Confidence and Enthusiasm in Sales Presentations

Robert S Heiser
University of Maine Portland

David McArthur
Utah Valley University

ABSTRACT

Confidence and enthusiasm are considered critical to sales performance, as well as job performance and satisfaction. However, the literature has little discussion of how confidence and enthusiasm impact the overall sales process. We examine the National Collegiate Sales Contest (NCSC) scoring system within marketing classes and note that there are significant differences in individual scores on confidence and enthusiasm; these differences separate our sample into three distinct classes of personal sales learners. The paper confirms the importance of confidence and enthusiasm in student role-play presentations and notes the implications for instructors and practitioners in sales training programs.

Keywords: sales performance, confidence, enthusiasm

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Confidence and enthusiasm have long been linked to overall sales performance and as prerequisites to success in personal selling. In an early model of sales performance, Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1977) propose that self-esteem, perceived competence, and ability are motivational components critical to gaining sales experience and increased job performance. Similarly, confidence, a reflection of individual character, and a generalized personal belief in one's own abilty, contribute to positive sales outcomes (Bagozzi, 1978). Confidence and enthusiasm are also among the few selling dimensions that managers and industry salespeople, alike see as requisite to new client sales (Weilbaker, 1990). Further, in sales presentations, weak versus strong nonverbal signals of confidence create a significant difference in perceived product value (Heiser, 2005), and low enthusiasm has been flagged as a potential reason for new salespeople leaving the sales profession (Johnston, Hair, & Boles, 1989).

Self-confidence is defined as a degree of certainty about a perception, event, or outcome; at trial, the perceived confidence of an expert witness has implications for credibility and belief by juries (Cramer, Neal & Brodsky, 2009a). Stajkovic (2006) puts confidence forward as a higher order construct composed of hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience with positive implications for performance, attitudes, and subjective well-being. Enthusiasm, on the other hand, has been characterized in the sales presentation as "active and ardent engagement" with the client (Taute, Heiser & McArthur, 2011). Enthusiasm is also discussed as ardent zeal toward a goal or objective; a strong, yet controlled, motivation (Glassman & McAfee, 1990).

Beyond business and sales communication, confidence and enthusiasm have been noted as contributing to performance in a number of contexts. For example, by deliberately exuding confidence and enthusiasm teachers can improve learning and their student evaluations (Coffey & Gibbs, 2001; Lincoln, 2008). In industry, new product innovations need confident and enthusiastic champions to be successful (Howell, 2005). In the courtroom, studies have shown that expert witness confidence has a curvilinear relationship with jurors' ratings of credibility; moderately confident expert witnesses had the highest credibility ratings and the most influence on sentencing outcomes (Cramer, Brodsky & DeCoster, 2009b). In academia, the expressed self-confidence of college students is consistent with other's appraisals, leads to selection of activities consistent with higher levels of confidence, and raises expectations of more favorable life outcomes (Shrauger & Schonhn, 1995). Further, self-confidence, as a psychological trait, is positively correlated with several measures of cognitive test performance (Stankov & Lee, 2008).

Despite finding confidence and enthusiasm to be efficacious in performance across a multitude of scenarios, the overall literature provides little indication of how confidence and enthusiasm in the salesperson influence sales presentation outcomes (Taute et al., 2011). Indeed, difficulties in the measurement and theoretical support for these constructs (Cramer et al., 2009a), may have contributed a shortage of research on the role of confidence and enthusiasm in personal selling over the past several decades. To fill this research lacuna, we first demonstrate that levels

of enthusiasm and confidence are measureable in student sales presentations. We then examine how these attributes are correlated with and predictive of individual sales performance ratings. Our discourse concludes that confidence and enthusiasm are discernible attributes and have important implications for both self and witness-perceived sales presentations.

1.2 Literature Review

Self-confidence is a person's self-appraisal of their skill, competence, and ability to perform effectively in a given context (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995). Confidence in the salesperson is studied as both a generalized and context specific attribute stemming from and consequently leading to superior performance (Bagozzi, 1978; Walker et al., 1977). In this sense self-confidence is a self-fulfilling prophecy, some level of self-confidence is necessary to performance in a given environment; superior performances further enhance individual self-confidence and result in performance improvement. Confidence is related to, but distinct from self-esteem; self-esteem is the more holistic affective perception of individual contribution, value, and significance (Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001), while confidence is a self-appraisal of abilities (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995).Within interpersonal interactions, confidence is a personal disposition or state that varies with the state of each social relationship (Salmela-Aro & Nurmi, 1996). Confidence is also related to self-efficacy; where self-efficacy is a targeted perception of one's ability to perform a specific behavior and a level of certainty in that performance (Cramer et al., 2009a).

The importance of confidence and enthusiasm in salespeople has been demonstrated in several contexts. Bagozzi (1978) shows that self-esteem, as a function of the general, specific, and social perceptions of one's competence, is related to job performance and satisfaction in industrial salespeople. Experimental designs demonstrate a cause and effect relationship between perceived confidence and attributions of product value and worth (Heiser, 2005). Baer (1983) states unequivocally that enthusiasm by an ardent believer is a requisite to effective presentations. Similarly, salespeople, sales managers, and physicians agree that enthusiasm is required for success in missionary selling (Weilbaker, 1990). Prior research on confidence and enthusiasm in student role-play performances failed to find confidence and enthusiasm as correlated with, or predictive of, overall presentation performance ratings, however, instances of individuals where a significant positive or negative impact on performance were noted (Taute et al., 2011).

As the subjective appraisal of one's capabilities and performance, research suggests that confidence has cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995). The cognitive dimension relates to performance as evaluated by absolute and social standards; confident people achieve personal objectives, do well in relation to others, and perform effectively (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995). Emotionally, people with greater self-confidence are comfortable in their own skin, enthusiastic, and experience less dread, anxiety, and depression than those lacking confidence (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995). Others are also able to recognize self-confidence as it may be displayed in demeanor, style of interaction, and a readiness to engage in activities (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995). College students are shown to have varying

levels of self-confidence as more confident students were more positive in their expectations for themselves, both in absolute terms and relative to others (Shrauger & Schohn, 1995).

Confidence is also studied as an attribute of expert witness testimony leading to impressions of credibility and persuasiveness; witnesses are instructed to make appropriate eye contact with attorneys and jurors, maintain good posture, respond honestly, and speak clearly (Boccaccini, Gordon, & Brodsky, 2005). Experimental manipulations of preparation for witnesses at trial, including confident and energetic items, produce increases in witness credibility and persuasiveness (Boccaccini et al., 2005). The credibility of expert witnesses increases with a measure of confidence and witness confidence has significant positive effects on likability, trustworthiness, and perceived knowledge; an inverted 'U' pattern of effects is demonstrated in this case with medium levels of confidence having the most effect (Cramer, et al., 2009b).

Demonstrations or measures of confidence or enthusiasm in other sales or marketing contexts are limited. In advertising response contexts, personal self-confidence mediates response to persuasion, however, the form this relationship takes is subject to debate and may be a contingent one (Bither & Wright, 1973). Consumer self-confidence is discussed as a precursor to experience with products, contributes to self-confidence with regard to specific products, and influences consumer information search processes (Bearden et al., 2001). Consumer self-confidence was shown to be formed of several dimensions including abilities in information search and processing, product and market knowledge, anticipation of personal and social outcomes, persuasion knowledge, and self-efficacy in market interactions (Bearden et al., 2001).

Thus, we are left with the unenviable task in this research of finding support for the factors of good sales performance by students which should include both factors of confidence and of enthusiasm without free-standing definitions of them separately fitted to the marketing setting. The National Collegiate Sales Contest (NCSC) form uses a single item confidence and enthusiasm measure as part of overall sales performance. Because the NCSC is used in dozens of personal selling and sales programs, we use the NCSC measurements as a first step in evaluating confidence and enthusiasm and sales performance

1.3 Hypotheses

Prior research suggests that confidence and enthusiasm have a huge impact on overall sales performance (Johnston et al., 1989; Weilbaker, 1990); a lack of confidence has been linked to the price offered for products (Heiser, 2005). Confidence and enthusiasm are characteristics of successful salespeople (Weilbaker, 1990), and failure is associated with a lack of enthusiasm and confidence (Johnston et al., 1989). The attributes of confidence and enthusiasm can have a large influence during a sales presentation (e.g., Bagozzi, 1978; Heiser, 2005); accordingly, in the rating form for the National Collegiate Sales Competition (NCSC) the overall sales measurement dimension has an item rating the "confidence and enthusiasm" of the salesperson. This suggests that there are differences in the different levels of confidence and enthusiasm within sales presentations. However, Taute et al. (2011) fail to find support for the relationship of confidence

and enthusiasm with presentation performance across their sample, although they note large positive and negative variances for individuals in their samples.

Because personal selling techniques require the learning of both verbal such as voice inflection and nonverbal motor skills such as head nodding and smiling, we draw on the findings from experimental psychology on motor skill learning as a foundation for our first hypothesis (Smith, 2011; Wade & Whiting, 1986). Motor skill learning such as mirroring a client's body posture is a continuous process where actions are acquired and refined with practice at nonlinear rates and varying absorption rates for different people (Logan, 1988). Motor skills are gradually acquired via a power law function that reflects the dynamics of interpersonal perception, cognition and action and the difficulty of applying many motor skills simultaneously in a real-life personal encounter (Murre & Chessa, 2011; Newell, Liu, & Mayer-Kress, 2001; Shaw & Alley, 1985). Because motor skills are applied differently based on the interaction between perception and action, and these skills are acquired on a steep learning curve, it is normal for a population group to acquire these perceptual-action-response behaviors at differential rates (Lee, Magill, & Weeks, 1985; Magill & Anderson, 2007).

Researchers have attempted to classify learners who need to acquire motor skills into groups based on the speed and accuracy of newly acquired skills. The number of learner latent classes can vary by situation and context; for example, adult literacy learners can be grouped into five classes (Strucker, Yamamoto & Kirsch, 2007), adolescent word learning into five classes (Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010), general sports coordination habits into two classes (Busch & Strauss, 2005), and high school sports teamwork skills into two classes (Wang et al., 2007). Identification of latent classes has important teaching implications as different classes of learners at different stages of learning may require different types of feedback and reinforcement, such as additional visual posturing and modeling (Carroll & Bandura, 1985; Fagundes, Chen & Laguna, 2013) or reinforced information on body movements during practice sessions (Newell et al, 2001).

Sales trainees learn and practice a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal motor skills such as voice control, body posture, and head, eye and hand movements as they emulate good interpersonal personal sales behaviors and exude confidence and enthusiasm. These models of motor skills are taught as context specific, as excellent salesmanship requires adaptation to the client's own mood, gestures and verbal and nonverbal cues (Pelham & Kravitz, 2008; Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986). The interaction between client and salesperson resembles interaction in other venues such as sport and military activities, where participants use their learned skills in an interactive social environment that varies per client and situation. We could find no literature in the services, marketing or sales areas specifying learner skills latent classes or latent profiles; however, given the overwhelming evidence of a power function for acquiring general motor skills and the complex interactive nature of personal sales encounters, we expect to find up to five distinct classes of student learners.

H1: There are distinct classes of student personal selling learners within student role-play sales presentations.

Taute et al. (2011) suggest that non-verbal signaling has differential effects on phases or aspects of the role-play sales presentation; strong nonverbal communications have been positive correlated to the approach phase and negatively correlated to overcoming objections and closing selling phases. While the current research proposes that personal selling learners may be divided into classes or subgroups on the basis of their perceived confidence and enthusiasm, the effects of verbal and behavioral cues to the confidence and enthusiasm may not contribute equally, or for that matter positively, across the approach, needs identification, presentation, overcoming objections, and close phases of the role-play sales presentation.

For example, prior research emphasizes the importance of first impressions in the sales encounter (LaTour, Henthorne, & Williams, 1989; Naylor, 2007). Similarly, the Taute et al. (2011) finding of a negative relationship between overt nonverbal signals and the overcoming objections and closing reinforces the importance of active listening during these phases (Castleberry & Shepherd, 1993). We therefore expect that perceived verbal and nonverbal signals of confidence and enthusiasm will be differentially effective in the opening versus the closing parts of sales presentation, specifically:

H2: Confidence and enthusiasm will be (H2a) positively correlated with salesperson performance in the initial phases of the sales of approach and needs identification and (H2b) negatively correlated with salesperson performance in the latter stages of product presentation, overcoming objections and close of the role-play performance.

Social psychologists have focused primarily on positive psychology over the past decade, with many studies of emotions and traits that lead to enhanced well-being and positive experiences (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). However, recently researchers have noted that positive traits, experiences and emotions may not be linearly related to emotional outcomes (Davis, 2009). For example, extremely cheerful people tend to engage in riskier behaviors (Martin et al., 2002) and high levels of positive emotions tend to depress creativity (Davis, 2009). Communications and legal research has shown moderate levels of confidence can produce more effective interpersonal communications, while extreme confidence actually may disrupt communication (Cramer, et al., 2009b). We note from classroom experience that it is easy to overdo enthusiasm, especially with excessive nonverbal gestures. We thus conclude that confidence and enthusiasm may also be nonmonotonic. In fact, the effects of confidence and enthusiasm will be curvilinear with low and high levels of confidence and extreme both leading to less effective overall sales presentation scores.

H3: There is a curvilinear (inverted U-shape) relationship between students' evaluations on the NCSC confidence and enthusiasm item and overall sales performance ratings. At low or high levels of confidence and enthusiasm, sales performance is lower than at moderate levels of confidence and enthusiasm.

2. METHOD

2.1 Measures

The National Collegiate Sales Competition is formatted to allow students from different educational and experiential backgrounds to compete in a realistic, if highly structured, role-play sales presentation. The sales competition system evaluates sales presentations on five fundamental phases of sales, namely, approach, needs assessment, presentation, handling objections and the close, as well two additional dimensions of communications skills dimension and overall sales impact. The seven dimensions weighted separately from 5 to 25 percent and then summed for a total score ranging from 0-10, with 10 being the best (Loe & Chonko, 2000). The overall performance score contains two items, a single item rating the role-play salesperson's confidence and enthusiasm in the encounter while the other assesses apparent product knowledge. This study evaluates the impact of 'salesperson enthusiasm and confidence' and the total sales performance within the NCSC rating system.

2.2 Research Design

The personal selling class taught by some of the authors at a mid-sized, public university in the USA's Mountain West region employed an experiential-practice format using the NCSC template. Course content, learning materials, and several role-play exercises employed are consistent with the form and format of the NCSC evaluation form. In this format, students participated in recorded exercises designed to mimic the introductory telephone call, the initial approach, and the qualifying/needs identification aspects of the sales presentation prior to participating in a final role-play sales presentation. Students watched the recorded episodes and evaluated each other's performance using evaluative criteria; student grades for each of these role-play exercises were formed by the mean scores of their classmates (Tanner & Roberts, 1996; Widmier, Loe, & Seldon, 2007). Final class sales presentations were completed by the end of the semester, with all other class members evaluating the performances.

Assessment and validity of student role-play data has been found to be comparable to naturally occurring, similarly structured behavior (St. Lawrence, Kirksey, & Moore, 1983). This supports the use of student-assessed data from role-plays to understand the dynamics of complex processes (see, for example, Gallagher & Hargie, 1989). The efficacy of role-plays as well as other teaching devices is enhanced by use of and familiarity with a rubric (Wolf & Stevens, 2007), which the NCSC form serves as in this study.

The final role-play presentation, as illustrative of every student's learning in the professional selling class, accounted for 30% of each student's grade for the course. Students not presenting in a given role-play earned 10% of their final grade by evaluating the acting student's role-play presentation using the NCSC form as a rubric. Presenting students self-selected a product of choice, a confederate to act as buyer, and set the scene prior to beginning the role-play presentation. Evaluating students used the NCSC form and rated each aspect of a student's presentation from 1-10 (10 being the best) per NCSC instructions. The NCSC student data was

then entered into SPSS to derive student scores on the seven dimensions with weighted averages determining the student's final score.

2.3 Sample

The sample consisted of 142 undergraduate students enrolled in four sections of a personal selling class at a mountain west university. Most students were advanced business majors and were within one or two years of completing their degree. The age range of the student sample was homogeneous traditional college students. Less than 10% of the respondents were above 25 years old. There were less than 30% of the classroom sample were non-Caucasian and women represented less than 30% of the sample. There were no missing data.

3. RESULTS

In studies reporting the results of experimental manipulations or interventions, it is normal practive to specitfy the interventions as interntional or random treatements. That is, were all participants assigned to conditions included in the data analysis regardless of whether they actually received the intervention, or were only participants who completed the intervention satisfactorily included? Latent class analysis (LCA) is a cluster technique that assumes a heterogeneous population of individuals can be grouped into a finite number of homogeneous subgroups or classes (McCutcheon, 1987). In the LCA model, individuals are fit into a latent categorical variable that divides the sample into distinct homogeneous classes. In our study, we examine up to five potential classes of sales learners through LCA based on perceived levels of confidence and enthusiasm. The determination on the number of the classes is based on the model fit statistics such as Akaike information criterion (AIC), Bayes information criterion (BIC) and posterior model probabilities and a Lo–Mendell–Rubin –Likelihood-Ratio latent class test. Smaller AIC and BIC values suggest a better fitting model, (Burnham & Anderson, 2002). Following the suggestions from Muthen and Muthen, (1998; 2010), the LMR-RT are also employed to test any differences between latent classes by testing nested groups.

Our results indicate support for a three-class solution as compared to the other c-1 class solutions estimated (Table 1). Of the models tested, the three-class solution model contained the lowest estimated values of BIC (601.19) and AIC (475.19) and the lowest model log likelihood fit statistic (-169.47). In evaluating the follow-up LMR-LRT nested c-1 group tests, our results indicate that the one- and two-class solutions should be rejected, $p < .01$, while we failed to reject a three-class solution, $p = .268$. Table 1 contains the number of free parameters along with values for BIC, AIC, model fit, and the LMR-LRT statistic for each latent class solution tested. Values for the best-fitting three-class solution are also in bold in Table 1 (Appendix).

In examining our three-class solution, approximately 39% (n = 55) of the sample was estimated to belong to the first class, which we will label as good performers. Approximately 16% (n = 22) belong to the second class, which we will label as struggling; the remaining 45% (n = 65) belong to the third class which we label as superior performers. The results of our latent

class analyses revealed all classes were significantly different from one another in terms of standardized mean subscale scores. This suggests that those lacking in confidence and enthusiasm are perceived as performing less well in each phase of the role-play presentation. Figure 1 shows the standardized means for each sales phase, confidence and enthusiasm and presentation score according to latent class. We note that the greatest variance between latent classes occurs within the confidence and enthusiasm dimension.

To test H2, we examine the partial correlation coefficients between the sales phases and confidence and enthusiasm, controlling for the overall presentation score. Our analysis confirms the impact of confidence and enthusiasm within the sales encounter. There is a positive impact in the initial sales phases and negative impact in the later phases. Confidence and enthusiasm was significant ($p<.05$) with a positive correlation to the approach phase where sales people gain attention and build rapport ($r = .373$) and identify the client's needs ($r=.228$). Confidence and enthusiasm was significant ($p<.05$) and negatively related to product presentation ($r = -.195$) and closing the sale ($r = -.171$); it was negatively correlated, but not significant in overcoming objections sales phase ($r = -.037$, $p=.655$). The positive relationship of confidence and enthusiasm and the approach phase is consistent with prior research delineating the importance of first impressions (Henthorne et al., 1989; Naylor, 2007). Confidence and enthusiasm may be negatively related to presenting the product since both the prospect and the observers are awaiting cognitive, rational explanation and demonstrations of functions, features, and benefits rather than additional salesperson exuberance. In a similar fashion, attempts to close the sale with confidence and enthusiasm rather than verbal persuasion can backfire and lead to interpersonal tension and feelings of sales pressure.

To test H3, the relationship between the confidence and enthusiasm measure and total sales rating was assessed with a hierarchical regression model. To test for curvilinear effects the confidence scores were entered as linear and squared terms (Aiken & West, 1991; Janssen, 2001). In the regression first step, the NCSC sales phases of approach, needs identification, presentation, handling objections and close were entered as control variables. Confidence and enthusiasm scores were added as a linear term in step 2 and as a squared term in step 3. An inverted U relationship would be indicated by significant positive linear and negative squared effects for our independent variable. Results of the hierarchical regression are summarized in Table 2. For the control variables of the five sales phases, the approach, presentation and close were significantly correlated to overall sales score. The five sales phases contributed 69.1% of the model explained variance. The linear term for confidence and enthusiasm yielded a significant and positive result in step 2, supporting a linear relationship with the total sales score. In step 3, both the linear and quadratic terms for confidence and enthusiasm produced significant effects, accounting for 94.5% of the total sales score variance. Model 3 yielded significant positive linear and significant negative quadratic effects. Model 3 results thus provided partial support for hypothesis three.

These mixed findings point toward the role of confidence and enthusiasm contribute in overall sales presentation performance, with believable confidence and enthusiasm (latent class 3) leading to better presentation scores and less believable (latent class 2) confidence and enthusiasm behaviors leading to lower sales presentation scores.

4. DISCUSSION

The field of experimental psychology may be a useful guide to addressing the different needs of the different latent classes of student learners. For example, motor skills research has noted that learners in the initial stages of learning new verbal and nonverbal sales behaviors, such as proper handshake techniques, may not learn as quickly with visual demonstrations as they would with cognitive explanations (Carroll & Bandura, 1985) or other sensory feedback, such as auditory explanation (Black & Wright, 2000; Zelaznik, Shapiro, & Newell, 1978). In addition, other studies on the timing and duration of post-performance feedback indicate that immediate, cognitive-oriented input works best to change future performance (Newell, 1976). Thus, students who are still in the early stages of learning motor skills, such as our study's latent class two learners, are better served with immediate explanatory feedback rather than a visual demonstration of "here's how to do it." Because learners in latent class two are struggling across many sales phases, allowing them to process the feedback information into a framework or schema and subsequently asking them to verbally repeat the process with the new information may be the best way to impact verbal and nonverbal motor skills (Magill & Anderson, 2007; Schmidt, et al., 1989; Shute, 2008).

Learners in latent class one are already displaying competent verbal and nonverbal skills in many sales presentation phases, although the largest mean difference between LC1 and the top performers is in the proper display of confidence and enthusiasm. Sales presentation improvements for LC1 students can be achieved through small, incremental task rehearsals or with suggestions asking the students to scale-up tasks their existing skills (Newell & Rosenbloom, 1981). For example, asking some LC1 learners to focus increased attention to maintaining eye contact and "smiling with your eyes" could produce more effective sales presentations by conveying more sales confidence. When trying to improve existing skills, the learner will need knowledge about his or her immediate presentation behavior as well as information on how the recommended changes will improve presentation outcome. The latter allows LC1 learners to place the recommendations into their sales schema or framework. Suggestions for motor skills improvements should be limited to one or two-degrees of task constraints or kinetic changes rather than an entire whole body of new motions or responses (Newell & Rosenbloom, 1981).

Latent class three learners are displaying superior sales presentation skills across most or all sales presentation phases. For these students, skills can be optimized and controlled through better insights into their perceptual environment. Noting sales signals missed or nonverbal confirmatory opportunities allow LC3 learners to sharpen their situational awareness (Newell et al., 2001). Better perceptions of the sales situation for LC3 students should lead to better adaptation and movement control without the need for prescriptive, "how to" training. New feedback information can be used as a basis for learning how to search for additional client sales cues, so LC3 students can adapt to new signals in a highly interactive, dynamic environment. In addition, LC3 learners have already integrated much of the stimulus-reaction sales knowledge into their own schema and frameworks. These students are a valuable resource for classroom

feedback on their own personal process of closing the loop between personal selling theory, perception and action. Collaborating with LC3 students should increase student engagement and learning inside the sales classroom (Campbell et al., 2007; Little & Williams, 2010; Tanner & Roberts, 1996).

The results of our study point toward a complex relationship between the measure of confidence and enthusiasm and the total sales presentation score. Instead of a constant, high level of fervor in the sales presentation, our study points to the need for varying application of informed, enthusiastic engagement. Finding that confidence and enthusiasm single item is positively related to total sales performance in the introduction and needs identification sales phases while becoming negative in the presentation, overcoming objections, and closing phases should allow educators and trainers to encourage displays of confidence and enthusiasm in the former and empathetic, active listening (e.g., Castleberry & Shepherd, 1993) in the latter.

There is evidence that confidence and enthusiasm are not strictly monotonic independent variables, as low and high levels of confidence and enthusiasm can lead to less effective sales presentation performance. These results help explain prior mixed research findings in sales effectiveness studies, as Johnston et al. (1989) found low confidence leads to poor performance, enthusiasm is required for success in missionary selling (Weilbaker, 1990); however, confidence and enthusiasm were only marginally related to overall sales presentation effectiveness in the study by Taute et al. (2011). Although sales managers have intuitively known that too much confidence and enthusiasm can be perceived as arrogance and ultimately negatively impact sales performance, this study is the first to model the complex relationship between confidence, overconfidence and sales presentation effectiveness. These findings should help sales managers and trainers find the “tipping point” between adequate confidence and enthusiasm and the pushy, overbearing, salesperson with excessive zeal.

5. FUTURE RESEARCH

These findings highlight new challenges and opportunities for sales research. Finding nonmonotonic relationships between sales phases and behavior, and sales effectiveness complicates sales training programs and research programs, as everyone may need to be sensitive to ideal and non-ideal behavior for conveying confidence and enthusiasm. However, there is opportunity for researchers to examine specific verbal and nonverbal behavior to define effective behaviors and their associated intensity and frequency attributes. Development of multi-item measures for the verbal and behavioral markers of confidence and enthusiasm may enhance educator and sales trainers in this regard. Additionally, experimental research that varies the treatment levels at multiple intensities and behavior will help to identify optimum verbal and behavioral levels for confidence and enthusiasm the in each of the sales presentation phases.

Future studies could examine the role of information processing and cognitive frameworks for sales trainees in acquiring personal selling motor skills. Current academic and training literature does not identify how information is incorporated into a highly interactive sales environment that demands complex verbal and nonverbal behavior for excellence. Specifically, it

is not clear what types of information and feedback are effective for different latent classes of learners nor do we understand the best behavioral "constraints" that would help students perform better. Finally, the nonlinear nature of learning nonverbal motor skills such as head nodding and body posture means that research needs to probe different learner latent classes, as different types of feedback will lead to motor skills and sales effectiveness gains.

Sales effectiveness may also be affected by the selling context such status of the relationship with the customer, the type of marketplace, consumer or business markets, or cultural customs and norms. In addition, the confidence and enthusiasm- overall presentation relationship is likely to be moderated by other important personal selling variables. For example, age may interact with the enthusiasm, as potential customers may be more likely to forgive youthful exuberance. Although positive psychology researchers generally prefer to investigate positive outcomes (e.g. Grant & Schwartz, 2011), sales theory would be more complete if researchers would discover how and why personal attributes or behavior excess harms sales outcomes. It is possible that other recommended sales behaviors exhibit "vitamin effects" (Warr, 2007), with some resembling vitamins A's and D's negative effects above a certain level and others resembling Vitamins C's and E's with no incremental or harmful effects above a recommended level. Investigating nonmonotonic sales effects will provide valuable insights on sales performance and its limits and boundaries.

REFERENCES

Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Baer, D. H. (1983). *Selling management on public relations research*. Public Relations Quarterly, 28(3), 9-11.

Bagozzi, R. P. (1978). *Salesforce performance and satisfaction as a function of individual differences, interpersonal and situational factors*. Journal of Marketing Research, 15, 517-531.

Bearden, W. O., Hardesty, D. M., & Rose, R. L. (2001). *Consumer self-confidence: Refinements in conceptualization and measurement.* Journal of Consumer Research, 28(1), 121-134.

Bither, S. W., & Wright, P. L. (1973*). The self-confidence-response relationship in advertising*. Journal of Marketing Research, 10, 146-152.

Black, C. B., & Wright, D. L. (2000). *Can observational practice facilitate error recognition and movement production?* Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 71(4), 331-339.

Boccaccini, M. T., Gordon, T., & Brodsky, S. L. (2005). *Witness preparation and training with real and simulated criminal defendants.* Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 23(5), 659-687.

Burnham, K. P., & Anderson, D. R. (2002). *Model selection and inference: a practical-theoretic approach* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Springer.

Busch, D., & Strauss, B. (2005). *Qualitative differences in performing coordination tasks*. Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science, 9(3), 161-180.

Campbell, F., Beasley, L., Eland, J., & Rumpus, A. (2007). *Hearing the student voice: promoting and encouraging the effective use of the student voice to enhance professional development in learning, teaching and assessment within higher education*, Final Report, Edinburgh: Napier University.

Carroll, W. R., & Bandura, A. (1985). *Role of timing of visual monitoring and motor rehearsal in observational learning of action patterns*. Journal of Motor Behavior, 17(3), 269-281.

Castleberry, S. B., & Shepherd, C. D. (1993). *Effective interpersonal listening and personal selling*. Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 13(1), 35-49.

Coffey, M., & Gibbs, G. (2001). *The evaluation of the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality Questionnaire (SEEQ) in UK higher education*. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 26(1), 89-93.

Cramer, R. J., Brodsky, S. L., & DeCoster, J. (2009b). E*xpert witness confidence and juror personality: Their impact on credibility and persuasion in the classroom.* The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 37(1), 63-74.

Cramer, R. J., Neal, T. M. S., & Brodsky, S. L. (2009a). *Self-efficacy and confidence: Theoretical distinctions and implications for trial consultation.* Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 61(4), 319-334.

Davis, M.A. (2009). *Understanding the relationship between mood and creativity: A meta-analysis*. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 108(1), 25–38.

Fagundes, J., Chen, D. D., & Laguna, P. (2013). *Self-control and frequency of model presentation: Effects on learning a ballet passé relevé*. Human Movement Science, 32(4), 847-856.

Gallagher, M.S., and Hargie, O.D.W. (1989). *An investigation into the validity of role play as a procedure for counsellor skill assessment*. British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 17(2), 155-165.

Glassman, M., & McAfee, R. B. (1990). *Enthusiasm: The missing link in leadership*. Advanced Management Journal, 55(3), 4-7.

Grant, A.M., & Schwartz, B. (2011). *Too much of a good thing: The challenge and opportunity of the inverted U*. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 6(1), 61-76.

Heiser, R. S. (2005). *Poker Tells in a Sales Encounter: The Role of Nonverbal Signaling*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM.

Howell, J. M. (2005). *The right stuff: Identifying and developing effective champions of innovation*. Academy of Management Executive, 19, 108-119.

Janssen, O. (2001). *Fairness perceptions as a moderator in the curvilinear relationships between job demands, and job performance and job satisfaction*. Academy of Management Journal, 44, 1039-1050.

Johnston, M. W., Hair Jr., J. F., & Boles, J. (1989). *Why do salespeople fail?* Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 19, 53-58.

LaTour, M. S., Henthorne, T. L., & Williams, A.J. (1989). *Initial impressions in the retail environment: A comparison of black and white impressions*. Psychology & Marketing, 6(4), 329-347.

Lee, T. D., Magill, R. A., & Weeks, D. J. (1985). *Influence of practice schedule on testing schema*

theory predictions in adults. Journal of Motor Behavior, 17(3), 283-299.

Lesaux, N. K., & Kieffer, M. J. (2010). *Exploring sources of reading comprehension difficulties among language minority learners and their classmates in early adolescence*. American Educational Research Journal, 47(3), 596-632.

Lincoln, D. J. (2008). *Drama in the classroom: How and why marketing educators can use nonverbal communication and enthusiasm to build student rapport*. Marketing Education Review, 18(3), 53-65.

Little, B., & Williams, R. (2010). *Students' roles in maintaining quality and in enhancing learning: is there a tension?* Quality in Higher Education, 16(2), 115-127.

Logan, G. D. (1988). *Toward an instance theory of automatization*. Psychological Review, 95(4), 492-527.

Loe, T. W., & Chonko, L. B. (2000). *Promoting sales programs: The national collegiate sales competition*. Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 20(1), 11-13.

Magill, R. A., & Anderson, D. (2007). *Motor learning and control: Concepts and applications*, (Vol. 11). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Martin, L.R., Friedman, H.S., Tucker, J.S., Tomlinson-Keasey, C., Criqui, M.H., & Schwartz, J.E. (2002). *A life course perspective on childhood cheerfulness and its relation to mortality risk.* Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28(9), 1155–1165.

McCutcheon, A. L. (1987). *Latent class analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Murre, J. M., & Chessa, A. G. (2011). P*ower laws from individual differences in learning and forgetting: mathematical analyses*. Psychonomic Bulletin & Review, 18(3), 592-597.

Muthen, L. K., & Muthen, B. O. (1998-2010). *Mplus users' guide* (6th ed.). Los Angeles: Author.

Naylor, R. W. (2007). N*onverbal cues-based first impressions: Impression formation through exposure to static images.* Marketing Letters, 18(3), 165-179.

Newell, K. M. (1976). *Knowledge of results and motor learning*. In J. Keogh & R. S. Hutton (Eds.), Exercise and sport science reviews, 4:195-228. Santa Barbara: Journal Publishing Affiliates.

Newell, A., & Rosenbloom, P. S. (1981). *Mechanisms of skill acquisition and the law of practice*. In J.R. Anderson (Ed.), Cognitive skills and their acquisition, 1-55. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Newell, K. M., Liu, Y. T., & Mayer-Kress, G. (2001). *Time scales in motor learning and development*. Psychological Review, 108(1), 57-82.

Pelham, A.M., & Kravitz, P. (2008). *An exploratory study of the influence of sales training content and salesperson evaluation on salesperson adaptive selling, customer orientation, listening, and consulting behaviors*. Journal of Strategic Marketing, 16(5), 413-435.

St. Lawrence, J. S., Kirksey, W.A., & Moore, T. (1983). *External validity of role play assessment of assertive behavior*. Journal of Behavioral Assessment, 5(1), 25-34.

Salmela-Aro, K., & Nurmi, J.E. (1996). *Uncertainty and confidence in interpersonal projects: Consequences for social relationships and well-being*. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 1391), 109-122.

Schmidt, R. A., Young, D. E., Swinnen, S., & Shapiro, D. C. (1989). *Summary knowledge of results for skill acquisition: support for the guidance hypothesis.* Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 15(2), 352-359.

Seligman, M.E.P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). *Positive psychology: An introduction*. American Psychologist, 55(1), 5–14.

Shaw, R. E., & Alley, T. R. (1985). *How to draw learning curves: Their use and justification*. In T.D. Johnston & A.T. Pietrewicz (Eds.), Issues in the ecological study of learning, 275-304. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Shrauger, J. S., & Schohn, M. (1995). *Self-confidence in college students: Conceptualization, measurement, and behavioral implications*. Assessment, 2(3), 255-278.

Shute, V. J. (2008). *Focus on formative feedback*. Review of Educational Research, 78(1), 153-189.

Smith, W. W. (2011). *Skill acquisition in physical education: A speculative perspective*. Quest, 63(3), 265-274.

Stajkovic, A. D. (2006). *Development of a core confidence-higher order construct*. Journal of Applied Psychology, 91(6), 1208-1224.

Stankov, L., & Lee, J. (2008). *Confidence and cognitive test performance*. Journal of Educational Psychology, 100(4), 961-976.

Strucker, J., Yamamoto, K., & Kirsch, I. (2007). *The relationship of the component skills of reading to IALS performance: Tipping points and five classes of adult literacy learners*. NCSALL Reports 29. Boston: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL).

Tanner Jr., J. F., & Roberts, J. A. (1996). *Active learning: Students as teachers*. Marketing Education Review, 6(1), 41-46.

Taute, H. A., Heiser, R. S., & McArthur D. N. (2011). *The effect of nonverbal signals on student role-play evaluations*. Journal of Marketing Education, 33(1), 28-40.

Walker Jr., O. C., Churchill Jr., G. A., & Ford, N. M. (1977). *Motivation and performance in industrial selling: Present knowledge and needed research*. Journal of Marketing Research, 14, 156-168.

Wade, M. G., & Whiting, H. T. A. (Eds.) (1986). *Motor development in children: Aspects of coordination and control*. Boston: Nijhoff.

Wang, L., MacCann, C., Zhuang, X., Liu, O. L., & Roberts, R. D. (2009). *Assessing teamwork and collaboration in high school students: A multimethod Approach*. Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 24(2), 108-124.

Warr, P. (2007). *Work, happiness, and unhappiness*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Weilbaker, D. C. (1990). *The identification of selling abilities needed for missionary type selling*. Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 10(3), 45-58.

Weitz, B. A., Sujan, H., & Sujan, M. (1986). *Knowledge, motivation, and adaptive behavior: A framework for selling effectiveness.* Journal of Marketing, 50, 174-191.

Widmier, S.M., Loe, T. W., & Seldon, G. (2007). *Using role-play competition to teach selling skills*. Marketing Education Review, 17(1), 69-78.

Wolf, K., and Stevens, E., (2007), *The role of rubrics in advancing and assessing student learning*. Journal of Effective Teaching, 7(1), 3-14.

Zelaznik, H. N., Shapiro, D. C., & Newell, K. M. (1978). *On the structure of motor recognition memory*. Journal of Motor Behavior, 10(4), 313-323.

APPENDIX

Table 1 Model Fit of Latent Classes

Classes	# of Free Parameters	AIC	BIC	Log Likelihood	LMR-RT (Ho: c-1 model fits)
1	18	949.30	989.77	-465.65	NA
2	37	607.48	690.67	-266.76	Reject 1 class solution: p<.01
3	56	475.19	601.19	-180.86	Reject 2 class solution: p<.01
4	79	478.83	615.50	-189.93	Do not Reject 3 class solution p=.268
5	99	485.76	644.39	-192.22	NA

Table 2 Hierarchical Regression of Confidence & Enthusiasm on Overall Sales Performance

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	.556	.513	2.26*	.228	3.09*	.115
Step 1 (NCSC control variables)						
Approach	.386*	.081	-.075	.039	-.071	.039
Needs	.030	*.066	.003	.028	.006	.028
Presentation	.245*	.082	.110*	.035	.106*	.036
Objections	.000	.053	.011	.022	.009	.023
Close	.310*	.082	.146*	.035	.147*	.035
Step 2 (linear effect) Confidence & Enthusiasm			.582*	.023	.381*	.085
Step 2 (quadratic effect) Confidence & Enthusiasm					-.037*	.016
ΔR2			.235		.020	
ΔF			217.45		51.31	
R2	.691		.925		.945	
F-value	60.88*		278.33*		329.64*	

* p<.05

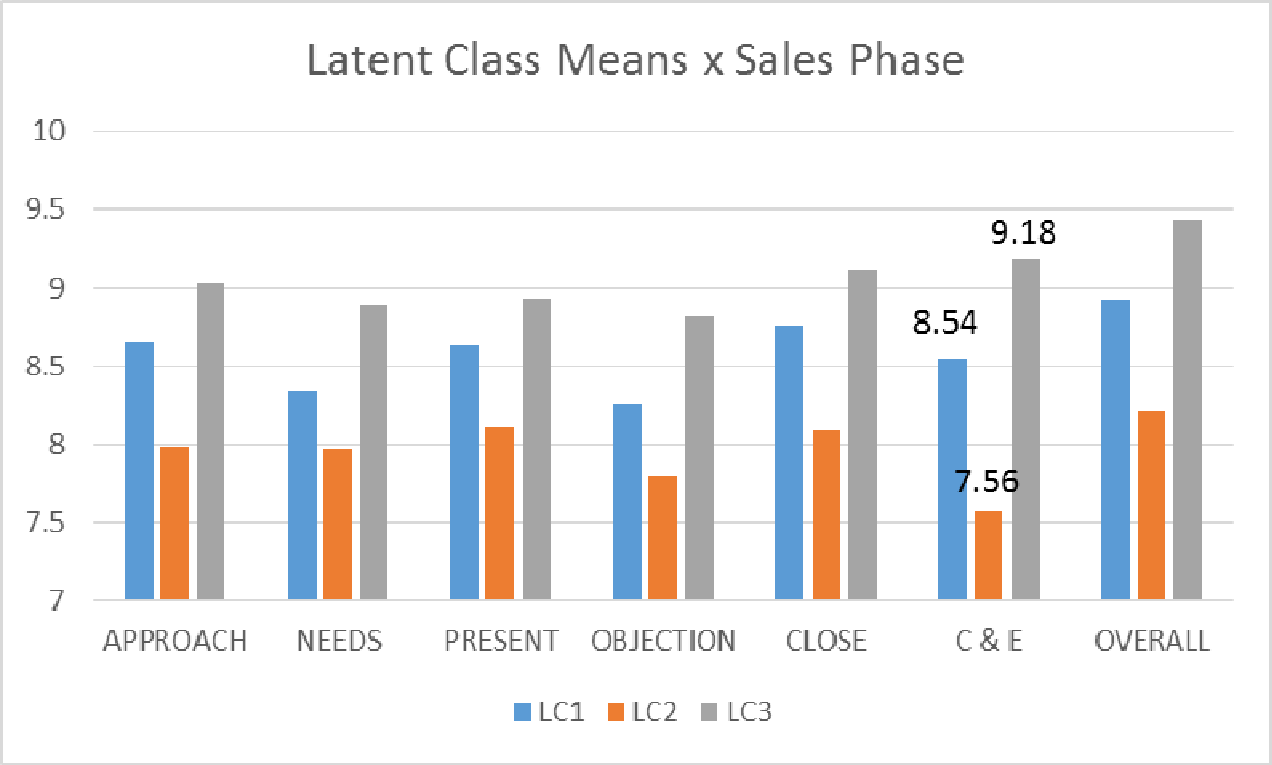

Figure 1 Sales Phases, C&E & Overall Presentation Scores per Latent Class
*Confidence & enthusiasm latent class means in bold, ($\Delta \bar{x}$, p<.01)