MANAGING THE SALESFORCE THROUGH PRODUCT-HARM CRISES

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ABSTRACT

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Product-harm crises can cost firms billions of dollars in expenses. Worse still, they create a more difficult sales environment for the salesforce. The salesforce plays a crucial role in generating revenues to help the firm recover from the crises. The more effectively they can convert leads to sales, the quicker the firm can recover. However, the literature has remained silent on how these crises affect the salesforce and how the salesforce can function more effectively during these crises. In their customer-facing role, salespeople must face consumer criticisms of the firm while looking the consumer in the eye. I suggest that salesperson traits can cause salespeople to take these criticisms more personally, and that these criticisms can adversely affect salespeople's performance by eliciting feelings of shame. Furthermore, I suggest that brand identification and customer orientation, traits typically viewed in a positive light, can increase these feelings of shame, leading to poorer salesperson performance. The question then becomes, how do sales managers reign in these effects and train their salesforce to sell more effectively in these environments? Are there leadership traits that can counter the effects of these crises on the salesforce? Are there tactics that sales managers can train their salesforce to use that will boost their salespeople's performance in these environments? My first study explores the effects of product-harm crises on salespeople's performance and what sales managers can do to counter these effects. I suggest that empathic concern can weaken the effects of shame on salespeople's performance. My second study explores the tactics that salespeople can use to sell more

effectively during product-harm crises. The implications of these studies will assist sales managers in managing the behavioral consequences of salespeople's reactions to product-harm crises, and will help sales managers better train their salesforces.

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PREFACE

In 2014, over of 60 million automobiles were recalled (Vlasic 2014). Labeled the "Year of the Recall", the recalls of 2014 demonstrated both the prevalence and grave consequences that product-harm crises (e.g. product recalls) entail. GM's ignition switch recall of 2014 and the Takata airbag recall of 2013 especially drive these consequences home. Collectively, these two recalls have left 57 people dead (51 and 6, respectively) and have cost the firms billions of dollars ($4.1 billion for GM so far (Isidore 2015) and an estimated $2.1 billion for Takata; Tahara-Stubbs 2015). These recalls, although larger than most, are only two among the many that have occurred nearly every year since the inception of the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration in 1970. As firms engage in crisis management to fend off the negative press and financial losses following the recalls, the burning question becomes: how do we recover?

The product-harm crisis literature has striven to answer this question, but its investigation has been limited in scope. Thus far, researchers have predominantly focused on firm- and brand-level marketing actions (i.e. communications management, consumer sensitivity to marketing tactics, etc.) that can expedite recovery. The story less told is that of the effects of these crises on the firm's internal stakeholders. The salesforce, comprised of key, customer-facing internal stakeholders, plays a pivotal role the firm's recovery process. Although firm- and brand-level marketing actions generate leads during the crises, the salesforce is tasked with converting these leads into sales. Their performance during these crises is crucial. Yet, no literature exists that discusses the issues concerning salesforce management during these crises.

In the following studies, we seek to discover how product-harm crises affect salesperson performance, and how managers can train their salespeople to overcome the effects of these crises. In the following two studies, we tackle two critical issues: how do product-harm crises interact with salesperson traits to affect salesperson performance, and how can salespeople sell most effectively during product-harm crises. Through our exploration of these issues, we hope to make sales managers aware of the actions they can take to increase their salesforces' performances during product-harm crises.

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1 ABSTRACT

The ability of customer orientation and brand identification to improve salesperson performance is well-documented in the literature. However, both customer orientation and brand identification are perceptual biases that inhibit salesperson efforts during product-harm crises. When product-harm crises befall a brand, brand-identified salespeople view the failings of the brand as their own and internalize the public's criticism of the brand. The shame experienced by salespeople, especially those who strongly identify with the brand, can harm their performance. Similarly, customer-oriented salespeople may experience greater anxiety over the crisis because of their higher sense of concern for others. In the following studies, I find that product-harm crises turn the typically positive influences of customer orientation and brand identification into negative influences, decreasing salesperson performance. The studies imply that highly brand-identified and customer-oriented salespeople experience stronger feelings of shame during product-harm crises, and that these feelings of shame decrease salesperson performance.

2 INTRODUCTION

"GM victims' fund closes with 51 deaths -- so far" – reads USA Today's headline on a February morning in 2015 (Healey 2015). The product recall that left GM CEO Mary Barra embroiled in a wave of bad press sent GM's stock spiraling last year, and resulted in a $35 million fine from the NHTSA. Far worse than that, the cause of the recall, a faulty ignition switch, has been linked to the deaths of 124 people (Isidore 2015), and the investigation isn't over. The final number of deaths, not to mention injuries, linked to what engineer Ray DeGiorgio nicknamed "the switch from hell" (Healey 2015), may climb higher. While the effects of the recall on GM as an organization are well-documented by the media, what is less clear is how the recall is affecting GM's internal stakeholders. It is true that we know that several employees have been fired, including engineer Ray DeGiorgio, and we can speculate that the environment has become more hectic and stressful since. What we don't know is how the recall is affecting employees personally and how it is affecting their performance on the job.

GM's predicament, unfortunately, is not unique. 2014 was designated "The Year of the Recall" because of the roughly 700 recalls that happened last year (Vlasic 2014), and Toyota found itself in a situation similar to GM's during its unintended acceleration recall in 2010. The result of Toyota's unintended acceleration debacle was 89 people dead (The New York Times 2010) and $1.2 billion in fines (Ross et al. 2014).

While research has investigated which actions the firm can execute to recover from product-harm crises, such as product recalls, it has not investigated how to manage the very employees who not only execute those actions, but also who deal with the customers directly to make sales happen. The salesforce, in their customer-facing role, takes the leads generated by firm-level actions and converts them into dollars. They also deal directly with the criticisms and

blowback from customers stirred up by the actions of the firm. The criticality of their role as boundary-spanners and revenue-generators only increases in times of firm embroilment because these are the times that revenues are falling and revenue generation is needed most. Effective management of the salesforce is needed to ensure that salespeople continue to perform well in spite of the adverse environment. This can expedite the recovery process from a firm's product-harm crisis and minimize financial losses. Yet, the literature has investigated neither the effects that these crises have on salespeople nor how to manage these effects so that salespeople continue to convert leads into sales.

A few articles in the sales literature have discussed the influence of organizational climate on the antecedents of salesperson performance (see, e.g. Evans et al. 2007; Siguaw et al. 1994). These articles give credence to the supposition that organizational actions influence the attitudes and behaviors of the salesforce. However, when product-harm crises occur, the actions of the firm affect salespeople both directly and indirectly by prompting attitudes and behaviors in consumers. Being on the firm's frontlines, salespeople have to deal with these behaviors directly; and the effects of the resulting adverse environment on salesperson attitudes and behaviors have received little attention. In fact, no articles, to the authors' knowledge, have explored the effects of product-harm crises on salesperson performance; and only one article has tied the two literature streams together. In that article, Kotler and Mantrala discuss consumer reactions to flawed products and broad strategies for selling flawed products (Kotler and Mantrala 1985). However, the investigation is conceptual in nature and does not discuss the impact on salesperson performance.

The purpose of this article is to examine the relationships among product-harm crises and salesperson performance, and to examine the measures a sales manager can take to minimize the

damage. In the course of my investigation, I analyze the interaction of product-harm crises and salesperson traits, exposing a potential dark side to customer orientation and brand identification not yet identified in the literature. The remainder of this paper lays out my conceptual framework and explains how product-harm crises hinder salesperson performance by eliciting feelings of shame.

3 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

The conceptual model in Figure 1 illustrates the stressor-strain reaction that I expect product-harm crises to induce. I expect product-harm crises to induce feelings of shame within salespeople that lead to increases in turnover intentions and decreases in salesperson performance. The extent to which this occurs depends on two salesperson traits: brand identification and customer orientation. Specifically, I expect the traits of brand identification and customer orientation to increase the feelings of shame that product-harm crises induce. Finally, I suggest that empathic concern from sales managers can counteract the effects of product-harm crises on shame, weakening the negative relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance.

3.1 Coping Theory

For the theoretical background of this study, I use a stressor-strain model from coping theory. Stressors are external or internal stimuli that elicit stress emotions that lead to strains. Strains are emotional, mental, or physical tensions such as burnout, anxiety, and exhaustion. Stressors stimulate the stress process from which stress emotions and strains are the outcomes (Lepine et al. 2005). The nature of the stressor and individual differences, such as traits, affect how an individual will appraise and cope with the stressor. The individual's appraisal of the

stressor, in turn, influences the type of stress emotions elicited and the amount of strain. The appraisal process has two components: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. During primary appraisal, the individual considers whether their values are being threatened, if they have something at stake, or if damage has already been done. During secondary appraisal, the individual "evaluates the availability of coping resources" to determine what actions he can take (Dewe et al. 2012). Finally, the individual engages in either an emotion-focused or problem-focused coping strategy.

The individual's coping strategy drastically influences the outcomes of the stress process. When engaging in a problem-focused coping strategy, the individual engages the environment or takes action on oneself to alter one's relationship with the environment (Lazarus 1993). This coping strategy is associated with high self-efficacy, high self-esteem (Duhachek et al. 2012), and increased motivation (Lepine et al. 2005), and can lead to favorable outcomes. When individuals engage in emotion-focused coping, the individual alters their approach to dealing with the environment, or the individual alters "the relational meaning of what is happening" (Lazarus 1993). Emotion-focused coping, in contrast to problem-focused coping, is associated with maladaptive behaviors that can decrease the effort the individual puts forth in achieving their goals. Therefore, whether the individual engages in problem- or emotion-focused coping affects the intentions and efforts of the individual.

The distinction in coping strategy is critical in my model, as the coping strategy determines the individual's behavior. An emotion-focused coping strategy can lead to avoidance behaviors, where the individual psychologically or physically withdraws himself from the environment around him. A problem-focused coping strategy can lead to adaptive behaviors, such as confronting the problem. These responses can be induced by the stress emotions caused

by the stressor. Shame, for example, is associated with emotion-focused coping (Duhachek et al. 2012), and can lead to increases in avoidance tendencies.

The interactions of the stressor with salesperson traits are crucial components of my conceptual model, because the interactions influence the stress emotions the stressor elicits. In the case of my study, product-harm crises act as stressors. The degree to which shame, the stress emotion, is elicited from the crises depends on the commonly studied salesperson traits of brand identification and customer orientation. I propose that these traits, while they are typically positive traits, can lead to higher levels of shame. For example, individuals with high levels of brand identification strongly define themselves in terms of their beliefs about the brand (Hughes and Ahearne 2010). If the stressor in the stressor-strain model occurs because the brand behaves badly, then the individual may form negative beliefs about the brand and, consequently, negative beliefs about himself. This logic suggests that the interaction of the stressor with the individual's brand identification will cause the individual to internalize the feelings elicited by the crisis, leading to feelings of shame. To explain how product-harm crises may induce shame and decrease salesperson performance, I continue with a review of the product-harm crisis literature.

3.2 Product-Harm Crises

Product-harm crises are short-term, exogenous shocks to firms or brands that are typically accompanied by spillover effects, a decline in sales, negative stock returns, and a loss of goodwill. In their seminal work, Jarrell and Peltzman (1985) demonstrated that product-harm crises result in losses beyond their direct costs, signaling a possible shift in expectations of the brand. Several studies since have built on this notion, investigating how brand reputation and connections with the brand can alter consumer reactions. Other literature has focused on the effectiveness of various recovery actions of the firm. This literature has focused on firm- and

brand-level strategies that can be enacted through the firm's or brand's marketing strategy (see, e.g., Cleeren, Van Heerde, and Dekimpe 2013). To date, however, the literature has been largely silent on how these crises affect key, customer-facing personnel. The salesforce is responsible for converting the leads generated by these strategies into actual sales so that firms can recover from their product-harm crises. Managers can help expedite the recovery process if they can more effectively manage their salesforce during these crises. Although the literature has been largely silent on how these crises affect the salesforce, we can draw insights from the broader product-harm crises literature.

Several articles have investigated consumer reactions to product-harm crises, and how firm attributes and responses affect consumer reactions. For example, several investigations have found that firm's with good reputations suffer fewer losses during product-harm crises (see, e.g., Siomkos and Kurzbard 1994; Zhao, Zhao, and Helsen 2011), which reinforces concepts from the CSR literature of goodwill acting as an "insurance-like protection for the firm" (Luo and Bhattacharya 2009). However, other research has found that the product-harm crises of more reputable firms elicit stronger market reactions (Rhee and Haunschild 2006) because they disconfirm expectations in a negative way. Higher levels of consumer brand loyalty (Cleeren et al. 2008) and commitment (Ahluwalia et al. 2000), though, have been found to attenuate negative consumer reactions. Product-harm crises may affect a firm's salesforce in a similar manner.

Other research has focused on recovery. The extant research has shown that firm communications about corrective actions the firm is taking are effective in pacifying consumer concerns (Zavyalova et al. 2012). In accordance with this finding, researchers have found that ambiguous or stonewalling responses can decrease customer-based brand equity (Dawar and Pillutla 2000). Generally, the literature indicates that firms should respond with clear

communications about corrective actions that they are taking to address the problems that caused the product-harm crisis. Such responses appear to re-establish credibility and trust among consumers, enabling a smoother recovery from the crisis.

For the salesforce, these insights have several implications. Like consumers, salespeople form connections with the brand such as identity, loyalty, commitment, and expectations of the brand. Insights from the literature suggest that loyalty and commitment could cause salespeople to dismiss negative information about the brand, and that high expectations could cause salespeople to have stronger reactions to product-harm crises. However, salespeople play a very different role in the transaction process than consumers.

Unlike consumers, salespeople play a crucial role in pushing products down the supply chain and into the consumer's possession. As part of this role, they may feel a sense of responsibility for putting a good product into the hands of the consumer. If the salesperson feels that they are in some way responsible for selling consumers a dangerous product, then they may feel ashamed and as though they have violated their morals.

These findings would be relevant not only for the products they had already sold, but also for the products currently being sold. Findings in the literature indicate that there are spillover effects within brands during product-harm crises. Once one product of the brand has been recalled, consumers tend to stay away from all products within the brand (Sullivan 1990). Salespeople may too call into question the safety and reliability of all of the brand's products once one or more of them have been recalled. Their doubt in the product can cause salespeople to feel as though selling the product is not in the best interest of the consumer, and that selling the product is morally reprehensible. Their adverse feelings toward the brand may cause the salesperson to expend less effort at work, ultimately harming their performance.

H1: Product-harm crises are negatively related to salesperson performance.

3.3 Shame

Shame is a stress emotion that occurs when individuals violate their moral code, and a "negative evaluation of the global self" is triggered (Tangney 1999). When individuals experience shame, not only do they believe that they have done a bad thing, but also that they are a bad person. The individual's focus is on their sense of *self* as opposed to the offense that they have committed. Feelings of shame generally have been viewed as problematic, because they have been shown to induce emotion-focused coping (Duhachek et al. 2012) and are associated with maladaptive responses, such as anxiety and low self-efficacy (Tangney and Dearing 2002). Vicarious shame occurs when an individual experiences shame even though they were not the wrong-doer (Welten et al. 2012). Research has shown that individuals can experience shame vicariously because of their physical proximity to the offender or because of their social identification with the offender (Lickel et al. 2005). In both cases, the individual assesses the actions of the offender as both negative and reflective of their own self-identity. The individual may wonder what their association with the offender means about them as an individual and internalize their negative view of the offender, causing shame.

Product-harm crises can trigger feelings of shame in salespeople, because salespeople may view the crisis as a moral transgression. Salespeople's association with the brand may cause them to take the ensuing public criticism personally and internalize the criticism. Internalizing the criticism of the brand can cause salespeople to adapt a negative view of their own identity, or of their *self*, and elicit feelings of shame.

Shame can hinder salesperson performance. Prior research associates shame with many maladaptive responses, such as increases in anxiety and low self-efficacy (Tangney and Dearing

2002). Furthermore, shame has been shown to induce emotion-focused coping (Duhachek et al. 2012), in which salespeople alter "the way the stressful relationship with the environment is attended to" instead of taking action to resolve the situation that is inducing the stress emotion (Lazarus 1993). When engaging in emotion-focused coping, the salesperson may choose an avoidance strategy, in which the salesperson psychologically or physically withdraws from the stressful situation that is causing the feelings of shame (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). As the salesperson withdraws from their work, their feelings of shame and the associated maladaptive responses may decrease, but their performance may suffer. The psychological withdrawal is indicative of the salesperson's desire to remove himself from the stressful environment. This desire can turn into an intention, and lead to an increase in the salesperson's turnover intentions.

H2: (a) Product-harm crises are positively related to turnover intentions. (b) This relationship is mediated by feelings of shame.

Some salesperson traits may increase the degree of felt association with the brand and responsibility for the consumer's safety. These traits could strengthen the connections between product-harm crises and salesperson performance. Traits that increase a salesperson's sense of oneness with the brand or concern for others could increase the salesperson's proneness to shame during product-harm crises. I suspect that two traits in particular could strengthen these relationships more than others: the traits of brand identification and customer orientation.

3.4 Brand Identification

Social identity theory posits that an individual's self-concept is, in part, a cognitive structure mostly comprised of one's personal and social identity (Tajfel 1982). An individual's personal identity denotes distinctive attributes of the individual such as intellectual concerns and personal taste. It differs from social identity in that it does not denote an individual's

membership with a social group. Social identity, in contrast, signifies an individual's membership and attachment to a group. It involves self-categorization ("cognitive awareness of one's group membership"), affective commitment (emotional involvement with the group), and an evaluative component of group membership (the value associated with group membership - group self-esteem) (Ellemers et al. 1999), and is an element of the collective-self.

Unlike interpersonal identification, social identification entails a depersonalization of an individual's sense of self, in which the individual begins to perceive himself as an interchangeable element of a social group (Brewer and Gardner 1996). This identification creates strong psychological bonds with the group, causing an individual to "personally experience the successes and failures of the group" as their own (Ashforth and Mael 1989). This psychological connection has typically been viewed positively, as it can motivate an individual to help the group succeed. Since individuals seek out a positive sense of self, and part of their self-concept comes from their social identity, individuals seek to be associated with successful social groups (Hughes and Ahearne 2010).

Brand identification is one of the many levels of foci within an organization with which social identification may occur. I define brand identification as the degree to which a person's beliefs about a brand become self-defining. It is an element of a salesperson's self-concept that has generally been viewed in a positive light. Previous literature has linked brand identification to desirable outcomes in salesperson behavior, such as increases in effort (Hughes 2013), extra-role (e.g. citizenship) brand behaviors (Hughes and Ahearne 2010), and reduced turnover (Mael and Ashforth 1995). However, I argue that there is a potential dark side to brand identification.

Although the literature is sparse, some research has been conducted on the dark side of brand identification. This literature highlights the negative aspects of the deleterious effects of

brand identification. As a salesperson becomes more identified with the brand, their brand identification can suppress other identities that form their self-concept (Ahearne et al. 2013). The suppression of other identities can cause the salesperson to experience criticisms of the brand personally and elicit feelings of shame (Dutton et al. 1994). Furthermore, brand identification leads to the formation of in-groups and out-groups, in which the salesperson psychologically impedes the formation of other social identities (Wieseke et al. 2012). Psychologically distancing themselves from other social identities may have an isolating effect that increases the salesperson's propensity to internalize the criticisms of the brand. Therefore, while it may drive individuals to support the brand, brand identification is, in a basic sense, a psychological bias that can amplify both positive and *negative* attitudes and behaviors. It can cause salespeople to perceive themselves negatively when product-harm crises occur, because they experience the failures and criticisms of the brand personally, damaging their self-concept and inducing shame.

Social identification has been linked to stronger feelings of vicarious shame (Welten et al. 2012). Since brand-identified salespeople partially base their perceptions of their self-concept on their perceptions of the brand, they are more likely to see criticisms of the brand as criticisms of themselves (Chi et al. 2015). Brand-identified salespeople may view these criticisms as a threat to their self-concept and form negative views about their *self*. If they view the crisis as a moral transgression, the combination of the transgression and negative view of the *self* may amplify feelings of shame.

H3: (a) Brand identification strengthens the negative relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance. (b) Brand identification strengthens the positive relationship between product-harm crises and shame.

3.5 Customer Orientation

Customer orientation refers to the "degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs'' (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). It is a psychological trait, associated with a "high concern for others" (Saxe and Weitz 1982), that influences states, such as job stress (Zablah et al. 2012), and salesperson behaviors. A salesperson, for example, who is highly customer oriented, seeks to create a positive experience for the customer and puts the customer's needs ahead of their own need to close a sale (Saxe and Weitz 1982). Customer-oriented salespeople strive to provide the customer with accurate, beneficial information about products and services while avoiding the use of high-pressure sales tactics, and they focus on the customer's long-term goals (Schwepker 2003).

The extant literature has generally found customer orientation to be a desirable trait. Since the customer-oriented salesperson perceives the customer's satisfaction to be their ultimate goal, the salesperson's role expectations and objectives are clear (Zablah et al. 2012). This clarity reduces role ambiguity and conflict, thereby increasing desirable job outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Donavan et al. 2004). In other words, the salesperson's appraisal of the job environment is altered because of their customer orientation. Their customer orientation provides them clear guidance on objectives and expectations, causing them to perceive less role ambiguity and conflict where less customer-oriented salespeople might. Therefore, stressors that increase role ambiguity and conflict have less of an impact on customer-oriented salespeople, decreasing the strain they experience. For this reason, customer orientation has been proposed and shown to be negatively related to strains such as burnout (Babakus et al. 2009). However, these positive outcomes are

proposed to occur in routine situations; not when non-routine events, such as product-harm crises, occur.

When a product-harm crisis occurs, the effects of customer orientation could cease to be positive and, in fact, become negative. The inclination of the customer-oriented salesperson to take care of the customer, to be honest with the customer, and to put the customer's needs ahead of their own suggests a higher sense of ethics and, possibly, stronger moral values. Although unconfirmed, the relationship between moral values and customer orientation has been proposed in previous literature (Schwepker 2003). The relationship seems plausible, and indicates a serious dilemma for customer-oriented salespeople during product-harm crises. Although the salesperson may not be expected to sell a recalled product, they would be expected to sell other products by the same brand. The salesperson may feel conflicted about selling those products, unsure if the product is truly safe and can deliver what it promises since another product with the same brand name was just recalled. The uncertainty may cause the salesperson to feel as though they're violating their morals by selling the products, because they're not sure that the information they have is accurate. If they're not sure that the information is accurate, then they may feel that they are lying when they speak with the customer about the product, and they may be selling the customer a product that's unsafe. Lying and selling an unsafe product to a customer would likely violate their moral code. Since shame occurs when people feel that they've violated their moral code, the salesperson's dilemma is likely to result in feelings of shame. As shame can lead to several maladaptive consequences, the salesperson's customer orientation is likely to have a negative effect on their performance and increase their turnover intentions.

H4: (a) Customer orientation strengthens the negative relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance. (b) Customer orientation strengthens the positive relationship between product-harm crises and shame.

3.5.1 Customer Orientation, Brand Identification, and Product-Harm Crises

The combination of brand identification and customer orientation can intensify the salesperson's feelings of shame during a product-harm crisis. When the salesperson strongly identifies with the brand, they are more likely to internalize criticisms of the brand, cause a negative view of the *self*. However, brand identification alone doesn't indicate that salespeople view a product-harm crisis as a moral transgression. Customer orientation, however, may be associated with a higher sense of moral values, making it more likely that a salesperson views a product-harm crisis as a moral transgression. Therefore, the combination of their heightened sense of morality, evidenced by their level of customer orientation, coupled with their brand identification, can intensify their feelings of shame when product-harm crises occur.

H5: There is a 3-way interaction among customer orientation, brand identification, and product-harm crises such that, when levels of brand identification and customer orientation are high, (a) the negative relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance is stronger and (b) the positive relationship between product-harm crises and shame is stronger.

3.6 Empathic Concern

A possible managerial solution to alleviating the salesperson's sense of shame is empathic concern. Empathic concern is an aspect of empathy consisting of positive, compassion-like responses toward the plight of others and "sympathetic-like emotions" (Bagozzi et al. 2013).

Empathic concern from the sales manager could weaken the effects of a product-harm crisis on the salesperson's sense of shame by eliciting positive affect that acts as a buffer against the stress emotions being elicited by the stressor (the product-harm crisis). Previous literature has proposed this phenomenon, and suggests that it could occur in at least two ways.

Expressions of empathic concern, such as consideration for others, are prosocial, supportive behaviors. These supportive behaviors can cause reappraisal of the stressor or inhibit maladaptive responses (Cohen et al. 1985). In the case of empathic concern and shame, I posit that empathic concern can inhibit maladaptive responses by eliciting positive affect and by providing esteem support. By responding positively to the salesperson's plight, the sales manager can elicit positive affect through emotional contagion. The positive perspective of the sales manager can be "caught" by the salesperson, eliciting positive affect within the salesperson. The positive affect can inhibit the maladaptive response of feeling shame by providing a temporary psychological reprieve from the shame-inducing situation. This psychological reprieve can act as a buffer against the stressor, the product-harm crisis, and allow the salesperson to replenish coping resources (Moskowitz et al. 2012).

Empathic concern may also inhibit feelings of shame by providing esteem support. Through the expression of compassion, the sales manager can provide esteem support by pointing out positive aspects of the salesperson's abilities and persona (Cohen et al. 1985). This could counter the negative views of the global-self associated with shame and weaken the impact of the product-harm crisis on the salesperson. However, the sales manager should be careful not to be empathetic to the point that too much time is spent discussing the salesperson's issues. There may be a tipping point, at which discussing the issue causes the salesperson to dwell on the shame-inducing situation, causing greater feelings of shame. In addition, time spent

discussing the issue is time taken away from selling. The reduced focus on work could lead to reduced effort, hindering salesperson performance. Therefore, I hypothesize that…

> **H6**: (a) There is a linear relationship among empathic concern, product-harm crises, and salesperson performance, in which empathic concern strengthens the relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance. (b) There is a curvilinear relationship among empathic concern, product-harm crises, and salesperson performance, in which moderate levels of empathic concern attenuate the relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance.
>
> **H7**: (a) There is a linear relationship among empathic concern, product-harm crises, and shame, in which empathic concern strengthens the relationship between product-harm crises and shame. (b) There is a curvilinear relationship among empathic concern, product-harm crises, and shame, in which moderate levels of empathic concern attenuate the relationship between product-harm crises and shame.

3.7 Control Variables

3.7.1 Shame Proneness

An argument could be made that the interaction effects of brand identification and customer orientation with product-harm crises are merely due to the salesperson's shame proneness. Shame proneness is the predisposition to experience shame when particular stressors induce the stress process (Tangney 1999). It could be argued that customer orientation and brand identification are merely proxies for shame proneness. However, I posit that brand identification and customer orientation uniquely explain variance in feelings of shame beyond the correlations of shame proneness and shame. Therefore, I control for shame proneness.

3.7.2 Advertising

Researchers have found that changes in advertising expenditures before, during, and after a product-harm crisis can weaken the crisis' effects on sales (see, e.g., Rubel et al. 2011, Cleeren et al. 2013). Increases in advertising after a product-harm crisis can be more effective than usual because the publicity surrounding the product-harm crisis increases consumers' awareness of the brand. Additionally, not only can advertising make consumers aware of the brand, but also it can provide information that reduces the risk that consumers associate with the brand (Byzalov and Shachar 2004). Since these effects of advertising can influence sales, I control for advertising in my model.

3.7.3 Incentives

Price promotions can reduce consumers' perceived risk of purchases and have been found to have positive, short-term effects on sales (Blattberg et al. 1995). During a product-harm crisis, reductions in price have been found to have similar effects and weaken the effects of the crisis on sales (Cleeren et al. 2013). In the automobile industry, price promotions come in the form of incentives. The incentives, in the form of manufacturer finance rates and cash rebates, lower the overall cost of the automobile, and make the automobile more affordable. Since the lower cost can increase sales, I control for incentives in my model.

4 OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

I conduct two studies to evaluate the impact of product-harm crises on salesperson performance. In study 1, I test my conceptual model in a field setting using a combination of survey data and secondary data gathered from automotive salespeople. This study enables us to test the moderating effects of brand identification (H3a), customer orientation (H4a), and

empathic concern (H6a,b) on an objective salesperson performance measure (the number of vehicles sold). Moreover, study 1 enables us to establish external validity by testing my conceptual model in a real-world setting.

In study 2, I conduct a scenario-based experiment to test the process through which product-harm crises influence salesperson performance. Study 2 enables us to examine the underlying process by providing measures of the mediating effect of shame (H2b) on salesperson performance. Furthermore, the experimental setting affords us the controls to establish internal validity. However, because of the experimental setting, I am not able to record an objective measure of salesperson performance. Instead, I use measures of turnover intentions, a psychological job outcome, to test the relationship between product-harm crises and turnover intentions (H2a). Finally, I follow the Edwards and Lambert (2007) approach to moderated mediation to analyze the data.

4.1 Procedure for Study 1

For study 1, I merged primary and secondary data from multiple sources to create a 3-level, longitudinal dataset. I collected these data from the sales forces of 16 U.S.-based, automotive dealerships in the upper mid-west, which represent a total of 16 well-known automotive brands, both foreign and domestic. From each dealership, I collected primary data from salespeople via an online survey and secondary salesperson performance data from dealership databases. The salespeople surveyed are 83.5% male and 13.4% female, with an average age of 40.75 and an average tenure (as an automobile salesperson) of 6.64 years. Levels 2 and 3 of my dataset are comprised of measures from these survey responses. For my level1 data, I combined the salesperson performance data with product-harm crisis data gathered from the headlines of news stories in the top 10 most widely circulated newspapers. The product-harm

crisis data is frequency data that counts the number of times a brand is mentioned in headlines for having caused, or potentially having caused, a fatality within a given month. I gathered the product-harm crises data in this manner, because previous literature has used negative publicity surrounding product recalls as the measure of product-harm crises (Cleeren et al. 2013). Furthermore, previous studies on the effects of product recalls in the automobile industry have noted that only the most severe recalls were likely to receive media coverage, and that only those recalls had any demand-side effects (Pruitt et al. 1986). These data, as well the salesperson performance data, are monthly data spanning a 68 month time period from 2010 to 2015. These data are nested within brands as multiple brands experienced product-harm crises over the 68 month time period. Furthermore, the salespeople at several of the automotive dealerships sell multiple brands of vehicles. As salespeople sell several brands, I gathered brand identification measures for the 3 brands the salesperson sells most often. Therefore, Level 2 consists of measures of brand identification that are nested within salespeople. Finally, for Level 3 data, I measured salesperson traits that are constant across the brands they sell. I elaborate on the measurement of the salesperson traits next.

4.2 Measurement in Study 1

My Level 2 and 3 datasets consist of measures of salesperson brand identification and salesperson traits. For measures of brand identification, I adapted organizational identification measures from Mael and Ashforth (1992) by simply substituting the name of the organization with the brand name of interest. The salespeople rated these items on a 7-point Likert scale for the 3 brands they sell most often, yielding a total of 227 brand identification measures. For my Level 3 data, I measured salespeople's level of customer orientation, shame proneness (covariate), and their perceptions of their manager's empathic concern on 7-point Likert scales.

To measure customer orientation, I asked salespeople to rate items from the short form of the customer orientation scale developed by Thomas et al. (2001). The same approach was used to measure shame proneness and empathic concern, for which respondents rated items from scales developed by Harder (1995) and Davis (1983), respectively (see the Appendix). In total, the survey was delivered to 292 salespeople with a usable response rate of 38%. Merging the survey, salesperson performance, and product-harm crisis data resulted in 103 usable responses at Level 3, 183 responses at Level 2, and 7,276 records of data at Level 1.

I tested the psychometric properties of my measures by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (see Table 2). Fit statistics indicate that the CFA is slightly outside of recommended levels, with $\chi^2_{(129)} = 361.55$ ($p < .01$), comparative fit index (CFI) = .89, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .09. The results indicated strong reliability, with shame proneness, brand identification, and empathic concern having factor rho coefficients above .70. Customer orientation, however, had a factor rho coefficient of .65, slightly below the desired level. The construct measures had convergent and discriminant validity, because the average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than .50 (convergent validity), and AVE was greater than the squared correlation of any two constructs (discriminant validity) (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

4.3 Analytical Approach

Because of the multilevel structure of the data and the Poisson distribution of the outcome variable, the number of units sold, I utilized hierarchical generalized linear modeling for the analysis of the data (HGLM; Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). To justify the use of HGLM, I ran three null models to evaluate the non-independence of the data. First, I evaluated a null model of the Level 1 salesperson performance data to determine whether there was statistically significant between-group variance among the brands. The results indicated that the brand-

grouping accounts for approximately 63% of the variance in salesperson performance (ICC = .626, $\chi 2$ (182, N= 7276) = 48421.85, p < .001). For the second null model, since each salesperson reported brand identification measures for multiple brands, I estimated the amount of salesperson-specific, between-group variance in the brand identification data (Level 2). The results indicated that the salesperson-grouping accounts for approximately 64% of the variance in brand identification (ICC = .641, $\chi 2$ (102, N= 183) = 435.67, p < .001). Finally, I integrated all three levels with the third null model by estimating the influence of individual salespeople on their own performance. The results indicated that roughly 65% of the variance in salesperson performance is within-salesperson variance, and roughly 35% of the variance is between-salesperson variance (ICC = .346, $\chi 2$ (102, N= 7276) = 9403.29, p < .001). Together, these results provide evidence of non-independence in the data and of a 3-level, hierarchical structure. Moreover, because multiple measures of brand identification were reported by each salesperson, I conducted a Hausman test to determine the appropriateness of a random effects model. The Hausman test indicates that a random effects model is appropriate for this analysis ($\chi^2 = 2.20$, $p > .05$). The significance of the predictors at each level of the dataset was determined next.

4.4 Results of Study 1

I present the results of my model in Table 3. To assist with the interpretation of my results, and because my model features several cross-level interactions, I group-mean centered Level 1 and 2 predictors and grand-mean centered Level 3 predictors. Group-mean centering the Level 1 and 2 predictors has the advantage of removing the influence of the Level 2 and 3 predictors, respectively, from the estimation of the Level 1 and 2 relationships with salesperson performance (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The removal of this influence gives us an unbiased estimate (with respect to fixed effects) of the Level 1 and 2 predictors and yields a "better"

estimation of their influence on salesperson performance. Grand-mean centering the Level 3 predictors provides a clearer interpretation of effects by causing the intercept and slopes to represent the variances of the average subject (Hox 2002, p. 56). I discuss the results with respect to the individual hypotheses next.

My model contains both direct and moderated relationships between product-harm crises and salesperson performance. H1 indicates a direct stressor-strain relationship, in which the occurrence of a product-harm crisis results in the decrease of salesperson performance. Although the sign of the coefficient was negative, the estimation merely approached statistical significance ($\gamma = -0.030$, $p < .10$; H1 not supported). In H4a, I test the proposition that salespeople with higher levels of customer orientation have stronger moral values, and will experience higher levels of stress emotions and strain when selling products during a product-harm crisis. To test this relationship, I estimated a cross-level interaction in which the slope of the product-harm crisis variable at Level 1 was influenced by the salesperson's customer orientation at Level 3. The relationship was negative, but not significant ($\gamma = -0.012$, $p > .05$; H4a not supported). A similar relationship was hypothesized for brand identification in which the slope of the product-harm crisis variable at Level 1 is a function of the brand identification variable at Level 2. However, this relationship was not significant ($\gamma = 0.037$, $p < .10$; H3a not supported).

Finally, in terms of salesperson traits influencing the outcome of the stressor-strain relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance, I tested the hypothesis that the three-way interaction of brand identification, customer orientation, and a product-harm crisis is negatively related to salesperson performance (H5a). To test H5a, I estimated a cross-level interaction in which the slope of brand identification at Level 2 is a function of customer orientation at Level 3, and the interaction of brand identification and customer orientation

strengthens the within-brand relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance. I found support for this relationship ($\gamma = -0.142$, $p < .01$; H5a supported). Furthermore, simple slopes analysis revealed a significant slope when both brand identification and customer orientation are low ($\gamma = -0.414$, $p < .01$). Although no other simple slopes are significant, there are significant differences between several of the simple slopes. Results suggest that salesperson performance is worse among salespeople, who are both highly brand-identified and highly customer-oriented than for salespeople, who are highly brand-identified but have low levels of customer orientation during product-harm crises ($\gamma_{\text{High BID, High CO}} - \gamma_{\text{High BID, Low CO}} = -0.455$, $p < .05$). Similarly, salesperson performance is lower for salespeople with low levels of both brand identification and customer orientation than for salespeople with high levels of brand identification but low levels of customer orientation ($\gamma_{\text{Low BID, Low CO}} - \gamma_{\text{High BID, Low CO}} = -0.630$, $p < .01$) and for salespeople with low levels of brand identification but high levels of customer orientation during product-harm crises ($\gamma_{\text{Low BID, Low CO}} - \gamma_{\text{Low BID, High CO}} = -0.449$, $p < .05$).

In H6a, I hypothesize a negative interaction effect of empathic concern and product-harm crises on salesperson performance. In H6b, I posit that moderate levels of sales manager empathic concern can weaken the negative relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance. To test these relationships, I created a quadratic term by squaring the grand-mean centered measure of sales manager empathic concern. Then, I added both the grand-mean centered measure and the quadratic term into the HGLM analysis. Since my variable measures the salesperson's perception of their sales manager empathic concern, I felt it was appropriate to include this term at the salesperson-level, Level 3. Finally, I estimated the cross-level interactions, in which the grand-mean centered term and the quadratic term for sales manager empathic concern influenced the within-brand effect of product-harm crises on

salesperson performance. The results were not statistically significant ($\gamma = -0.002$, $p > .05$; H6a not supported; ($\gamma = -0.005$, $p > .05$; H6b not supported).

4.5 Discussion of Study 1

This study mimics previous research on stressor-strain relationships but studies it within a specific, albeit frequently occurring, sales context. By examining a stressor-strain relationship within this context, we're able to determine how common, heavily-researched salesperson traits influence the appraisal of stressors within a general sales context. In study 1, I find that the performance of salespeople with a strong sense of brand identification and higher levels of customer orientation suffers during product-harm crises. Under normal circumstances, these traits generally improve salesperson performance. Therefore, these traits are desirable and the implications of this study are not that salespeople with these traits should be weeded out. Instead, the implications are that these salespeople will be most affected by these crises, and that these salespeople's reactions to these crises need to be managed. Salespeople with low levels of brand identification and customer orientation need to be managed as well, as their performance is significantly worse during product-harm crises. One possible explanation for this result is that these salespeople lack the enthusiasm and commitment to the customer to perform well, and the product-harm crisis exacerbates the lack of enthusiasm and commitment. Instead of feeling shameful and responsible, the salesperson may simply feel more apathetic, and the lack of interest makes it harder for them to close a sale.

Study 1 has several limitations that I attempt to remedy in Study 2. Because the analysis is of historical data, I cannot measure salesperson states, such as stress emotions, that may occur in the moment of the crisis. These states are key components of the stressor-strain relationship,

because they mediate the effects of the stressors and can lead to vastly different strains. Depending on the stress emotion elicited, the response of the salesperson to the crisis could be either adaptive or maladaptive. Given that Study 1 indicates that salesperson performance decreases during these crises, the response appears to be maladaptive. However, I have not yet uncovered the process through which the crisis affects the salesperson. Furthermore, a test of effects in the moment of the crisis may reveal stronger reactions from salespeople. I attempt to remedy these limitations in Study 2.

4.6 Procedure for Study 2

In Study 2, 100 automotive salespeople participated in a scenario-based experiment through an online, data collection company. The participants are 57.7% male and 42.3% female, with an average tenure (as an automobile salesperson) of 4.38 years and an average age of 34.12 years. In the experiment, I randomly assigned participants to 1 of 2 sales scenarios, in which a product-harm crisis either had or had not occurred. In each condition, the participant imagines that they're a salesperson for a major automotive brand. The salesperson has a morning meeting with their supervisor, interacts with several customers who ask about the safety of the automobiles, takes a few test drives with customers and closes some sales. The only difference in the scenarios is that the supervisor mentions that there has been a recall associated with several deaths. In the control scenario, there is no mention of the recall (see the Appendix).

4.7 Measurement in Study 2

I measured constructs with multi-item, seven-point Likert scales using well-established scales, such as the State Shame and Guilt scale (Tangney and Dearing 2002). Additionally, I included manipulation checks of the participants' perceptions of the safety, quality, and

reliability of the vehicles in the scenario. Tests of the manipulation checks confirmed that the participants' perceptions were significantly different in each condition ($p < .01$) with participants in the recall condition perceiving the safety, quality, and reliability of the vehicles in the scenario to be lower than those in the control condition.

Next, I evaluated my measurement of the constructs by conducting a CFA. Fit statistics indicate that the CFA is acceptable, with $\chi^2_{(179)} = 251.50$ ($p < .01$), comparative fit index (CFI) = .95, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .07. My calculation of the average variance extracted (AVE) provided evidence of discriminant validity, since the AVE was greater than the squared correlations among paired constructs. Furthermore, the AVE for each construct exceeded 0.5, providing evidence of convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). All constructs demonstrated good reliability as well, with factor rho coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.97 (see Table 4).

4.8 Results of Study 2

I evaluated the model's path parameters by using Edwards and Lambert's (2007) approach to analyzing moderated mediation. To perform the analysis, I ran two separate OLS regressions in SPSS 24: one with the mediator, shame, as the dependent variable, and another with turnover intentions as the dependent variable. The results of the OLS regressions revealed that my model explains 47.1% of the variance in turnover intentions (Radj. = .471) and 20.5% of the variance in shame (Radj. = .205). I then estimated coefficients with the constrained nonlinear regressions (CNLR) module from 1,000 bootstraps, and used the estimates from the bootstrapping procedure to evaluate simple effects.

Testing of the path parameters provided support for several hypotheses. For H2a, I hypothesized a positive relationship between product-harm crises and turnover intentions. However, I found no support for this relationship ($\beta = -0.932$, $p > .05$; H2a not supported). For H2b, in which I posit that shame mediates the relationship between product-harm crises and turnover intentions, I found partial support ($\beta_{indirect} = 0.301$, $p < .10$; H2b not supported).

In H3b, I hypothesized a significant interaction effect of product-harm crises and brand identification on shame. While I did not find a significant interaction effect, the interaction does approach significance when brand identification is low ($\beta = 0.717$, $p > .05$; H3b not supported) ($\beta_{low} = 1.62$, $p < .10$) (see Table 6). Furthermore, I found a significant main effect of brand identification on shame, in which brand identification is positively related to shame ($\beta = 0.256$, $p < .05$). Similarly, in H4b, I posit that customer orientation would strengthen the negative relationship between product-harm crises and turnover intentions by increasing the amount of felt shame. I found support for this relationship, with a significant difference in the high and low conditions of customer orientation ($\beta = 0.717$, $p < .05$; H4b supported). Specifically, I found that, when customer orientation is high, it's interaction with a product-harm crisis increases shame significantly more than when customer orientation is low. The difference in the indirect effects of the customer orientation by product-harm crisis interaction on turnover intentions is also significantly higher when customer orientation is high than when customer orientation is low.

For H5b, I posited that high levels of brand identification and customer orientation would increase the likelihood that a salesperson would feel shame during a product-harm crisis. I found that the three-way interaction of brand identification, customer orientation, and product-harm crises is not significant ($\beta = -0.795$, $p > .05$; H5b not supported). However, simple slopes analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between low and high levels of brand

identification when customer orientation is low. When customer orientation is low, brand identification decreases the amount of felt shame from the product-harm crisis, contrary to expectations ($\beta_{\text{Low BID, Low CO}} - \beta_{\text{High BID, Low CO}} = 8.36$, $p < .05$). Furthermore, when brand identification is low, the difference between high and low levels of customer orientation approaches significance, with high levels of customer orientation decreasing shame more than low levels of customer orientation ($\beta_{\text{Low BID, Low CO}} - \beta_{\text{Low BID, High CO}} = 4.42$, $p < .10$).

Finally, I found support for the hypothesis that the interaction of empathic concern and product-harm crises increase turnover intentions by increasing shame ($\beta = 0.803$, $p < .05$; H7a supported). Simple slopes analysis revealed that both low and high levels of empathic concern increase feelings of shame when product-harm crises occur, with high levels of empathic concern increasing feelings of shame significantly more than low levels of empathic concern ($\beta_{\text{High}} - \beta_{\text{Low}} = 2.27$, $p < .01$). The indirect effects of the empathic concern by product-harm crisis interaction also increase turnover intentions, both when empathic concern is low and when empathic concern is high, but significantly more when empathic concern is high ($\beta_{\text{indirect High - Low}} = 1.52$, $p < .01$). However, I did not find support for the negative interaction effect of a moderate amount of empathic concern and product-harm crises on shame ($\beta = 0.215$, $p < .05$; H7b not supported).

4.9 Discussion of Study 2

In Study 2, I attempted to replicate the results of Study 1 and uncover the process through which product-harm crises affect salesperson performance. Although the results were mixed, I did find some similarities in the results. Although I did not find a significant three-way interaction among brand identification, customer orientation, and product-harm crises, I did find support for the assertion that product-harm crises can increase feelings of shame and turnover intentions in highly customer-oriented salespeople. Moreover, the simple slopes analysis

indicates that salespeople with low levels of customer orientation feel less moral responsibility for the wrong-doing of the brand when they are brand-identified. Perhaps brand-identified salespeople are more likely to defend the brand against criticism and dismiss the crisis as an honest mistake or simply part of doing business when they are brand-identified.

The finding that highly customer-oriented salespeople are more likely to leave their jobs during product-harm crises is significant in terms of its substantive implications. The finding indicates that a manager's best salespeople are most likely to leave during these crises. Furthermore, the results indicate that sales managers can make matters worse by being empathetic. While moderate amounts of empathic concern did not weaken the feelings of shame, there was a significant, positive interaction effect of both the linear and non-linear form of empathic concern and product-harm crises on shame. For the sales manager, the results imply that they should be careful not to be too empathetic to their salespeople during these crises. Expressing empathy may cause their salespeople to dwell on the issue, making matters worse. In addition, time spent discussing problems is time taken away from selling. The result may be a decrease in effort that hinders the salesperson's performance and increases their turnover intentions.

5 GENERAL DISCUSSION

A review of the extant sales literature reveals a dearth of research on the effects of product-harm crises on the salesforce, which periodically plague firms. Furthermore, sales literature that addresses stressor-strain relationships predominantly focuses on the mediating effects of role stress and may ignore the presence of other stress emotions (see, e.g., Walker et al. 1977). While some literature addresses how brand identification and customer orientation

positively affect salesperson performance (see, e.g., Joshi and Randall 2001, Hughes 2013), no research, to the authors' knowledge, discusses how they interact with stressors to negatively influence salesperson performance.

In my studies, I posit and empirically test how product-harm crises interact with salesperson traits to influence salesperson performance. My empirical estimations reveal that product-harm crises interact with customer orientation and brand identification to negatively influence salesperson performance. Specifically, the result of the studies collectively imply that your better performers during product-harm crises are salespeople, who have high levels of brand identification but low levels of customer orientation. Salespeople, who are both highly brand-identified and highly customer-oriented perform worse, as do salespeople, who have low levels of both brand identification and customer orientation. The findings indicate that highly brand-identified salespeople maintain their enthusiasm about the brand and continue to perform well during product-harm crises. However, if they are highly customer-oriented as well, then they see the crisis as a moral dilemma that they internalize, and their performance declines. This finding exposes a problem to be managed when product-harm crises occur. Namely, the problem is the increase in shame among customer-oriented salespeople that increases their turnover intentions and lowers performance. My discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications of my research focuses on the implications of these results.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

I extend the salesforce management literature in at least two ways. First, my research indicates that brand identification and customer orientation can hinder salesperson performance during product-harm crises. More broadly speaking, the implication is that salesperson characteristics are psychological biases that increase the salesperson's feelings of association

with the brand and sense of moral responsibility. Additionally, brand identification can cause public and personal sentiment toward the brand to be internalized and cause a negative view of the salesperson's self. My experiment indicates a similar implication for customer orientation. Perhaps the customer-oriented salesperson's "high concern for self" (Saxe and Weitz 1982) causes the salesperson to reflect on what the crisis means about them as a person. Similar to brand identification, this reflection could cause the sentiment toward the brand to be internalized and lead to a negative sense of self. Furthermore, customer orientation has been associated with a higher sense of ethics and, in my studies, appears to be associated with a higher sense of moral responsibility. The significance of this implication is that higher levels of customer orientation will not only cause decreases in salesperson performance during product-harm crises, but also in any situation, in which the brand has committed a wrong-doing. Therefore, the findings may hold under any circumstance, in which the brand has an adverse product event, engages in fraudulent activity, or receives negative publicity for any kind of immoral act.

Second, my studies indicate that stress emotions, such as shame, are key factors of influence on salesperson performance. While the salesforce management literature has predominantly focused on role stress, other stress emotions can be elicited by actions of the brand that mediate the effects of those actions on salesperson performance. In the case of my research, I demonstrate how the actions of the brand can interact with salesperson traits to induce shame. In alignment with coping theory, the results give further evidence to the assertion that traits influence the appraisal of the stressor (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Furthermore, as previous research has demonstrated, shame induces maladaptive responses to the stressful environment, resulting in increased turnover intentions. While research has found similar results for role stress (Singh et al. 1994), the inclusion of shame and additional stress emotions in

models of salesperson performance may increase the explanation of variance in attitudinal and behavioral responses to stressful sales environments.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Product-harm crises, among other adverse events, create stressful environments for the salesforce that can hinder salesperson performance. When these crises occur, it is important for managers to understand who will be affected by them, how they will be affected, and how they, as managers, can ameliorate the negative effects. In addition, understanding how these crises affect their own salesforce helps managers understand how the competition's salesforce is affected. The implications of both scenarios are discussed next.

My studies show that highly customer-oriented salespeople are the most negatively affected salespeople by the crisis, and that brand identification can make matters worse. Typically, both brand identification and customer orientation correlate with positive outcomes such as increased salesperson performance, extra-role behaviors, and organizational citizenship behaviors (see, e.g., Hughes and Ahearne 2010). Therefore, my research implies that is the brand's *better* salespeople, who are most likely to leave the organization and perform poorly during these crises. From a competitor's perspective, the situation is desirable, because it presents an opportunity to hire good salespeople from the crisis-embroiled brand. Since the turnover intentions of these salespeople are higher during these crises, competitors may be able to hire them away with fewer incentives and salary increases than usual. These crises present an opportunity to increase the number of better salespeople within their own organization and increase their total sales.

Managers need to reign in the shame and turnover intentions that product-harm crises elicit. While results are mixed, my studies indicate that empathic concern can make matters worse instead of better. Sales managers should be careful not to be overly empathetic and cause the salesperson to dwell further on their plight or to take too much time away from their selling tasks. If managers are empathetic, the salesperson will experience stronger feelings of shame, a decrease in performance, and will be more likely to leave the organization.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

I use a multimethod approach to studying the effects of product-harm crises on the salesforce. The mixture of the field study and experimental design enables me to take both a historical perspective and an in-the-moment perspective of the effects of the crises on the salesforce. However, my field study provides limited evidence of effects. By being retrospective, my field study is unable to capture alterations in salesperson states before and after a crisis occurs. This limitation prevents us from understanding how salespeople's state of shame varies before and after crises and how long the effects last. Salesperson brand identification and customer orientation, although relatively stable, can vary over time as well. These salesperson characteristics could have fluctuated over the time periods analyzed and may have been directly affected by the crises. In addition to addressing these limitations, future research is needed to evaluate the effects of crises on other stress emotions in addition to shame. Many could be elicited by the crises, be directed at different entities (e.g. anger toward the brand), and may have differential effects on salesperson performance.

In addition to empathic concern, other managerial responses to the crises should be measured. Other constructs may attenuate the effects of the crises on salesperson performance by providing salespeople with various types of social support. Social support that provides

information about the corrective actions of the brand or provides esteem support may inhibit the effects of the crisis. Future research should measure informational support and esteem support to estimate the effects of these constructs on the crisis-performance relationship.

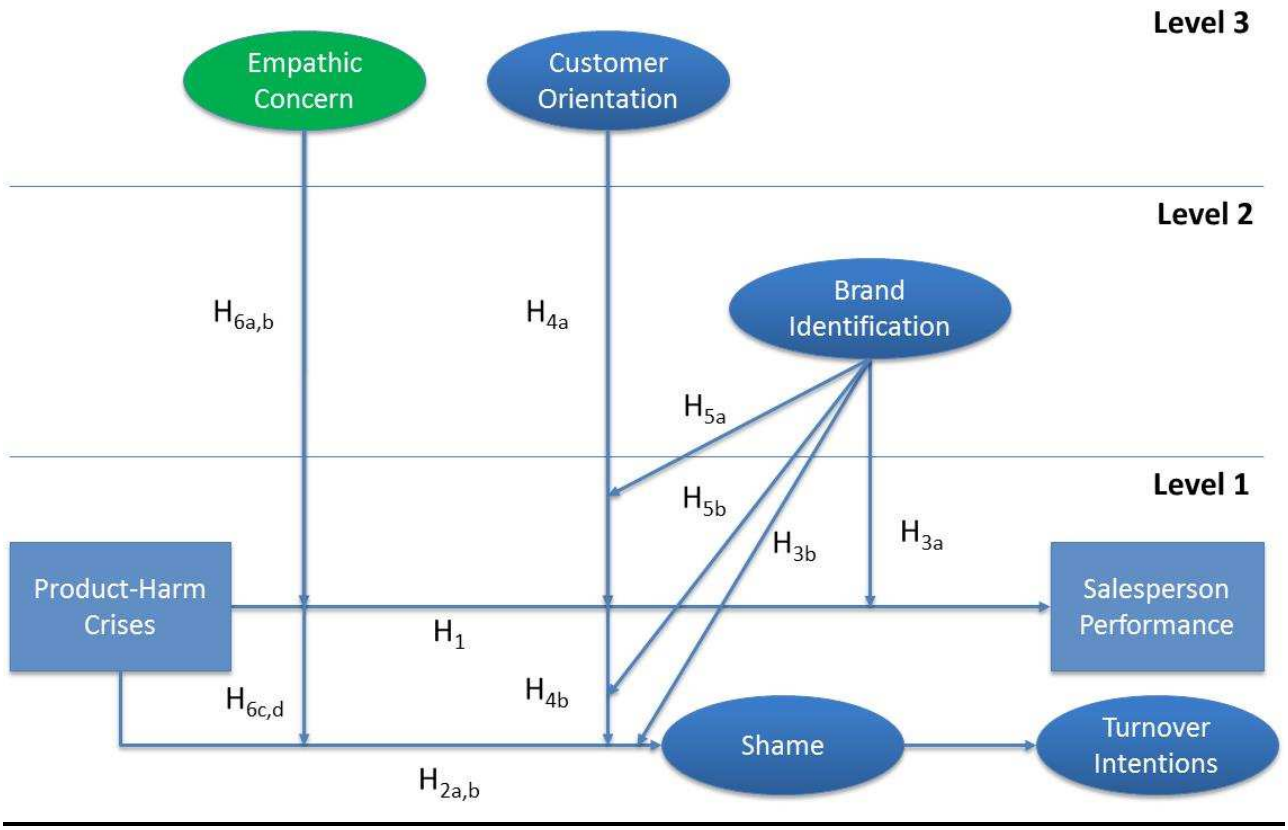
Another limitation of this research is that measures of empathic concern were only gathered from salespeople. Empathic concern, as well as other management constructs, should be measured by both the salesperson and the sales manager. Measures from both sources would help protect against single source bias, and the measures may produce differential effects.

Lastly, management constructs, as well as the aforementioned salesperson constructs, should be evaluated for their effects on salesperson performance across a variety of "immoral acts" by the firm. My current research is limited to the impact of product-harm crises. Further research is needed to determine how other crises, such as fraud, impact the salesforce as well. Similarities in findings would speak to the generalizability of my research, and provide further evidence of these effects.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Notes. Blue ovals are latent salesperson constructs, the green oval is a latent sales manager construct, rectangles are objective data. Covariates in the model are shame proneness, advertising, and incentives.

Figure 2: HGLM Model

Level-1 Model

$$E(SOLD_{tij}|\pi_{ij}) = \lambda_{tij}$$
$$\log[\lambda_{tij}] = \eta_{tij}$$
$$\eta_{tij} = \pi_{0ij} + \pi_{1ij}(PHC_{tij}) + \pi_{2ij}(ADV_{tij}) + \pi_{3ij}(CR_{tij}) + \pi_{4ij}(FR_{tij})$$

Level-2 Model

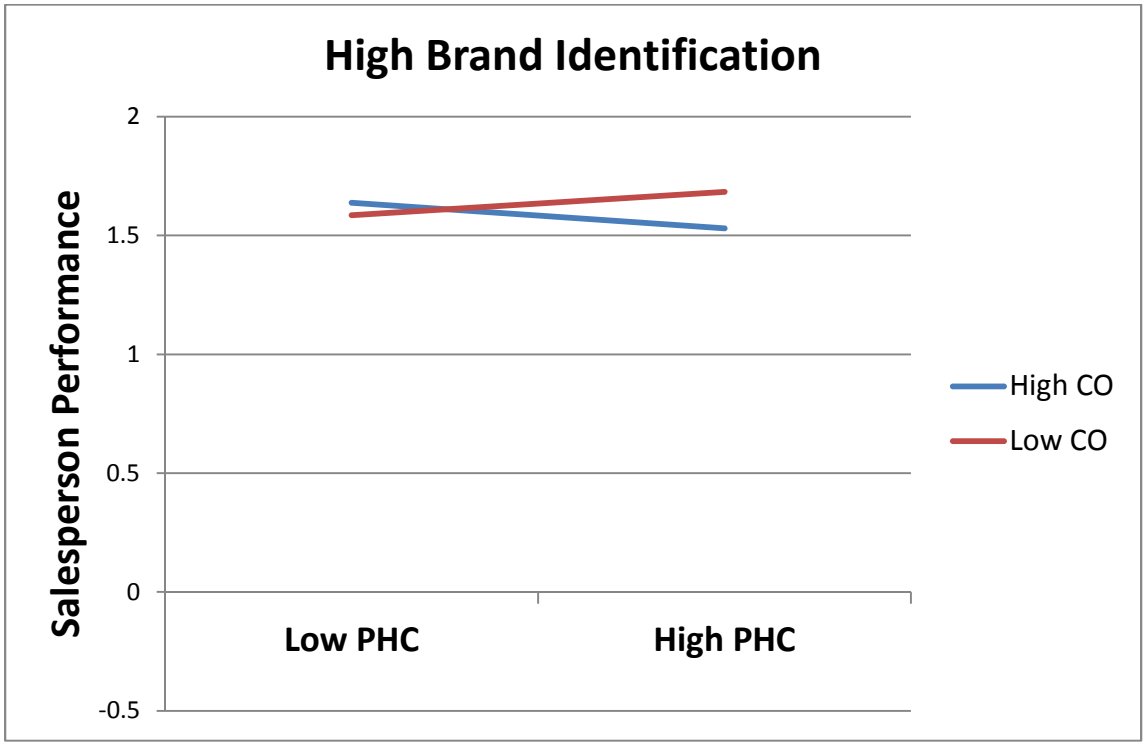
$$\pi_{0ij} = \beta_{00j} + \beta_{01j}(BID_{ij}) + r_{0ij}$$
$$\pi_{1ij} = \beta_{10j} + \beta_{11j}(BID_{ij})$$
$$\pi_{2ij} = \beta_{20j}$$
$$\pi_{3ij} = \beta_{30j}$$
$$\pi_{4ij} = \beta_{40j}$$

Level-3 Model

$$\beta_{00j} = \gamma_{000} + \gamma_{001}(EMP_j) + \gamma_{002}(CUSTOR_j) + \gamma_{003}(EMPSQ_j) + \gamma_{004}(SHAMEPRO_j) + u_{00j}$$
$$\beta_{01j} = \gamma_{010} + \gamma_{011}(CUSTOR_j) + \gamma_{012}(SHAMEPRO_j)$$
$$\beta_{10j} = \gamma_{100} + \gamma_{101}(EMP_j) + \gamma_{102}(CUSTOR_j) + \gamma_{103}(EMPSQ_j) + \gamma_{104}(SHAMEPRO_j)$$
$$\beta_{11j} = \gamma_{110} + \gamma_{111}(CUSTOR_j) + \gamma_{112}(SHAMEPRO_j)$$
$$\beta_{20j} = \gamma_{200}$$
$$\beta_{30j} = \gamma_{300}$$
$$\beta_{40j} = \gamma_{400}$$

where PHC = product-harm crisis, ADV = advertising expenditures, CR = cash rebates, FR = finance rates, BID = brand identification, EMP = empathic concern, EMPSQ = empathic concern squared, CUSTOR = customer orientation, and SHAMEPRO = shame proneness.

Figure 3: Study 1: HGLM Interaction Graphs



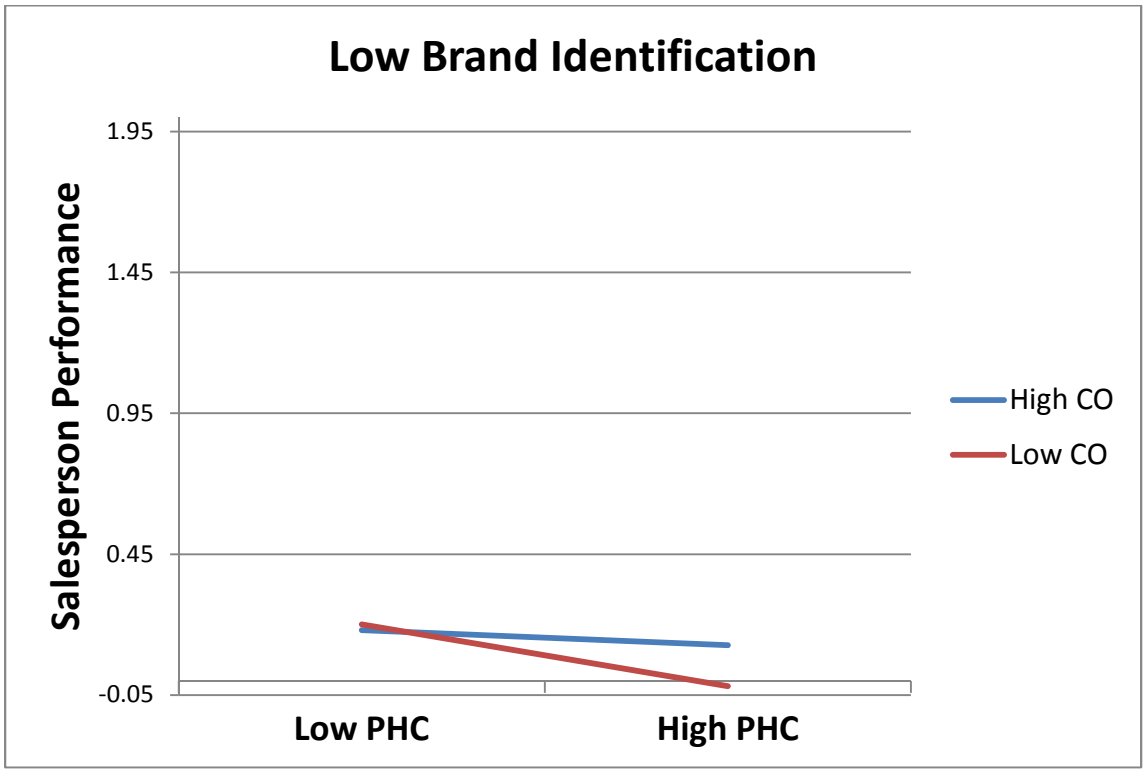
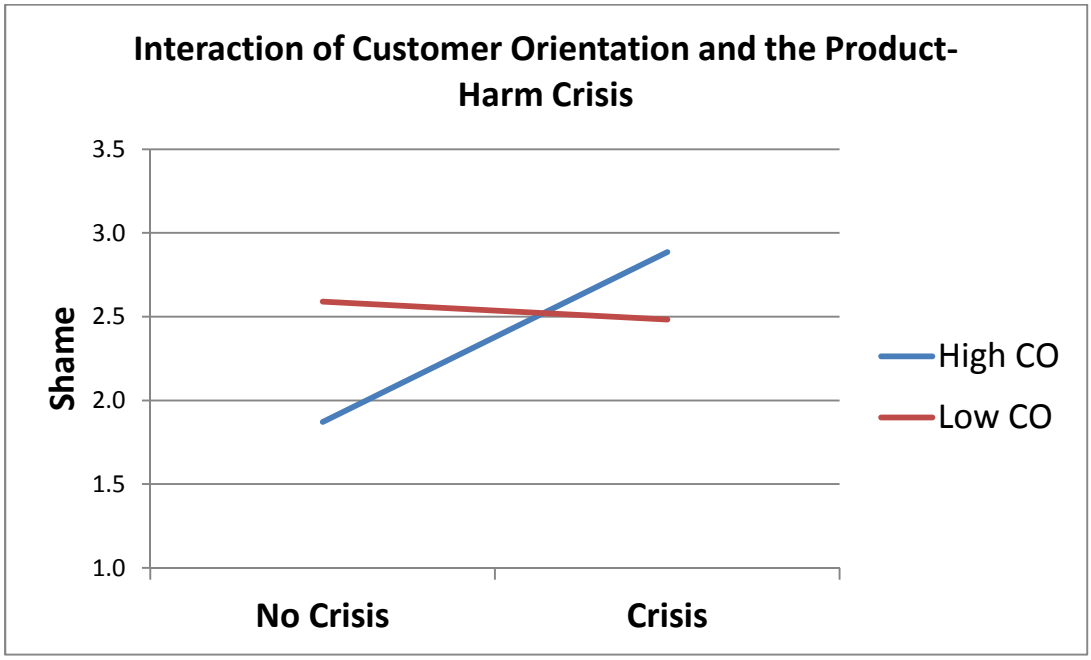


Figure 4: Study 2: Interaction Graphs



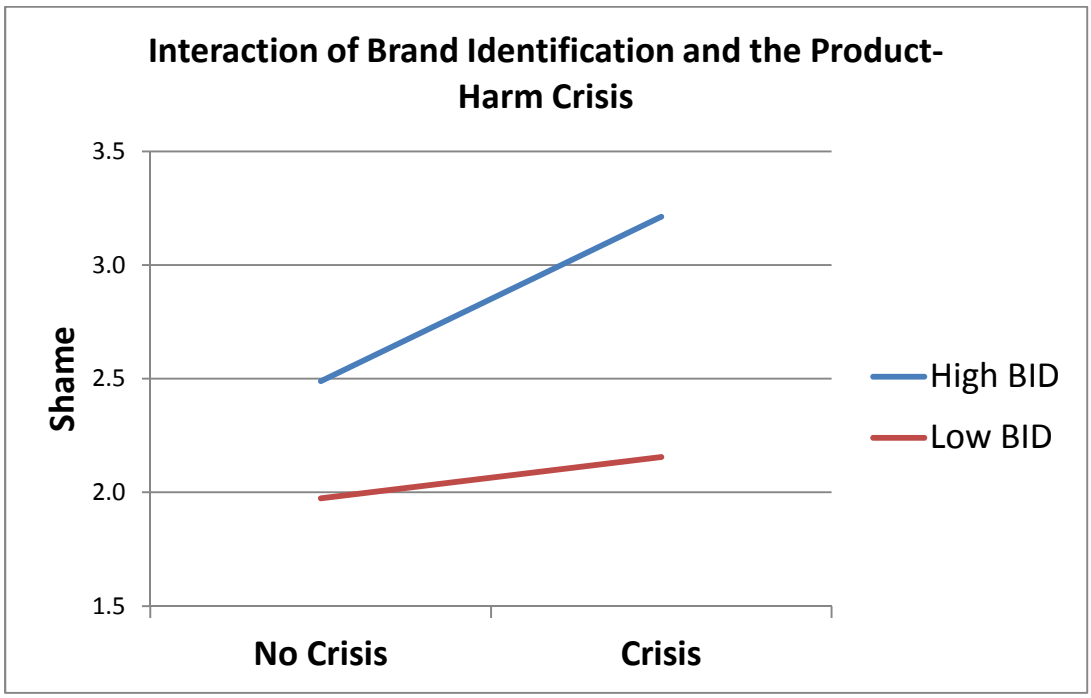
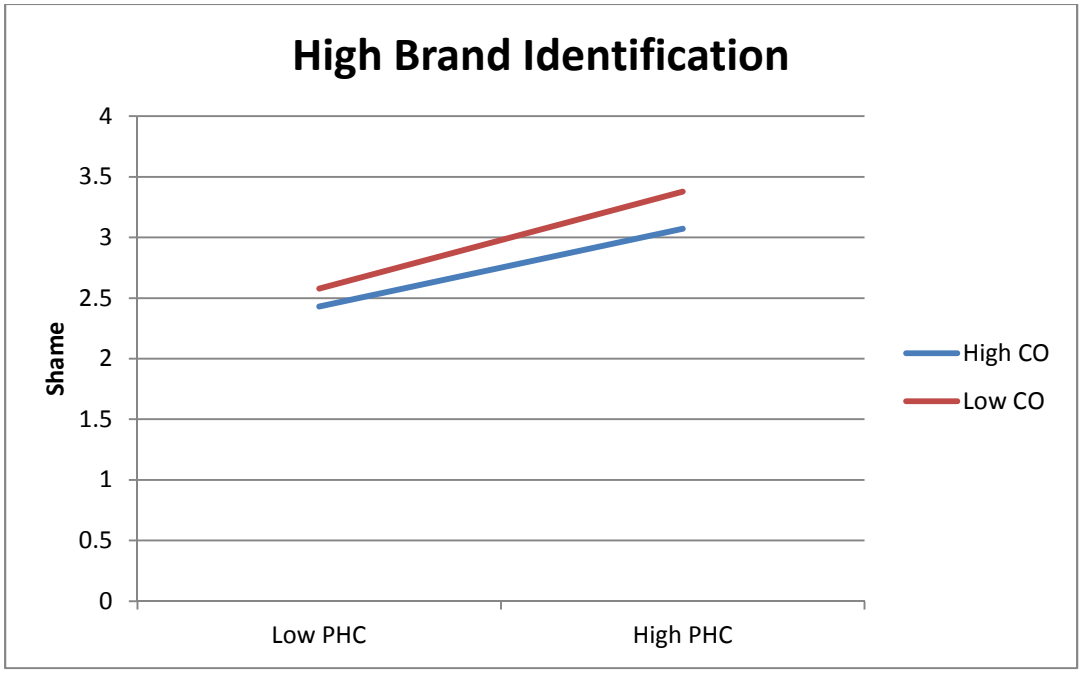


Figure 4 (cont'd)



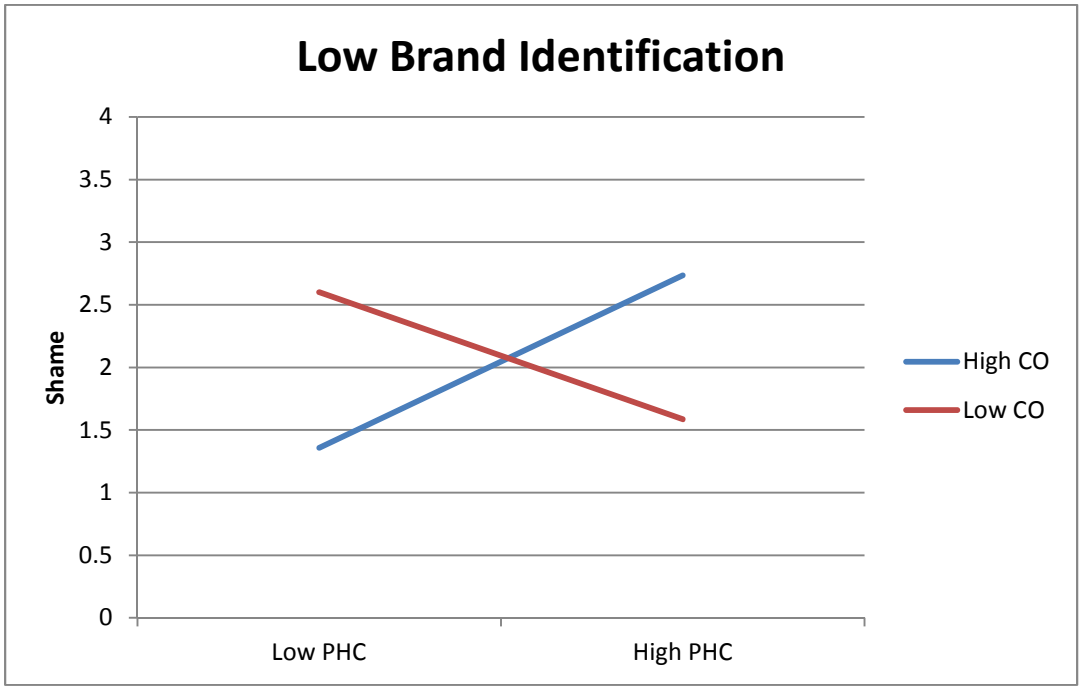


Table 1: Summary of Relevant Prior Research on Identification

Article	Brand Identification	Effects of Leadership Style on Identification	Negative Effects of Identification	Performance Outcomes	Relevant Findings
Ahearne et al. 2013	×	×	✓	✓	Interpersonal identification, such as employee identification with their manager, can increase employee performance through the process of self-expansion. However, over-identification may cause an unhealthy state of codependency. In this state, "any change of the relational identity threatens the self."
Wieseke et al. 2012	×	×	✓	✓	Identification at lower levels of an organization, such as work team identification, combined with low levels of organizational identification can lead to negative stereotypes about the organization's headquarters. The negative stereotypes harm sales performance.

Table 1 (cont'd)

Article	Brand Identification	Effects of Leadership Style on Identification	Negative Effects of Identification	Performance Outcomes	Relevant Findings
Hughes and Ahearne 2010	✓	×	×	✓	Salesperson brand identification increases the connections among the salesperson's goals and the brand' goals. These connections motivate the salesperson and lead to increased brand effort. Other levels of identification can increase or decrease brand effort, depending on the alignment of the group's goals and the brand's goals.
Hughes 2013	✓	×	×	×	Salespeople are more likely to identify with brands that they and others view favorably. Firm actions, such as advertising, can enhance the image of a brand, increasing a salesperson's desire to identify with it. Furthermore, internal communications can increase the understanding of firm actions, which increases their influence over salesperson-brand identification.

Table 1 (cont'd)

Article	Brand Identification	Effects of Leadership Style on Identification	Negative Effects of Identification	Performance Outcomes	Relevant Findings
Ashforth and Mael 1989	×	✓	×	✓	When group members identify with the group, they "personally experience the successes and failures of the group". Managers can manipulate group members' levels of identification by manipulating symbols, such as rituals and physical settings.
Dutton et al. 1994	×	×	✓	×	When employees identify with an organization, they experience criticisms of the organization personally. These experiences can lead to "feelings of shame, disgrace, or embarrassment".

Table 1 (cont'd)

Article	Brand Identification	Effects of Leadership Style on Identification	Negative Effects of Identification	Performance Outcomes	Relevant Findings
Current Article	✓	✓	✓	✓	Brand identification causes salespeople to experience personally the failures and criticisms of the brand. During product-harm crises, this can bring about feelings of guilt and shame, negatively impacting performance. Transformational leadership, however, can moderate these effects through social identification with the work-group and empowerment.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix and Descriptives

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Level 3: Salespeople									
1. SP	(.77)								
2. CO	-.29**	(.65)							
3. EMP	-.18*	.43**	(.88)						
Level 2: Brands									
4. BID	.08	.18*	.25**	(.92)					
Level 1: Time									
5. PHC[a]	.02	.00	.01	-.01	-				
6. ADV[a]	.04**	-.11**	.00	-.08**	.03*	-			
7. CR[a]	-.13**	-.02	.00	-.06**	-.12**	.12**	-		
8. FR[a]	.08**	-.02	-.02	.03*	.26**	-.03**	-.33**	-	
9. Sales[a]	.04**	.05**	-.06**	.23**	-.04**	.18**	-.15**	.00	-
M	1.60	6.74	4.28	4.89	-	35545.26	1725.71	2.76	3.33
SD	0.80	0.37	1.44	1.23	-	25076.18	843.78	1.14	4.41
AVE	0.76	0.74	0.83	0.80	-	-	-	-	-

Notes. L3, N = 103. L2, N = 183. L1, N = 7,276. AVE = average variance extracted, PHC = product-harm crisis (number of fatalities reported in association with a product recall), SP = shame proneness, CO = customer orientation, BID = brand identification, EMP = empathic concern, ADV = advertising expenditures, CR = cash rebates, FR = finance rates, and Sales = number of units sold. Each construct's factor rho coefficient is written on the diagonal.

[a] Construct measured with secondary data.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 3: Study 1: HGLM Results

Hypothesis	Variable	γ	SE
	Intercept (γ_{000})	0.880**	0.176
	Main Effects		
H1	PHC (γ_{100})	-0.035[a]	0.027
	CO (γ_{002})	0.397	0.362
	BID (γ_{010})	0.991**	0.207
	EMP (γ_{100})	-0.094	0.105
	EMP^2 (γ_{100})	-0.064	0.063
	Cross-Level Interactions		
H3a	BID x PHC (γ_{110})	0.047*	0.028
H4a	CO x PHC (γ_{102})	0.046	0.045
H5a	BID x CO x PHC (γ_{111})	-0.328*	0.176
H6a	EMP x PHC (γ_{101})	-0.010	0.010
H6b	EMP^2 x PHC (γ_{103})	-0.003	0.010
	Controls		
	SP (γ_{001})	0.094	0.128
	ADV (γ_{200})	-0.000**	0.000
	CR (γ_{300})	-0.000	0.000
	FR (γ_{400})	0.051**	0.020

Notes. L3, N = 103. L2, N = 183. L1, N = 7,276. AVE = average variance extracted, PHC = product-harm crisis with fatalities, SP = shame proneness, CO = customer orientation, BID = brand identification, EMP = empathic concern, ADV = advertising expenditures, CR = cash rebates, and FR = finance rates.

[a] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix and Descriptives

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. PHC[a]	-					
2. Shame	.24*	(.97)				
3. CO	.22*	.10	(.82)			
4. BID	.13	.24*	.14	(.81)		
5. EMP	.12	.21*	.44**	.42**	(.92)	
6. TI	.03	.69**	-.02	.02	.08	(.97)
M	-	2.81	6.22	5.50	4.80	2.79
SD	-	1.87	0.78	1.03	1.42	1.81
AVE	-	.87	.52	.54	.86	.95

Notes. N = 100. AVE = average variance extracted, PHC = product-harm crisis, CO = customer orientation, BID = brand identification, EMP = empathic concern, TI = Turnover Intentions. Each construct's factor rho coefficient is written on the diagonal.

[a] Construct measured with a dummy variable.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 5: Coefficient Estimates

DV	PHC	Shame	CO	BID	EMP	EMP^2	PHC* CO	PHC* BID	PHC* BID* CO	PHC* EMP	PHC* EMP^2	R^2	R^2_{adj}
TI	-0.932	0.667**	-0.187	-0.335	0.169[a]	0.015	0.134	0.193	0.269	-0.211	0.178[a]	0.54	0.47
Shame	0.451[a]		-0.446	0.256*	-0.191	0.034	0.717*	0.262	-0.795	0.803**	0.215*	0.30	0.21

Note. N = 100. DV = dependent variable, TI = turnover intentions, PHC = product-harm crisis, CO = customer orientation, BID = brand identification, and EMP = empathic concern. Tests of statistical significance are based on bias-corrected confidence intervals obtained from the bootstrap estimates.

[a] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 6: Analysis of Simple Effects

Moderator variable	Stage		Effect		
	First	Second	Direct	Indirect	Total
Customer Orientation					
Low	4.35*	0.67**	-0.20	2.90*	2.70[a]
High	5.46*	0.67**	0.00	3.64*	3.65[a]
Differences	1.12*	0.00	0.21	0.74*	0.95*
Brand Identification					
Low	1.62[a]	0.67**	0.12	1.08[a]	1.20
High	2.16	0.67**	0.33	1.44	1.77
Differences	0.54	0.00	0.21	0.36	0.57[a]
Brand ID by CO					
Low	0.94*	0.67**	-1.10	0.63*	-0.47
High	-0.19	0.67**	-0.71	-0.13	-0.84
Differences	-1.13	0.00	0.38	-0.76	-0.37
Empathic Concern					
Low	3.17**	0.67**	-1.65	2.11**	0.46
High	5.44**	0.67**	-2.25	3.63**	1.38
Differences	2.27**	0.00	-0.60	1.52**	0.92[a]
Low Brand ID					
Low CO	-13.82	0.67**	7.22	-9.22	-2.00
High CO	-18.24	0.67**	9.30	-12.16	-2.86
Differences	4.42[a]	0.00	-2.09	2.95[a]	0.86
Low CO					
Low Brand ID	-13.82	0.67**	7.22	-9.22	-2.00
High Brand ID	-22.18	0.67**	10.63	-14.79	-4.16
Differences	8.36*	0.00	-3.41	5.57*	2.16

Note. N = 100. Tests of statistical significance are based on bias-corrected confidence intervals obtained from the bootstrap estimates. The low condition for each variable is one standard deviation below the mean, and the high condition is one standard deviation above the mean.

[a] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX B: Survey Items and Manipulations

Study 1: Measurements

Brand Identification (from Mael and Ashforth 1992)

1. When someone criticizes Brand X, it feels like a personal insult.
2. I am very interested in what others think about Brand X.
3. When I talk about this Brand X, I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’.
4. This Brand X’s successes are my successes.
5. When someone praises this Brand X, it feels like a personal compliment.
6. If a story in the media criticized the Brand X, I would feel embarrassed.

Empathic Concern (from Davis 1983)

1. My supervisor has tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate.
2. My supervisor is often quite touched by things that he/she sees happen.
3. My supervisor is a pretty soft-hearted person.

Customer Orientation (from Thomas et al. 2001)

1. I try to figure out my customers' needs.
2. I have the customer’s best interests in mind.
3. I take a problem solving approach in selling products or services to customers.
4. I try to find out which kinds of products or services would be most helpful to customers.

*Shame Proneness (*from Harder 1995)

1. Feeling ridiculous
2. Self- consciousness

3. Feeling helpless, paralyzed

Study 2: Base Scenario

Imagine that you come into work and start your day like any other. After a morning meeting with your supervisor, customers start hitting the dealership and it is clear that it is going to be a busy day. Throughout the day you are continually interacting with customers and they repeatedly ask you about the safety and fuel efficiency of the vehicles. During these conversations, you do your best to answer their questions and try to get them to agree to a test drive, which you know will increase your odds of a sale. At the end of the day you were able to close some sales on {brand name piped in} vehicles.

Recall Scenario

Imagine that you come into work and start your day like any other. During your morning meeting, your supervisor informs you that your number one selling brand, {brand name piped in}, is undergoing a major safety recall that spans all models from the previous production year and is linked to several deaths in your region. Your supervisor also informs that the recall has made the headlines in the news and consumers coming in today will likely know about it. Shortly after this meeting, customers start hitting the dealership and it is clear that it is going to be a busy day. Throughout the day you are continually interacting with customers and they express concerns about the safety of your vehicles citing the recent recall. During these conversations, you do your best to answer their questions and try to get them to agree to a test drive, which you know will increase your odds of a sale. At the end of the day, despite customers continually expressing concern over the recall, you were able to close some sales on {brand name piped in} vehicles.

Manipulation Checks

In the scenario, was there a product recall?

Finally, thinking back to the scenario, how realistic was this scenario?

1. I could see something like this happening.
2. This type of thing happens occasionally in the automotive industry.
3. It would be possible that I could experience a day like this during my career at this dealership.

Measurements

Brand Identification (from Mael and Ashforth 1992)

7. When someone criticizes Brand X, it feels like a personal insult.
8. I am very interested in what others think about Brand X.
9. When I talk about this Brand X, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'.
10. This Brand X's successes are my successes.
11. When someone praises this Brand X, it feels like a personal compliment.
12. If a story in the media criticized the Brand X, I would feel embarrassed.

Intention to Turnover

1. After this day, I would think about leaving this organization.
2. After this day, I would plan to look for a new job.
3. After this day, I would not plan to work for this dealership much longer.

Shame (from Tangney and Dearing 2002)

Likert Scale 1 = Not feeling this way at all, 4 = Feeling this way somewhat, 7 = Feeling this way very strongly

1. I want to sink into the floor and disappear.
2. I feel small.
3. I feel like I am a bad person.
4. I feel humiliated, disgraced.
5. I feel worthless, powerless.

Empathic Concern (from Davis 1983)

4. My supervisor has tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate.
5. My supervisor is often quite touched by things that he/she sees happen.
6. My supervisor is a pretty soft-hearted person.

Customer Orientation (from Thomas et al. 2001)

5. I try to figure out my customers' needs.
6. I have the customer's best interests in mind.
7. I take a problem solving approach in selling products or services to customers.
8. I try to find out which kinds of products or services would be most helpful to customers.

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CHAPTER 2: MANAGING SALESFORCE EFFECTIVENESS DURING PRODUCT-HARM CRISES

1 ABSTRACT

A substantial amount of research has investigated the effects of product-harm crises on consumers. However, no research to date has examined the effects of product-harm crises on the firm's frontline employees, such as the salesforce. As customer-facing employees whose primary objective it is to convert leads into sales, the salesforce plays a critical role in the firm's recovery from a product-harm crisis. In order to expedite the recovery process from a product-harm crisis, managers need to know how salespeople can be most effective during these crises. To fill this knowledge gap, I examine which salesperson influence tactics are more effective in generating sales revenue during a product-harm crisis. I find that, during a product-harm crisis, open influence tactics are negatively related to sales, and closed influence tactics are positively related to sales. These effects are mediated by the consumer's trust in the salesperson.

2 INTRODUCTION

"Sold" read the signs on about half of the 15 Toyota Camrys sitting on a Columbia, Tennessee dealership lot. The Camrys are part of a product recall, but their signs read "Sold" because the dealership wants to trick consumers into thinking they're flying off the lot (Lichterman 2013). Dealerships and their salespeople use a number of tactics to move product out of inventory and into the hands of the consumer. Some are more deceptive than others, but each has the goal of making a transaction happen. Situational factors, though, can make the achievement of this goal more difficult. In the case of more severe, well-publicized product recalls, for instance, some salesperson influence tactics may lose their effectiveness, and some may even backfire. It is my intention to investigate this phenomenon and determine which salesperson influence tactics are more effective during product-harm crises (e.g. product recalls).

The costs of product-harm crises can be financially crippling to a firm. Firms, and thereby their salesforces, that are embroiled in a product-harm crisis have an urgent need to regain consumer trust so that they can recover their losses. The salesforce plays a pivotal role in the firm's recovery of revenue as they convert leads into actual sales. Like the firm, the salesforce needs to understand which tactics it can use to effectively regain consumer trust and generate sales. If the salesforce uses less effective tactics, their performance will suffer, and the firm's recovery from the crisis will be delayed. However, if sales managers know which influence tactics are most effective during these crises, they can train the salesforce to utilize them during these times and expedite the firm's recovery.

Key insights into how salespeople can increase their performance can be drawn from the existing literature. In particular, the adaptive selling literature has shown that the effectiveness of influence tactics depends on situational and consumer characteristics, and that a contingency

approach to selling is most effective. Furthermore, the literature has proposed that consumers' negative feelings toward the firm can be redirected toward its employees (Dutton et al. 1994). As product-harm crises can elicit negative feelings in consumers, it is necessary to understand how these feelings affect consumer-salesperson interactions. A better understanding of these effects will enable salespeople to understand which influence tactics to use in these situations, benefiting salespeople and the firm. The literature, although it has made several important contributions to the knowledge of influence tactics, is limited with respect to the effectiveness of influence tactics during product-harm crises or other kinds of adverse environments. Given the crucial role the salesforce plays in generating revenue for the firm and the urgency with which the firm needs to recover from the crisis, I feel that an expansion of knowledge in this area is needed.

The purpose of this research is to understand which salesperson influence tactics are more effective during product-harm crises. In adding this knowledge to the literature, I extend current research on the contingency approach to selling known as adaptive selling. In my research, I seek to understand which salesperson influence tactics are more effective and why they are more effective. I begin my discussion with an explanation of salesperson influence tactics.

3 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Salesperson Influence Tactics

In a transaction, in which salespeople are the negotiators, there are three main foci of uncertainty. The consumer is uncertain about the value of the product, about the intentions of the salesperson, and about the information the salesperson divulges. These three foci of uncertainty are related as the uncertainty about the intentions of the salesperson affects the uncertainty about the information the salesperson divulges and the value of the product. The primary objective of

the salesperson is to increase a consumer's willingness to pay for a product by decreasing the uncertainty associated with the transaction and by increasing the value of the product. In order for the salesperson to be able to influence the consumer's perceptions of the product, the salesperson must first reduce the uncertainty the consumer has about him. In other words, trust needs to be established as base from which other influence tactics can be effectuated. Which influence tactics are best suited for establishing trustworthiness and for influencing the consumer's perceptions about the product depends on a number of situational factors (Weitz 1981), such as the consumer's orientation, the selling situation (face-to-face vs. over the phone, etc.), and the consumer's perception of the salesperson.

Several influence tactics have been identified and categorized within the literature. In earlier organizational behavior literature, Schilit and Locke (1982) tested the effectiveness of over 18 influence tactics for persuading superiors within organizations. Kipnis et al. (1980) found eight influence tactics used within organizations. Their typology consists of coalition building, rationality, ingratiation, sanctions, assertiveness, exchange, blocking, and upward appeals. This typology was recently used to explain how salespeople persuade organizations to adopt their recommendations for product innovations (Joshi 2010). For the personal selling literature, though, one typology in particular stands out. McFarland et al. (2006) identified and investigated the effectiveness of six influence tactics that salespeople use in business-to-business transactions. Their identification of the tactics stems from a refinement of tactics uncovered in the literature and interviews with business-to-business salespeople. They identified six tactics that are commonly used: information exchange, recommendations, ingratiation, inspirational appeals, promises, and threats. Then, they matched these influence tactics to consumer types that were more likely to be influenced by them. They found that information exchange,

recommendations, promises, and ingratiation positively influence different types of buyers (McFarland et al. 2006). Additionally, as with the organizational behavior literature, past personal selling literature has investigated the influence tactic of rationality and found supporting evidence of its positive influence (see, e.g. Payan and McFarland 2005). Therefore, I begin my investigation by evaluating these seven influence tactics.

To refine my list of influence tactics, I draw on theories and concepts used in the literature to explain the usage of the seven identified salesperson influence tactics. The primary difference between current typologies and my own is that they those typologies consist of influence tactics used in B2B selling as opposed to B2C selling. As my investigation takes place in a B2C setting, I use this context as a lens to evaluate these seven salesperson influence tactics through. With this in mind, I begin my evaluation with a discussion of the bases of the categorizations of salesperson influence tactics and the theories used to explain them. McFarland et al. (2006) categorizes influence tactics based on Kelman's (1961) processes of opinion change. The influence tactics of information exchange and recommendations are linked to the internalization process, ingratiation and inspirational appeals are linked to the identification process, and threats and promises are linked to compliance process. The internalization and identification processes seek to alter the consumer's perceptions about the salesperson, the firm, and/or the product. In virtually any sales situation, salespeople will likely need to influence consumers' perceptions about themselves, the firm, and/or the product. As such, it seems reasonable to investigate these tactics in a B2C context; and an elaboration of the theory behind these processes will illuminate why. Additionally, rationality is a tactic discussed in both the organizational influence and personal selling literatures that seeks to change the target's (in this case, the consumer is the target) perception of the desired behavior. As

rationality is composed of the argument structure elements found in information exchange and recommendations, I assert that it is reasonable to include it as an influence tactic in B2C contexts and that it works through the internalization process. The elaboration below of the theory behind the internalization process will clarify this supposition.

Two tactics that seem out of place in the B2C context are threats and promises. Previous literature has used dependence theory to explain the conditions under which threats and promises are most likely to be effective. According to dependence theory, dependence is the degree to which a target believes a source can assist or prevent the achievement of the target's goals (Kelman and Hamilton 1989). Therefore, consumers who perceive themselves as being dependent on the salesperson for achievement of their goals will be more susceptible to a salesperson's threats and promises. While this makes sense in a B2B context, it is less likely to occur in a B2C context. Threats are statements about punishments that the salesperson will impose if the consumer does not comply. For example, a salesperson may threaten to impose penalties or withdraw from future business dealings if the consumer does not execute the desired behavior. This is less likely to occur in a B2C context, as consumers usually have many salespeople to choose from and are rarely dependent on one particular salesperson. Similarly, because of the low dependence setting of many B2C contexts, promises are also less likely to be used or to be effective. Promises are statements about future rewards that will be given to the consumer if they comply with the salesperson's request. Some B2C selling situations are transactional, and repeat business is limited, if it occurs at all, or there are long periods of time between transactions. Promises are unlikely to be used in these situations because when or if a future reward could be given to the consumer is uncertain. Even in relationship selling situations, promises are unlikely to be used because of the low amount of dependency the consumer has on

the salesperson. Since these two tactics, from a theoretical perspective, seem unlikely to be used or to be effective in a B2C context, I have discarded them from my current study.

Based on my review of the literature, and given the business-to-consumer context of my research, I am left with five influence tactics to investigate: information exchange, recommendations, rationality, ingratiation, and inspirational appeals. The first three influence tactics can be categorized as open influence tactics (i.e. direct, legitimate), and the latter two as closed influenced tactics (i.e. there are ulterior motives behind the salesperson's actions and communications) (Spiro and Perreault 1979). Next, I define these influence tactics.

Information Exchange. Information exchange is the communication of data from the salesperson to the consumer. The data, or information, could be about the product, the salesperson, the firm, and so on. When engaging in information exchange, the salesperson does not request any action on the part of the consumer (Frazier and Summers 1984) or make any recommendations, but seeks to positively influence the consumer's perception of the salesperson, product, firm, etc. by discussing the positive aspects of the product, firm, etc. (McFarland et al. 2006). For example, the salesperson may relate to the consumer that an automobile has a four star safety rating from Edmunds'. This information does not request any action from the consumer or make any kind of recommendation, but highlights a positive attribute of the product.

Recommendations. Recommendations are arguments, in which the salesperson suggests a particular course of action will benefit the consumer (McFarland et al. 2006). An automobile salesperson may suggest, for example, that the consumer upgrade their purchase to include air conditioning (course of action) so that the consumer has a more comfortable driving experience (benefit) during the hot summer months. Notice that no information is exchanged in the recommendation. This will become important when discussing the use of this tactic during

product-harm crises. Notice as well that requests are implicit in the recommendations, requests for a course of action on the part of the consumer. In interviews with salespeople, McFarland et al. (2006) found that requests are implicit in recommendations, and thus excluded them from their list of influence tactics. For this reason, I exclude requests from my list of influence tactics as well, even though it has been investigated in previous literature.

Rationality. Salespeople engage in the influence tactic of rationality when they use information and logic to support a claim they've made, and they use a warrant to link the information and logic to the claim. The salesperson communicates "reasons accompanied with supportive information" (Payan and McFarland 2005) that explain how the consumer's compliance with a request will be to their benefit. For example: "You ought to try out car X (the request/claim). It has four-wheel drive that gives it better traction on snowy roads than the two-wheel drive model (information). So you'll have better traction and be safer driving car X on snowy, winter roads" (warrant; the link between the claim and the information). Since recommendations are implicit in rationality, I exclude recommendations from my studies.

Ingratiation. Ingratiation is an influence tactic in which salespeople try to make themselves more likeable or attractive to the consumer. Ingratiation involves behaviors such as flattery and expressions of attitude similarity that increase their interpersonal attractiveness and improve their relationship with the consumer (McFarland et al. 2006).

Inspirational Appeals. Inspirational appeals arouse "a positive affective response in the target, which serves to motivate the target toward a desired response" (McFarland et al. 2006). Salespeople link the desired response from the consumer to the consumer's "values, ideals, and aspirations" (Yukl and Tracey 1992) to arouse enthusiasm in the consumer. The link of the desired behavior to their values and ideals motivates consumers to behave in a preferred manner.

As previously noted, these tactics can be linked to the internalization and identification processes of opinion change. To elaborate on how these tactics are linked to these processes and explain how these tactics exact influence on consumers, I next discuss argument structure theory and ingratiation theory. Argument structure theory explains how information exchange and rationality alter perceptions through the process of internalization. Ingratiation theory explains how ingratiation and inspirational appeals alter perceptions through the process of identification.

3.2 Argument Structure Theory

Argument structure theory usually follows one of two models from consumer behavior: the logical syllogism model or the jurisprudence model. The logical syllogism model consists of "a minor premise, a major premise, and a conclusion" (Areni 2003). The minor premise links a subject to a middle term, which is then related to a predicate in the major premise. The conclusion then links the subject to the predicate. For example:

Minor Premise: My automobile is a 2006 Chevy Cobalt.

Major Premise: All 2006 Chevy Cobalts have been recalled.

Conclusion: My automobile has been recalled.

The jurisprudence model describes argument structures in terms of claims, data, warrants, backing, qualifiers, and rebuttals (Areni 2003). Claims are requests or assertions in the argument. Data are information that supports the claims. Warrants are conclusions that link the claims to the data. Backing further strengthens the connection between the data and the claims. Qualifiers indicate that the claim may, at times, be false, and rebuttals describe scenarios in which the claim may not be true. Of these six elements, claims, data, and warrants are the three fundamental elements needed to constitute a complete argument (Payan and McFarland 2005).

Research has shown that more complete arguments are more persuasive than incomplete arguments (Areni 2002). Past research into salesperson influence tactics mostly supports this supposition. Payan and McFarland (2005), for example, decomposed salesperson influence tactics according to which of the three elements they have. They found that the influence tactic with the most complete argument structure, rationality, had a significantly larger, positive impact on compliance than requests, recommendations, and information exchange. They did not, however, find that influence tactics that use claims with warrants (recommendations) were more convincing than influence tactics that only use claims (requests) or information exchange (data). These findings are in alignment with previous research, as several studies on argument structure have found contradictory results on the effectiveness of claims vs. claims with data (Areni 2003). Warrants combined with data and claims, however, increases consumers understanding of the claims-data link and fosters acceptance (Munch et al.1993).

Argument structure theory explains a direct route of influence that aligns well with Kelman's (1961) influence process of internalization. Internalization occurs "when an individual accepts influence because the induced behavior is congruent with his value system" (Kelman 1961). In brief, the consumer decides that the salesperson's requested behavior will be rewarding or helpful in some way, and therefore executes the requested behavior. Since argument structure theory posits that arguments persuade consumers through logic and that more complete arguments are more digestible, it serves as a sound conceptual explanation for the effectiveness of influence tactics that work through the internalization process.

McFarland et al. (2006) linked recommendations and information exchange to the internalization process of opinion change. To this categorization, I add rationality, in which recommendations are implicit. Rationality is a complete argument with claims, data, and

warrants. It persuades consumers by making the link between claims and data more comprehensible, increasing the perceived support that the data gives the claim. Since data increases the credibility of a claim and warrants increase consumers' understanding of how the data supports the claim, rationality should be considered an internalization tactic. Furthermore, of recommendations, information exchange, and rationality, rationality should be the most influential internalization tactic. Information exchange is simply the data portion of an argument. It, by itself, should not be as persuasive as a complete argument. Recommendations should not be as effective as rationality either. Recommendations consist of claims and conclusions but lack supporting data. Therefore, it is nested within rationality.

3.3 Ingratiation Theory

Ingratiation theory defines ingratiation, describes the factors influencing the tendency to ingratiate, and describes the factors influencing the success of ingratiation. Jones (1964) defines ingratiation as "a class of strategic behaviors illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities". Ingratiation is, therefore, an influence tactic carried out through communications and behaviors that aims to increase the attractiveness of the salesperson to the consumer. Similarly, inspirational appeals try to increase the attractiveness of the salesperson by invoking enthusiasm in the consumer. An interesting and critical piece of Jones' definition is the phrase "illicitly designed to influence". It implies that ingratiation is a closed tactic, meaning that the tactic conceals the influencer's motives. The "illicit" aspect of ingratiation influences both the tendency to ingratiate and the success of the tactic. The tendency to ingratiate depends on the salesperson's perceived probability of success, his/her perceived value of increasing his/her attractiveness to the consumer, and his/her perception of the appropriateness of ingratiatory behaviors. The success of ingratiation depends

on the consumer's detection and opinion of the ingratiation. The consumer's detection of the ingratiation depends on the overtness of the ingratiation, and the consumer's opinion of the ingratiation depends on the consumer's values with regards to "illicit" influence tactics. The consumer's detection and opinion of the salesperson influences the success of the tactic, and the consumer's evaluation of the salesperson is influenced by situational factors (Jones 1976).

Ingratiation influences the consumer by creating a role relationship with the consumer. The salesperson finds common ground with the consumer and increases their attractiveness to the consumer in order to create a role relationship. Within the role relationship, certain expectations are imposed on the consumer that the consumer must fulfill in order to maintain the role relationship. The desire to maintain the role relationship influences the consumer to comply with requests made by the salesperson, because the consumer does not want to violate the role relationship that the consumer has entered into with the salesperson (Kelman 1961). However, the success of the salesperson's influence depends on the consumer's evaluation of the ingratiation.

If situational factors increase the consumer's skepticism of the salesperson, then the ingratiation is less likely to be successful. As the consumer's skepticism of the salesperson increases, the consumer focuses more on the salesperson's mannerisms and communication with an increasingly critical mind. This increases the probability of the salesperson's behaviors being perceived as ingratiation and being perceived as having an ulterior motive. If the consumer takes offense to the tactic, then the tactic will likely be unsuccessful in influencing the consumer.

I posit that as situational factors increase the consumer's skepticism about a firm that the consumer will become more skeptical of representatives of the firm. Since salespeople are

customer-facing representatives of the firm, consumers strongly identify salespeople with the firm. Since consumers identify salespeople with the firm, they expect the salespeople to have attributes that are similar to the attributes of the firm. In other words, they transfer their beliefs about the firm to the salesperson. Therefore, if they become more skeptical of the firm, they will become more skeptical of the firm's salespeople.

3.4 Product-Harm Crises

Product-harm crises are crises in which the firm has tainted its name by producing a defective product. These crises instill doubt, mistrust, and fear in consumers, and are typically followed by short-term boycotts of the firm. As expected, the boycotts of the firm decrease the firm's sales, but there is evidence that product-harm crises injure the firm's beyond this by decreasing its goodwill.

Researchers have found supporting evidence for the negative influence of product-harm crises on goodwill. Jarrell and Peltzman (1985), for example, found that product-harm crises tend to be followed by decreases in stock returns that *exceed* their direct costs, suggesting a loss of goodwill. If firm actions do not restore this goodwill, then the effects of the crisis can become more severe. Although several studies have focused on the effectiveness of recovery actions by the firm, none of the product-harm crises literature has focused on the effectiveness of the actions of its customer-facing employees. In its customer-facing role, the salesforce has the responsibility of gaining consumer trust in the product, the firm, and themselves. Without gaining this trust, it is difficult to establish credibility with the consumer and convince them to believe in the soundness of the product information that the salesperson is giving them. To gain consumers' trust, salespeople have to overcome the stain that the product-harm crisis has left on the firm.

As the effectiveness of the salesperson influence tactics depends on how the product-harm crisis affects consumers, I can draw several useful insights from the product-harm crisis literature on consumer reactions. Research suggests that consumers react more strongly and negatively when product-harm crises defy their expectations of the firm. Barber and Darrough (1996) found that market reactions were stronger to the product recalls of Japanese automobile manufacturers than to the product recalls of American automobile manufacturers. This effect occurred, because Japanese automobile manufacturers had fewer product recalls, establishing an expectation of high quality. Similarly, Lei et al. (2012) found that a high frequency of similar product-harm crises in an industry elicited less blaming of the firm; but only when prior consumer beliefs were positive. Both of these findings imply that consumers have stronger reactions to a product-harm crisis when the crisis violates their expectations of the firm. In accordance with this claim, an investigation into firm reputations revealed that product recalls for more reputable firms elicited stronger, negative market reactions. The researchers proposed that the stronger, negative reactions occurred because consumers develop higher expectations of more reputable firms. Therefore, product-harm crises are seen as a greater violation of expectations and elicit a stronger market reaction (Rhee and Haunschild 2006).

Other research into product-harm crises has focused on consumer responses to firm recovery actions. Important conclusions from this group of literature revolve around signaling effects, blame acknowledgement, and the type of response. A potentially useful finding is that messages about technical, corrective actions that a firm is taking are more effective than messages about ceremonial actions (Zavyalova et al. 2012). Additionally, findings indicate that if the guilty firm acknowledges blame, it should reduce consumers' perceived risk in making

purchases from the firm by decreasing its prices (Cleeren et al. 2013). Similarly, salespeople have to reduce consumers' perceived risk with the product.

From these findings, I can draw several meaningful inferences for the salesforce. One key implication is that product-harm crises may decrease consumers' trust in the firm's salespeople. Product-harm crises increase the perceived risk consumers have of a firm's products. As salespeople function in a customer-facing capacity as representatives of the firm, the consumers' mistrust of the firm may be transferred to the salesperson. If consumers are more skeptical of the salesperson than usual, then the salesperson's task of establishing trust with consumers will become more difficult and render some salesperson influence tactics ineffective. This could be especially true if the salesperson works for a more reputable firm, and consumers view the product-harm crisis as a violation of expectations. Lastly, two findings indicate that technical, diagnostic messages may have a greater effect on consumer decisions post-crisis, especially if the consumer has high levels of commitment to the firm. This suggests that salespeople may have more success with salesperson influence tactics that disclose more information about the product or the firm. In summation, what these findings suggest is that open influence tactics are more effective that closed influence tactics during product-harm crises.

H1: Product-harm crises are negatively related to salesperson performance.

3.5 Trust

Trust exists between the consumer and the salesperson when the consumer believes in the integrity and reliability of the salesperson (Palmatier 2008). It is the consumer's confidence in the salesperson to perform in a consistent, honest, fair, and high quality manner (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Swan et al. (1999) posit that there are emotional and cognitive components to trust. The emotional component is a feeling of security with regards to relying on the salesperson. The

cognitive component is a belief about the salesperson's ability and motivation. The word "belief" makes its way in to each of these conceptualizations of trust. I conceptualize trust in the same manner, defining it as belief in the reliability and integrity of the salesperson. I propose that both cognitive reasoning and emotion affect the *belief* the consumer has in the salesperson's reliability and integrity. Indeed, there are cognitive and emotional *components of belief*, which influence the acceptance of information about a salesperson's reliability and integrity. These components of belief can be manipulated through influence tactics and by situational factors, such as a product-harm crisis.

Studies on trust have demonstrated that trust can be transferred from one entity to another. The mechanism, through which trust is transferred, is referred to as entitativity. Entitativity is the perception that two entities are united and belong to the same group. When two entities have entitativity, the trustworthiness of one entity is transferred to the other (Badrinarayanan et al. 2012). Salespeople are often seen by consumers as united with the firm, or grouped with the firm. Their perceptions of the firm's salespeople can influence their perceptions of the firm, and their perceptions of the firm can influence their perceptions of the firm's salespeople (Dutton et al. 1994). As previously noted, product-harm crises can trigger a mistrust, on the part of consumers, in the firm. This mistrust can be transferred to salespeople, because of their perceived unity with the firm. Therefore, the mistrust in the firm that the product-harm crises elicit also cause mistrust in the firm's salespeople.

Trust has been shown to increase salesperson performance. Previous research has conceptualized trust as a platform, from which further influence can be enacted on the consumer (Weitz 1981). It has been posited to inhibit the consumer's own thoughts, and increase receptivity of the salesperson's persuasive arguments (Grewal and Sharma 1991). The

acceptance of the salesperson's arguments enables the salesperson to influence the consumer's purchase intentions, leading to an increase in the salesperson's performance.

H2: Trust mediates the negative relationship between product-harm crises and salesperson performance.

3.6 Product-Harm Crises x Open Influence Tactics

Open influence tactics should be an effective tactic during a product-harm crisis. One of the key takeaways from the product-harm crisis literature is that consumers respond more favorably to technical messages containing information about the product and information about corrective actions that the firm is taking when product-harm crises occur. Open influence tactics entail communicating data about the product, the salesperson, and the firm to the consumer. These communications increase consumers' knowledge about the product, which reduces their uncertainty about purchasing the product. As their uncertainty diminishes, their willingness to pay for the product should increase. Furthermore, open influence tactics use warrants that make the connections between data and claims easier to comprehend, increasing their potency. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

H3: (a) The interaction of product-harm crises and open influence tactics are positively related to salesperson performance. (b) The interaction effect is mediated by trust.

3.7 Product-Harm Crises x Closed Influence Tactics

Closed influence tactics may strengthen the negative effects of product-harm crises on consumer demand. The successfulness of closed influence tactics depends on the consumer's evaluation of the salesperson. If the salesperson's influence tactics are perceived as being illegitimate, the influence tactics may cause the consumer to trust the salesperson less. If the

consumer believes the salesperson is simply trying to manipulate them, they may become more skeptical of the salesperson and his communications. Whether the consumer perceives communications from the salesperson as being legitimate depends on situational factors (Jones 1976). As noted above, product-harm crises may cause the consumer to trust the salesperson less because they may transfer their mistrust of the firm to the salesperson. The consumer's deeper sense of mistrust may bias their evaluation of the salesperson's communications and predispose them to interpreting the salesperson's communications as illegitimate and manipulative. The consumer's evaluation of the tactic will lead the consumer to believe that the salesperson is hiding ulterior motives, eliciting a negative reaction to the tactic.

H4: (a) The interaction of product-harm crises and closed influence tactics are negatively related to salesperson performance. (b) The interaction effect is mediated by trust.

3.8 Covariate

3.8.1 Consumer Type

The adaptive selling literature posits that influence tactics are most effective when they align with the traits of the consumer (Weitz 1981). McFarland et al. (2006) tested this concept and uncovered three distinct consumer types: task-focused, engagement-focused, and self-focused with balance. The effectiveness of influence tactics varied depending on the type of consumer on whom the tactic was being used. I propose that the consumer type matters less during product-harm crises because the central issues are trust and product quality; and that consumers will focus on product and firm information more than usual. Therefore, I do not think consumer type will be a significant factor in my model. However, as it has been shown to be a significant factor under normal conditions, I do feel that I should control for it in my analysis.

4 OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

I conduct two studies to evaluate the combined effect of product-harm crises and influence tactics on salesperson performance. For Study 1, I gathered survey data and secondary salesperson performance data (number of units sold) from automotive salespeople. This study enabled me to test the interactions of product-harm crises with open influence tactics (H3a) and product-harm crises with closed influence tactics (H4a) on salesperson performance in a real-world setting.

In study 2, I conduct a scenario-based experiment to uncover the process through which influence tactics affect salesperson performance during product-harm crises. To analyze the process, I measure and estimate the mediating effect of trust (H2) on salesperson performance. Here, because of the experimental setting, I substitute a measure of persuasiveness for an objective salesperson performance measure.

4.1 Procedure for Study 1

For study 1, I created a 2-level dataset from a combination of primary and secondary data. To collect primary data, I distributed a survey to the sales forces of 16 U.S.-based, automotive dealerships. Collectively, these dealerships represent 16 well-known automotive brands. I distributed the survey online and collected objective data on salesperson performance (number of units sold) from dealership databases. The salespeople surveyed have an average tenure (as an automobile salesperson) of 6.64 years, an average age of 40.75, and are 83.5% male and 13.4% female. I used the measurement of constructs obtained from the survey for my data at Level 2. For Level 1 data, I merged objective salesperson performance measures with product-harm crisis data. To generate the product-harm crisis data, I counted the number of times a brand was mentioned in the headlines of news stories in the top 10 most widely circulated newspapers

for being linked to consumer deaths within a given month. I gathered the product-harm crises data in this manner, because previous literature on the demand-side effects of automobile product recalls has noted that only recalls that receive media coverage are likely to have an effect on demand, and that only the most severe recalls receive media coverage (Pruitt et al. 1986). Furthermore, Cleeren et al. (2013) used negative publicity about product recalls as their product-harm crises measure. The Level 1 data are monthly data from years 2010 to 2015 and yield a total of 68 time periods (there was missing data from April to August in 2014). Since the salespeople at some of the dealerships sell multiple brands, I aggregated brand-level salesperson performance and product-harm crisis data so that the Level 1 data are nested within salespeople at Level 2, instead of being nested within brands. Thus, measures of salesperson influence tactics are at Level 2, and monthly measures of product-harm crises and salesperson performance data comprise Level 1.

4.2 Measurement in Study 1

My Level 2 dataset is comprised of measures of the tendency of salespeople to use closed and open influence tactics. To measure these constructs, I used measures of influence tactics from Plouffe et al. (2014) and Payan and McFarland (2005). These scales measured the use of information exchange, rationality, ingratiation, and inspirational appeals (see the Appendix). I combined these measures to create composite measures for open and closed influence tactics by averaging the scores of information exchange and rationality for open tactics and ingratiation and inspirational appeals for closed. I created these composite measures, because manipulation checks in Study 2 revealed that I was unable to create significantly different manipulations for each of the four tactics. However, I was able to create significantly different manipulations for open tactics and closed tactics.

Salespeople rated these items on a 7-point Likert scale. The result was 103 usable responses at Level 2 and 3,748 records of data at Level 1.

I evaluated my measurement of the constructs by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Fit statistics indicate that the CFA is outside of recommended levels, with $\chi^2_{(118)} = 308.21$ ($p < .01$), comparative fit index (CFI) = .66, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .12. For my measure of closed influence tactics, I obtained a factor rho coefficient of .78, indicating good reliability. For open influence tactics, I obtained a factor rho coefficient of .65, slightly below the desired value of .70. Each construct measure demonstrated convergent validity, with the average variance extracted (AVE) being greater than .50. Furthermore, the AVE for each construct was greater than the squared correlation of the two, demonstrating discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

4.3 Analytical Approach

I estimated the path coefficients of my model with hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM; Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Using HGLM enabled me to account for the Poisson distribution of the salesperson performance data and the nested structure of the data. To determine whether HGLM should be used, I ran a null model to estimate the intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) and evaluate the non-independence of the data. I estimated a null model with the Level 1 salesperson performance data as the outcome variable and an intercept only at Level 2. The results indicated that between-salesperson variance accounts for 43.2% of the variance in salesperson performance (ICC = .432, $\chi 2$ (102, N= 3748) = 14208.03, $p < .01$). This result provides evidence of non-independence in the data and of a 2-level, hierarchical structure.

4.4 Results of Study 1

I group-mean centered Level 1 predictors and grand-mean centered Level 2 predictors to assist with the interpretation of cross-level interactions. Group-mean centering the Level 1 predictors removes the bias from their estimates by uncorrelating them with Level 2 predictors (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Removal of this bias gives a "purer" estimate of the relationships at Level 1. I grand-mean centered the Level 2 predictors so that the slopes of the Level 2 predictors represent the average salesperson.

My model contains main effects and interaction effects of product-harm crises on salesperson performance. In H1, I hypothesize a negative relationship between product-harm crisis and salesperson performance. The relationship was both negative and significant ($\gamma = -0.012$, $p < .05$; H1 supported). In H3a, I test the proposition that salespeople, who engage in open influence tactics during product-harm crises, weaken the negative effects of the crises on their performance. I estimated a cross-level interaction, in which the open influence tactics variable at Level 2 affected the slope of the product-harm crisis variable at Level 1. The relationship was negative and significant ($\gamma = -0.028$, $p < .05$; H3a not supported). The opposite relationship was hypothesized for closed influence tactics. I tested the relationship between closed influence tactics and product-harm crises with a cross-level interaction, in which the slope of the product-harm crisis variable at Level 1 was a function of the closed influence tactics at Level 2. However, I found no evidence of this relationship ($\gamma = -0.001$, $p > .05$; H4a not supported).

4.5 Discussion of Study 1

This study extends previous research on salesperson influence tactics by analyzing the effects of influence tactics during product-harm crisis. By examining the effects of these tactics under product-harm crises, I can infer more generalized insights about how the effectiveness of

these tactics in adverse environments. Furthermore, to the author's knowledge, only one other study to date has investigated the effectiveness of these tactics on objective salesperson performance data. In study 1, I find that open influence tactics, which previous literature proposes to have a positive effect on performance, has a negative effect when used during product-harm crises. Although counterintuitive, the finding is in alignment with previous research. As suggested in previous research, open influence tactics may influence consumers through the process of internalization. The process of internalization causes consumers to think more deeply about the information presented, including information about the product-harm crisis. Thinking more deeply about the product-harm crisis could cause consumers to focus on the safety concerns triggered by the product-harm crisis. As a result, the consumer's safety concerns may increase their perceived risk in purchasing the product. The consumer then becomes less likely to purchase the product, because of the increase in perceived risk. Closed influence tactics, however, appear to have no effect on salesperson performance.

Study 1 is limited. While the analysis of historical data does enable me to estimate the effects of the crises and tactics on an objective performance measure, it only allows me to account for the tendency to use these tactics. I am not able to control for fluctuations in the usage of these tactics among sales encounters. Moreover, the source of the ratings of the influence tactics is the salespeople, and the ratings do not account for the consumer's perceptual biases with respect to which kind of tactic is being used. Furthermore, I am neither able to establish the process through which the tactics work, nor control for consumer characteristics that may influence the effectiveness of these tactics. I remedy several of these limitations in Study 2.

4.6 Procedure for Study 2

To address the limitations of Study 1, I conduct a scenario-based experiment through and online, data collection company in Study 2. In Study 2, I gathered responses from 328 consumers, who had purchased an automobile in the last 2 years. The participants are 38.6% male and 61.4% female, with an average age of 42.53 years. The experiment had a 2 x 3 design, and participants were randomly assigned to one of six sales scenarios. For three of the scenarios, a product recall had occurred that had been linked to fatalities. In the other three scenarios, a product recall had occurred, but no fatalities had been linked to it. In both conditions, participants were presented with dialogue from an automotive salesperson that either expressed open influence tactics, closed influence tactics, or neither (control condition) (see the Appendix). Furthermore, I controlled for various consumer types by measuring the participants task orientation, interaction orientation, and self-orientation.

4.7 Measurement in Study 2

I measured constructs with well-established, seven-point Likert scales from the literature. In addition, I included manipulation checks for the influence tactics in each scenario using scales from McFarland et al. (2006), Plouffe et al. (2014), and Payan and McFarland (2005). Similar to Study 1, scores from these scales were averaged to create composite scores of open and closed influence tactics. Participants' responses confirmed that participants perceived the influence tactics in open influence tactics scenarios to only be open influence tactics and the same for closed influence tactics. The control condition was found to present neither.

I evaluated the measures of the constructs by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis. Fit statistics indicate that the CFA is within recommended levels, with $\chi^2_{(199)} = 420.83$ ($p < .01$), comparative fit index (CFI) = .97, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .06.

The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded .50, providing evidence of convergent validity. The AVE for each construct also exceeded the squared correlations of all paired constructs, demonstrating discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Additionally, the reliability of each construct exceeded .70, demonstrating good reliability (see Table 8).

4.8 Results of Study 2

I estimated the main and interaction effects of the model by following Edwards and Lambert's (2007) approach to moderated mediation. First, I ran an OLS regression with the mediator, trust, as the dependent variable. Then, I ran an OLS regression with persuasiveness as the dependent variable. Both regressions were run in SPSS 24. The results revealed that the model explains 78.9% of the variance in persuasiveness (Radj. = .789) and 20.8% of the variance in trust (Radj. = .208). Next, I used the constrained nonlinear regressions (CNLR) module in SPSS 24 to run 1,000 bootstraps and estimate the path parameters. Bias-corrected confidence intervals were used to determine their significance.

In H1, I hypothesize a negative relationship between product-harm crises and persuasiveness. I found no support for this relationship ($\beta = 0.04$, $p > .05$; H1 not supported). H2 tests the proposition that trust mediates the relationship between product-harm crises and persuasiveness. The test of mediation revealed no support ($\beta_{indirect} = 0.09$, $p > .05$; H2 not supported).

In H3b, I posit that open influence tactics increase trust in the salesperson during product-harm crises. I found no support for this hypothesis ($\beta = -0.21$, $p > .05$; H3b not supported). Moreover, an analysis of the simple effects revealed no significant difference in the high and low conditions of open influence tactics when interacting with the product-harm crisis (see Table 10). However, when testing H4b, I found a positive relationship between the interaction effect of

closed influence tactics and product-harm crises on trust that approaches significance ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < .10$; H4b not supported). Similarly, I found partial support for a positive direct effect of the interaction on persuasiveness ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < .10$; H4a not supported). Simple slopes analysis revealed that the interaction of product-harm crises and closed influence tactics is positively and significantly related to trust and persuasiveness, both directly and indirectly, in the high condition (high indicates that participants read a scenario in which closed influence tactics were used) ($\beta_{High} = 0.40$, $p < .05$) ($\beta_{indirect} = 0.38$, $p < .05$) ($\beta_{direct} = 0.21$, $p < .05$) (see Table 10). Additionally, I conducted an analysis to determine whether there was a significant difference in the effects of open influence tactics vs. closed influence tactics during a product-harm crisis. I found a positive, significant difference in tactics, in which closed tactics increase trust and persuasiveness more than open tactics during product-harm crises ($\beta_{Closed - Open} = 0.69$, $p < .01$) ($\beta_{indirect, Closed - Open} = 0.65$, $p < .01$).

4.9 Discussion of Study 2

In Study 2, I attempt to remedy the limitations of Study 1. I tested the hypotheses with a scenario-based experiment, controlling for consumer types that could alter interaction effects, and obtained measures from consumers instead of salespeople. The results indicate that trust is the mechanism, through which the coupling of product-harm crises and influence tactics influence salesperson performance. In contrast to Study 1, I found no evidence of a negative relationship between the interaction of open influence tactics and product-harm crises on salesperson performance. However, I found evidence of a positive relationship between closed influence tactics and salesperson performance during product-harm crises. The result indicates that closed tactics work through affect as opposed to internalization, and invoke a weak processing of the safety concerns the product-harm crisis triggers in the consumer. The

distraction from the consumer's safety concerns seems to inhibit the effect the product-harm crisis has on the consumer's trust of the salesperson and increase their trust in the salesperson.

5 GENERAL DISCUSSION

Although previous research in the sales literature stream has investigated the effects of influence tactics, a noticeable gap exists on the use of influence tactics in adverse environments, like product-harm crises. Previous research on influence has generally proposed that open influence tactics should be positively related to persuasion and performance. However, previous studies investigate influence tactics under routine situations. The situations created by non-routine events, like product-harm crises, necessitate a different influence strategy. The substantial implications of this finding are significant, because product-harm crises often cause the loss of massive amounts of financial resources. To survive, the firm needs to replenish those resources.

In my studies, I empirically test propositions concerning the effects of influence tactics on salesperson performance during product-harm crises. The results indicate a negative effect of open influence tactics and a positive effect of closed tactics during product-harm crises. Collectively, the results indicate that sales managers should train their salespeople to avoid using open influence tactics during crises and instead use closed tactics, such as ingratiation. My discussion of theoretical and managerial implications is aligned with these findings.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of my studies have at least two theoretical implications. Previous research discusses the effects of trust on influence and how a lack of trust can inhibit reception to a salesperson's message (Grewal and Sharma 1991). I find that influence tactics, in combination

with situational factors, can affect consumer's trust in the salesperson. The influence tactics used can cause a deep or shallow processing of information, which can lead to a focus on negative product information. Open influence tactics, which work through internalization, can trigger deeper processing of information and rational thinking about the product. A rational evaluation of the product, the salesperson, and the brand can cause the consumer to focus on negative information about the brand. The focus on negative information can elicit mistrust of the salesperson and the brand, since the salesperson has sold products before that have since been deemed defective and dangerous. The consumer's mistrust of the salesperson can inhibit their reception of other, more positive information, decreasing the likelihood that the consumer will purchase a product from the salesperson. Closed influence tactics, which work through affective responses, such as identification, can cause a shallow processing of negative information and increase the consumer's trust in the salesperson. The increase in trust makes the consumer more open to the salesperson's message and increases the likelihood of a sale. Furthermore, these effects hold even when controlling for various consumer types. The extant literature on adaptive selling stresses choosing the appropriate tactic for the type of consumer. However, the findings indicate that open influence tactics hinder performance regardless of the consumer type. Conversely, closed influence tactics have the opposite effect. Further research is needed to determine this relationship.

Interestingly, the use of closed influence tactics did not seem to induce the consumer's suspicion of ulterior motives. In spite of the situation, in which products were presented as potentially being hazardous, closed influence tactics did not seem to enhance suspicion on the part of the consumer. The extant literature posits that closed influence tactics can decrease salesperson influence by arousing the consumer's suspicion of ulterior motives (Brown 1990).

When their suspicion is aroused, they determine that the salesperson does not have their interests in mind, and their trust in the salesperson decreases. However, I found no evidence of this effect.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Product-harm crises create an urgent situation, in which firms need to replenish lost financial resources as quickly as possible. Product-harm crises slow recovery by creating an adverse environment for the salesforce. It is critical for sales managers to know how their salespeople can navigate the environment, minimize the damage to their performance, and speed the recovery of the firm.

My studies demonstrate that open influence tactics harm performance, whereas closed influence tactics increase performance when product-harm crises occur. However, under normal circumstances, open influence tactics can positively affect performance. Managers need to train their salespeople to engage in the appropriate tactics for a given situation and stress that the situation may trump the consumer type. In other words, although salespeople typically need to adjust their influence tactics depending on the type of consumer their interacting with, some non-routine situations may reduce the influence that consumer orientation has on the consumer's receptiveness of the salesperson's message. When product-harm crises occur, this means avoiding open tactics and embracing closed tactics.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

I attempt to establish internal and external validity by taking a multimethod approach to the current research. Moreover, the multimethod approach allows me to remedy the shortcomings of the field study with the experiment and vice-versa. However, I am limited in my establishment of external validity, in that I can only capture the effects of tendencies to use

influence tactics and am not able to account for daily fluctuations. Furthermore, in the field survey, I am not able to control for the various consumer orientations, and the influence tactics are self-rated, making them prone to bias. Additionally, consumer orientations in the experiment are self-rated and prone to bias. Future research could address these shortcomings by collecting dyadic data in sales transactions during a product-harm crisis.

Another limitation of this research is the limited unveiling of the process. Although I was able to find evidence of tactics, in combination with the crisis, affecting trust and performance, I was not able to establish trust as the mediating effect between product-harm crises and performance. Additionally, I was not able uncover the process, through which the crises and tactics influence trust. I posit that open influence tactics activate consumers' thought process and cause a deeper processing of negative information. However, I was neither able to test this process nor the proposed inhibition of thought caused by closed influence tactics. Further research is needed to uncover these effects.

Lastly, I did not find evidence of the detection of ulterior motives by consumers. However, in my studies, I did not specifically measure the detection of ulterior motives. The detection of ulterior motives may separate the effects of both open and closed influence tactics during crises. The separation may show positive interaction effects with both influence tactics when no ulterior motives are detected and negative interaction effects with both influence tactics when ulterior motives are detected. Furthermore, the detection of ulterior motives may differ depending on situational factors. Future research could explore these effects.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Figures and Tables

Figure 5: Conceptual Model

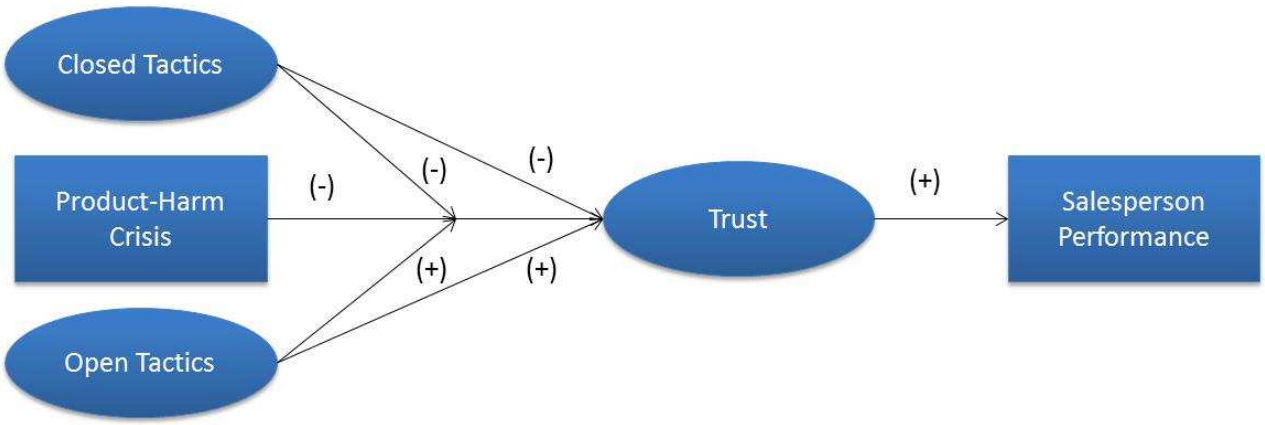
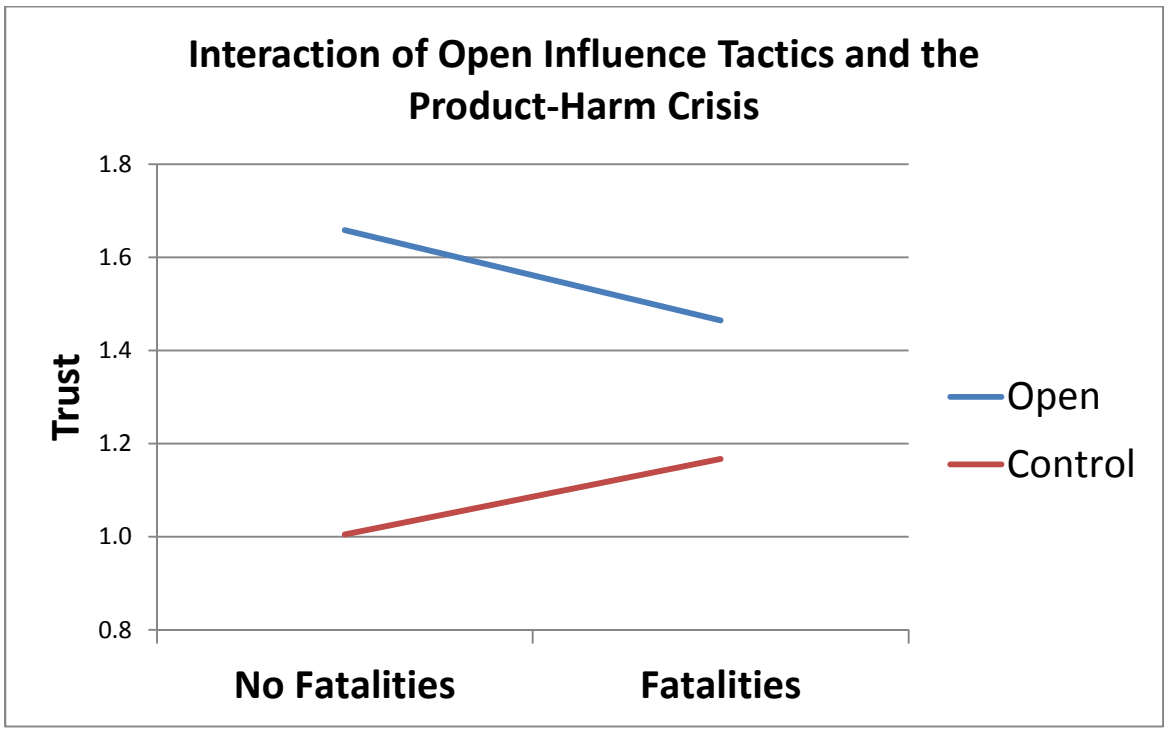


Figure 6: Study 2 Interaction Graphs



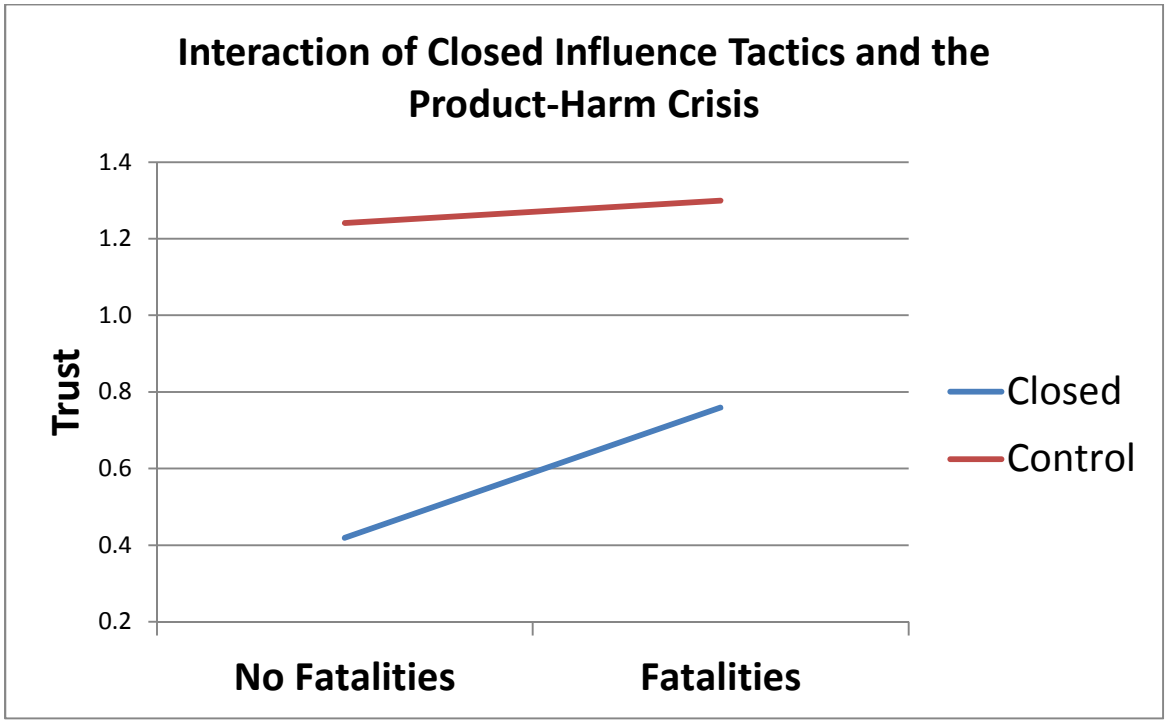


Table 7: Prior Research on Influence Tactics, Salesperson Traits, and Situational Factors

Article	Firm Influence on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Effects of Salesperson Traits on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Empirical Research	Objective Performance Outcomes (Sales)	Relevant Findings
Brown 1990	✓	✓	×	×	Situational factors and salesperson traits can alter the perceptions buyers have of salesperson influence tactics. Traits, such as Machiavellianism and self-monitoring, affect whether buyers perceive the salesperson's tactics to be manipulative or sincere. When buyers perceive influence tactics as manipulative, they are less likely to purchase products from the salesperson.

Table 7 (cont'd)

Article	Firm Influence on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Effects of Salesperson Traits on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Empirical Research	Objective Performance Outcomes (Sales)	Relevant Findings
Goff et al. 1994	×	×	✓	✓	Characteristics of buyers easily identified by salespeople can be used as clues to consumers' susceptibility to various salesperson influence tactics. Visible factors such as gender, age and whether the consumer brought purchase pal provide cues to the consumer's susceptibility to influence tactics. Males and older adults are more susceptible to relational influence, older adults are more susceptible to informational influence, and consumers who are more likely to bring along a purchase pal are more susceptible to recommendational influence.
Spiro and Perrault 1979	✓	×	✓	×	Situational factors determine the intensity and usage of various influence tactics by salespeople.

Table 7 (cont'd)

Article	Firm Influence on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Effects of Salesperson Traits on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Empirical Research	Objective Performance Outcomes (Sales)	Relevant Findings
McFarland et al. 2006	×	×	✓	×	The authors decompose adaptive selling into the interaction of the right influence tactics with the right buyer types. Buyers fall into three general types: task-focus, engagement-focus, and self-focus-with-balance. Certain combinations of salesperson influence tactics are more effective depending on the type of buyer the salesperson is interacting with.
Plouffe et al. 2014	×	×	✓	✓	Salespeople may not only differ in terms of the influence tactics they use, but also how effectively they use them. Three broad influence styles were determined: pragmatic, enthusiastic, and politician. Each cluster varied in terms of how effectively they could use each influence tactic to generate sales.

Table 7 (cont'd)

Article	Firm Influence on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Effects of Salesperson Traits on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Empirical Research	Objective Performance Outcomes (Sales)	Relevant Findings
Weitz 1981	✓	✓	×	×	Situational factors, such as the salesperson-customer relationship, the salesperson's resources, and the reputation of the company, moderate the effectiveness of the salesperson's influence tactics. In order to sell effectively, source credibility needs to be established during the initial selling stages, and influence tactics need to be adapted to the situation. A trait found to be associated with adaptive selling behavior is self-monitoring.

Table 7 (cont'd)

Article	Firm Influence on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Effects of Salesperson Traits on Salesperson Influence Tactics	Empirical Research	Objective Performance Outcomes (Sales)	Relevant Findings
Payan and McFarland 2005	×	×	✓	×	The authors introduce a new influence tactic, Rationality, and analyze the effectiveness of Rationality, Information Exchange, Recommendations, Requests, Threats, and Promises on compliance. Influence tactics with more complete argument structures, like Rationality, were found to be more effective. Threats only work when buyers have high dependence on the supplier, and Recommendations only work when buyers trust the supplier.
Joshi 2010	×	✓	✓	×	Salesperson trustworthiness increases the credibility of their proposals to buyers. This increase in credibility increases the effectiveness of Rationality as an influence tactic.

Table 8: Correlation Matrix and Descriptives

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. PHC[a]	-							
2. OPEN[a]	.04	-						
3. CLOSED[a]	.06	-.46**	-					
4. Trust	.01	.25**	-.30**	(.98)				
5. TO	-.08	-.01	.01	.07	(.73)			
6. SO	.02	.01	-.04	.33**	-.06	(.78)		
7. IO	-.04	.00	-.06	.31**	.07	.54**	(.83)	
8. PERSUAS	.02	.27**	-.31**	.87**	.02	.23**	.25**	(.98)
M	-	-	-	3.28	6.10	3.04	4.06	3.72
SD	-	-	-	1.58	.73	1.34	1.53	1.57
AVE	-	-	-	.83	.68	.77	.77	.82

Notes. N = 328. AVE = average variance extracted, PHC = product-harm crisis (0 = crisis without fatalities, 1 = crisis with fatalities), OPEN = open influence tactics (0 = no tactic, 1 = open), CLOSED = closed influence tactics (0 = no tactic, 1 = closed), TO = task-oriented, SO = self-oriented, IO = interaction-oriented, and PERSUAS = persuasiveness. Each construct's factor rho coefficient is written on the diagonal.

[a] Construct measured with dummy variable.

[b] $p < .10$ (two-tailed).

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 9: Coefficient Estimates

Dependent Variable	PHC	TRUST	OPEN	CLOSED	PHC*OPEN	PHC*CLOSED	TO	SO	IO	R^2	$R^2_{adj.}$
Persuasiveness	0.04	0.94**	0.26*	-0.23	-0.21	0.17[a]	-0.14	-0.03	0.06**	0.80	0.79
Trust	0.10		0.71**	-0.87	-0.39	0.30[a]	0.10[a]	0.20**	0.24**	0.23	0.21

Notes. N = 328. AVE = average variance extracted, PHC = product-harm crisis (0 = crisis without fatalities, 1 = crisis with fatalities), OPEN = open influence tactics (0 = no tactic, 1 = open), CLOSED = closed influence tactics (0 = no tactic, 1 = closed), TO = task-oriented, SO = self-oriented, and IO = interaction-oriented. Tests of statistical significance are based on bias-corrected confidence intervals obtained from the bootstrap estimates.

[a] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 10: Analysis of Simple Effects

Moderator variable	Stage		Effect		
	First	Second	Direct	Indirect	Total
OPEN					
Low	0.10	0.94**	0.04	0.09	0.13
High	-0.29	0.94**	-0.17	-0.27	-0.44
Differences	-0.39	0.00	-0.21	-0.37	-0.58
CLOSED					
Low	0.10	0.94**	0.04	0.094	0.13
High	0.40*	0.94**	0.21*	0.38*	0.59**
Differences	0.30[a]	0.00	0.17[a]	0.28[a]	0.45*
OPEN vs. CLOSED					
CLOSED	0.40*	0.94**	0.21*	0.38*	0.59**
OPEN	-0.29	0.94**	-0.17	-0.27	-0.44
Differences	0.69**	0.00	0.38**	0.65**	1.03**

Note. N = 328. For OPEN and CLOSED, the dummy variable is equal to 0 in the "Low" condition and is equal to 1 in the "High" condition. For OPEN vs. CLOSED, both dummy variables are set equal to 1. Tests of statistical significance are based on bias-corrected confidence intervals obtained from the bootstrap estimates.

[a] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

APPENDIX B: Survey Items and Manipulations

Study 1: Measurements

Open Tactics

Information Exchange (from Plouffe et al. 2014)

When interacting with my customers and prospects, I...

1. Present information related to various purchase options.
2. Ask about their long-term purchasing goals.
3. Ensure they receive all product and sales materials relevant to the purchasing decision.
4. Ask if there are any problems or needs I can help address.
5. Talk about the possible application of my products or services.

Rationality (from Payan and McFarland 2005)

1. Make a case based on sharing specific information or data as to why the customer should purchase the vehicle.
2. Make a case based on past experience with similar purchases as to why the customer should purchase the vehicle.

Closed Tactics

Ingratiation (from Plouffe et al. 2014)

1. Act in a friendly manner prior to asking for what I want.
2. Sympathize with them about the added problems that my requests of them may have caused.
3. Make them feel good about themselves before making my sales pitch.
4. Compliment and praise their achievements.

5. Discuss shared interests and/or hobbies prior to discussing sales issues.

Inspirational Appeals (from Plouffe et al. 2014)

1. Try to get them excited about what I am selling.
2. Argue that they have an exciting opportunity to help themselves.
3. Describe the use of my products or services with enthusiasm and conviction.
4. Appeal to their values and ideals when asking for their business.
5. Make sales pitches which try to appeal to their emotions.

Study 2: Base Scenario

Imagine that you are shopping for a car at a well-known automotive firm dealership. The automotive firm has just had a product recall on several car models. You're walking around the lot, looking at different cars when a salesperson approaches you. The salesperson greets you and strikes up a conversation.

It looks like you have had some time to check out some cars on the lot. Can I answer any questions for you?

You reply that you saw online that the dealership had four similar car models on the lot that you'd like to look at. You also mention that you recently heard about the recall in the news. "Are you sure these cars are safe? I just read about the recall you guys are having."

The salesperson gestures for you to follow him. As you walk he says:

Yes, I have a recently had a recall. And by the way, thank you for giving us the chance to work with you today. I hope I can find something that meets your needs. As we walk, let me run you through some highlights of this vehicle.

Then as you finish your walk the other side of the lot, they provide some details on the vehicle and ask if you want to take it for a test drive.

Then you pull off on the test drive.

Fatalities Manipulation

Imagine that you are shopping for a car at a well-known automotive firm dealership. The automotive firm has just had a product recall on several car models that *has been linked to several deaths in your state*.

Open Influence Tactics Manipulation

Yes, these are safe. I understand the concerns that a recall can raise, but they happen quite often in the automobile industry. There were over 700 industrywide last year alone, and we take immediate action to get defective vehicles off the road. Plus, we do not sell any vehicles that are unsafe. This car here, for example, is both safe and a perfect fit for what you are looking for. It has (1) a 4.5 star safety rating, (2) gets best in class fuel efficiency ratings (35 MPG combined), and (3) the most horsepower (205 horsepower). You won't find another vehicle in this class with better numbers.

Then as you finish your walk the other side of the lot, they provide even more details on the vehicle and ask if you want to take it for a test drive.

As you pull away on the test drive, you can't help but reflect on how much information the salesperson ran past you during your talk.

Closed Influence Tactics Manipulation

Oh yeah, they're definitely ok. And you know, I'm not surprised at all that you know about that recall, because you are clearly a smart shopper and have done a lot of research. I bet you know all about it. They happen now and again, as I'm sure you are aware. And let me just say that

working with someone as knowledgeable and savvy as you is both rare and truly my pleasure. I am sure you already know all of this stuff, but let me quickly run you through the highlights of the vehicle.

Then as you finish your walk the other side of the lot, he briefly rattles off some more information about the vehicle, its fuel efficiency, and performance and asks if you want to take it for a test drive.

As you pull away on the test drive, you can't help but reflect on how over the top the salesperson was in complimenting you during your talk.

Manipulation checks

Safety of Vehicles

How safe were the cars in the scenario?

1. Very Unsafe _____ / Very Safe _____
2. Low Quality _____ / High Quality _____
3. Very Unreliable _____ / Very Reliable _____

Salesperson Influence Tactics

Closed Influence Tactics

Information Exchange (from McFarland et al. 2006)

The salesperson...

1. Presented information related to your various purchase options.
2. Asked about your long-term purchasing goals.
3. Talked about the possible applications of his or her products or services.

Rationality (adapted from Payan et al. 2005)

The salesperson…

1. Made a case based on past experience with similar purchases that you should purchase the vehicle.
2. Made a case based on sharing specific information or data, such as safety ratings, that you should purchase the vehicle.

Closed Influence Tactics

Ingratiation (from McFarland et al. 2006)

The salesperson...

1. Made you feel good about yourself before making his or her sales pitch.
2. Complimented and praised my achievements.
3. Discussed shared interests and/or hobbies prior to discussing sales issues.

Inspirational Appeals (from Plouffe et al. 2014)

The salesperson...

1. Tried to get you excited about what he or she was selling.
2. Described the use of his or her products or services with enthusiasm and conviction.
3. Made a sales pitch that tried to appeal to my emotions.

Covariates

Consumer Orientation Scales (adapted from McFarland et al. 2006)

Task Orientation

1. You like to focus on the task at hand.
2. You like to make your sales interactions as efficient as possible.
3. You are highly goal oriented.

Self- Orientation

1. You are more interested in yourself than what the salesperson has to say.
2. You try to impress the salesperson by telling him things about yourself.
3. You are more focused on talking about yourself than the salesperson's products.

Interaction Orientation

1. You like to socialize during sales interactions.
2. You are interested in the salesperson as a person, not just a salesperson.

Mediator, Dependent Variable

Trust

1. This salesperson is reliable.
2. This salesperson would not disappoint me.
3. This salesperson is dependable.
4. I would feel confident purchasing from this salesperson in the future.
5. This salesperson can be trusted at all times.
6. This salesperson has high integrity.
7. This salesperson can be depended on to do what is right.
8. This salesperson would be honest in addressing my concerns.

Persuasiveness (from Bruner II, Gordon C. 1997; "Marketing Scales Handbook").

Please describe your perceptions about the strength of the arguments the salesperson presented in the scenario above. In your opinion, the salesperson's arguments were:

1. Very Weak _____ / Very Strong _____
2. Not Very Convincing _____ / Very Convincing _____
3. Not Very Powerful _____ / Very Powerful _____
4. Not Very Persuasive _____ / Very Persuasive _____

5. Not Compelling _____ / Compelling _____
6. Not At All Conclusive _____ / Very Conclusive _____

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