LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OF THE INDUSTRIAL FIELD SALES FORCE: EQUIVALENT/DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF SUBORDINATES

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This study takes a focused look at the degree to which industrial sales managers treat all of their subordinates equally. Leadership theories do not agree on whether or not sales managers engage in differential treatment of subordinates. This study first presents arguments in favor of both equivalent and differential treatment. Using matched responses from managers and their respective salespeople, a set of hypotheses (which propose that sales managers do engage in differential treatment) was tested. A jack-knife analysis, comparing salespeople reporting to the same manager, was supportive. The study concludes that sales managers do develop closer working relationships with some salespeople and do allow some salespeople more autonomy than others.

INTRODUCTION

Do sales managers provide more resources and develop closer working relationships with some subordinates over other subordinates? Some leadership theorists claim this is a common, and preferable managerial practice (Graen and Cashman 1975; Graen and Schiemann 1978). Still others claim sales managers take pains to avoid such favoritism and do so to enhance perceptions of procedural justice (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1994). The degree to which a sales manager engages in differential or equal treatment of his or her subordinates may have a profound effect on the sales person's attitude and performance. Recognizing the effect managerial behavior can have, leadership theorists offer guidelines. Unfortunately, this body of advice is not uniform and disagreement exists concerning the differences in salesperson-manager dyads. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine this issue by first presenting both sides of the argument. The results of a study which explicitly tests for dyadic differences are then presented.

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Arguments in favor of equivalent treatment of salespeople claim that sales managers attempt to enhance perceptions of procedural fairness by emulating specific effective leadership behaviors. Arguments in favor of differential treatment of salespeople claim that sales managers try to meet the individual needs of each salesperson by adapting their own behavior to suit those needs. At the core of this disagreement is the degree to which each side believes differences in salesperson-manager dyads are meaningful. One side claims that the individual leader's behavior should be the focal point of research efforts. The other side claims the dyadic relationship between leader and member is the appropriate level of analysis. Both sides of this issue will be examined.

Sales Manager Behavior: Equivalent or Differential Treatment?

Providing more resources to one subordinate over another could lead to serious morale problems. If the same sales manager allows more resources to some subordinates and restricted those resources to others, his or her subordinates may question the judgment of the manager (Swift and Campbell 1995). Sales managers may be concerned over equity or procedural fairness and avoid developing differential relationships (Sias and Jablin 1995).

Studies concerning procedural justice and perceived fairness claim sales managers should engage in behaviors which will be perceived to be equitable (Podsakoff and Mackenzie 1994). When a manager makes evaluative decisions that are unbiased and clearly communicate his or her expectations to all subordinates equally, the level of perceived procedural fairness increases (Ramaswami, Srinivasan and Gorton 1997). High levels of perceived procedural fairness have been linked to positive job outcomes such as expectancies (Cole and Latham 1997), satisfaction (Dailey and Kirk 1992) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Niehoff and Moorman 1993). Given the desirability of these outcomes, any one sales manager has reason to pursue behaviors that will be perceived as equitable treatment of each salesperson

Apart from the negative attitudinal outcomes, differential treatment may be inconsistent with the corporate-wide system. In effect this argument claims dyadic differences are not significantly varied because the manager is restricted by corporate guidelines. For example, one managerial resource is the amount of freedom or autonomy granted to each salesperson. Proponents of dyadic differences claim sales managers allow some salespeople more freedom than others (DelVecchio 1998). These differences, however, may be a result of differences between one firm and another (rather than between one salesperson-manager dyad and another). Rather than allowing one salesperson more freedom than another, sales managers tend to be consistent when a corporate control system, which is either outcome-based or behavior-based (Oliver and Anderson 1994; Anderson and Oliver 1987), is in place. Taking a systems approach, one could argue that sales managers do not allow one salesperson more freedom than another – and that no dyadic differences exist with respect to managerial freedom granted. In this view, the manager is part of the control system and the system operates the same for all subordinates.

Thus, these arguments claim a sales manager will not and should not engage in differential treatment at the salesperson-manager dyad level. Rather, a manager should engage in behaviors that are consistent with the goal of perceived procedural fairness or consistent with corporate-wide orientations. In effect this school of thought contends a sales manager should emulate one best set of leadership styles (i.e., styles which are simultaneously highly task-oriented and highly people-oriented). The use of this same leadership style will be uniformly successful with every salesperson (Russ, McNeilly and Comer 1996).

Finally, those who argue in favor of equivalent treatment (and oppose differential treatment) claim empirical evidence does not support dyadic differences. In a study of salespeople employed with a medical products company (Yammarino and Dubinsky 1994) and a study of insurance salespeople (Yammarino and Dubinsky 1990) no meaningful dyadic differences were uncovered in same-manager dyads. Similarly, Tanner and Castleberry (1994) found no meaningful differences between same manager dyads using the standard seven-item LMX measure. The dyadic approach to explaining variation in leader behavior is not universally accepted and has been criticized as lacking predictive validity (Deinesch and Liden 1987; Vecchio 1982).

Those who support dyadic differences point to this same body of evidence and make counter claims. The leadership style of any one sales manager, according to Leader-Member Exchange theory, is completely dependent upon the characteristics of each of his or her subordinates (Sparrowe and Liden 1997). Thus, one would expect that a significant portion of the variability in describing leader behavior would be uncovered when we compare salespeople who are reporting to the same sales manager. To date, no study has explicitly tested this expectation as it applies to industrial salespeople.

This expectation (i.e., of dyadic differences for same manager reports) has been tested in more insulated environments. In studies of nurses, lab technicians, university employees and plant workers, LMX researchers have found stable and meaningful differences at the subordinate-manager dyad level (Dansereau, Graen and Haga 1975; Gerstner and Day 1997; Wakabayashi and Graen 1984). When leaders in a military setting were assigned a mix of desirable and undesirable subordinates, manipulation checks confirmed the expected pattern of high and low quality dyads (Vecchio 1982). While these LMX studies support the notion of dyadic differences, their results may not extend to industrial selling.

Manager-subordinate relationships may develop differently when they occur in an insulated and structured work environment (Scandura 1996). The majority of LMX studies have been conducted on dyads in the public rather than private sector. Public sector employees' perceptions of management behaviors differ from those of private sector employees (Zeffane 1994). Boundary spanning positions occupied by the field salesperson differ dramatically from those of university service employees or lab technicians. The salesperson interacts with employees of other organizations. These interactions take place outside of the direct and frequent observation of his or her manager. These differences (in environment and task structure) affect perceptions of and reactions to leadership behaviors (Downey et al. 1974; Wofford and Liska 1993).

Ideally, a sales manager should adapt to each salesperson's level of self efficacy (Sujan, Weitz and Kumar 1994), experience (Kohli, Shervani and Challagalla 1998) or preferences in leadership style (Hite and Bellizzi 1986). In order to make these adaptations, the sales manager devotes the time and attention to each subordinate and alters his or her leadership style. In reality, however, time and resources are limited. Because of resource limitations, the field sales manager may be making judgments about how much time and effort he or she is willing to invest in adaptations. Social exchange (and LMX) theory claims these judgments are the basis for a dyad member's behavior (Sparrowe and Liden 1997). Sales managers judge subordinates as work partners and as social partners (DeCarlo and Leigh 1996). If sales managers are making these judgments and adaptations, then one might expect differences between same-manager dyads. Salespeople may be aware these subjective judgments are being made and attempt to influence them (Nonis, Sager and Kumar 1996). The actions of the salesperson may also affect dyadic differences. Since not all salesperson attempts to influence the manager may be successful, one might expect differences in terms of how each (both successful and unsuccessful attempts at ingratiation) salesperson evaluates their relationship. Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested.

H_1: A sales manager develops different quality working relationships with each of his or her salespeople.

A sales manager can closely monitor the behaviors of a salesperson and require that the salesperson frequently verify changes with the manager – and thus the manager curtails the amount of autonomy or freedom to a salesperson (Anderson and Oliver 1987). Alternatively the sales manager can focus only on the end-results and allow the salesperson discretion concerning how the end results were obtained (Oliver and Anderson 1994). According to the basic tenets of social exchange theory, leadership theorists contend a sales manager does allow or restrict freedom to his or her subordinates based on the benefits or costs of such an action. If the salesperson brings the benefit of experience and ability to the exchange relationship, the manager stands to gain from allowing the salesperson more autonomy. If, however, the salesperson is not trustworthy or capable, the manager may incur costs when he or she allows this salesperson more freedom (Leana, Locke and Schweiger 1990). The sales manager may allow each subordinate different levels of autonomy – based on what that salesperson brings to the transactional relationship. If the salesperson is highly capable – regardless of the organization-wide control system, the sales manager may make exception and allow the salesperson more latitude, autonomy or freedom in the execution of his or her sales tasks. Hence, the following hypothesis.

H_2: A sales manager allows different levels of autonomy or freedom to each of his or her salespeople.

LMX quality has been consistently linked to satisfaction with supervisor (Dienesch and Liden 1986; Dubinsky and Yammarino 1985; Graen and

Uhl-Bien 1995; Lagace 1990; Yammarino and Dubinsky 1992). If the salesperson-manager relationship is evaluated positively, then it is likely this relationship is characterized by high trust (Lagace 1990) and agreement (Yammarino and Dubinsky 1992). Relationships that can be characterized in this way (i.e., higher levels of trust and congruence) result in favorable attitudinal outcomes (Rich 1997). This may be explained by attribution theory. If the sales manager has favored one salesperson over another and developed a better working relationship with that salesperson, it is likely the favored salesperson will attribute the cause of that choice to good supervisory skills and express higher satisfaction levels (Teas and McElroy 1986).

Salespeople may have a preconceived notion of what is characteristic of an effective leader. When a subordinate evaluates his or her manager's behavior, these evaluations may be influenced by the subordinate's implicit leadership theories (Engle and Lord 1997). Since not all industrial salespeople share the same theory, and in fact differ in terms of preferred leadership styles (Hite and Belizzi 1986), then one might expect differences in satisfaction with supervision, suggesting the following hypothesis.

H_3: Salespeople reporting to the same sales manager will not experience the same level of satisfaction with supervision.

METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

Manufacturing firms which employed a sales force (rather than outside agents) were identified through the use of *Thomas Register of Manufacturers*. Firms which agreed to participate provided names and addresses of all sales managers and their respective salespeople. Survey instruments were sent to both the manager and his or her salespeople. A numerical coding system facilitated the matching of responses. A complete observation was defined as a matched set of salesperson and manager responses.

The sales manager form required responses that described a specific salesperson (named on the front of the form). For both practical and theoretical reasons, each manager was asked to provide responses for a portion (35 percent) of randomly selected subordinates. In this manner, participation would not place an undue burden on each manager. Of the 270 forms sent to salespeople and their managers, 155 matched and complete responses were returned (57 percent overall response rate).

Since the intent of this study was to compare same manager dyads, analyses were conducted on matched responses received from more than one dyad per manager and from more than one manager per company. The salesperson-manager matched responses meeting this criterion numbered 74. The number of salesperson-manager matched responses that did not meet this criterion were 81. (See Table 1: Matched Multiple Responses per Company.) Responses meeting these criteria were received from ten companies.

These companies were manufacturers of consumer products (apparel), building materials, and industrial equipment (such as generators, pumps and material handling equipment). All of the companies paid their sales force using some form of a combination plan (See Table 2: Sample Profile). Since this study required more managers per company (two or more) and more salespeople per manager (two or more), the companies in this analysis set tended to be larger manufacturing firms. The majority of these companies had annual sales revenues over $200 million.

The average salesperson in this subset of the sample had 9.69 years of experience with his or her current employer and a total of 16.01 years of sales experience. The average sales manager had 12.9 years experience with his or her current employer and 18.7 total years of sales experience. (See Table 2: Sample Profile). The majority of industrial sales personnel in this sample had a college degree (66 percent of the salespeople and 73 percent of the managers).

The 74 observations (i.e., matched responses from salesperson and manager) included in this analysis were compared to the 81 responses that did not meet

Table 1
Matched Multiple Responses Per Company

	Number of Managers		Number of Salespeople		Number of Salesperson-Manager Dyads	
Number of Companies	Per Company	Total	Per Company	Total	Total Number of Dyads	Number of Dyad in Each Iteration
2	2	4	4	8	8	8
2	2	4	5	10	10*	8
2	3	6	8	16	16**	12
2	4	8	8	16	16	16
1	5	5	10	10	10	10
1	5	5	14	14	14**	14
Total 10		32		74	74	68***

* The jack-knife analysis was conducted on the different combinations of same-manager dyads resulting from the inclusion of these additional cases.
** Four sets of SP-SM matched responses were received for two managers in this company. (See Figure 1 SM_3)
*** Sixty-eight SP-SM dyads were used to compare same manager dyads. This resulted in 34 pairs of same manager dyads (or 34 difference scores).

Table 2
Sample Profile
Participating Companies: Size, Compensation and Number of Managers

Annual Sales	Frequency	
Less than $50 million	2	
$50 million to $200 million	3	
Over $200 million	5	
Compensation Method	**For Salespeople**	**For Sales Managers**
Salary and Commission	7	5
Salary and Bonus	3	5

Experience	Salesperson Yrs Experience w/ Current Company	Salesperson Total Years in Sales	Sales Manager Yrs Experience w/ Current Company	Sales Manager Total Sales Experience
0 to 5 years	41%	16%	10%	3%
6 to 10 years	18%	23%	25%	17%
11 to 15 years	24%	17%	31%	17%
16 and over	17%	44%	34%	63%
Education	**Salesperson**	**Manager**		
High School	8%	3%		
Some College	26%	24%		
College Deg.	60%	48%		
Some Grad. Work	3%	19%		
Graduate Degree	3%	6%		

the multiple response criteria. No significant differences in terms of satisfaction, autonomy or quality levels exist between these two subsets. Similarly, no differences were found between experience and education levels. Since multiple responses were more likely to be received from larger firms, sales managers did tend to have a higher income than managers in the excluded portion of the sample. The salesperson income level, however, did not differ.

Measurement Assessment

The measurement of leader-member exchange has been the focus of much attention and little agreement. The commonly used seven-item scale has been criticized as lacking a firm conceptual basis (Dienesch and Liden 1986). The recent work of Sparrowe and Liden (1997) addresses these criticisms, but measurement scales based on this conceptual model have yet to be validated. Given the concern that dyadic differences may be attributable to variability inherent in longer scales, this study sought to provide a stringent test and used a shorter scale.

The quality of the working relationship was measured using the direct method recommended by Vecchio and Gobdel (1984). Respondents indicated the degree (on a seven point scale) to which each adjective anchor described his or her working relationship. On the salesperson form, this question specified the relationship with his or her sales manger. The sales manager form asked for responses concerning the specific salesperson named on the front of the form. The paired adjectives included: excellent-poor, close-distant and superior-inferior. The coefficient alpha for this three- item scale was .88 for salesperson respondents and .91 for sales manager. (See Table 4: Measures.) This compares favorably with sales management studies either a six (á=.85) or seven (á =.905) item LMX scale (Lagace 1990; Tanner, Dunn and Chonko 1993).

Two measures of autonomy were used in this study. One measure of autonomy was global and the other was task-specific. Global measures of autonomy do not make reference to specific tasks (Leana, Locke and Schweiger 1990). Global measures are consistent with the earlier explanations of dyadic differences offered by Graen and his colleagues. Adapted from the scales suggested by Graen and Cashman (1975), global autonomy was measured as the summed response to four Likert items. These items described the amount of flexibility or freedom the manager allows the salesperson. (Such as "My manager is open to my suggestions regarding changes in my sales responsibilities." and "I have freedom in operating my territory.")

The specific measure of autonomy asked respondents (both the manager and the salesperson) to rate the amount of autonomy the salesperson was allowed over changing specific sales tasks. These sales tasks described those that were central to making each sales call and interacting with the buyer (such as method of preparation, selecting approach method, presentation format, addressing objections and closing techniques). Both the salesperson and manager responded to these scales. The salesperson form asked for responses concerning autonomy allowed by his manager. The managerial form asked for responses concerning autonomy allowed to the specific salesperson named on the front of the form. The coefficient alpha for both global (.85) and specific measures of autonomy (.93 for sales manager and .94 for salesperson responses) fell within acceptable ranges (See Table 3: Measures: Scales, Respondents and Reliability).

The reduced version of the INDSALES scale was used to measure salesperson satisfaction (Comer, Machliet and Lagace 1989).

Analysis: Initial Test and Jack-knife Iterations

For each sales manager in the sample, dyadic difference scores were calculated by subtracting the responses of (or about) one subordinate from the responses of (or about) another subordinate. The absolute difference between a manager's set of matched responses was subjected to t-test. To assure that the t-tests were based on independent observations, each observation (i.e., matched salesperson-manager response) was used once in each analysis.

Because more than two matched sets of responses were received per manager, a jack-knife procedure was used to repeat the t-tests. (See Figure 1 for Sample Configuration and Calculation of Difference Scores.) Each repetition replaced one matched set of responses (i.e., dyad) and recalculated a difference score. All possible combinations of salesperson differences (for any one manager) were examined using this method. If, for example, matched responses were received for three salespeople reporting to the same manager (e.g., SP_1, SP_2, SP_3 reporting to SM_1), the initial t-test would be based on one pairwise combination (e.g. ,SP_1 compared to SP_2). Two jack-knife iterations would then be conducted to examine the other two pairwise combinations (e.g., SP_1 compared to SP_3 and SP_2 compared to SP_3). The stability of the results was examined by analyzing the distribution of the resultant t-statistics.

Table 3
Measures: Scales, Respondents and Reliabilities
(n = 74 manager-salesperson matched responses)

Variable	Number of Items	Respondent	Average	Std. Dev.	Coefficient Alpha
Quality of Relationship	3	Salesperson	15.82	0.43	0.88
	3	Sales Mgr.	15.18	0.44	0.91
Sales Call Autonomy	9	Salesperson	55.00	1.05	0.94
	9	Sales Mgr.	52.21	0.90	0.93
Global Autonomy	4	Salesperson	22.76	0.57	0.85
Satisfaction w/ supervision	4	Salesperson	21.97	0.68	0.89
Satisfaction w/ company	4	Salesperson	18.13	0.61	0.84
Satisfaction w/ customer	4	Salesperson	19.92	0.46	0.83
Satisfaction w/ promotion	4	Salesperson	16.84	0.55	0.75
Satisfaction w/ pay	4	Salesperson	17.36	0.68	0.86
Satisfaction w/ job	4	Salesperson	22.55	0.55	0.91

Seven point scale used for all items.

RESULTS

The average difference in perceived relationship quality was significant. The average difference from the viewpoint of the salesperson was 2.99 and from the sales manager's viewpoint it was 2.69. The t-tests comparing each of these averages (to the null or a mean of zero) were significant at a probability of .0001. (See Table 4: Differences in Same Manager Dyads: Averages, Standard Deviation and t-statistic.) Salespeople reporting to the same manager differ in terms of how they rate their working relationship with that manager. These results show that the manager is aware of the differences in the quality of working relationships he or she develops with each of his or her salespeople.

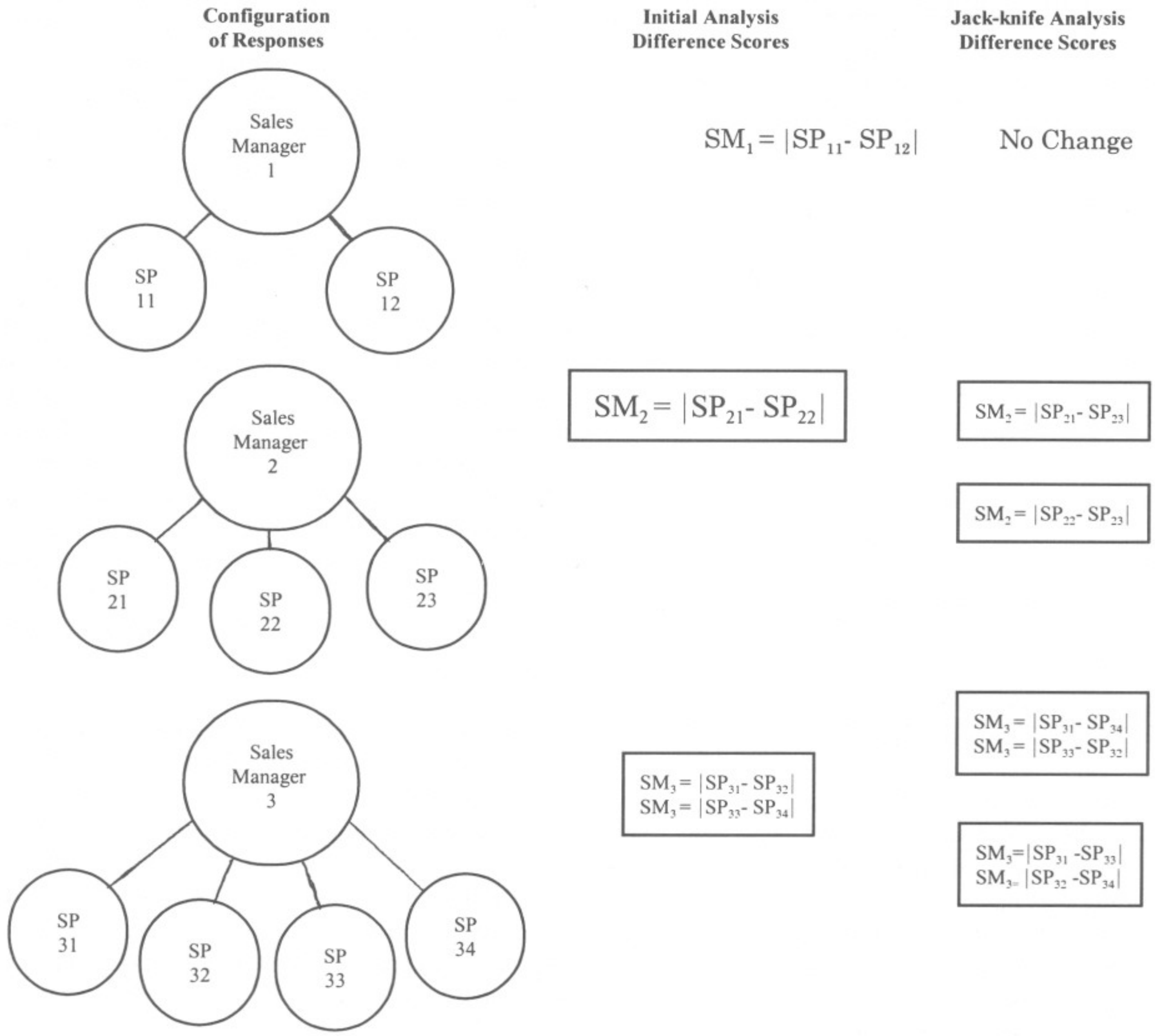
Table 4
Differences in Same Manager Dyads:
Averages, Standard Deviation and t-statistic

Variable	Average Difference	Standard Deviation	Value of t-statistic	Probability
H_1				
Quality of Relationship (salesperson)	2.99	0.39	7.63	0.0001
Quality of Relationship (manager)	2.69	0.47	5.66	0.0001
H_2				
Sales Call Autonomy (salesperson)	7.83	1.04	7.49	0.0001
Sales Call Autonomy (manager)	5.37	1.00	5.36	0.0001
Global Autonomy	4.63	0.69	6.87	0.0001
H_3				
Satisfaction with supervision	4.57	0.77	5.95	0.0001

(n = 34 managers)

Since these t-tests are based on a rather small sample of 34 difference scores, the analyses was repeated with one difference score recalculated on each iteration. As described previously, each recalculation was based either on the replacement of one

Figure 1
Configuration of Sample and Calculations of Difference Scores



(salesperson-manager) dyad or on a new pairwise combination of dyads. Every iteration produced significant t-statistics . Further, 95 percent or more of these iterations produced test statistics that fell within two standard deviations of the average test statistic (See Table 5: Difference in Same Manager Dyads: Jack-knife Results). Thus, from both salesperson perspective and sales manager perspective - and across different combinations of dyads, the first hypothesis is supported.

Differences in autonomy over specific sales call related tasks were significant from both dyad members' perspectives. The average difference in autonomy for salespeople reporting to the same manager was 7.83. The average difference in sales manager responses was 5.37. These differences were significant (with t-statistics of 7.49 and 5.36 respectively). Global measures of autonomy were consistent with these results. The average difference in salesperson perceived global autonomy was 4.63, significant at a p-level of .0001.

Table 5
Difference in Same Manager Dyads:
Jack-knife Results - 21 Iterations

Variable	Average t-statistic	Standard Deviation	% of t-statistics within 1 Std. Dev.	% of 5-statistics within 2 Std. Dev.
H_1				
Quality of Relationship (salesperson)	7.75	0.23	62%	100%
Quality of Relationship (manager)	5.86	0.18	67%	95%
H_2				
Sales Call Autonomy (salesperson)	7.11	0.18	71%	95%
Sales Call Autonomy (manager)	5.32	0.13	72%	100%
Global Autonomy	6.92	0.13	62%	100%
H_3				
Satisfaction with supervision	5.69	0.23	43%	100%

(sample size of each iteration 34 dyads)

When this analysis was subjected to jack-knife analysis, the stability of these results was confirmed. The distribution of test statistics for specific autonomy was highly concentrated as 71 percent to 72 percent of the t-values fell within one standard deviation of the average t-statistic. The distribution of global autonomy also indicates stable results since 100 percent of the iterations produced test statistics no more than two standard deviations from the average t-value. Significant dyadic differences exist in terms of either specific or global measures of autonomy. These differences were significant regardless of whether these measures were based on salesperson perceptions or manager perceptions. Thus, the second hypothesis was supported.

The initial t-test indicates salespeople reporting to the same manager are not equally satisfied with supervision. The average difference in same manager subordinates' satisfaction with supervision was 4.57 (std. dev.77). This difference was significant with a t-statistic of 5.95. The repetitions of this comparison did produce significant t-test results. In the case of satisfaction with supervision, the distribution of these test statistics tended to be somewhat bimodal (29 percent of the iterations at the low end of 5.36 and 38 percent at the high end of 5.83). Since the t-statistics were all large (the smallest was 5.36), it is unlikely that this pattern would undermine the support of the third hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

By comparing same manager dyads, this study explicitly tested for the existence of dyadic differences. The same sales manager was making distinctions between his or her salespeople. Dyadic differences were apparent to both dyad members. Managers in this sample of ten different companies admit and recognize they were making distinctions between their salespeople. These distinctions apply to both the quality of the relationships developed and the amount of autonomy granted each salesperson.

Sales managers realize they cannot develop nor enjoy high quality working relationships with all of their salespeople. Typically, leadership studies make recommendations concerning how to achieve high quality working relationships with all subordinates. This may not be a realistic recommendation. Since some level of variation between salesperson-manager dyads is likely to exist, the next question is how much variation is acceptable. Under some circumstances (and perhaps within some acceptable ranges of variation) dyadic differences may have positive overall job-outcomes. These results of this study and those of Tanner, Dunn and Chonko (1993) suggest wider variations in same-manager dyads may result in perceptions of procedural injustice or favoritism.

Results of this study may provide some insights into previous research efforts concerning sales force control systems. Sales manager behaviors explained a substantial portion of variance in control system measures (Oliver and Anderson 1994). Results here imply this variance may be attributable to distinctions sales managers are making between their different sales subordinates (i.e., sales managers vary the degree of autonomy allowed each of their subordinates). Findings here suggest the basis for this variation is the nature of each subordinate, rather than a corporate-wide systematic approach to monitoring, controlling or allowing autonomy to the sales force.

Just as sales managers draw distinctions between salespeople, salespeople differ in their assessments of the manager. Satisfaction with supervision was not the same for each sales manager's subordinates. Implicit leadership theories suggest that when a manager does not behave in a manner that the subordinate believes is consistent with effective leadership styles, the subordinate's ratings will be affected. While the majority of salespeople tend to prefer the "warm" and supportive style of leadership, they do not agree on whether the sales manager should be directive or submissive (Hite and Bellizzi 1986). Thus, the same sales manager behavior can result in different satisfaction levels.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

By collecting responses from both salesperson and manager within the same work group (i.e., salespeople reporting to the same manager), this study established that dyadic differences are pervasive. Since we now know that dyadic differences exist in this context, future studies could examine the effect of those differences. There may be some acceptable and unacceptable ranges in dyadic differences. When the differences between same-manager dyads are too high, the salespeople may believe the manager is being unfair and showing favoritism. When the differences fall into more moderate levels, the manager may be seen as engaging in acceptable levels of discretion and judgment. This study focused on showing that the same manager does differentiate. Future studies could examine the effect of varying degrees of manager differentiation.

This study relied on an empirical estimation method (i.e., jack-knife) to examine multiple managers across multiple companies. It is, however, an estimation method. A more homogeneous sample (or one with more observations per company) would eliminate the need for this estimate. This may be especially useful since some studies claim dyadic differences are not important in every type of sales position (Yammarino and Dubinsky 1992). Studies that restrict the sample to fewer sales positions may be able to provide more dyadic measures.

A validation of dyadic differences was provided in this study. These differences existed in both salesperson responses and manager responses, in both global and specific measures and in various combinations of dyads. While this study provided a rigorous test of dyadic differences, more work is needed to explain these differences. Methods such as within and between analyses offer some promise. Using within and between analysis, researchers can compare variation due to within group (same manager) and between group (across managers within the same company or industry). Employing this type of analysis, we can examine both outcomes and antecedents of LMX.

Managerial Implications

Sales managers do not and perhaps should not expect to develop the same type of working relationship with each of his or her salespeople. Attempts to find the "one best" leadership approach, therefore, is probably not a fruitful pursuit. A sales manager who is attempting to be consistent in his or her leadership style should realize the perceptions of that same style will differ from one subordinate to another. The same behavior may not be equally appreciated and different satisfaction levels will result.

Rather than aspiring to one ideal leadership style, it may be more realistic for sales managers to find an acceptable range of different behaviors. These different behaviors may result in a range of different types of working relationships. Finding and defining an acceptable range of dyadic differences is, of course, the challenging part of management. The type of sales position may affect dyadic differences. Finding an acceptable range of dyadic differences may be more important in more structured environments and/or for those salespeople selling tangible products (Yammarino and Dubinsky 1992). When the salesperson is employed by the firm (not acting as an independent agent) and is more dependent upon the manager, the dyadic differences become more important.

Sales managers should consider the possible advantages and disadvantages associated with these dyadic differences. Development of highly different dyadic relationships may alienate or disenfranchise a salesperson. Tanner, Dunn and Chonko (1993) found more stress for lower quality dyads when the sales manager was seen as showing "favoritism". On the other hand, if a sales manager attempts to develop equal and moderate levels of dyadic differences, performance may suffer. If salespeople are competing for favored status and the accompanying resources, then dyadic differences may be an effective internal selection process.

There are limits, however, to the differences in same-manager dyads. While a sales manager should expect that not all of his or her salespeople will be equally satisfied with supervision, the same cannot be said of differences in satisfaction with pay, promotion or job. Regardless of salesperson-manager dyads, salespeople tend to share the same level of satisfaction with issues that are not under the direct and complete control of the sales manager. Dyadic differences should be expected and may be the norm, in terms of how much freedom a sales manager allows, the quality of the salesperson-manager relationship and the salesperson's satisfaction with that supervisor.

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