers who supervise their work. The third section provides the statistical analysis and findings for research 6,

hypothesis 7, and 8, which dealt with the issues of self-reports versus third-party reports of social style.

### Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Mail surveys were sent to 217 potential respondents at four Midwestern food brokerage organizations. A total of 196 questionnaires were returned from 156 salespeople and 40 sales supervisors. Of these, 15%, or 29 questionnaires, were judged unusable. A total of 167 usable questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 77%. As previously noted in Chapter III, reasons for a questionnaire being judged unusable occurred: (a) if a large portion of the instrument was not completed, (b) if an insufficient number of social impression instruments were returned--a minimum of three per respondent was required, or (c) if a salesperson's supervisor did not return a questionnaire with the needed performance data.

Since the primary focus of this study is on the salesperson, the descriptive characteristics presented in this section describe the salespeople in the study. Table 4 shows that 25 of the 127 salespeople were female, or 19.7% of the respondents. The average age of the salespeople responding to the survey was approximately 39.4 years (see Table 5).

Over half of the survey respondents (51.2%) had less than a four-year college degree, and 47.2% held a bachelor's degree (see Table 6).

The average salesperson had 17.6 years of sales related experience (see Table 7) and had worked an average 8.4 years for their current employer. Nearly 35%

**Table 4**  
**Gender of Respondents**

<b>Salesperson Gender</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Male	100	78.7
Female	25	19.7
No Response	2	1.6

**Table 5**  
**Age of Respondents**

<b>Salesperson Age</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Under 30 Years	13	10.2
30 - 34 Years	26	20.5
35 - 39 Years	23	18.1
40 - 44 Years	21	16.5
45 - 49 Years	11	8.7
50 - 54 Years	11	8.7
55 - 59 Years	14	11.0
60 Years or Older	8	6.3

**Table 6**  
**Educational Level of Respondents**

<b>Highest Degree/Diploma</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Grade School	3	2.4
High School	30	23.6
Associates or 2-Yr Certificate	32	25.2
Bachelor's Degree	60	47.2
Master's Degree	2	1.6

**Table 7**  
**Salesperson Years of Sales Experience**

<b>Years of Sales Experience</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
5 Years or Less	12	9.4
6 - 10 Years	32	25.2
11 - 15 Years	31	24.4
16 - 20 Years	15	11.8
21 - 25 Years	11	8.8
More than 25 Years	26	20.4

of the salespeople surveyed had been at the same place of employment for three years or less (see Table 8). The average number of years salespeople had been in their current position was 5.4 years; however, as Table 9 indicates, 55.9% of the respondents had been in their current position for three years or less.

The distribution of social styles among the responding salespeople, based on the perceptions of the salesperson's peers and supervisors, is shown in Table 10.

The composite scores for social styles, which reflect the perceptions of the salespeople's peers and supervisors, indicate that 38.1% of the salespeople were Expressive, followed by Analyticals (28.6%), Drivers (21.4%) and Amiables 11.9%.

An issue explored in this study was the working relationship between salespeople and their supervisors. When salespeople were asked whether the relationship between themselves and their supervisors could be described as positive,

Table 8

Salesperson Years With Current Company

Years with Company	<u>n</u>	% of Respondents
3 Years or Less	44	34.6
4 - 6 Years	26	20.5
7 - 10 Years	30	23.6
11 - 15 Years	13	10.2
More than 15 Years	14	11.1

**Table 9**  
**Salesperson Years in Current Position**

<b>Years at Position</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
1 Year or Less	32	25.2
2 - 3 Years	39	30.7
4 - 6 Years	30	23.6
7 - 10 Years	16	12.6
More than 10 Years	10	7.9

**Table 10**  
**Social Styles of Salesperson Respondents**  
**(Composite Data)**

<b>Social Styles</b>	<b><u>n</u></b>	<b>% of Salespeople</b>
Amiables	15	11.9
Analyticals	36	28.6
Drivers	27	21.4
Expressives	48	38.1

\* Composite data includes peers and supervisory ratings, self-ratings excluded.

42.5% indicated strong agreement. On a Likert-type scale, with 1 being "strongly agree" and 5 being "strongly disagree", the mean rating was 1.76.



The majority of salespeople had positive perceptions of their supervisors' work performance. However, when salespeople were asked if they would consider the work performance of their supervisors to be exceptional, compared to others in a similar capacity, only 26.8% indicated strong agreement. On a Likert-type scale, with 1 being "strongly agree" and 5 being "strongly disagree", the mean rating was 2.11.

A majority of salespeople believed their supervisors had been fair in evaluations of their performance. When salespeople were asked if their supervisors' evaluations of their performances had always been fair, 31.5% indicated strong agreement. On a Likert-type scale, with 1 being "strongly agree" and 5 being "strongly disagree," the mean rating was 2.11.

#### Analysis of Research Questions on Performance Evaluations Versus Social Styles

This section presents the statistical analysis and findings for each of the five central research hypotheses which dealt with the performance evaluations of salespeople and the relationship of these evaluations with the social styles of the salespeople and their sales supervisors. Chapter V will provide a more detailed discussion of these findings.

#### Hypothesis 1

Research Hypothesis 1 is as follows: There is a relationship between a sales supervisor's perception of a salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's

performance evaluation of that person.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to examine whether a supervisor's perception of a salesperson's versatility was related to the performance evaluations given that person by the supervisor. (In the present study, the sales account executive is referred to as the salesperson and the sales manager is referred to as the supervisor.) Salesperson versatility for this hypothesis was the mean response on four variables within the Social Impressions Questionnaire as evaluated by the supervisor.

Performance was a measure of 30 items from the modified Behrman and Perreault (1982) Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory scale. Only data from the salesperson's direct supervisor was used to measure performance and versatility. To test the null hypothesis that the correlation coefficient between a sales supervisor's perception of a salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's performance evaluation of that person is equal to zero, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was computed between versatility and performance.

The SPSS output data presented in Table 11 confirmed the presence of a positive linear relationship between perceived versatility and performance evaluations. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation of .54 allows one to reject the null hypothesis that the correlation coefficient between a sales supervisor's perception of a salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's performance evaluation of that person is equal to zero at the .01 level of significance.

The findings of this study provided support for accepting the alternative hypothesis that there is a relationship between a sales supervisor's perception of a

Table 11  
Relationship Between Sales Supervisor's Perception of  
Salesperson Versatility and Performance

	Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation
Versatility	127	4.8366	.9125
Performance	126	4.9234	.7558
Coefficient Correlation $R = .5405$ Significant at .01			

salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's performance evaluations of that person. Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

### Hypothesis 2

Research Hypothesis 2 is as follows: There is a relationship between a sales supervisor's composite versatility score and the performance evaluations given to his or her salespeople.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine whether a sales supervisor's versatility was related to the performance scores that he or she assigned to the salespeople they supervise. Versatility for this hypothesis was a composite score of mean responses by each salesperson of their supervisor on four variables within the Social Impressions Questionnaire. In most cases, each sales supervisor's versatility

was evaluated by three or four salespeople whose work he or she supervised. Salesperson performance was a measure of 30 items from the modified Behrman and Perreault (1982) Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory scale. Only data from the salesperson's direct supervisor was used to measure performance. To test the null hypothesis that the correlation coefficient between versatility and performance is equal to zero, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was computed.

The SPSS output data presented in Table 12 does not support the presence of a linear relationship between a supervisor's versatility score and the performance evaluations scores given to his or her salespeople. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation of .0973 does not allow one to reject the null hypothesis that the correlation coefficient between a sale supervisor's composite versatility score and the

Table 12

Relationship Between Sales Supervisor's Versatility  
and Performance Scores of Salespeople

	Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation
Versatility	126	5.6032	1.1412
Performance	126	4.9234	.7558
Coefficient Correlation $R = .0973$			
Not Significant at alpha .01			

performance evaluations given to his or her salespeople will be equal to zero at the .01 level of significance.

The findings of this study did not support acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there is a relationship between a sales supervisor's composite versatility score and the performance evaluations given to his or her salespeople.

Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

### Hypothesis 3

Research Hypothesis 3 is as follows: There will be a significant difference between supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles match their supervisors social style and supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles do not match those of their supervisor.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine if differences between the supervisor and salesperson's social style would have had an effect on the performance appraisals given to the salesperson by the supervisor. To test the null hypothesis that there is no difference between supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles match their supervisors social style and supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles do not match those of their supervisor, t-tests for independent samples were computed. Mean scores for performance for all match cases were computed and compared to mean scores for performance for all no-match cases.

A match case occurred when both a salesperson's and his or her sales

supervisor's social style scores fell into the same social style quadrant (i.e., both were Drivers, or both were Expressive). A total of 48 match cases occurred. No-match cases occurred when a salesperson's and his or her supervisor's social style scores fell into different social style quadrants (i.e., one was a Driver, the other an Expressive). A total of 77 No-match cases occurred. T-test data computed between all sales supervisors and their salespeople for social style match/no-match are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

**T-Test Data for Differences in Performance Scores When  
Social Styles Match and Do Not Match Between  
Sales Supervisors and Their Salespeople**

Group	Cases	Mean	Standard Error	t Value	DF	2-tail Prob.
Match	48	5.13	.097	2.65	110.92	.009*
No Match	77	4.78	.089			

\* Significant at the .05 level.

The t-test computations indicated that the t-value was 2.65. The standard error of the mean for the match group was .097 and .089 for the no-match group. A p-value of .009 at the .05 level of significance allows one to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles match their supervisors social style and supervisor-

rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles do not match those of their supervisor.

The findings of this study provided support for accepting the alternative hypothesis there will be a significant difference between supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles match their supervisors social style and supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles do not match those of their supervisor. Hypothesis 3 is accepted.

#### Hypothesis 4

Research Hypothesis 4 is as follows: There will be a significant difference in mean performance scores for supervisory-rated and self-rated measures of performance when social styles between the supervisor and salesperson match versus do not match.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to examine whether differences in self-ratings of performance and supervisor ratings of performance were related to social style differences between the supervisor and the salesperson. To test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in mean performance scores for supervisory-rated and self-rated measures of performance when social styles between the supervisor and salesperson match versus do not match, t-tests for independent samples were computed. As in Hypothesis 3, match cases were determined when both the salesperson's and the supervisor's social style scores fell into the same social style quadrant (i.e., both were drivers, or both were Expressive). A total of 48 Match

cases occurred. No-match cases were determined when the salesperson's and the supervisor's social style scores fell into different quadrants of social style (i.e., one was a Driver, the other an Expressive). A total of 77 No-match cases occurred. The differences in mean performance scores for cases where social styles between salespeople and supervisors matched was .8528 compared to 1.022 when social styles did not match.

T-tests data computed between all sales supervisors and their salespeople for social style match/no-match are presented in Table 14. The t-test computations indicated that the t-value was -1.37. The standard error of the mean for the match group was .089 and for the no-match group .086. A p value of .172, does not allow one to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in mean performance scores for supervisory-rated and self-rated measures of performance when social styles

Table 14

Composite Data for Mean Differences in Supervisor-Rated  
and Self-Rated Measures of Performance When  
Social Styles Match and Do Not Match

Group	Cases	Mean	Standard Error	t Value	DF	2-tail Prob.
Match	48	.8528	.089	-1.37	114.32	.172*
No Match	77	1.022	.086			

\* Not Significant at the .05 level.



between the supervisor and salesperson match versus do not match.

The findings of this study did not support acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there will be a significant difference in mean performance scores for supervisory-rated and self-rated measures of performance when social styles between the supervisor and salesperson match versus do not match. Hypothesis 4 is rejected.

#### Hypothesis 5

Research Hypothesis 5 is as follows: There will be a significant difference in supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople, related to differences in the social styles of the sales supervisors.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine whether supervisors of different social styles, evaluate their salespeople differently. To test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople, related to differences in the social styles of the sales supervisors, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed. Analysis of Variance was performed on the performance variable to determine whether mean performance scores given salespeople differed by the supervisor's social style (Amiable, Analytical, Driver, Expressive). The results are presented in Table 15.

The mean salesperson performance score given by an Expressive supervisor was 4.96, where the mean salesperson performance score given by an Amiable supervisor was 4.06. Mean salesperson performance scores given by a Driver supervisor was 4.93, where the mean salesperson performance scores given by an

Analytical supervisor was 4.90. The  $F$  Ratio of 1.388 with a  $p$ -value of .250 does not allow one to reject the null hypothesis there will be no difference in supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople, related to differences in the social styles of the sales supervisors at the .05 level of significance.

The findings of this study did not support acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there will be a significant difference in supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople, related to differences in the social styles of the sales supervisors. Hypothesis 5 is rejected.

Table 15

ANOVA Computations of Sales Supervisor's  
Mean Performance Scores Given Salespeople  
by Social Style of Sales Supervisor

Sales Supervisor Social Style	Cell Means for Performance
Expressive	4.96
Amiable	4.06
Drivers	4.93
Analytical	4.90
$F$ -Ratio 1.388	
$P$ -Value .250	

### Analysis of Research Questions on Self-Reports Versus Third-Party Reports

The following section presents the statistical analysis and findings for research hypotheses 6, 7, and 8, which dealt with the issues of self-reports versus third-party reports on the three major components of social style.

#### Hypothesis 6

Research Hypothesis 6 is as follows: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for responsiveness and mean responsiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to examine how one's self-ratings compared to the ratings of others (peers and supervisors) for one of the key dimensions of social style--responsiveness. To test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in mean scores for responsiveness between raters (self, peer, and supervisory) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted.

The MANOVA analysis was performed on the responsiveness variable to determine whether the mean scores for self-ratings, peer ratings and supervisory ratings are equal. The results of that analysis are presented in Table 16 and indicate that the mean self-rating for responsiveness was 5.821 with a standard deviation of .802. Peer ratings for responsiveness, which were a mean composite of all peer ratings, was 5.298 with a standard deviation of .847. Mean supervisory ratings for salesperson responsiveness was 5.036 with a standard deviation of .846.

Table 17 presents the results of a Hotelling's trace multivariate test of significance. The significance of  $F$  at .000 allows one to reject the null hypothesis, that there is no difference between mean self-rating scores for responsiveness and mean responsiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

Table 16

**Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Responsiveness Scores  
Between Raters**

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Self-Rating	5.821	.802	125
Peer-Rating	5.298	.847	125
Supervisor-Rating	5.036	.846	125

Table 17

**Multivariate Tests of Significance Between Rater  
Effect for Mean Scores for Responsiveness**

Test Name	Value	Exact $F$	Hypoth. $df$	Error $df$	Sig. of $F$
Hotellings	.60745	37.357	2.00	123.00	.000*

\* Significant at the .05 level.

The findings of this study provided support for accepting the alternative

hypothesis that there is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for responsiveness and mean responsiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

Hypothesis 6 is accepted.

#### Hypothesis 7

Research Hypothesis 7 is as follows: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for assertiveness and mean assertiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

As with Hypothesis 6, the purpose of this hypothesis was to examine how one's self-ratings compared to the ratings of others (peers and supervisors), in this case for the social style dimension--assertiveness. To test the null hypothesis, that there is no difference in mean scores for assertiveness between raters (self, peer, and supervisory), a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted.

The MANOVA analysis was performed on the variable assertiveness to determine whether the mean scores for self-ratings, peer ratings and supervisory ratings are equal. The assertiveness variable, when combined with the responsiveness variable, defined the four social styles (Amiable, Analytical, Driver, Expressive) measured in this study.

The MANOVA computations for assertiveness, shown in Table 18, indicate that the mean self-rating for assertiveness was 5.427 with a standard deviation of .862. Peer-ratings for assertiveness, which are a composite of all peer ratings, was 5.073 with a standard deviation of .886. Mean supervisory ratings for salesperson

assertiveness was 4.699 with a standard deviation of 1.094.

Table 19 presents the results of a Hotelling's trace multivariate test of significance. The significance of  $F$  at .000 allows one to reject the null hypothesis, that there is no difference between mean self-rating scores for assertiveness and mean assertiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

Table 18

Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Assertiveness Scores Between Raters

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Self-Rating	5.427	.862	125
Peer-Rating	5.073	.886	125
Supervisor-Rating	4.699	1.094	125

Table 19

Multivariate Tests of Significance Between Rater  
Effect for Mean Scores for Assertiveness

Test Name	Value	Exact $F$	Hypoth. $df$	Error $df$	Sig. of $F$
Hotellings	.39206	24.111	2.00	123.00	.000*

\* Significant at the .05 level.

The findings of this study provided support for accepting the alternative

hypothesis that there is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for assertiveness and mean assertiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

Hypothesis 7 is accepted.

#### Hypothesis 8

Research Hypothesis 8 is as follows: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for versatility and mean versatility scores given by peers and supervisors.

As with Hypotheses 6 and 7, the purpose of this hypothesis was to examine how one's self-ratings compare to the ratings of others (peers and supervisors), in this case for the social style dimension--versatility. To test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in mean composite-ratings and mean self-ratings for versatility, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance was computed.

The MANOVA analysis was performed on the versatility variable to determine whether the mean scores for self-ratings, peer ratings and supervisory ratings, were equal. The MANOVA computations for versatility, shown in Table 20, indicate that the mean self-rating for versatility was 5.866 with a standard deviation of .856. Peer-ratings for versatility was 5.208 with a standard deviation of .892 and supervisory ratings for versatility was 4.848 with a standard deviation of .904.

Table 21 presents the results of a Hotelling's trace multivariate test of significance. The significance of  $F$  at .000 allows one to reject the null hypothesis, that there is no difference between mean self-rating scores for versatility and mean

versatility scores given by peers and supervisors.

Table 20  
Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Versatility Scores  
Between Raters

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Self-Rating	5.866	.856	125
Peer-Rating	5.208	.892	125
Supervisor-Rating	4.848	.904	125

Table 21  
Multivariate Tests of Significance Between Rater  
Effect for Mean Scores for Versatility

Test Name	Value	Exact F	Hypoth. df	Error df	Sig. of F
Hotellings	.82906	50.987	2.00	123.00	.000*

\* Significant at the .05 level.

The findings of this study provided support for the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for versatility and mean versatility scores given by peers and supervisors. Hypothesis 8 is accepted.



## Summary

This chapter summarized the results of the present study and was presented in three sections: (1) the descriptive characteristics of the respondents, (2) statistical analysis and findings for each of the five central research hypotheses which dealt with salesperson performance evaluation and the relationship of these evaluations with the social styles of the salespeople and their sales supervisors, and (3) the statistical analysis and findings for research hypotheses 6, 7, 8, which dealt with the issues of self-reports versus third-party reports of the three major components of social style. Support was found for two of the five research hypotheses addressed in the second section related to the relationship between social styles and sales performance. Support was also found for the three research hypotheses related to self-reports and third-party reports for social style. The next chapter discusses the findings in detail and the implications of the study. Chapter V gives suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes and discusses the present study's findings and their significance and implications for research in the areas of social styles and sales performance for sales managers and others in leadership positions who supervise the work of others. This chapter also identifies limitations of the current research and provides several suggestions for future research.

The chapter is divided into four major sections. The first section of the chapter examines and discusses the major findings for each of the study's five central research hypotheses. These dealt with salesperson performance evaluations and the versatility and social styles of the salespeople and sales managers who supervise their work.

The second section examines and discusses the major findings for research hypotheses 6, 7, and 8, which dealt with the issues of self-reports versus third-party reports of social styles. The third section discusses the major practical and theoretical implications of the research findings. The fourth and final section identifies the limitations of the current research and recommends directions for future research.

As noted in previous chapters, the purpose of this research study was twofold:

1. To use the Wilson Learning version of the Social Style Model to assess

whether the performance evaluations of salespeople are related (a) to their social styles, (b) to the social styles of the managers who supervise their work, or (c) to the differences between their social styles and the styles of their sales supervisors.

2. To test one of the key underlying assumptions of the Social Style Model; that is, the assumption that self-evaluations of social style are often significantly different from evaluations supplied by others who are familiar with a person's behavior.

### Social Styles, Versatility, and Performance Evaluations

This section discusses the major findings for the study's five central research hypotheses. These five research hypotheses address the issue of performance evaluations and the relationship between these evaluations and the social styles and the versatility of salespeople and their supervisors.

#### Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated: There is a relationship between a sales supervisor's perception of a salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's performance evaluation of that person.

The findings of the current study support the hypothesis that a relationship existed between a sales supervisor's perception of a salesperson's versatility and the sales supervisor's performance evaluation of that person. As noted in Chapter IV, a positive correlation coefficient of .54 was found between salesperson versatility and

performance, and this was significant at the .01 level.

That a positive relationship existed between salesperson versatility and performance is further supported by examining the data in Table 22. These data show that the positive relationship found between salesperson versatility and overall performance held true for each of the sub-categories of performance measured by the survey instrument. As Table 22 indicates, salesperson versatility correlated significantly with each of the five sub-categories of performance measured in this study.

Table 22

Relationship Between Supervisor's Perception of  
Salesperson Versatility and Performance  
in Five Performance Categories

Performance Category	Performance Scores	Standard Deviation	*R-Value
Sales Objectives	4.894	.9802	.4462
Technical Knowledge	4.722	.7994	.4837
Providing Information	4.776	.9468	.5065
Controlling Expenses	5.277	.8779	.3036
Sales Presentations	4.920	.8667	.5405
Overall Performance	4.923	.7558	.5405

\*All Significant at .01

Three previous empirical studies examined the relationship between versatility and performance and, as summarized in Chapter III, these studies reported findings similar to those described here. Merrill and Reid (1981) reported that high achievers in their studies displayed a great deal of style flexibility. Sujan and Weitz (1986) found a significant relationship between "working smarter" and performance. "Working smarter" was operationalized by Sujan and Weitz (1986) in terms of adaptability (i.e., versatility). A significant relationship between adaptability and sales performance was also reported by Spiro and Weitz (1990), although this finding was based on self-ratings of adaptability and performance rather than supervisory ratings. Supervisory ratings of versatility and performance, however, were not related according to Sujan and Weitz (1986), although it is important to note that their self- and supervisory performance instruments were dissimilar and did not necessarily assess the same aspects of performance.

All in all, the empirical evidence from the present study and earlier studies seems to point clearly in one direction: Higher performance levels are exhibited by salespeople who are perceived to be more versatile than others performing the same sales functions. This, of course, is what social style theory contends; that is, those who are versatile--those who can adapt or flex their communication behavior to the social styles of those with whom they interact--will be more productive. There will be less tension in their relationships with others because they can more easily adapt their communication style to better match the communication styles of those with whom they interact (Manning & Reece, 1992; Merrill & Reid, 1981).

It is of more than passing interest to note here that earlier studies have suggested that the potential to be versatile may vary systematically from one social style to another. In other words, people with specific social styles may more easily adapt to the behavior of those with whom they interact than other people with different social styles (Snively & Clutterbuck, 1980). Lashbrook, et al. (1976) found that the more responsive social styles (Amiables and Expressives) were perceived as more versatile than the less responsive social styles (Analyticals and Drivers). Sullivan (1977) found that the Expressive style, in particular, was perceived to be the most versatile of the four social styles. Snively and Clutterbuck (1980) also found Expressives to be the most versatile, followed, in order, by Amiables, Drivers, and Analyticals.

The data from this current study, as indicated in Table 23, supported all of these earlier findings. Expressives were shown to have the highest versatility scores, followed, in order, by Amiables, Drivers, and Analyticals. This finding is far from being unimportant if, in fact, there is a positive relationship between versatility and performance. All other things being equal, sales supervisors might be expected to prefer recruiting salespeople who exhibit the Expressive social style--because they tend to display versatility which is associated with higher levels of productivity. There was some evidence, in fact, that sales supervisors exhibited such a preference. As Table 24 indicates, of the 127 salespersons surveyed in this study, 38.1 percent were classified as Expressives--which, of course, significantly exceeded the 25% that one would expect on the basis of pure chance. Moreover, as Table 24 indicates,

Wilson Learning also reported that 38% of those in its very large data base who were employed in marketing/sales positions were classified as Expressives. Tracom (1991) noted that 30% of the sales and marketing respondents in Merrill and Reid's early studies were classified as Expressives.

Table 23

**Analysis of Variance for Salesperson Versatility  
by Social Style Composite Ratings  
(Peers and Supervisor)**

Social Style	Total Cases	Percentage of Cases	Versatility Scores
Expressives	49	38.6%	5.62
Amiables	15	11.8%	5.10
Drivers	27	21.3%	4.85
Analyticals	36	28.3%	4.53
Total	127	100.0%	5.09
F-Ratio 22.38 p-Value .000			

Clearly, Expressives are attracted in disproportionate numbers to careers in sales. Sales supervisors may, in fact, recognize the potential for success among people who display the characteristics of the Expressive. At the same time, Expressives themselves may be attracted in disproportionate numbers to careers in

sales--because, among other things, they find they can be productive in the sales field.

Table 24

Distribution of Survey Respondents Social Style  
Current Study Comparisons to Other Research

Distribution by Social Styles			
Social Style	Current Study *	Wilson Learning	Tracom Corporation
Expressives	38.1%	38.0%	30.0%
Amiables	11.9%	21.0%	26.0%
Drivers	21.4%	20.0%	22.0%
Analyticals	28.6%	21.0%	22.0%
Total	127	628	200

\* Composite scores include Peers and Supervisors, self-ratings excluded.

## Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated: There is a relationship between a sales supervisor's composite versatility score and the performance evaluations given to his or her salespeople.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine whether a sales supervisor's versatility was related to the performance scores given to the salespeople he or she supervises: Are sales supervisors who are more versatile also more or less tolerant or lenient in their evaluations of their salespeople? The findings of this study, as indicated in Chapter IV, did not support the hypothesis that a relationship exists



between a supervisor's level of versatility and the overall performance scores given to the salespeople that he or she supervises. As with Hypothesis 1, correlations were also computed for each of the five job performance sub-components measured in this of the five sub-component performance criteria.

As indicated in Chapter II, findings from earlier empirical studies on performance evaluations and rater bias (i.e., leniency, halo effect, etc.) were very mixed. The literature does not clearly point toward any general factor that explains rater bias when it exists. Taylor et al. (1959) and Klores (1966) suggested a tendency for supervisors who are task-oriented to give lower performance ratings to subordinates--and for supervisors who are relationship-oriented to give higher performance ratings to subordinates. The evidence from the present study, however, did not lend support to these earlier findings. There was no systematic difference between the performance evaluations given by supervisors classified as Drivers and Analyticals (who can be thought of in terms of task-orientation) and Expressives and Amiables (who can be thought of in terms of relationship-orientation).

If, as Manning and Reece (1992) and others contended, versatility is an important component of success in selling, the present study suggests that when evaluating the performance of salespersons, the versatility of the salesperson--and not the versatility of the supervisor--will determine the salesperson's performance evaluation. There was no evidence that the supervisor's versatility will influence (i.e., bias) his or her evaluations of subordinates in either a positive or negative direction.

### Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated: There will be a significant difference between supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles match their supervisors social style and supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople whose social styles do not match their supervisor.

The findings of the present study supported this hypothesis. In other words, the more similar a salesperson is to his or her immediate supervisor in terms of social style, the more likely one is to receive a favorable overall performance evaluation. As noted in Chapter IV, the average performance score mean when a supervisor's social style matched the salesperson's was 5.13 (on a 7-point scale), compared to 4.78 when their social styles did not match. This difference was significant at the .05 level.

There may be more than one way to explain this finding. When a salesperson and his or her supervisor are similar in terms of social style, there is, as social style theory suggests, less tension and more rapport in their relationship. The salesperson and the supervisor, one can speculate, are more likely to see the sales job in similar terms--with the salesperson performing the job much as the supervisor would (or, in fact, might have in the past). Both salesperson and supervisor might attach similar priorities to different components of the job. Both might approach similar on-the-job challenges in the same way. Thus, when supervisors evaluate the performance of salespeople who share similar social styles, they may in a sense be evaluating themselves. These supervisors may see that they would have (or, in fact, did in the

past) performed the job in much the same way as the salesperson now being evaluated.

Although the above explanation is certainly speculative, Behrman and Perreault (1982) and others, as outlined in Chapter II, underscored the difficulties of evaluating performance objectively. Performance evaluation, they concluded, is oftentimes unavoidably subjective. If sales supervisors are subject to preconceptions and perceptual distortions as they evaluate subordinates, it seems reasonable that their perceptual machinery might be influenced, as suggested here, by the similarity of their social styles and those whom they evaluate. Certainly, there are other ways of interpreting the finding reported here.

The same finding reported above, with one exception, was reached when individual sub-components of the study's performance evaluation instrument were examined. As noted in Table 25, when the social styles of a salesperson and his or her supervisor were the same, the performance scores for Sales Objectives, Providing Information, Sales Presentations, and Technical Knowledge were significantly higher than when the social styles of the supervisor and salesperson were different. Social style congruency, however, was not significantly related to the performance criterion labeled Controlling Expenses. It may be of some significance when interpreting the data in Table 25 to note that nearly three-quarters of the 48 cases where the social styles of supervisors and salespeople matched involved Expressives.

The finding discussed and interpreted here raises a couple of interesting managerial issues. If, as the evidence in this study suggested, there is a favorable bias in place when a supervisor evaluates the job performance of subordinates with

Table 25

Differences in Salesperson Performance Scores in  
Five Performance Categories When Social Styles  
Match and Do Not Match Between Sales  
Supervisors and Their Salespeople

Performance Category	Mean Scores	Standard Error	t Value	DF	p Value
Sales Objectives					
Match	5.14	.118	2.45	116.41	.016
No Match	4.73	.120			
Technical Knowledge					
Match	4.89	.108	1.94	112.01	.054
No Match	4.61	.096			
Providing Information					
Match	5.00	.139	2.18	95.93	.032
No Match	4.62	.104			
Controlling Expenses					
Match	5.38	.118	1.09	108.46	.280
No Match	5.21	.105			
Sales Presentations					
Match	5.22	.105	3.38	115.17	.001
No Match	4.73	.105			
Overall Performance					
Match	5.13	.097	2.65	110.92	.009
No Match	4.78	.089			

social styles similar to his or her own social style, it would seem reasonable that the same bias might influence the hiring choices made by the supervisor. He or she may show unconscious preference for job applicants with similar social styles, who would approach a sales job in much the same way as the supervisor. This behavior could, of course, lead the supervisor to forego hiring applicants with different social styles who might otherwise be perfectly suited for the position--and who might be very productive employees. Although the findings of this study showed, for example, that Expressive salespeople in the study's sample on average received the highest performance evaluations, this of course does not at all suggest that salespeople with other social styles are not very productive employees. The sales supervisor who permits social style bias to interfere with recruiting decisions runs the risk, of course, of hiring salespeople who might be less productive than others who might have been selected.

In much the same way, sales supervisors must be cognizant of the fact that social style bias can interfere with their need to evaluate all subordinates as fairly and objectively as possible. Sales supervisors who are unaware of social style bias risk morale problems and losing very productive employees by evaluating their work less favorably than it deserves to be.

#### Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated: There will be a significant difference in mean performance scores for supervisory-rated and self-rated measures of performance when social styles of the supervisor and the salesperson match versus do not match.

The findings of the present study did not support the hypothesis that the difference between self-ratings and supervisory-ratings of performance were significantly different when the social styles of the salesperson and the supervisor matched versus when they did not match. As reported in Chapter IV, the difference between mean scores for self-reported and supervisory-reported performance evaluations was .852 when social styles matched--and 1.02 when social styles did not match. This difference, however, was not statistically significant.

On the surface, the findings pertaining to this hypothesis did not seem to point to a meaningful conclusion until the variables involved were isolated and analyzed independently. Salespersons self-ratings of performance were examined to determine whether salespeople of different social styles evaluated their performance differently. The results of an Analysis of Variance, presented in Table 26, provided no evidence to support the premise that self-ratings of performance varied significantly among salespeople of different social styles. This would suggest that differences in one's self-ratings of performance are not related to their social style.

Likewise, as previously noted in Chapter IV, no evidence was found to support Hypothesis 5, which examined whether supervisory ratings of salesperson performance varied significantly among sales supervisors of different social styles. This finding, when coupled with the results in Table 26, again suggests that differences in performance ratings by either supervisors or salesperson's self-ratings are not related to the differences in the social styles of the raters.

When performance evaluations were examined independent from social style, a statistically significant difference between self-ratings and supervisory ratings was

Table 26

ANOVA Computations of Salesperson's Mean  
Self-Rating Scores for Performance  
by Social Style

Salesperson Social Style	Self-Ratings of Performance
Expressives	5.47
Amiables	5.28
Drivers	5.66
Analytical	5.55
F-Ratio 1.163	
P-Value .327	

found as illustrated in Table 27 and 28. Salespeople in the present study gave themselves, on average, a self-rating for performance of 5.51 (on a 7-point scale) while supervisory ratings averaged 4.92.

There has been no empirical research which has linked the differences in performance evaluations to the differences in social styles by raters. The conclusions of the present study are that the differences in the raters' social styles are not related to the differences in sales performance evaluations. The findings discussed here do, however, support earlier studies on sales performance which examined self-ratings versus supervisory ratings. As indicated in Chapter II review of performance literature by Thornton (1980) suggested that, in general, most research has indicated, as did this study, individuals rate themselves higher than they are rated by others.

Table 27

Differences Between Self-Rating and Supervisory Ratings of  
Salesperson Performance When Social  
Style is Not a Factor

Rater	Mean	Standard Error	t Value	DF	2-tail Prob.
Self	5.51	.059	6.43	125	.000*
Supervisor	4.92	.067			

\* Significant at the .05 level.

Chonko, et al. (1986); Lawler, (1967); Prien and Liske, (1962); Spiro and Weitz (1990); and Thornton, (1980) all found self-ratings of sales performance to be significantly higher than supervisory ratings. Parker et al. (1959); and Kirchner (1965) found moderate agreement between self-ratings and supervisory ratings of performance. Heneman (1974) found less leniency among self-raters than among supervisory raters.

While the differences between self-ratings and supervisory ratings of performance found in the present study are significant, the suggestion to sales supervisors and those involved in performance evaluation is not to discount either form of rating. The differences between self-ratings and supervisory ratings of performance may be an indicator that problems exist in the expectations related to job performance. Indeed, several authors have suggested that when agreement occurs between self-ratings and supervisory ratings, it implies that performance expectations of the salesperson and supervisor are in congruence (Feldman, 1976; Miles, 1976;



Table 28

Differences Between Self-Rating and Supervisory Ratings of  
Salesperson Performance in Five Performance Categories  
When Social Style is Not a Factor

Performance Category	Mean Scores	Standard Error	t Value	DE	p Value
Sales Objectives					
Self-Rating	5.45	.070			
Supervisor Rating	4.89	.088	5.32	124	.000
Technical Knowledge					
Self-Rating	5.16	.076			
Supervisor Rating	4.72	.071	4.29	125	.000
Providing Information					
Self-Rating	5.43	.079			
Supervisor Rating	4.77	.084	6.30	125	.000
Controlling Expenses					
Self-Rating	5.96	.067			
Supervisor Rating	5.27	.078	6.52	125	.000
Sales Presentations					
Self-Rating	5.53	.070			
Supervisor Rating	4.92	.077	5.79	125	.000
Overall Performance					
Self-Rating	5.51	.059			
Supervisor Rating	4.92	.067	6.43	125	.000

Morgan, 1980-1981). Chonko et al. (1986) suggested that differences in performance evaluations can be useful to both the salesperson and the sales supervisor in encouraging a meaningful dialogue and exchange of ideas, leading to improved role clarity and ultimately, improved performance. The use of self-ratings and supervisory ratings can assist in identifying training needs, job expectations, communication problems, and deficiencies in the evaluation process that would not be evident with a singular rating.

#### Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 stated: There will be a significant difference in supervisor-rated performance score means of salespeople, related to differences in the social styles of the sales supervisor.

Hypothesis 5 addressed the following question: Do supervisors who exhibit different social styles evaluate their salespeople differently? As the discussion in the previous hypothesis demonstrated and the findings of Chapter IV of the present study indicated, no evidence was found to support the hypothesis that overall performance evaluations varied significantly among sales supervisors with different social styles. Furthermore, analysis of each of the five sub-categories of performance measured in this study found no significant differences in performance evaluations related to the social styles of the sales supervisors.

While this study was unable to relate differences in mean performance scores for salespeople to differences in the social styles of their supervisors, it is of more than passing interest to note that the social styles of the salespeople themselves were

found to be significantly related to overall performance evaluations. As illustrated in Table 29, of the five sub-categories of performance analyzed, significant relationships were found in all but one performance category--"Providing Information." Expressive salespeople had the highest overall mean performance scores (5.13 on a 7-point scale), followed in order, by Driver salespeople (4.96), Amiable salespeople (4.92), and Analytical salespeople (4.62). Analysis of variance revealed these differences to be statistically significant.

A number of authors have cautioned that it is dangerous to label any one social style as any "better" or "worse" than others--since each style displays specific strengths and weaknesses (Merrill & Reid, 1981; Weiss & Mohr, 1992; Wenschlag, 1989). This point is underscored by Table 29 which analyzes the five sub-categories of performance evaluation. The data in this table indicates that while the overall performance of Expressive salespeople was highest among the four social styles, the Driver salesperson was best at meeting "Sales Objectives" and in terms of "Technical Knowledge." The Amiable salesperson performed marginally higher than the Expressive in terms of "Controlling Expenses" but was below or at the sample mean in all other performance categories. The Expressive salesperson was best at "Providing Information" and "Sales Presentations" and was above the sample mean in all performance categories.

While each social style exhibits, as Table 29 illustrates, specific strengths and weaknesses, this study found that salespeople with the Expressive social style received the strongest overall performance evaluations. This finding lends support to the one-best-style of leadership conclusions reached by Blake and Mouton (1980), Buzzotta

and Lefton (1982), Butler and Reese (1991), and others.

It is useful to repeat here that previous social style research has found a disproportionate number of people with the Expressive social style to be working in sales and marketing career positions. This study, likewise, found a greater number of Expressive salespeople in the study's sample than other social styles. Previous research has found that certain styles more easily adapt to their environment, and the Expressive style, in particular, was found to exhibit a greater level of versatility than other social styles (Snaveley & Clutterbuck, 1980; Lashbrook et al., 1976; Sullivan, 1977). This study found that in a sales environment the Expressive style was also the most versatile of the social styles. Lastly, in this study the Expressive salesperson received the highest performance scores of the four social styles--further supporting the issue of one-best-style.

Merrill & Reid (1981) contended that there is no correlation between social style and success, their contention was that versatility is the key variable in predicting one's success. However, how success is defined may be a point for distinction. Merrill and Reid (1981) measured success based on an individual's career position or how successful others perceived the individual, using performance criteria relevant to a sales environment as its measure of success. This study found not only significant differences in the performance scores of salespeople of different social styles, but also significant correlations between each of the three dimensions of social style and performance. For the assertiveness variable, a positive .29 correlation with performance was found at the .01 level of significance. For the responsiveness variable, a positive .27 correlation with performance was found at the

Table 29

Analysis of Variance for Salesperson Performance Scores in  
Two Performance Categories and Overall Performance  
By Social Styles of the Salesperson

Salesperson Social Style	Overall Performance	Sales Presentations	Controlling Expenses	Sales Objectives	Technical Knowledge	Providing Information
Expressives	5.13	5.20	5.50	5.06	4.85	4.94
Amiables	4.92	4.85	5.57	4.70	4.57	4.66
Drivers	4.96	4.98	4.79	5.20	4.88	4.69
Analyticals	4.62	4.52	5.21	4.38	4.39	4.58
Total Sample	4.92	4.92	5.28	4.89	4.72	4.78
F-Ratio	3.278	4.794	4.600	4.431	2.682	1.114
P-Value	.023	.003	.004	.005	.050	.346

.01 level of significance. For the versatility variable, a positive .26 correlation with performance was found at the .01 level of significance. Each of the three dimensions of social style were composite measures utilizing input from the salesperson's peers and supervisor. The findings of this study suggested that there is a significant relationship between the responsiveness and assertiveness variables to sales performance.

The implication of these findings for sales supervisors is that each individual has a specific social style and that each style has certain strengths and weaknesses which it can bring to a sales environment. Understanding one's own social style, as well as the social styles of others, can be helpful in recruiting, selection and assignment of individuals to specific tasks or positions where their strengths are greatest (e.g., where sales presentation skills are critically important, the Expressive would, all other things being equal, be the best; where technical knowledge is critically important, the Driver would, all other things being equal, be the best).

#### Analysis of Research Questions on Self-Reports Versus Third-Party Reports

The following section presents a discussion of the findings for research hypotheses 6, 7, and 8, which dealt with the issue of self-reports versus third-party reports on the three major components of social style. Each of these hypotheses focused on whether a significant difference exists between self-rating scores and scores given by peers and supervisors for the measured variable. For the sake of brevity and to minimize the potential for redundancy, these three hypotheses will be discussed collectively. The three variables examined were: responsiveness,

assertiveness, and versatility.

#### Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 stated: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for responsiveness and mean responsiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

#### Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 stated: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for assertiveness and mean assertiveness scores given by peers and supervisors.

#### Hypothesis 8

Hypothesis 8 stated: There is a significant difference between mean self-rating scores for versatility and mean versatility scores given by peers and supervisors.

Table 30 highlights the Analysis of Variance findings noted earlier in Chapter IV, which examined the differences between self-rating scores and scores given by peers and supervisors for the variables responsiveness, assertiveness, and versatility.

In the current research, all three variables showed statistically significant differences in mean scores between self-raters and third-party raters. For each variable, self-ratings had the highest mean scores followed in order, by peer and supervisory ratings.

The findings related to the three hypotheses in this section supported previous research which suggested that caution is needed when using self-assessments for

Table 30  
Social Styles Variable Ratings by Rater Type  
(Self-, Peer, Supervisor)

Social Style Variable	Self-Ratings		Peer-Ratings		Supervisory-Ratings	
	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Responsiveness	5.82	.802	5.30	.847	5.03	.846
Assertiveness	5.42	.862	5.07	.886	4.69	1.090
Versatility	5.86	.856	5.21	.892	4.85	.904



measuring one's social style. Merrill and Reid (1981), Ingrasci (1981), and Luft (1969) each contended that one's self-perceptions for social style are often significantly different from the perceptions of others. Self-ratings were found to be significantly different from both supervisor and peer ratings for all three variables measured.

These perceptual differences are highlighted in Table 31, where peer and supervisor perceptions of salesperson style are contrasted to the self-perceptions of the salesperson. A case in point is the fact that of the salespeople responding to this study, 65% rated themselves as an Expressive, whereby, composite scores by others (peers and supervisors) placed them in the Expressive category in only 38.1% of the cases.

Self-assessments, while significantly different than peer and supervisory ratings, provide meaningful insights which allow the salesperson to make necessary adjustments in his/her behavior. Knowledge of social styles from a self-perspective as well as the perspectives of others allow the individual to adapt to situations or people in ways which can be more productive.

The performance literature has generally found peer ratings to be more lenient than ratings of supervisors (Rothaus et al., 1965; Springer, 1953; Zedeck et al., 1974). However, there is no published research on social styles which contrasts peer-ratings with supervisory ratings. The findings of the present study provided evidence that peer ratings differ significantly from supervisory ratings, in an upward direction, when evaluating salespeople on the three key social style dimensions--responsiveness, assertiveness, and versatility. This study also found less variability in the ratings by

Table 31  
Comparisons of Self-Perceptions of Social Style and  
Composite Peer/Supervisor Scores of Social Style

Self-Ratings for Social Style					
Ratings of Others	Expressives	Amiables	Drivers	Analytical	Row Total
Expressives	38 30.2%	5 4.0%	3 2.4%	2 1.6%	48 38.1%
Amiables	8 6.3%	4 3.2%	0 0%	3 2.4%	15 11.9%
Drivers	18 14.3%	0 0%	7 5.6%	2 1.6%	27 21.4%
Analyticals	18 14.3%	4 3.2%	8 6.3%	6 3.7%	36 28.6%
Column Total	82 65.1%	13 10.3%	18 14.3%	13 10.3%	126 100.0%
F-Ratio	4.431	2.682	1.114	4.661	2.818
P-Value	.005	.050	.346	.004	.042

peers than the ratings by supervisors particularly, on the variable assertiveness. This does not support the earlier research by Klieger and Mosel (1953) and Springer (1953) who found less inter-rater agreement with peer ratings than with supervisory in performance ratings. Borman (1974), Zedeck et al. (1974), and Zammuto et al. (1982) suggested that differences between supervisory and peer ratings for performance, may be the result of different evaluative criteria or view points--and do not necessarily suggest that either type of rating is invalid or unreliable. This may

account for the degree of difference in rater variance on the variable assertiveness between supervisors and peers. Peoples' ability to assert themselves, an important trait in the sales environment, may determine how successful they might be in a selling career. Klimoski and London (1974) suggested that supervisors are less able to discriminate between items related to competence and those items related to effort--peer and self-ratings were able to make this distinction. It may also be possible that supervisors who may have minimal social interaction with their salespeople have a difficult time separating social behavior from performance behavior.

### Summary

This section, which included a discussion of Hypotheses 6, 7, and 8, discussed the findings from the present study which found self-assessments of one's social style to be significantly different, in an upward direction, from both supervisor and peer ratings. Peer ratings, likewise, were significantly higher than supervisory ratings for the three dimensions of social style measured. This is an important methodological issue.

Little empirical research has been published on the issue of self-ratings for social styles, and no published research exists on the issue relating to differences in peer and supervisory ratings for social style. The findings of this research provide a bench mark for future research and measurement of these differences.

### Summary of Study Findings and Implications

This sections summarizes the major findings and implications of the present

research study. A major objective of this research was to assess whether performance evaluations of salespeople were related to their social styles or to the social styles of the managers who supervise their work. The social style dimension, versatility, was found to be positively related to sales performance, supporting previous research. The present study did not, however, find a relationship between supervisory versatility and the performance scores given to their salespeople. The Expressive style salesperson was found to be more versatile than salespeople with other social styles, a finding again, supported in earlier research. A greater number of Expressive style salespeople were found to be present in the survey sample than other social styles. These findings support earlier research which indicated that sales and marketing careers tend to attract a greater number of Expressives than many other career paths. Contrary to the suggestions of Merrill and Reid (1981), however, the findings of this study suggested that not only are the Expressive styles attracted to the sales field, they also perform better overall than other styles. This finding does not support the suggestion that social style is not related to one's success or that no one style is best. Given this fact, sales supervisors and those responsible for hiring sales applicants should consider not only one's level of versatility but also the social style of the individual as a possible predictor of their success in a sales environment.

This study failed to find support for the premise that supervisors of different social styles evaluate salesperson performance differently. However, another major objective of this research was to assess whether salesperson performance was related to the differences between salesperson social styles and the styles of their sales managers. This study did find that the more similar a salesperson is to his or her

immediate supervisor in social style, the more likely one is to receive more favorable overall performance evaluations. This is an important finding both for social style theory as well as for those involved in the measurement of sales performance. These findings suggest that sales managers need to be aware of their own social style tendencies, as well as the social styles of others. Hiring individuals who have similar social styles raises the likelihood that a rapport can be established between the supervisor and salesperson, thus increasing the chances for a productive working relationship. Being cognizant of each styles strengths and weaknesses can be helpful in the recruiting, selection and assignment of individuals to specific tasks or positions. This should also insure that work is more productive, that tension is minimized, and that the strengths and abilities of each individual is optimized.

Another major objective of this research was to test the assumption that self-evaluations of social style are often significantly different from evaluations supplied by others who are familiar with a person's behavior. This study found evidence that self-assessments for the analysis of one's social style are significantly different, in an upward direction, from both supervisor and peer ratings. Likewise, peer ratings were found to be significantly different from supervisory ratings for all three dimensions of social style measured--assertiveness, responsiveness, and versatility. This is a significant methodological issue. Little empirical research has been published on the issue of self-ratings for social styles, and no published research exists relating to differences in peer and supervisory ratings for social style. The findings of this research provides a bench mark for future research and measurement of these differences. As noted earlier, differences between supervisory and peer groups may

be the result of different evaluative criteria based on one's position, level of familiarity and/or social interaction with the person being evaluated.

Consistent with the above findings on self-evaluation for social style, this study found that self-report measures of performance also have considerable upward bias from supervisory evaluations of salesperson performance. This finding was not unexpected; however, differences in supervisory ratings and self-ratings were not found to be related to social style differences or the raters. When the data was analyzed without regard to social style, significant differences in self-ratings and supervisory ratings existed.

These differences, while significant, can be useful to both the salesperson and the sales manager in encouraging a meaningful dialogue and exchange of ideas, leading to improved role clarity. This process can assist in identifying training needs, communication problems, role ambiguity or deficiencies in the evaluation process that would not be evident with a singular rating.

This study focused on the social styles of sales managers and the sales people whose work they supervised. The study also examined the relationship between social style and sales performance. Because leadership, sales management, and personal selling are all influence processes, the findings of this study should be particularly relevant to those whose work reside in any one or all of these areas.

The Social Style Model has attracted considerable attention by authors of textbooks on professional sales and by sales practitioners, and many believe it offers a practical framework for improving interpersonal communications. Knowledge of style can be especially important to managers and executives whose leadership

responsibilities require them to supervise, monitor, and motivate subordinates who function with considerable autonomy. This could include teachers, college professors, and research scientists, as well as salespeople. Understanding different social styles enables a leader--for example, a principal, a dean, a department head, a sales manager--to exercise versatility in interpersonal communications with subordinates.

Although the genesis of social style theory can be traced back as far as Jung, most references are made to the seminal work of Merrill and Reid (1981) and Wilson Learning (Wenschlag, 1989). Other than their work, however, there has been very little in the way of published empirical studies assessing the Social Style Model in real world settings. This exploratory research, makes a useful contribution to the literature and to the understanding of social style theory and its relationship to sales performance.

#### Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

There are several unavoidable shortcomings to the present research which may limit the interpretations of the results. First, the study sample was limited to one segment of the food industry (food brokers), thus other segments and industries are excluded from the sample. The choice of using a judgmental sample from a singular segment from the food industry was justified for this study, however, a more diverse sample which includes other segments of the food industry and/or other industries would assist in the generalization of the findings. The nonprobability judgement sample does have the advantage to control the variance which might occur in samples from diverse industries.

An essential factor related to the performance success of salespeople is the interaction between buyer and salesperson. This study utilized the input from peers, supervisors and self-, however, it did not attempt to measure the role of the buyer on social style behavior or performance. This element would obviously bring a vital dimension to the study of social styles and sales performance and would complement the self- and supervisory data collected in this study.

The use of objective measures of sales performance would be helpful to measure the extent of rater bias present with subjective measures.

Descriptive characteristics of the respondents, (i.e., demographic characteristics, work experience, and working relationships between supervisor and salesperson) were not addressed for their potential influence on the variables measured. Future research should consider these and other variables (e.g., role clarity, relationship quality), which may help explain the differences between raters of performance and social styles.

A number of studies report significant differences between self- and supervisory performance appraisals (Heneman, 1974; Holzbach, 1978; Steel & Ovalle, 1984) as well as this study. Behrman and Perreault (1982), reported correlations considered significant between subcomponents from the self-report scale to comparable subcomponent evaluations from sales managers for four of the five performance components. The current study used identical measures of performance for self-ratings and supervisory ratings, where Behrman and Perreault used comparable but not identical measures for performance between self-ratings and supervisory ratings. None of the five performance criteria measured in the present



study correlated significantly between self-ratings and supervisory ratings. Further inquiry into the evaluation process employed in the present study is needed.

**Appendix A**  
**Account Executive Questionnaire**

## **CONFIDENTIAL SALES ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES RESEARCH**

**Please return your completed questionnaire  
no later than Friday, November 13, 1992.**

**— CONFIDENTIAL —**

**Please be completely candid and honest in your responses. The information provided by you in this questionnaire will remain confidential, NO individual performance ratings will either be published or reported to your company. You have my personal assurance that your responses will remain confidential!!**

**To insure confidentiality, NO one besides yourself and the researcher will see your responses. If you have any questions pertaining to this research, feel free to call me direct at: 616-387-6119.**

**Frank M. Gambino  
Assistant Professor  
Food Marketing Program  
Western Michigan University**

**Please return your completed questionnaire directly to me using the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided.**

**(COMPLETION TIME APPROXIMATELY 15-18 MINUTES)**

1

### CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION

The following information is requested for classification purposes only. It will assist the researcher in making the results of the survey more meaningful.

1. Your gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female
2. Check your current age category:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Below 20 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 20 - 24 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 25 - 29 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 30 - 34 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 35 - 39 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 40 - 44 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 45 - 49 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 50 - 54 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 55 - 59 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 60 - 64 years old.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Over 65 years old.
3. What is the highest diploma or degree that you have earned?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Grade school diploma
  - \_\_\_\_\_ High school diploma or GED
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Associate's degree or other two year certificate
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's degree
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Master's degree
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Doctoral degree
4. Amount of time you have been with this company: \_\_\_\_\_ years.
5. Amount of time you have been in your current position: \_\_\_\_\_ years.
6. Number of years you have been in sales related positions: \_\_\_\_\_ years.

### WORK RELATIONSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE

Below are several questions which pertain to work relationships and performance. For each question, CIRCLE the response which most closely reflects your level of agreement with the statement.

Please Circle Your Level of Agreement

- |   | Strongly<br>Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Strongly<br>Disagree |
|---|-------------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------|
| 1. The relationship between myself and my supervisor can be described as positive.                                      |                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                    |
| 2. I would consider the work performance of my supervisor, compared to others in a similar capacity, to be exceptional. |                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                    |
| 3. My supervisor's evaluation of my performance has always been fair.   |                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                    |

2

### Self-Improvement Communication Style Profile

Code #

102

Below is a set of words or phrases commonly used in describing people. For each word or phrase, carefully write a number in the box to the right, which most closely reflects your level of agreement in how you perceive YOURSELF ON-THE-JOB pertaining to the description on the left. You are making judgments based on your own perceptions; there are no right or wrong answers. Please be sure you have responded to each item on the scale. The code in the box above is a means for the researcher to tabulate your responses for analysis purposes only.

	DISAGREE	AGREE	I see myself as someone who:
1. Is sociable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
2. Desires to control	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
3. Is trustworthy	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
4. Is flexible	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
5. Needs to compete	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
6. Is willing to negotiate	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
7. Is willing to relate	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
8. Is fair	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
9. Shares feelings	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
10. Has a sense of what is just	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
11. Is warm	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
12. Is a risk taker	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
13. Is open minded	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
14. Is aggressive	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
15. Is quiet	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
16. Is reliable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
17. Is willing to change	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
18. Is dynamic	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
19. Is open	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
20. Is dependable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
21. Is versatile	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
22. Is approachable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
23. Takes charge	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
24. Is adaptable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
25. Is loyal	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
26. Is assertive	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
27. Is tough minded	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
28. Is people oriented	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
29. Is able to cope with situations	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
30. Makes people feel comfortable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	

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## 3

**Peer Impressions  
Communication Style Profile**

Please use the enclosed card for completing the responses on this page. Below are a set of words or phrases commonly used to describe people. For each word or phrase, select a number which most closely reflects your level of agreement in how you perceive each of the individuals on the enclosed card based on their ON-THE-JOB behaviors. Carefully place that number in the appropriately coded box to the right. Remember, you are making judgments based on how you perceive these individuals; there are no right or wrong answers. Please be sure you have responded to each item for all individuals listed. **DO NOT** place any names on this form. Refer to the code card provided.

		I see this person as someone who:		
		103	104	105
	DISAGREE      AGREE			
1. Is sociable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
2. Desires to control	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
3. Is trustworthy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
4. Is flexible	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
5. Needs to compete	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
6. Is willing to negotiate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
7. Is willing to relate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
8. Is fair	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
9. Shares feelings	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
10. Has a sense of what is just	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
11. Is warm	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
12. Is a risk taker	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
13. Is open minded	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
14. Is aggressive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
15. Is quiet	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
16. Is reliable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
17. Is willing to change	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
18. Is dynamic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
19. Is open	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
20. Is dependable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
21. Is versatile	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
22. Is approachable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
23. Takes charge	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
24. Is adaptable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
25. Is loyal	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
26. Is assertive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
27. Is tough minded	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
28. Is people oriented	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
29. Is able to cope with situations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
30. Makes people feel comfortable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			

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4

**Supervisor Impression  
Communication Style Profile**

Code #

<b>301</b>
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Below is a set of words or phrases commonly used in describing people. For each word or phrase, please write the number in the box to the right that most closely reflects your level of agreement in how you perceive Your Supervisor ON-THE-JOB. As on the previous page, use the enclosed card to respond to the statements below. Remember, you are making judgments based on how you perceive this person; there are no right or wrong answers. Please be sure you have responded to each item on the scale. DO NOT place any names or identifiers on this form. Refer to the code card provided.

	DISAGREE	AGREE	I see my supervisor as someone who:
1. Is sociable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
2. Desires to control	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
3. Is trustworthy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
4. Is flexible	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
5. Needs to compete	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
6. Is willing to negotiate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
7. Is willing to relate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
8. Is fair	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
9. Shares feelings	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
10. Has a sense of what is just	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
11. Is warm	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
12. Is a risk taker	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
13. Is open minded	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
14. Is aggressive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
15. Is quiet	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
16. Is reliable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
17. Is willing to change	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
18. Is dynamic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
19. Is open	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
20. Is dependable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
21. Is versatile	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
22. Is approachable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
23. Takes charge	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
24. Is adaptable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
25. Is loyal	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
26. Is assertive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
27. Is tough minded	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
28. Is people oriented	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
29. Is able to cope with situations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
30. Makes people feel comfortable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		

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### Self-Measure of Performance Sales Account Managers

This section lists activities and skills that are related to various aspects of your job. The activities have been grouped into the following general categories:

- (1) Meeting sales objectives
- (2) Technical knowledge and how you use it
- (3) Controlling company expenses
- (4) Providing different types of information to the firm
- (5) Your skill in giving sales presentations and in dealing with customers during the sales call

Please consider each activity or item listed and evaluate how well you perform in that area *compared to an average salesperson in similar selling situations*. Clearly, every individual has his or her own strengths and weaknesses in performing different aspects of a job.

Please do not stop to puzzle over specific items. Simply indicate your first reaction of how you rate yourself on each item by circling the number which most closely describes your performance. Numbers further to the right indicate that your performance is *outstanding* compared to the average salesperson in a similar selling situation, and numbers further to the left indicate that your performance in that particular area *needs improvement* compared to the average salesperson.

Be sure to respond to *every item* with respect to your *current level of performance*.

#### — CONFIDENTIAL —

##### REMEMBER:

Please be completely candid and honest in your responses. The information provided by you in this questionnaire will remain confidential, *NO individual performance ratings will be published or reported to your company*. You have my personal assurance that your responses will remain confidential!!

To insure confidentiality NO one besides yourself and the researcher will see your responses. Send your completed questionnaire directly to the researcher using the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided.

THANK YOU



6

**PLEASE RATE YOURSELF ON "MEETING SALES OBJECTIVES"  
OF THE COMPANY, WITH RESPECT TO:**

**Please Circle Your Level of Performance  
Compared to the Average Salesperson**

	<b>Need Improvement</b>				<b>Outstanding</b>		
1. Ability to secure advertising support for company represented products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Generate a high level of case & dollar sales.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Ability to gain authorization for special store level merchandising activities (ie; displays, demos) for company represented products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Quickly achieve sales and distribution of new products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Produce sales which assist company in gaining additional bonus or incentive brokerage.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Exceed all sales target objectives for your accounts during the year.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**PLEASE RATE YOUR "TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE  
AND ITS USE", WITH RESPECT TO:**

**Please Circle Your Level of Performance  
Compared to the Average Salesperson**

	<b>Need Improvement</b>				<b>Outstanding</b>		
1. Product knowledge in terms of packaging, content and nutritional information for products represented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Know the merchandising practices, preferences and policies for customer accounts.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Know the merchandising practices, preferences and policies for manufacturer principal accounts.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Knowledgeable of computer usage and applications within company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Keep abreast of industry, market, and category trends, changes, problems, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Able to resolve customer-supplier problems on a timely basis where appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Adapted From Behrman and Perreault (1982), Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory.

7

**PLEASE RATE YOURSELF ON "PROVIDING  
THE COMPANY WITH USEFUL INFORMATION",  
WITH RESPECT TO:**

		<b>Please Circle Your Level of Performance Compared to the Average Salesperson</b>						
		<b>Need Improvement</b>				<b>Outstanding</b>		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Carry out company policies, procedures, and programs for presenting information.							
2.	Complete paperwork accurately related to orders, expenses, and other required reports.							
3.	Recommend on your own Initiative how company operations and procedures can be improved.							
4.	Submit required reports on time.							
5.	Maintain company specified records that are accurate, complete, and up to date. (ie. principal and customer records).							

**PLEASE RATE YOURSELF ON  
"CONTROLLING COMPANY EXPENSES",  
WITH RESPECT TO:**

		<b>Please Circle Your Level of Performance Compared to the Average Salesperson</b>						
		<b>Need Improvement</b>				<b>Outstanding</b>		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Operating within the budgets set by the company.							
2.	Use expense accounts and business gifts with integrity.							
3.	Use promotional allowances with specified principal performance requirements.							
4.	Spend travel and lodging money carefully.							
5.	Entertain only when it is clearly in the best interest of the company to do so.							
6.	Control costs in other areas of the company (order processing, computer print outs, phone usage, supplies, staff usage, and presentation preparation).							

Adapted From Behrman and Perreault (1982), Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory.

8

**PLEASE RATE YOURSELF ON "DEALING WITH CUSTOMERS  
AND MAKING SALES PRESENTATIONS IN THE SALES  
CALL SITUATION", WITH RESPECT TO:**

**Please Circle Your Level of Performance  
Compared to the Average Salesperson**

	<b>Need Improvement</b>				<b>Outstanding</b>		
1. Listen attentively without interrupting customer during presentations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Ability to convey empathy with regards to customer concerns and problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Use available market data (i.e. Nielsen, Info Scan) to develop new business opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Communicate your sales presentation clearly and persuasively.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Make effective use of audiovisual aids (charts, tables, and the like) when appropriate to improve your sales presentation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Sets specific goals for each customer call.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Handle customer objections and resistance smoothly and effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Adapted From Behrman and Perreault (1982), Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory.

9

**You have now completed the questionnaire!! Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will assist the food industry in better understanding the relationships between individual styles and performance.**

**Please make sure you have responded to all statements in each section. After checking for any missing responses please place the entire questionnaire in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided and mail it directly to the researcher.**

**If you have any questions or comments about any portion of this questionnaire or about the study in general I would be most interested in what you have to say. You may address any questions, comments or concerns in the space below or feel free to contact me at:**

**Frank M. Gambino  
Food Marketing Program  
Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-3812**

**Phone: 616-387-6119**

#### **COMMENTS**

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**Please return the questionnaire no later than Friday, November 13, 1992.**

**Appendix B**  
**Supervisor Questionnaire**

## **CONFIDENTIAL SALES SUPERVISORS RESEARCH**

**Please return your completed questionnaire  
no later than Friday, November 13, 1992.**

**— CONFIDENTIAL —**

**Please be completely candid and honest in your responses. The information provided by you in this questionnaire will remain confidential, NO individual performance ratings will either be published or reported to your company. You have my personal assurance that your responses will remain confidential!!**

**To insure confidentiality, NO one besides yourself, and the researcher will see your responses. If you have any questions pertaining to this research, feel free to call me direct at: 616-387-6119.**

**Frank M. Gambino  
Assistant Professor  
Food Marketing Program  
Western Michigan University**

**Please return your completed questionnaire directly to me using the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided.**

**(COMPLETION TIME APPROXIMATELY 15-18 MINUTES)**

1

**CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION**

The following information is requested for classification purposes only. It will assist the researcher in making the results of the survey more meaningful.

1. Your gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Check your current age category:
  - ☐ Below 20 years old.
  - ☐ 20 - 24 years old.
  - ☐ 25 - 29 years old.
  - ☐ 30 - 34 years old.
  - ☐ 35 - 39 years old.
  - ☐ 40 - 44 years old.
  - ☐ 45 - 49 years old.
  - ☐ 50 - 54 years old.
  - ☐ 55 - 59 years old.
  - ☐ 60 - 64 years old.
  - ☐ Over 65 years old.
3. What is the highest diploma or degree that you have earned?
  - ☐ Grade school diploma
  - ☐ High school diploma or GED
  - ☐ Associate's degree or other two year certificate
  - ☐ Bachelor's degree
  - ☐ Master's degree
  - ☐ Doctoral degree
4. Amount of time you have been with this company:  years.
5. Amount of time you have been in your current position:  years.
6. Number of years you have been in sales related positions:  years.

**WORK RELATIONSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE**

Below are several questions which pertain to work relationships and performance. For each question, CIRCLE the response which most closely reflects your level of agreement with the statement.

Please Circle Your Level of Agreement

- |  | Strongly<br>Agree |   |   |   |   | Strongly<br>Disagree |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|----------------------|
|  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |                      |
| 1. The relationship between myself and my account managers can be described as positive. |                   |   |   |   |   |                      |
| 2. I use the same criteria in evaluating performance of all my account managers.         |                   |   |   |   |   |                      |
| 3. My performance evaluations of my account managers are fair.                           |                   |   |   |   |   |                      |

2

Self-Impression  
Communication Style Profile

Code #

301

Below is a set of words or phrases commonly used in describing people. For each word or phrase, carefully write a number in the box to the right, which most closely reflects your level of agreement in how you perceive **YOURSELF ON-THE-JOB** pertaining to the description on the left. You are making judgments based on your own perceptions; there are no right or wrong answers. Please be sure you have responded to each item on the scale. The code in the box above is a means for the researcher to tabulate your responses for analysis purposes only.

	DISAGREE	AGREE	I see myself as someone who:
1. Is sociable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
2. Desires to control	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
3. Is trustworthy	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
4. Is flexible	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
5. Needs to compete	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
6. Is willing to negotiate	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
7. Is willing to relate	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
8. Is fair	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
9. Shares feelings	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
10. Has a sense of what is just	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
11. Is warm	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
12. Is a risk taker	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
13. Is open minded	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
14. Is aggressive	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
15. Is quiet	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
16. Is reliable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
17. Is willing to change	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
18. Is dynamic	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
19. Is open	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
20. Is dependable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
21. Is versatile	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
22. Is approachable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
23. Takes charge	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
24. Is adaptable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
25. Is loyal	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
26. Is assertive	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
27. Is tough minded	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
28. Is people oriented	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
29. Is able to cope with situations	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	
30. Makes people feel comfortable	1	2 3 4 5 6 7	

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3

**Subordinate Impressions  
Communication Style Profile**

Please use the enclosed card for completing the responses on this page. Below are a set of words or phrases commonly used to describe people. For each word or phrase, select a number which most closely reflects your level of agreement in how you perceive each of the individuals on the enclosed card based on their ON-THE-JOB behaviors. Carefully place these numbers in the appropriately coded boxes to the right. Remember, you are making judgments based on how you perceive these individuals; there are no right or wrong answers. Please be sure you have responded to each item for all individuals listed. DO NOT place any names on this form. Refer to the code card provided.

		I see this person as someone who:		
		103	104	105
	DISAGREE      AGREE			
1. Is sociable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
2. Desires to control	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
3. Is trustworthy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
4. Is flexible	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
5. Needs to compete	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
6. Is willing to negotiate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
7. Is willing to relate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
8. Is fair	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
9. Shares feelings	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
10. Has a sense of what is just	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
11. Is warm	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
12. Is a risk taker	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
13. Is open minded	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
14. Is aggressive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
15. Is quiet	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
16. Is reliable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
17. Is willing to change	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
18. Is dynamic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
19. Is open	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
20. Is dependable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
21. Is versatile	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
22. Is approachable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
23. Takes charge	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
24. Is adaptable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
25. Is loyal	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
26. Is assertive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
27. Is tough minded	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
28. Is people oriented	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
29. Is able to cope with situations	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			
30. Makes people feel comfortable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7			

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**SUPERVISOR EVALUATIONS  
FOR  
SALES ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES**

**OVERVIEW:**

On the following pages you are requested to evaluate each of the Sales Account Executives under your authority on a number of criteria:

- (1) Meeting sales objectives
- (2) Technical knowledge and how it is used
- (3) Controlling company expenses
- (4) Providing different types of information to the firm
- (5) Sales presentation skills and dealing with customers during the sales call

Please consider each activity or item listed and evaluate how well each of your account executives perform in that area *compared to an average salesperson in similar selling situations*. Clearly, every individual has his or her own strengths and weaknesses in performing different aspects of a job.

Please do not stop to puzzle over specific items. Simply indicate your first reaction of how you would rate each individual by placing the number which most closely describes your level of agreement with each account executives performance. Numbers further to the right indicate that your performance is outstanding compared to the average salesperson in a similar selling situation, and numbers further to the left indicate performance needs improvement compared to the average salesperson.

Be sure to rate each account executive who reports to you on every scale.

**— CONFIDENTIAL —**

**REMEMBER:**

Please be completely candid and honest in your responses. The information provided by you in this questionnaire will remain confidential. NO individual performance ratings will be published or reported to your company. You have my personal assurance that your responses will remain confidential!!

To insure confidentiality, NO one besides yourself and the researcher will see your responses. Send your completed questionnaire directly to me using the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided.

THANK YOU

PLEASE RATE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE ON THEIR ABILITY TO "MEET SALES OBJECTIVES" FOR YOUR COMPANY, COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE SALESPERSON, WITH RESPECT TO:

CAREFULLY ASSIGN A NUMBER WHICH MOST CLOSELY REFLECTS THE RATING YOU WOULD GIVE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE FOR ALL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA LISTED.

	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	OUTSTANDING	103	104	105
1. Ability to secure advertising support for company represented products.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
2. Generate a high level of case & dollar sales.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
3. Ability to gain authorization for special store level merchandising activities (ie; displays, demos) for company represented products.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
4. Quickly achieve sales and distribution of new products.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
5. Produce sales which assist company in gaining additional bonus or incentive brokerage.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
6. Exceed all sales target objectives for your accounts during the year.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				

PLEASE RATE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE ON THEIR "TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND THEIR ABILITY TO USE IT," COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE SALESPERSON, WITH RESPECT TO:

CAREFULLY ASSIGN A NUMBER WHICH MOST CLOSELY REFLECTS THE RATING YOU WOULD GIVE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE FOR ALL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA LISTED.

	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	OUTSTANDING	103	104	105
1. Product knowledge in terms of packaging, content and nutritional information for products represented.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
2. Know the merchandising practices, preferences and policies for customer accounts.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
3. Know the merchandising practices, preferences and policies for manufacturer principal accounts.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
4. Knowledgeable of computer usage and applications within company.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
5. Keep abreast of industry, market, and category trends, changes, problems, etc.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
6. Able to resolve customer-supplier problems on a timely basis where appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				

Adapted From Behrman and Perreault (1982), Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory.

PLEASE RATE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE ON THEIR ABILITY TO "PROVIDE THE COMPANY WITH USEFUL INFORMATION," COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE SALESPERSON, WITH RESPECT TO:

CAREFULLY ASSIGN A NUMBER WHICH MOST CLOSELY REFLECTS THE RATING YOU WOULD GIVE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE FOR ALL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA LISTED.

	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT							OUTSTANDING							103	104	105
1. Carry out company policies, procedures, and programs for presenting information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
2. Complete paperwork accurately related to orders, expenses, and other required reports.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
3. Recommend on your own initiative how company operations and procedures can be improved.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
4. Submit required reports on time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
5. Maintain company specified records that are accurate, complete, and up to date. (ie. principal and customer records).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										

PLEASE RATE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE ON THEIR "ABILITY TO CONTROL COMPANY EXPENSES" COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE SALESPERSON, WITH RESPECT TO:

CAREFULLY ASSIGN A NUMBER WHICH MOST CLOSELY REFLECTS THE RATING YOU WOULD GIVE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE FOR ALL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA LISTED.

	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT							OUTSTANDING							103	104	105
1. Operating within the budgets set by the company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
2. Use expense accounts and business gifts with integrity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
3. Use promotional allowances with specified principal performance requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
4. Spend travel and lodging money carefully.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
5. Entertain only when it is clearly in the best interest of the company to do so.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										
6. Control costs in other areas of the company (order processing, computer print outs, phone usage, supplies, staff usage, and presentation preparation).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7										

Adapted From Behrman and Perreault (1982), Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory.

PLEASE RATE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE ON THEIR ABILITY TO "DEALING WITH CUSTOMERS AND MAKING SALES PRESENTATIONS IN THE SALES CALL SITUATION," COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE SALESPERSON, WITH RESPECT TO:

CAREFULLY ASSIGN A NUMBER WHICH MOST CLOSELY REFLECTS THE RATING YOU WOULD GIVE EACH ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE FOR ALL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA LISTED.

	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	OUTSTANDING	103	104	105
1. Listen attentively without interrupting customer during presentations.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
2. Ability to convey empathy with regards to customer concerns and problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
3. Use available market data (i.e. Nielsen, Info Scan) to develop new business opportunities.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
4. Communicate your sales presentation clearly and persuasively.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
5. Make effective use of audiovisual aids (charts, tables, and the like) when appropriate to improve your sales presentation.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
6. Sets specific goals for each customer call.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				
7. Handle customer objections and resistance smoothly and effectively.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7				

Adapted From Behrman and Perreault (1982), Industrial Sales Representative Job Opinion Inventory.

8

**You have now completed the questionnaire!! Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. The information you have provided will assist the food industry in better understanding the relationships between individual styles and performance.**

**Please make sure you have responded to all statements in each section. After checking for any missing responses please place the entire questionnaire in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided and mail it directly to the researcher.**

**If you have any questions or comments about any portion of this questionnaire or about the study in general I would be most interested in what you have to say. You may address any questions, comments or concerns in the space below or feel free to contact me at:**

**Frank M. Gambino  
Food Marketing Program  
Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-3812**

**Phone: 616-387-6119**

### **COMMENTS**

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**Please return the questionnaire no later than Friday, November 13, 1992.**

**Appendix C**  
**Response Code Card**

### PEER IMPRESSION COMMUNICATION STYLES

Use the codes below to complete the statements on the Peer Impression Communication Style Profile on page 4. The names and codes on this card correspond to the codes assigned on the questionnaire to your sales peers (see the back of this card for your Supervisor Code).

John SMITH 103	ALICE WHITE 104	JANE DOE 105
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When you have completed the questionnaire either destroy this card or return it with the questionnaire to the researcher.

### SUPERVISOR IMPRESSION COMMUNICATION STYLES

Use the code below to complete the statements on the Supervisor Impression Communication Style Profile on page 5. The name and code on this card corresponds to the code assigned on the questionnaire to your IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR (see the flip-side of this card for your Peer Codes).

	STEVE WEST 301	
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When you have completed the questionnaire either destroy this card or return it with the questionnaire to the researcher.



**Appendix D**  
**Human Subjects Approval Form**

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board



Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-3899

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**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

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Date: October 28, 1992

To: Frank Gambino

From: M. Michele Burnette, Chair *M. Michele Burnette*

Re: HSIRB Project Number 92-10-12

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research protocol, "Adaptive Leadership Style and Sales Performance: A Test of the Social Style Model" has been approved after expedited review by the HSIRB. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the approval application.

You must seek reapproval for any change in this design. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination:

October 28, 1993

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