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The recent work of Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (1994) brings into sharp focus two distinct goal orientations of salespeople: learning and performance. In this article, the authors make two primary contributions to this emerging topic in salesforce literature: (1) They develop and examine novel propositions that shed light on how supervisors influence the goal orientations of salespeople, and (2) They examine whether supervisors' influence on their salespeople's orientations is moderated by salesperson experience. The article's hypotheses are tested using data from salespeople in two *Fortune* 500 companies. The results support several of the a priori hypotheses and suggest that supervisory behaviors (as perceived by salespeople) have a significant influence on salespeople's learning and performance orientations. Furthermore, the authors obtain some support for the hypothesized moderating effect of salesperson experience.

# Learning and Performance Orientation of Salespeople: The Role of Supervisors

Several scholars have made forceful arguments that organizations ultimately learn through their individual members and are, therefore, directly affected by individual learning (e.g., Argyris and Schon 1978). Understanding individual learning has assumed greater importance because it now is recognized as an important source of competitive advantage, both in the short and the long run. Some scholars even argue that the accumulated knowledge and learning of individual organizational members is an organization's *only* source of sustainable competitive advantage. However, little research exists on antecedents to individual learning, even though prior research suggests that people vary in their desire to learn. Correspondingly, our understanding of how managers can spark, shape, and elevate learning of organizational members is, at best, limited. In this article, we focus on individual salespeople and explore factors related to their interest in learning.

The recent work of Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (1994) brings into sharp focus two distinct goal orientations of salespeople: learning and performance. Salespeople with a learning orientation have a strong desire to improve and master their selling skills and abilities continually and view achievement situations as opportunities to improve their competence (Dweck and Leggett 1988). In contrast, salespeople with a performance orientation focus on performing well because they see good performance as a means to obtaining extrinsic rewards from others (e.g., supervisors). Persons with a performance orientation are concerned with being judged able and showing evidence of ability by being successful (Ames and Archer 1988). Learning and performance orientations are *not* the opposite ends of a continuum; rather, these represent two distinct dimensions, and a salesperson can have both high learning and high performance orientation.

The implications of salespeople's goal orientations go beyond their effects on organizational learning. Dweck and Leggett (1988) suggest that persons with a learning orientation are not concerned unduly with making mistakes and persist in their efforts even if they fail. In contrast, persons with a performance orientation persist only if they see themselves as being very skilled. From an organization's viewpoint, a performance orientation is likely to lead to short-term payoffs, such as improved sales, whereas a learning orientation is likely to enhance skills and abilities that lead to better long-term performance.

There is, however, little research that sheds light on the factors that lead to a greater learning or performance orientation on the part of salespeople. Although some of the variance in salespeople's goal orientations is likely to be individual-specific and stable, both theory and empirical evi-

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dence strongly suggest that situational factors are likely to play a role as well (Ames and Archer 1988; Dweck and Leggett 1988). In support of these arguments, Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (1994) show that the valence of supervisory feedback to salespeople affects their goal orientations. More generally, this finding suggests that supervisors can and do shape their salespeople's goal orientations.

The present article builds on the work of Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (1994) in two respects. First, we examine the role of supervisors in influencing the learning and performance orientations of salespeople. The focus on first-line supervisors is in line with recent thinking that managers as "designers, teachers, and stewards" play a crucial role in inspiring learning (e.g., Senge 1990). Some supervisors are end-results oriented: They tend to concern themselves with the end results produced by salespeople. Others are more focused on salespeople's activities that lead to end results, whereas yet others emphasize capabilities that also can lead to end results. When supervisors focus on end results, they set end-results goals, monitor their attainment, and provide feedback to salespeople on the results attained by them. That is, goal setting, monitoring, and feedback on end results represent a gestalt, an end-results orientation. (For examples of the gestalt approach in controls literature, see Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan 1993; Oliver and Anderson 1994; Ramaswami 1996.) Activity and capability orientation similarly entail goal setting, monitoring, and feedback on activities and capabilities, respectively. Accordingly, our first objective is to examine the effects of these three different supervisory orientations (i.e., end-results, activity, and capability) on salespeople's learning and performance orientation and investigate whether supervisory orientations that engender a learning orientation also build a performance orientation or tend to undermine it.

Second, to enhance the richness, range, and usefulness of the study, we examine whether the effects of the three supervisory orientations vary depending on the focal salesperson. Path-goal theory contends that a supervisor's effect on an employee depends on the characteristics of the employee (House and Dessler 1974). Consistent with this reasoning, evidence suggests that more experienced salespeople might be less responsive to supervisory intervention than relatively inexperienced salespeople (Kohli 1989). Therefore, it is useful to investigate the moderating effects of experience, because the findings have clear implications for whether inexperienced salespeople should be supervised differently than experienced salespeople. In the following sections, we discuss the typology of supervisory orientations, the arguments in support of our hypotheses, and the study design and its findings and then conclude with a discussion of the study's theoretical and practical implications.

## *TYPOLOGY OF SUPERVISORY ORIENTATIONS*

Our threefold typology of supervisory orientations is rooted in sales control systems literature (cf. Anderson and Oliver 1987; Challagalla and Shervani 1996; Jaworski 1988). Each orientation—end-results, activity, and capability—mirrors the emphasis of a supervisor's behavior. Therefore, an end-results-oriented supervisor emphasizes achievement of end-results, an activity-oriented manager focuses on performance of routine activities, and a capability-oriented supervisor tends to do things that enhance salespeople's skills and abilities. The three supervisory orientations are not mutually exclusive. They represent three distinct dimensions of supervisory behavior, and a supervisor might favor one particular orientation, some combination of two, or all three orientations simultaneously. Furthermore, it is possible for supervisors to adjust their orientation across salespeople and situations. Each of the three orientations is discussed subsequently in greater detail.

*End-results orientation.* Supervisors with an end-results orientation focus their attention on establishing end-results goals, such as targeting sales and market share, tracking their attainment, and providing feedback regarding end results. Their entire focus—goal setting, monitoring, and feedback—is on end results. When supervisors emphasize the importance of end results, they leave it up to salespeople to determine the sales strategies and level of effort needed to achieve those results (Oliver and Anderson 1994). Such supervision provides little information to salespeople about why the desired end results were or were not achieved. Supervisory end-results orientation is rooted in the concept of output or outcome control (cf. Anderson and Oliver 1987; Jaworski 1988).

*Activity orientation.* Supervisors with an activity orientation focus on the routine and mechanical activities a salesperson is expected to perform. Examples of such activities include filling out call reports periodically, making a certain number of calls during a week, spending a certain amount of time with customers, maintaining correspondence levels, adhering to budgets, and so on. Activity-oriented supervisors specify the activities they expect their salespeople to perform, monitor to see if they are performing those activities, and inform them of how they are meeting expectations on this dimension (cf. Merchant 1985).

Although the concept of activity orientation is rooted in the notion of behavioral control, which is discussed in sales literature, we draw a clear distinction between two aspects of behavior—routine activities and the quality of those activities (the latter is discussed in the subsequent paragraph). This distinction is responsive to the concerns of several researchers who suggest that treating behavioral control as a single construct might be overly restrictive (Child 1984; Merchant 1985). Indeed, inconsistent and contradictory findings have emerged in studies that have treated behavior as a single construct (cf. Cravens et al. 1993; Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan 1993).

*Capability orientation.* Capability-oriented supervisors focus on the development of salespeople's skills that enhance the quality of their behaviors, such as sales presentations. A supervisor with a capability orientation is more of a coach and is focused on enhancing salespeople's skills and abilities (e.g., negotiation skills, closing skills). Capability-oriented supervision involves specifying to salespeople what it takes to perform sales tasks effectively, monitoring progress, and providing them with appropriate feedback regarding their capabilities. For reasons that are elaborated subsequently, we expect the effects of a capability orientation on salespeople to differ from those of activity orientation.

## *HYPOTHESES*

First, we discuss the hypothesized effects of the three supervisory orientations on salespeople's learning orientation and certain moderating effects of the salesperson's level of experience on these relationships. Second, we discuss the expected effects of the three supervisory orientations on

salespeople's performance orientation and the moderating effects of experience on these relationships. Third, we discuss the expected effects of learning and performance orientation on the performance of salespeople. Figure 1 depicts most of the relationships examined here.

*Supervisors and Salespeople's Learning Orientation*

*End-results orientation.* Supervisors who have an end-results orientation essentially adopt a laissez-faire approach. The influence of an end-results orientation on salespeople's learning orientation is the subject of some debate. On the one hand, because salespeople are free to select the methods of achievement and are held accountable only for their end results, they can focus solely on immediate payoffs and resist investing effort in actions that are conducive to learning (Anderson and Oliver 1987). Furthermore, because it emphasizes end results without providing guidance on how to achieve those results, an end-results orientation can evoke evaluation anxiety and disrupt task involvement (cf. Elliot and Harackiewicz 1994).

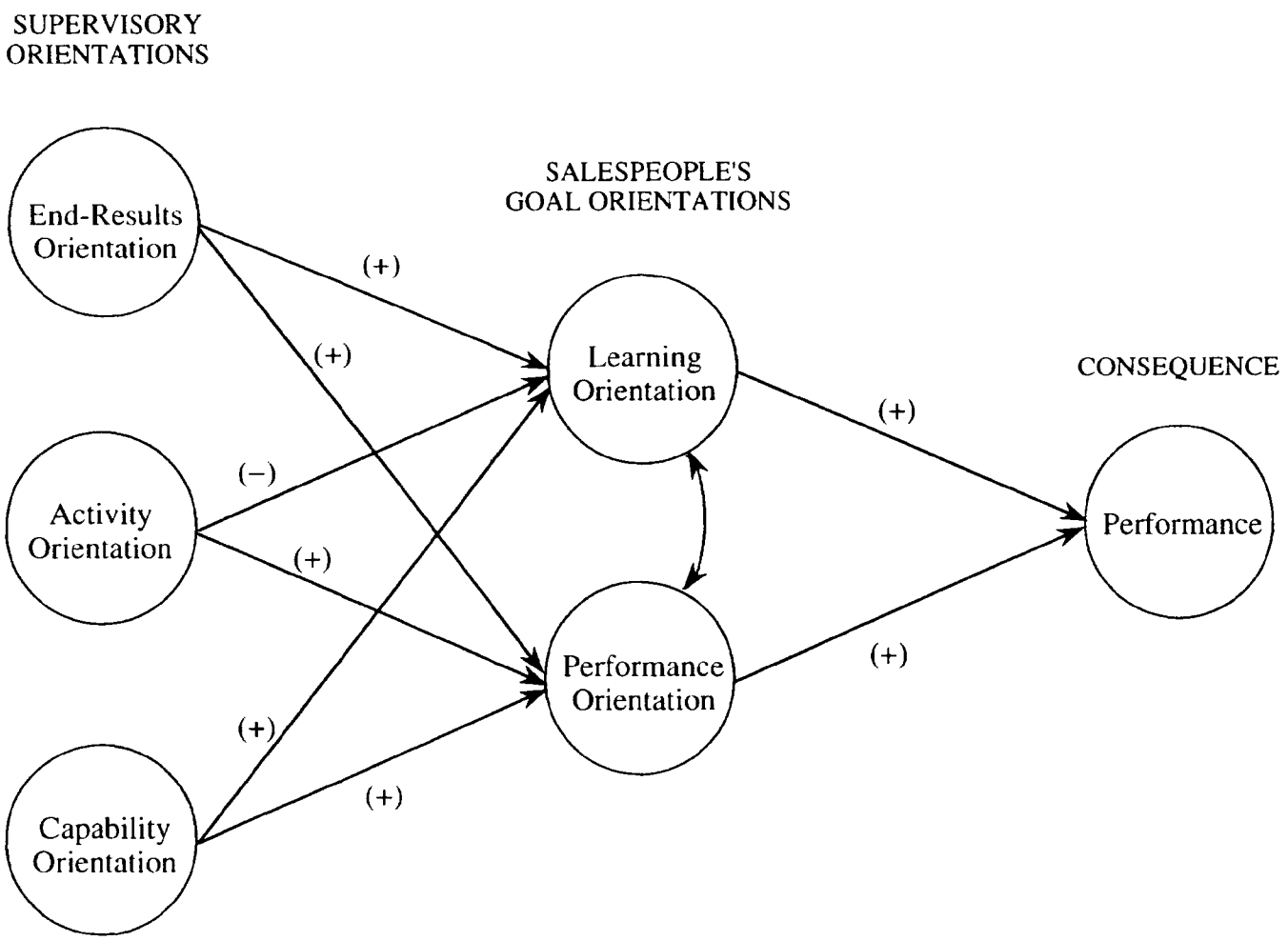
On the other hand, goal and control theory suggest that providing clear and unambiguous goals focuses attention on the task, triggering a search for relevant information and task strategies that will help achieve those goals (cf. Klein 1989; Locke and Latham 1990). In other words, a supervisory end-results orientation might create tension, but it is likely to be a positive tension that can encourage search for information and strategies and thereby enhance a learning orientation. Therefore, even though end-results orientation does not directly provide information that is relevant to learning, it is likely to encourage salespeople to uncover the reasons for good or poor performance. Evidence also suggests that when goals and feedback are individualistic (as is typically the case for salespeople), recipients display a learning orientation (Ames 1984; Harackiewicz, Abrahams, and Wageman 1987). On balance, given the strength of the arguments for a positive relationship, we expect supervisory end-results orientation to enhance the learning orientation of salespeople. Therefore,

$H_{1a}$: Supervisory end-results orientation is related positively to the learning orientation of salespeople.

*End-results orientation and salesperson experience.* Although supervisory end-results orientation is expected to

Figure 1

SUPERVISORY ORIENTATIONS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SALESPEOPLE'S LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION




Note: Moderating effects are not shown for schematic clarity.

increase the learning orientation of all salespeople, the positive relationship is expected to be stronger in the case of more experienced salespeople. As salespeople gain work experience, they are likely to become adept at understanding what is expected of them and to be able to deal more effectively with role conflict (cf. Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1976; Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1975). More experienced salespeople, therefore, presumably have greater ability to distill the reasons for their success or failure from end-results information, as they can use their accumulated knowledge to find perceived cause-and-effect relationships. Because experienced salespeople possess more refined knowledge structures and more complex scripts (Leigh and McGraw 1989), they might be more confident that they can find such ways to enhance end results. Therefore, they are more likely to be motivated to search for ways to improve end-results performance and to be successful in this search than less experienced salespeople. These arguments suggest the following:

$H_{1b}$: The positive relationship between supervisory end-results orientation and salespeople's learning orientation is stronger for more experienced salespeople than for less experienced salespeople.

*Activity orientation.* Supervisors with an activity orientation specify day-to-day activity goals, monitor subordinates, and provide feedback on activity performance (e.g., call rate, amount of correspondence, submission of call reports). For these routine-type activities, evidence suggests that people prefer low levels of supervision (Schriesheim and DeNisi 1981). Consistent with this reasoning, House and Dessler (1974) argue that for relatively clear and unambiguous activities, supervision is likely to be perceived as redundant and unnecessarily close control. Furthermore, the monitoring of daily activities also might be perceived as a curb on autonomy, which thereby leads to a feeling of loss of self-determination, and thus a diminished willingness to learn. Therefore,

$H_{2a}$: Supervisory activity orientation is related negatively to the learning orientation of salespeople.

*Activity orientation and salesperson experience.* Although a supervisory activity orientation is expected to lower the learning orientation of all salespeople, its effect on more experienced salespeople is expected to be much more marked. Supervisory attempts to influence routine activities might be more irksome to experienced salespeople, as they are more set in their routines and less responsive to supervisory attempts to influence their day-to-day behavior (Johnston et al. 1990). Experienced salespeople also are likely to perceive activity-oriented supervisors as being "hung up" on relatively mundane activities, such as filling call reports, rather than the "real stuff" of selling and sales, which thereby reduces their motivation to learn and excel at their jobs. Furthermore, because experienced salespeople possess well-developed scripts for various selling situations (Leigh and McGraw 1989), they are prone to find supervisory intervention bothersome, which thereby diminishes their motivation to learn.

Conversely, inexperienced salespeople value structure and are more receptive to direction from supervisors (Kohli 1989). In addition, because inexperienced salespeople do not possess well-developed scripts for dealing with various selling situations, they are likely to be less resentful of supervisory attempts to influence day-to-day activities. These arguments collectively suggest the following:

$H_{2b}$: The negative relationship between supervisory activity orientation and salespeople's learning orientation is stronger for more experienced salespeople than for less experienced salespeople.

*Capability orientation.* A capability-oriented manager is more of a coach, one who emphasizes the development of skills and abilities. When salespeople learn why they might not have been successful in the past, their attention is drawn to the content of the selling task. Moreover, by helping salespeople understand, for example, how to negotiate better or make a superior presentation, managers can enable salespeople to improve their competence. Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan (1986) suggest that focusing on skills and abilities increases the procedural knowledge of salespeople, thereby enabling and motivating them to learn better ways to perform a task. In addition, cognitive evaluation theory suggests that enhancing competencies through coaching and training increases intrinsic motivation and task interest (Deci and Ryan 1985; Tyagi 1985). Greater task interest, higher intrinsic motivation, and a focus on the content of the selling task are likely to enhance the learning orientation of salespeople. On the basis of these arguments, we propose the following:

$H_3$: Supervisory capability orientation is related positively to the learning orientation of salespeople.

### *Supervisors and Salespeople's Performance Orientation*

*End-results orientation.* Salespeople with a performance orientation perceive good performance as a means to obtaining extrinsic rewards from important others. They also are concerned about being judged able, and they view successful performance as a demonstration of their ability (Ames and Archer 1988). When supervisors adopt an end-results orientation, their evaluation of salespeople is contingent upon achieving end-results goals. A strong emphasis on end results is, therefore, likely to foster an extrinsic orientation on the part of salespeople (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986) and lead them to perceive achieving end-results goals as a means to acquire valued external ends. Moreover, the greater the supervisory emphasis on end results, the more likely salespeople will regard the achievement of end results as a test of their competence, which thereby leads to a greater performance orientation. Therefore,

$H_4$: Supervisory end-results orientation is related positively to the performance orientation of salespeople.

*Activity orientation.* Because activity goals tend to be proximal in nature, supervisors are likely to monitor and communicate with salespeople more frequently. Frequent communication and closer supervision is likely to increase salespeople's sensitivity to supervisory evaluations, which makes them more concerned about being perceived as competent and as high performers by their supervisors (Lawler and Rhode 1976). In other words, close supervision (even though focused on activities) is likely to motivate salespeople to do well on the criteria established by supervisors,

because they want to look good in the eyes of the supervisor. These arguments suggest the following:

$H_{5a}$: Supervisory activity orientation is related positively to the performance orientation of salespeople.

*Activity orientation and salesperson experience.* We expect that supervisory activity orientation will trigger a greater increase in performance orientation among more experienced salespeople. Because experienced salespeople often serve as role models for less experienced salespeople, supervisors are likely to emphasize strongly to them the importance of performing routine activities, lest they set a bad example. Social learning theory suggests that failure to do so can result in loss of group control and unproductive behavior on the part of other employees (O'Reilly and Weitz 1980). In turn, experienced salespeople are more likely to be concerned about their standing and prestige in the organization and are generally more sensitive to being judged poorly. Therefore, more experienced salespeople can be expected to strive harder than less experienced salespeople to meet the activity goals set by supervisors. These arguments suggest the following:

$H_{5b}$: The positive relationship between supervisory activity orientation and salespeople's performance orientation is stronger for more experienced salespeople than for less experienced salespeople.

*Capability orientation.* Providing guidance to salespeople to improve their skills and abilities requires supervisors to commit time and effort to assess the capabilities of salespeople. Such a commitment of time and effort enables supervisors to become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of individual salespeople and to provide useful tips, knowledge, and helpful hints to them. Such interaction is likely to motivate salespeople to perform well on criteria established by their supervisors and increase salespeople's sensitivity to supervisory appraisals (e.g., Lawler and Rhode 1976), which thereby enhances their performance orientation. Therefore,

$H_{6a}$: Supervisory capability orientation is related positively to the performance orientation of salespeople.

*Capability orientation and salesperson experience.* More experienced salespeople are expected to possess a richer base of knowledge and understanding of selling situations and to have the ability to muster the necessary skills for coping with sales tasks. Thus, there is pressure on experienced salespeople to be judged able, an important aspect of which is their achievement of their performance goals. Experienced salespeople, therefore, can be expected to be more sensitive to the potential embarrassment of being judged incompetent, which thereby heightens their performance orientation. Conversely, supervisors expect the less experienced salespeople to make mistakes and, at times, flounder in selling. Although inexperienced salespeople are also under pressure to demonstrate adequate skills and abilities, this pressure is likely to be lower because they are likely to be perceived as still improving their skills and abilities. These arguments suggest the following:

$H_{6b}$: The positive relationship between supervisory capability orientation and salespeople's performance orientation is stronger for more experienced salespeople than for less experienced salespeople.

### *Salespeople's Goal Orientations and Performance*

A learning orientation is expected to lead to performance for several reasons. Learning-oriented salespeople are expected to use self-regulation strategies (e.g., solution-oriented self instruction, self-checks) that help develop the salesperson's selling skills and knowledge, which thereby leads to superior performance (cf. VandeWalle and Cummings 1997). Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that learning orientation encourages salespeople to work hard, presumably because they enjoy their work, which thus leads to higher performance (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994). In addition, salespeople with a learning orientation tend to adapt their responses to selling situations and therefore perform at a higher level (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994).

Salespeople with a performance orientation are focused on performing well as a means to obtaining rewards and/or recognition from others. They frequently compare their performance with supervisory expectations and the performance of their peers. Their desire for recognition from others is expected to encourage them to exert greater effort on their jobs which thus leads to higher performance. Empirical evidence reported by Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (1994) supports this argument. Furthermore, performance-oriented salespeople even might select their tasks purposively, so as to maximize their likely success level. This suggests that we will find a positive relationship between a performance orientation and performance. The prior discussion suggests the following hypotheses:

$H_7$: Learning orientation is related positively to salespeople's performance.

$H_8$: Performance orientation is related positively to salespeople's performance.

## *METHOD*

### *Sample Selection and Data Collection*

Because the primary thrust of the study is how salespeople's perceptions of supervisory orientation shape their own goal orientations, salespeople were deemed as the appropriate sample. Data for the study were obtained from salespeople working for two *Fortune* 500 companies operating in industrial markets. Prior to the mailing of the questionnaires, a senior sales executive in each sales force sent the salespeople a brief note that informed them of the organization's participation in the study and requested their cooperation. We mailed surveys to 302 salespeople in the participating companies. The respondents were asked to mail the surveys directly back to us. Two weeks after the first mailing, a reminder letter was sent to all salespeople. Another two weeks later, a second reminder and questionnaire were sent to all salespeople who had not responded. These efforts yielded 270 responses, for a final usable response rate of 89%.

### *Measure Development, Pretesting, and Item Purification*

Pretesting was performed in four sequential stages. A draft of the questionnaire was provided initially to four salespeople with two or more years of industrial sales experience. The respondents filled out the questionnaire in the

presence of one of the researchers and were asked to identify ambiguous scale items. The questions in the survey were distributed randomly in certain groups of variables to minimize yea-saying and feelings of repetitive questions. In the second pretest, feedback was obtained from nine academic experts in this area. All constructs were clearly identified so that the academic experts could evaluate scale items and the order of questions critically. The third stage involved administering the survey to three salespeople and obtaining input from four senior sales executives in the organizations in which the survey was to be administered. On the basis of the inputs received, several items were eliminated, others modified, and some completely new items added. A fourth and final pretest was conducted by mailing a draft of the questionnaire to 32 industrial salespeople of a national firm. The respondents also were asked to point out any scale items they found confusing, irrelevant, and/or repetitive. Few concerns were reported by the respondents, and therefore the questionnaire was ready for final administration.

### *Measures*

All scales used a five-point scoring format ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," unless otherwise mentioned. The scales are presented in the Appendix. The reliabilities of all scales are presented in Table 1. The coefficient alphas of all but one construct exceed the .70 level recommended by Nunnally (1978). Performance orientation has a coefficient alpha of .68, but its internal consistency reliability (i.e., composite reliability) is .72.

*Supervisory orientations.* To measure salespeople's perceptions of supervisory end-results, activity, and capability orientation, items were adapted from Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan's (1993) study. Each supervisory orientation was operationalized as a gestalt of goal setting, monitoring and evaluation, and provision of feedback. Because Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, and Krishnan (1993) did not distinguish between activity and capability orientation, new items were developed for that purpose. Four items were used to measure end-results orientation, five items were used to measure activity orientation, and five items were used to measure capability orientation.

*Salespeople's goal orientations.* Learning orientation was measured using six items, and performance orientation was measured using five items drawn from Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar's (1994) study.

*Experience.* A single item, measuring the number of years and months of selling experience with the organization, was used to assess a salesperson's job experience.

*Performance.* The performance scale consists of six items drawn from Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar's (1994) study that assess salespeople's accomplishments on various aspects, such as generating sales, selling high profit-margin products, and selling new products. The performance items were scored on a five-point scale ranging from "Much Worse" to "Much Better," relative to peers.

### *Measurement Models*

To assess whether the three supervisory orientation constructs were distinct, we performed an exploratory factor analysis on all items of the three scales. Strong evidence for operationalizing each supervisory orientation as a gestalt of goal setting, monitoring, and feedback was obtained. The results suggest a clean three-factor solution that corresponds to end-results, activity, and capability orientations. These results suggest that, though the three orientations are distinct, goal setting, monitoring, and feedback tend to "hang together" and can be studied as a single "orientation" construct.

Next, we followed the two-step procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and separately estimated and respecified the measurement model prior to simultaneous estimation of measurement and structural models. LISREL 8 (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993) was used to estimate the measurement model. The sample size, after listwise deletion of missing values, was 239. The sample covariance was used as input. Table 2 provides the results of the measurement analyses.

Initially, a six-factor model using all 30 indicators from the three supervisory orientations, the two goal orientations, and performance was estimated. The fit of this model was acceptable ($\chi^2$ = 830.2, comparative fit index [CFI] = .89, goodness-of-fit index [GFI] = .82, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .069, and root mean square residual [RMR] = .057), but six items had high standardized residuals and modification indices, which indicated that the model fit could be improved. Therefore, as is suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the measurement model was respecified after eliminating these items. The respecified six-factor model fits the data well, as is indicated by most fit indices (see Model 1 in Table 2). In terms of absolute fit

Table 1

CONSTRUCT MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, LATENT FACTOR INTERCORRELATIONS, RELIABILITY ESTIMATES,* AND VARIANCE EXTRACTED**

| | *Mean* | *Standard Deviation* | $X_1$ | $X_2$ | $X_3$ | $X_4$ | $X_5$ | $X_6$ | *Internal Consistency Reliability* | *Variance Extracted* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| End-results orientation ($X_1$) | 4.39 | .68 | .87 | | | | | | .88 | .66 |
| Activity orientation ($X_2$) | 4.05 | .77 | .59 | .86 | | | | | .87 | .64 |
| Capability orientation ($X_3$) | 3.79 | .82 | .63 | .74 | .85 | | | | .86 | .61 |
| Learning orientation ($X_4$) | 4.18 | .56 | .42 | .31 | .40 | .78 | | | .79 | .49 |
| Performance orientation ($X_5$) | 3.79 | .70 | .40 | .47 | .40 | .40 | .68 | | .72 | .47 |
| Performance ($X_6$) | 3.83 | .60 | .11 | .21 | .20 | .06 | .22 | .83 | .83 | .51 |

*Coefficient alphas are reported in the diagonal.

**Discriminant validity is obtained if $\rho_{vc(\eta)} > \gamma^2$. $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$ is the variance extracted for a construct, and $\gamma^2$ is the squared latent factor correlation between a pair of constructs.

Table 2
SUMMARY RESULTS OF MEASUREMENT MODELS USING CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

| *Model* | *Description* | $\chi^2$ | *df* | *GFI* | *CFI* | *RMR* | *RMSEA* | *p-close fit* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model 1 | Six factors—ERO, AO, CO, LO, PO, and Perf. | 393.9 | 237 | .88 | .94 | .048 | .053 | .30 |
| Model 2 | Five factors—ERO, LO, PO, Perf., and a factor in which no distinction is made between AO and CO | 538.9 | 242 | .82 | .88 | .052 | .072 | <.01 |
| Model 3 | Five factors—AO, CO, LO, Perf., and a factor in which no distinction is made between ERO and PO | 531.9 | 242 | .83 | .89 | .065 | .071 | <.01 |
| Model 4 | Five factors—ERO, AO, PO, Perf., and a factor in which no distinction is made between CO and LO | 620.6 | 242 | .81 | .86 | .058 | .08 | <.01 |
| Model 5 | Five factors—ERO, AO, CO, LO, and a factor in which no distinction is made between PO and Perf. | 566.8 | 242 | .81 | .87 | .085 | .075 | <.01 |

ERO = end-results orientation; AO = activity orientation; CO = capability orientation; LO = learning orientation; PO = performance orientation; Perf. = performance; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMR = root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; *p*-close fit = *p*-value for test of close fit (RMSEA < .05).

Note: Latent factors were correlated with one another.

measures, the GFI is an acceptable .88, whereas the RMR value of .048 is below the recommended cut-off level. The RMSEA is .053, and the *p*-value for test of close fit (RMSEA < .05) equals .30, which suggests a very good fit. In terms of incremental fit, the CFI for the six-factor model is .94 and exceeds the recommended cut-off of .90 (McDonald and Marsh 1990).

In addition, we compared the fit of the respecified six-factor model to that of a series of alternative models with fewer factors. In each of these alternative models, we collapsed a pair of factors most similar to each other into a single factor (see Table 2). We compared the fit of the six-factor model (Model 1) against a series of five-factor models in which no distinctions were made between (1) activity orientation and capability orientation (Model 2), (2) end-results orientation and performance orientation (Model 3), (3) capability orientation and learning orientation (Model 4), and (4) performance orientation and performance (Model 5). The $\chi^2$ difference between the proposed six-factor model ($\chi^2 = 393.9$, $p < .01$) and the best fitting five-factor model ($\chi^2 = 531.9$, $p < .01$) is significant ($\chi^2 = 138.0$, $p < .01$), which suggests that the six-factor model fits the data much better than the five-factor models. Furthermore, on all other indices (e.g., CFI, GFI, RMSEA, and *p*-close fit), the six-factor model has a superior fit.

### *Unidimensionality, Composite Reliability, and Convergent and Discriminant Validity*

Gerbing and Anderson (1988) recommend examining the scales of a study for unidimensionality, composite reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity. An exploratory factor analysis initially was performed on scale items, taken one scale at a time, to see if the items for a construct share a single underlying factor (i.e., are unidimensional). In every case, only one factor was extracted using an eigen value of 1.0 as the cut-off point. Next, for each scale, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to assess whether a one-factor model adequately accounts for the covariances among the subset of items for each construct. In every case, a single-factor measurement model had an acceptable fit (i.e., GFI > .90, CFI > .90), which implies that the measures are unidimensional. As an additional indicator of unidimensionality, we assessed the magnitudes of the residuals and modification indices of the six-factor model (cf. Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994). The vast majority of modification indices were below 3.84. This was considered reasonable, especially considering the large number of items in the measurement models. Finally, when unidimensionality is lacking, the fit of the resulting measurement model is poor. As is indicated in the previous section, the fit of the proposed six-factor measurement model is good.

The composite reliability of each scale exceeds the .70 threshold for acceptable reliability, which suggests that the measures are internally consistent. Convergent validity is indicated when the path coefficients from latent constructs to their corresponding manifest indicators are statistically significant (i.e., $t > 2.0$). All items load significantly on their corresponding latent construct with the lowest t-value being 7.6 ($p < .01$), which thereby provides evidence of convergent validity (see the Appendix for t-values). Discriminant validity is obtained because all pairwise latent-trait correlations of the constructs are significantly different from one (Dillon and Goldstein 1984; Singh and Rhoads 1991). In addition, discriminant validity is obtained for all pairs of measures when we use the more stringent procedure suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

## *RESULTS*

Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), all indicators in the respecified measurement model were used in the simultaneous estimation of the measurement and structural submodels. The structural model is shown in Figure 1. In estimating the structural model, the two latent goal orientations were allowed to covary because both reflect a person's interest in his or her work (cf. Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994). The model's overidentifying restrictions were tested by specifying paths from the antecedent constructs to performance. None of the paths was significant.

*Main Effects Structural Paths*

Table 3 reports the model fit and estimated structural paths. The GFI, CFI, and RMSEA are .88, .94, and .052, respectively. The *p*-close fit is .31. Taken collectively, these indices suggest a good model fit, even though the chi-square index is significant ($\chi^2 = 397.9$; $p < .01$).

*Supervisory orientations and learning and performance orientations.* The findings support $H_{1a}$ and $H_3$, as salespeople's learning orientation is related positively to supervisory end-results ($\gamma = .28$, $p < .01$) and capability orientations ($\gamma = .25$, $p < .05$). $H_{2a}$ is not supported, as activity orientation is unrelated to learning orientation. The results support $H_4$ and $H_{5a}$, as performance orientation is related positively to supervisory end-results ($\gamma = .17$, $p < .05$) and activity orientations ($\gamma = .33$, $p < .01$). However, $H_{6a}$ is not supported, as capability orientation is unrelated to performance orientation. Collectively, the three supervisory orientations explain 21% of the variance in learning orientation and 25% of the variance in performance orientation. It is interesting to note that a supervisory activity orientation has an effect only on salespeople's performance orientation, whereas a capability orientation has an effect only on salespeople's learning orientation. This finding lends strong support for disaggregating supervisory behaviors to distinguish between those that focus on activities and those that focus on capabilities.

*Goal orientations and performance.* In support of $H_8$, a performance orientation is related positively to the performance of salespeople ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$). However, $H_7$ is not supported, as learning orientation is unrelated to performance. The two goal orientations explain 6% of the variation in performance.

*Moderating Effects of Experience*

We split the sample to form two subgroups that represent low and high levels of experience. The means for the low- and high-experience subgroups are 5.4 and 22.3 years, respectively. To assess the moderating effect of experience, we allow only the hypothesized structural paths to vary across the low- and high-experience subgroups ($M_{ho}$) and compare the fit of this model with one in which we constrained the structural paths to be equal across the two subgroups ($M_{equal}$). The $\chi^2$ difference between the $M_{ho}$ ($\chi^2 = 875.57$, $p < .01$) and $M_{equal}$ ($\chi^2 = 899.68$, $p < .01$) models is significant ($\chi^2 = 24.11$, $p < .01$), which suggests that the structural paths for the low- and high-experience groups are unequal.

*Moderating effect on learning orientation.* To assess whether experience moderates the relationship between supervisory orientations and learning orientation, we "freed" each hypothesized path individually and evaluated the improvement in fit relative to the $M_{equal}$ model. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4. $H_{1b}$ receives directional support only, as an end-results orientation is related positively to learning orientation for more experienced salespeople ($\gamma = .34$, $p < .01$) but is unrelated to learning orientation for less experienced salespeople ($\gamma = .14$). $H_{2b}$ is supported because the $\chi^2$ difference between the $M_{ho(activity)}$ ($\chi^2 = 893.78$, $p < .01$) and $M_{equal}$ ($\chi^2 = 899.68$, $p < .01$) models is significant ($\chi^2 = 5.82$, $p < .01$). As was expected, supervisory activity orientation is associated with lower learning orientation for more experienced salespeople ($\gamma = -.24$, $p < .05$). However, activity orientation is unrelated to learning orientation for less experienced salespeople ($\gamma = .10$).

*Moderating effect on performance orientation.* The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4. $H_{5b}$ receives directional support only, as an activity orientation has a stronger influence on the performance orientation of more experienced salespeople ($\gamma = .39$, $p < .01$) than it does on their less experienced counterparts ($\gamma = .27$, $p < .05$). $H_{6b}$ is not supported, as supervisory capability orientation is unrelated to performance orientation of both more ($\gamma = .08$) and less experienced ($\gamma = .02$) salespeople.

## *DISCUSSION*

The purpose of the study was to (1) identify supervisory behaviors that nurture salespeople's learning orientation, which contributes to the building of a learning organization, (2) examine the influence of these same supervisory behaviors on salespeople's performance orientation to assess whether supervisory behaviors that promote a learning orientation also enhance salespeople's performance orientation or undermine it, and (3) compare and contrast the impact of supervisory behaviors on inexperienced and experienced salespeople. The results provide valuable insights into these three questions.

Table 3

EFFECTS OF SUPERVISORY ORIENTATIONS ON LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION OF SALESPEOPLE

| *Path To* | *Path From* | *Ho* | *Ho Sign* | *Standardized Structural Coefficients* | *Statistical Significance (One-tail)* | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *γ paths* | | | | | | |
| Learning orientation | End-results orientation | $H_{1a}$ | + | .28 | $p < .01$ | .21 |
| | Activity orientation | $H_{2a}$ | – | –.04 | ns | |
| | Capability orientation | $H_3$ | + | .25 | $p < .05$ | |
| Performance orientation | End-results orientation | $H_4$ | + | .17 | $p < .05$ | .25 |
| | Activity orientation | $H_{5a}$ | + | .33 | $p < .01$ | |
| | Capability orientation | $H_{6a}$ | + | .07 | ns | |
| *β paths** | | | | | | |
| Performance | Learning orientation | $H_7$ | + | –.03 | ns | .06 |
| | Performance orientation | $H_8$ | + | .25 | $p < .01$ | |

*Overidentifying restrictions of the model were tested by specifying paths from the antecedent variables to performance. None of the paths was significant. Model fit: $\chi^2_{(240)} = 397.9$ ($p < .01$), CFI = .94, GFI = .88, RMSEA = .052, *p*-close fit = .31.
ns = not significant.

Table 4
MODERATING EFFECTS OF EXPERIENCE

| Path To | Path From | Ho | Standardized Structural Coefficients: Low Experience | Standardized Structural Coefficients: High Experience | $\chi^2$ Difference Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learning orientation | End-results orientation | $H_{1b}$ | .14 | .34[a] | ns |
| | Activity orientation | $H_{2b}$ | .10 | −.24[b] | 5.82 |
| | Capability orientation | — | .34[b] | .24 | — |
| Performance orientation | End-results orientation | — | .25[b] | .11 | — |
| | Activity orientation | $H_{5b}$ | .27[b] | .39[a] | ns |
| | Capability orientation | $H_{6b}$ | .02 | .08 | ns |

$\chi^2$ difference test indicates if coefficients in the low- and high-experience groups are significantly different. Values greater than 3.84 are significant at the .05 level.
[a] $p < .01$.
[b] $p < .05$.

*Building a learning orientation.* Our findings indicate that two of the three supervisory orientations—end-results and capability orientation—tend to inculcate a learning orientation in salespeople. However, supervisory activity orientation has a negative influence on the learning orientation of more experienced salespeople. Taken together, these results have important implications for supervisory assignments and training.

Foremost, organizations ought to match supervisory orientations to the needs of individual salespeople and those of the organization through judicious assignment of supervisors. If the business has customers and markets that change rapidly, and the goal of the organization is to foster individual learning, supervisors who emphasize end results and capabilities can help enhance the desire to learn among salespeople. Supervisors, especially those with an activity orientation, must recognize that experienced salespeople should be managed differently than inexperienced salespeople. Activity-oriented supervisors must be made aware that stressing performance of routine activities is likely to lower the learning orientation of more-experienced salespeople. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggests that during the maintenance stage (i.e., a more advanced stage) of their careers, salespeople require less guidance and direction from supervisors (cf. Cron 1984). If the goal is to enhance the learning orientation of experienced salespeople, it is prudent to have supervisors who deemphasize performance of day-to-day activities and focus much more on end results and capabilities.

*Building a performance orientation.* Supervisors who focus on activities and end results appear to enhance salespeople's performance orientation. Activity orientation appears to inculcate a performance orientation in both inexperienced and experienced salespeople, which suggests that when supervisors pay attention to what salespeople do on a daily basis it sensitizes and motivates them to "look good" on their performance metrics. Likewise, an end-results orientation influences salespeople by focusing them on performing well and achieving their targeted level of end results. Supervisory capability orientation, contrary to our expectations, is unrelated to the performance orientation of salespeople. Perhaps the emphasis on skills and abilities detracts from the salesperson's focus on measuring up well on key performance criteria.

It is encouraging that, with one major exception, the three supervisory orientations do not work at cross-purposes, in that they affect learning and performance orientation in the same direction. The only exception is the effect of an activity orientation on the learning orientation of more experienced salespeople. The implication is that, in dealing with less experienced salespeople, supervisors can focus on all three desiderata without lowering a salesperson's motivation to learn or eagerness to measure up on performance criteria. However, when dealing with more experienced salespeople, supervisors should rely largely on end-results and capability orientation. If they focus on activities, supervisors are likely to increase the performance orientation of more-experienced salespeople, but at the expense of their learning orientation. In addition, it also should be noted that the relative effects on learning and performance orientation vary in magnitude.

*Effects of learning and performance orientation on performance.* Whereas a performance orientation positively influences salesperson performance, a learning orientation appears to be unrelated to performance. The latter result is contrary to expectations and to that obtained by Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (1994). It is possible that a learning orientation does not influence performance in the short term; rather, it influences long-term performance by enabling salespeople to develop skills and abilities that are beneficial over a period of time that is longer than the three-to-twelve-month period typically used when assessing industrial salespeople's performance. In addition, it is possible that some strategies of learning-oriented salespeople even might hinder short-term performance. For example, because salespeople with a learning orientation enjoy pursuing challenging goals and tasks, they might call on accounts that are more difficult to penetrate. Spending time with such accounts might be detrimental to short-term performance but could pay off in the long run.

In addition, the linkage between learning orientation and performance might depend on factors not included in the study. For example, a learning orientation primarily captures a person's desire to learn, but says nothing about his or her ability to learn or the opportunities available for learning. Therefore, a person might have the motivation to learn but lack the ability and/or the opportunities to learn. In such instances, learning orientation is unlikely to translate into

performance. Finally, it is plausible that common method variance in the study might have affected the observed relationship between learning orientation and performance. It would be useful to replicate (or disconfirm) this "nonfinding" in future studies and also explore the previously noted possible explanations for the result obtained.

*Limitations and Future Research Directions*

Our findings are subject to some limitations that also suggest fruitful avenues for further research. Researchers might wish to examine a more detailed conceptualization and measurement of supervisory behaviors in additional studies. Specifically, supervisory behaviors can be distinguished along three dimensions: (1) types of supervisory behaviors (end results, activities, and capabilities), (2) the degree to which supervisors employ specific elements of a control system (goal setting, monitoring, and feedback), and (3) the nature of feedback (level or process). If these dimensions are crossed with one another, several supervisory behaviors can be conceptualized and studied individually.

It is commonly accepted that a person's learning and performance orientations are traits (i.e., stable dispositions) as well as states (i.e., situationally influenced conditions) (cf. Ames and Archer 1988; Button, Mathieu, and Zajac 1996). The extent to which these states are amenable to alteration is likely to be a function of variables such as career stage (cf.

## Appendix
### SCALE ITEMS

| *Scale* | *Items* | *Standardized Factor Loadings* | *t-values** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Supervisory end-results orientation | In answering the following questions, please focus *ONLY* on **sales volume** or **market share** targets. | | |
| | 1. My manager tells me about the level of achievement expected on sales volume or market share targets. | .62 | 10.4 |
| | 2. I receive feedback on whether I am meeting expectations on sales volume or market share targets. | .78 | 14.0 |
| | 3. My manager monitors my progress on achieving sales volume or market share targets. | .90 | 17.3 |
| | 4. My manager ensures I am aware of the extent to which I attain sales volume or market share goals. | .91 | 17.7 |
| Supervisory activity orientation | In answering the following questions, please focus *ONLY* on **sales activities** (e.g., call rate, number of demos, customers to be contacted, reports to turn in etc.) | | |
| | 1. My manager informs me about the sales activities I am expected to perform. | .58 | 9.4 |
| | 2. My manager monitors my sales activities.*** | — | — |
| | 3. My manager informs me on whether I meet his/her expectations on sales activities. | .87 | 16.5 |
| | 4. If my manager feels I need to adjust my sales activities, s/he tells me about it. | .86 | 16.0 |
| | 5. My manager evaluates my sales activities. | .84 | 15.7 |
| Supervisory capability orientation | In answering the following questions, please focus *ONLY* on **selling skills/abilities** (e.g., negotiation, communication, presentation, etc.) | | |
| | 1. My manager has standards by which my selling skills are evaluated. | .70 | 11.9 |
| | 2. My supervisor periodically evaluates the selling skills I use to accomplish a task (e.g., how I negotiate).*** | — | — |
| | 3. My manager provides guidance on *ways* to improve selling skills and abilities. | .80 | 14.2 |
| | 4. My supervisor evaluates how I make sales presentations and communicate with customers. | .77 | 13.4 |
| | 5. My manager assists by suggesting *why* using a particular sales approach may be useful. | .84 | 15.4 |
| Salespeople's learning orientation | 1. There really aren't a lot of new things to learn about selling (R)** | — | — |
| | 2. It is worth spending a lot of time learning new approaches for dealing with customers. | .51 | 7.8 |
| | 3. An important part of being a salesperson is continually improving your sales skills. | .68 | 11.0 |
| | 4. I put in a great deal of effort in order to learn something new about selling.*** | — | — |
| | 5. It is important for me learn from each selling experience I have. | .77 | 12.7 |
| | 6. Learning how to be a better salesperson is of fundamental importance to me. | .81 | 13.5 |
| Salespeople's performance orientation | 1. I spend a lot of time thinking about how my performance compares with that of other salespeople.*** | — | — |
| | 2. I evaluate myself using my supervisor's criteria.*** | — | — |
| | 3. I always try to communicate my achievements to my manager. | .51 | 7.6 |
| | 4. I feel very good when I know I have outperformed other salespeople in my company. | .62 | 9.3 |
| | 5. It is very important that my manager sees me as a good salesperson. | .88 | 13.0 |
| Performance | 1. Identifying major accounts and selling to them. | .81 | 14.0 |
| | 2. Generating a high level of dollar sales. | .74 | 12.4 |
| | 3. Selling high profit-margin products. | .63 | 10.1 |
| | 4. Exceeding sales targets.*** | — | — |
| | 5. Quickly generating sales of new company products. | .64 | 10.3 |
| | 6. Assisting your sales supervisor meet his/her goals. | .71 | 11.8 |

(R) denotes a reverse-coded item.

*t-values are provided for assessing convergent validity. Convergent validity is obtained when the path coefficients from latent constructs to their corresponding manifest indicators are significant (i.e., $t > 2.0$).

**This item was eliminated from the analysis because its squared multiple correlation was less than .2.

***These items were eliminated during respecification of the measurement model.

Note: All items were scored on five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"), with the exception of the performance scale, which was scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("Much Worse") to 5 ("Much Better"), relative to peers.

Cron 1984), competitiveness (cf. Brown and Peterson 1994), other-directedness (cf. Bagozzi 1978), and knowledge bases (cf. Leigh and McGraw 1989; Szymanski 1988). Research exploring these relationships could shed further light on situations in which supervisors are likely to have the greatest impact.

Moreover, this study does not control for traits (or dispositions) of salespeople, a step that would benefit additional research on learning and performance orientation. Button, Mathieu, and Zajac (1996) have taken an important first step in this direction by developing a measure of traits. The issue, however, is complex, because the same salesperson's disposition to learn (i.e., trait) might vary across tasks (e.g., working versus recreation). Therefore, researchers ideally would need to control for dispositions with respect to relevant tasks rather than assume an "average" disposition across tasks. Developing valid and reliable trait measures of learning and performance orientation should be an important goal of additional research in this area.

Although this study examines the influence of supervisors, it does not take into consideration other important organizational factors that might shape the learning and performance orientations of salespeople, such as peer influence (cf. Kohli and Jaworski 1994), organizational socialization (cf. Dubinsky et al. 1986), organizational citizenship (cf. MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Fetter 1993), and organizational rewards (cf. Ingram and Bellenger 1983). For example, supervisors are likely to be influential not only because of the position they occupy, but also because salespeople are likely to have less personal contact with their peers than other employees and are thus more likely to rely on supervisors for direction and guidance. However, the influence of supervisors might not be as strong as is suggested here for those salespeople and other employees who have more frequent contact with their peers. This and other similar issues deserve attention in further research. We hope this study provides an impetus for research along these lines.

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