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DEPARTMENT STORE APPAREL BUYERS: RELATIONSHIPS AMONG
PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS,
PERCEIVED ENVIRONMENTAL UNCERTAINTY,
BOUNDARY SPANNING ACTIVITIES, MANAGERIAL DISCRETION,
AND PERCEIVED POWER

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

by

Shirley A. Lazorchak, B.S., M.S.

\* \* \* \*

The Ohio State University
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College of Human Ecology
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1996
This purpose of this study was to explore the relationships among perceived environmental characteristics, (complexity and dynamism), perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, managerial discretion, and perceived power of department store apparel buyers who assume combination or independent buyer responsibilities.

The researcher chose the purposive sample of department store apparel buyers who purchased merchandise in the moderate-to-better sportswear areas in the top ten ranked department store groups in the nation. A total of 312 buyers comprised the accessible population.

Data was collected using a mailed questionnaire. Research instruments collected data on environmental characteristics, environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, managerial discretion, perceived power, type of buying responsibility, and various demographic questions.
A total of 58 questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 19 percent. The data for this study was analyzed using SAS. Statistical tools included descriptive statistics, t-tests, Pearson product-moment correlations and multiple regression.

The relationships among the study variables have been extensively studied in the industrial and manufacturing environments. The findings of the prior research generated the following model. A complex, dynamic environment leads to environmental uncertainty. Perceptions of uncertainty trigger the use of boundary spanning activities to cope with uncertainty. The use of boundary spanning activities enhance the power of the organizational member due to the access to information that aids decision-making. The results of this study, conducted in a department store environment, support the model of relationships found to exist in industrial environments. Furthermore, combination and independent buyers also associated certain types of boundary spanning activities with environmental variables. Finally, combination buyers identified uncertainty and boundary spanning activities as predictors of merchandise power. Independent buyers identified discretion and complexity as predictors of merchandise power. Differences in predictor variables were explained as a function of differences in buyer orientation.
Dedicated to my Parents and Brother:
William and Rose Uram Lazorchak
William (Chip) Lazorchak
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the research is to describe the relationships among environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, buyer discretion and perceived power of department store apparel buyers who assume independent, team, or a combination (team/individual) of, buyer responsibilities. This investigation is necessary because the retail industry is undergoing a revolution of immense proportion (Feinberg, 1990a). The rules of the game have changed and many developments have contributed to the new climate.

This new climate is a result of changes emanating from environmental sectors. Sectors are "subdivisions of the external environment that contain similar or related elements" (Daft, 1992, p. 71). Daft (1992) has identified ten sectors that can impact any organization: industry, raw materials, human resources, financial resources, market, technology, economic conditions, government, socio-cultural, and international. As a result, the new retail environment
is characterized as more complex and dynamic than in the recent past due to an increased number of important sectors that affect department stores and the changing nature of them.

Although all retailers are operating in an uncertain environment, department stores have been hit hard, more so than most other retail formats. In particular, department stores have been losing their share of the $60 billion women's apparel market since 1985: in 1985, department stores had 20% of the market which had declined to 17% in 1989. Discounters' slice of the women's apparel market increased from 17% in 1985 to 20% in 1989 (Millstein, 1991; Solomon, 1993). "Of all apparel expenditures, department store share fell to 24.3%, down from 33.6% in 1985" (Standard & Poor's, 1992b).

The criticism has been harsh as many experts in the field blame the managements of department stores for many of the current problems. In fact, one prominent manufacturing executive suggested that department store executives need an "attitude adjustment" ("Industry says," 1990, p. 4). In particular, department stores have ignored customer service and focus, thereby allowing the specialty stores to proliferate ("Industry says," 1990). Samuel Feinberg (1990b), a respected retail observer, said, "If department stores had complied with consumers' requirements more faithfully, rather than becoming self satisfied and
sluggish, there would have been little need for specialty stores and other destination competitors" (p. 11). A retail merger and acquisition specialist said that "department stores have become their own worst enemy...that by demanding markdown money, sometimes prior to reviewing a line, they were in effect, beating down their suppliers....at the same time, they have alienated their customers by overcharging them and training them to shop on the days when daily sales are advertised" ("Industry says," 1990, p. 5). May and McNair (1977) described department stores as containing "built-in organizational rigidities, cumbersomeness, a slowness to act, a lack of receptivity to new ideas" (p. 57).

Other experts (Moin, 1992; Moin, 1993; Zinn, Power, Siler, DeGeorge, & Zellner, 1990), however, are not as harsh in their criticism. Zinn et al. (1990) believed that department stores have been at the mercy of certain environmental influences out of their control. For example, economists say billions of dollars have been eliminated from the middle market. Therefore, it is not surprising that department stores, many of whom serve the middle markets, are struggling.

Other retail consultants point out that most of the current problems in department store retailing arise from their strengths. Department store executives were slow to see how their positive characteristics were altered by the
passage of time, a changing consumer, a transformed market and increased competition (Levy, 1991; Loomis, 1993). Caught between the specialty retailers who offer edited and coordinated assortments, good service and an upbeat atmosphere, and the off-price retailers who offer brand name merchandise at lower prices, department stores are trying to justify their existence with a strong emphasis on fashion leadership and an expanded definition of customer service (Standard and Poor's Industry Survey, January 11, 1990).

The evolution of new retail formats has weakened the hold that department stores have historically enjoyed in their communities. Once the dominant format, the department store has now lost its number one ranking and customer loyalty (Feinberg, 1990b).

These developments have left department store retailers operating in an uncertain environment. In fact, the uncertainty in the environmental sectors affecting department stores is currently at a level which is unparalleled in the history of the industry. "The environment is changing much faster than they can adapt to" (Moin, 1990, p. 16). Even respected management expert Peter Drucker has commented: "More is happening in retailing than is happening in manufacturing or finance" (Drucker, 1993, p. RBR4). Experts say a stronger focus is needed on the external environment in order to monitor the sectors to determine the values that have the potential to shape
consumer behavior (Levy, 1989, 1991). The importance of the retail industry is realized when one considers that the industry is responsible for nearly two trillion dollars in annual sales, employs one-fifth of the workforce (i.e., represents twenty million jobs) and includes two million stores. Because of these realities, Tracy Mullin, the president of the National Retail Federation says that "this industry has the potential to be the most influential one in the country ("Retailers tripling," 1993, p. 27; "Wexner gets NRF," 1993).

To cope with environmental uncertainty at the department store level, the buyer may initiate boundary spanning activities. In fact, the organization's need for information has been identified as an antecedent cause of boundary spanning activities. These activities enable buyers to gather information about environmental contingencies so that appropriate decisions regarding environmental conditions and developments can be made (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978).

J. D. Thompson (1967) was the first theorist to introduce the concept of boundary spanning. He suggested that boundary spanning could be considered in the capacity of a role, a position or a set of activities. Leifer (1975) defined boundary spanning activities as "those activities which link the focal organization with other organizations or social systems and are directly relevant for the goal
A boundary spanner is "the person performing this activity" (Leifer, 1975, p. 7). "Persons who operate at the periphery or boundary of an organization, performing relevant tasks, relating the organization with elements outside it, are called boundary spanners" (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, p. 41). "Boundary roles concerned with resource acquisition and disposal include...buyers (Aldrich & Herker, 1977, p. 220).

Boundary spanners engage in boundary spanning activities of three types: face, process, and relation (Miles, 1980; Almubarek, 1982). Face activities include activities that represent and protect the organization. Process activities include activities that scan and monitor the environment. Leifer and Delbecq (1978) emphasized information exchange as a principal activity of the boundary spanner. Relation activities include activities that transact, link and coordinate with the environment.

Engaging in boundary spanning activities enables the buyer to exert power within the store. Boundary spanners, as gatherers, analyzers, and disseminators of crucial information, gain influence in regard to organizational decisions (Thompson, 1967, Tushman, 1977). However, with the recent upheaval in the department store sector, it is difficult to know the extent of buyers' power in organizational decision making. Historically, the power garnered by the retail buyer has been as a result of the
buyer's "monopoly of...knowledge and information over the merchandise of the department for which he buys" (Dickinson, 1967, p. 8). This monopoly of merchandise knowledge has allowed the buyer to develop a barrier between him or herself and upper management. Because of this, upper management has usually bowed to the knowledge of the buyer, unless the higher authority, at some point in his or her career, actually purchased the merchandise under consideration (Dickinson, 1967). As a result, buyers assumed great authority in the area of merchandise decision making. This situation is unique in that these buyers are powerful relative to middle managers in other industries (Dickinson, 1967).

But, with the advent of sophisticated information systems, it seems that the information barrier would be weakened. Many individuals located at levels above the buyer can access the information that once was the domain of the buyer. Questions of concern are: Does the weakening of the information barrier lead to less influence for the buyer? Or, does the knowledge factor (i.e., shopping the market) still help the buyer retain, to some extent, a monopoly on information?

A very recent development has emerged in certain department stores that may impact the power of department store buyers. Some leading department stores, like Macy's, are currently reorganizing their buying staffs into what is
called a Buyer-Planner-Store merchandising system (BPS). Under this new system, the duties of the buyer are split between three people. "The buyer is the person who is going to shop the market and the competition. The buyer will locate the best merchandise, and negotiate the best price and best delivery. The planner will influence the quantities of the purchases by the buyer, will track variations in customer response by store, test items to determine optimal retail prices and calculate the merchandise assortments by store. The store manager will pick up nuances in the store that (the buyers) may miss..." (Hartnett, p. 54, 1993; Rutberg, 1992).

With the BPS configuration being adopted by many department stores, it would seem that the duties and responsibilities of buyers are being diluted along with the buyer's power. However, buyers who are working under the new system disagree. They believe the buyer is strengthened by the adoption of merchandise information systems and by receiving more accurate merchandise information. Buyers in the nineties and beyond are given a slim margin of error; some believe that these developments are adopted to help buyers meet the challenge in the current retail climate. Misses apparel buyers, in particular, are targeted for study because the misses apparel classifications are a major contributor to the department store's sales and profitability (Martin, 1980).
Need for the Research

This study contributes to the literature in various ways. It is important to investigate retail buyer's perceptions because of the revolution in retailing, (i.e., the environmental uncertainty). It is dangerous to rely on prescriptions from the past that may no longer apply in this new environment. Buyers must be prepared to deal with a more dynamic, uncertain environment than was present in the recent past. That organizational change is increasingly externally induced is undisputed (Terreberry, 1968).

Second, the results from this study can be incorporated into the curriculum of both academic programs in textiles and clothing and in the buyer training programs of department stores. For example, the results may reveal a correlation between type of buying responsibility (independent, team, or combination) and type of boundary spanning activity (face, process, and relation). More specifically, a buyer who is being trained to operate in a team buying environment may be advised to adopt process types of boundary spanning activities, i.e., scan and monitor environmental buying sectors that may impact the team buying decision.

Third, introducing organizational theory into the discipline of textiles and clothing can encourage further research in this important area. Fourth, this study will contribute to the literature involving boundary spanners in
general and retail buyers in particular. Completion of this study will enable the researcher to respond to a need cited in the literature by Hrebiniak and Snow (1980). They observed that "industry differences in response to environmental uncertainty have not been noted currently by researchers...there are distinguishing characteristics of industries that affect the type of external issues or problems salient to top management...there may be 'objective' characteristics of industries that affect the perceptions of managers regarding type of uncertainty and appropriate responses to it" (p. 750).

Furthermore, boundary spanners located in diverse industries and environments adopt different boundary spanning activities when interacting with the environment and in their search for information (Miles, 1980). By using a sample of department store buyers, the researcher was able to control for industry differences in response to the environment and type of boundary spanning activities. Finally, this study contributes to the knowledge base by determining if the results of this study, conducted in the fashion arena, support the results of environmental studies conducted in industrial firms.
Objectives of the Research

The needs for the research led to the generation of seven objectives:

1. To describe the level of environmental complexity perceived by independent, team and combination department store apparel buyers.

2. To describe the level of environmental dynamism perceived by independent, team and combination department store apparel buyers.

3. To describe the level of perceived environmental uncertainty reported by independent, team and combination department store apparel buyers.

4. To describe the extent of boundary spanning activities (face, process, and relation) used by independent, team and combination department store apparel buyers.

5. To describe the apparel buyer's discretion, i.e., the inclination to solve current problems facing the organization by using specific boundary spanning activities.

6. To describe the perceived power of the independent, team and combination department store apparel buyer.

7. To describe the relationships among perceived environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, buyer discretion and perceived power of independent, team and combination department store apparel buyers.
Definition of Terms

**Boundary roles**: "those roles which link the focal organization with other organizations or social systems and are directly relevant for the goal attainment of the focal organization" (Aiken & Hage, as cited in Jemison, 1978, p. 21).

**Boundary spanners**: "those whose activities place them at the organizations' boundaries for the purpose of effecting transactions with the environment" (Adams, 1976, p. 1176).

**Boundary spanning activities**: "those activities which link the focal organization with other organizations or social systems and are directly relevant for the goal attainment of the focal organization" (Leifer, 1975, p. 6).

**Face activities** include those boundary spanning activities used to represent the organization in the external environment and protect the organization from external organizational threats (Miles, 1980; Almubarek, 1982).

**Process activities** include those boundary spanning activities used to monitor and scan environmental events that are deemed important to the organization and gatekeeping activities that sort and interpret information garnered from the environment (Miles, 1980; Almubarek, 1982).

**Relational activities** include those boundary spanning activities used in completing transactions with
relevant organizations in the environment in order to acquire needed inputs, to dispose of outputs, and to link and coordinate with relevant organizations (Miles, 1980; Almubarek, 1982).

**Combination buying**: type of buying responsibility whereby buyers, who for some merchandise purchases, work independently and for other purchases, work with corporate buyers when selecting, buying, and presenting merchandise for sale in department stores.

**Complexity**: the degree to which factors in the decision unit's environment are few or many in number and are similar or dissimilar to one another (Duncan, 1972).

**Decision making**: "the gathering and processing of information carried out by groups of individuals, which precedes the actual choice process" (Duncan, 1972, p. 313).

**Department store**: "...stores that offer an extensive assortment of customer services, position themselves as fashion leaders, and carry nationally branded merchandise distributed on a selective basis. Examples...include Bloomingdales, Neiman-Marcus, and Macy's" (Mazursky & Hirschman, 1987, p.46).

**Dynamism**: "the degree to which the factors of the decision unit's...external environment remain basically the same over time or are in a continual process of change" (Duncan, 1972, p. 316).
Environment: the "totality of physical and social factors that are taken directly into consideration in the decision making behavior of individuals in the organization" (Duncan, 1972, p. 313).

Independent buying: type of buying responsibility whereby buyers are primarily independent in their decision making regarding the selection, buying, and presentation of merchandise for sale in department stores.

Department store buyer's discretion: the buyer's "expressed inclination to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty" (Almubarek, 1982, p. 9).

Department store buyer's perceived power: department store buyer's "expressed likelihood that one or more of his or her recommendations will be accepted by his or her colleagues" (Almubarek, 1982, p. 9).

Perceived environmental uncertainty: "the (perceived) lack of information regarding the environmental factors associated with a given decision making situation, not knowing the outcome of a specific decision in terms of how much the organization would lose if the decision were incorrect and the inability to assign probabilities...with regard to how environmental factors are going to affect the success or failure of the decision unit in performing its function" (Duncan, 1972, p. 318).

Team buying: type of buying responsibility whereby a group of store and corporate buyers who work as a team when
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature builds a rationale and
theoretical framework for the study. To accomplish this,
several concepts in organizational theory are reviewed. The
review is presented in six sections, five of them addressing
relevant sections in the organizational theory literature:
perspectives on the environment (including a discussion of
the current status of the department store in order to
understand the environment in which the apparel buyer
performs), perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary
spanning concepts, buyer discretion and perceived power.
The sixth section reviews the marketing and textiles and
clothing literature relevant to the population under
consideration: retail buyers.

Perspectives on the Environment

Scholars have focused much attention on the interaction
between the organization and the environment (Aldrich &
Pfeffer, 1976; Miles, Snow, & Pfeffer, 1974; Pfeffer, 1972;
Sharfman & Dean, 1991; Starbuck, 1976; Terreberry, 1968; Thompson, 1967). Duncan (1972) defined the environment as the "totality of physical and social factors that are taken directly into consideration in the decision-making behavior of individuals in the organization" (p. 314).

Another definition of organizational environment includes "all elements that exist outside the boundary of the organization and have the potential to affect all or part of the organization" (Daft, 1992, p. 71). The organization has been defined as "a social entity, which is goal directed, has a deliberately structured activity system and an identifiable boundary (Daft, 1992, p. 7). These diverse parts form a system. "A system is a set of interrelated elements that requires inputs, transforms them, and discharges outputs to the external environment...The idea of a system is important because it has to interact with the environment to survive, and subsystems must be coordinated into a coherent organizational whole" (Daft, 1986, p. 7). The systems perspective, therefore, inherently calls for research into the interplay between organizations and their environments. Three major perspectives have evolved to suggest how the environment influences the organization: the information perspective, the resource dependence perspective, and the population ecology perspective (Daft, 1992).
Information Perspective

The information perspective emphasizes the organization's need for information about the environment. The characteristics of the environment influence the amount and kind of information required within the organization. Uncertainty in the environment, caused by environmental change and complexity, create a greater need to gather information about the environment and to respond successfully to that information. Furthermore, the characteristics of the environment impacts the organization's internal structure and process of information gathering. For example, organizations that operate in stable environments develop bureaucratic internal structures identified with formalized rules, policies, and a centralized hierarchy of authority. This type of internal management structure is called mechanistic (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

On the other hand, organizations that operate in dynamic environments develop internal structures that adapt to changing developments. Rules and policies, if they exist, are readily modified or ignored. The hierarchy of authority is uncertain and the responsibility for decision making is decentralized. This type of internal management structure is called organic (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

Organizations tend to become more organic as environmental uncertainty increases. As a result, authority
is decentralized. Employees at all levels of the organization are encouraged to work together to solve problems and promote teamwork. Furthermore, tasks are assigned and, if necessary, readjusted based on the needs of the project and/or team. Information flow tends to be horizontal, rather than vertical, as found in the mechanistic organization (Courtright, Fairhurst, & Rogers, 1989). As a result, to facilitate information gathering, the organization is structured to reflect the degree of stability or dynamism in the environment. Environmental uncertainty influences organizational structures, behaviors and characteristics (Aiken & Hage, 1972; Aldrich, 1979; Burns & Stalker, 1961; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967).

**Resource Dependence Perspective**

The second perspective, the resource dependence approach, emphasizes the organization's need for financial and non-financial resources from the environment and the need to guarantee the obtainability of these resources. An exchange relationship is acknowledged. Resource dependence means that organizations rely on the environment, but also try to dominate resources in order to reduce dependence. Organizations are weakened if essential resources are controlled by others, so they try to be as autonomous as possible. However, when risks are high, companies join together to reduce resource dependence and the chance of extinction (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).
Organizations adapt to their environment in the informational perspective, while by contrast, the resource dependence approach encourages an equilibrium between autonomy and dependence by modifying, manipulating, and controlling other organizations to reduce uncertainty (Babcock, 1981). Organizations accomplish this task by initiating positive ties with important players in the external environment and by molding the external domain (Kotter, 1979). This exchange relationship is described as contingent because the activities of an organization are influenced by the environment (Thompson, 1967).

"Contingency means that one thing depends upon other things, or that an organization's characteristics depend upon the total situation. What works in one setting may not work in another. There is not one best way" (Daft, 1993, p. 20). Contingency theory suggests that the variety of possible exchange relationships, the permeability of the organizational boundary and the organization-environment interdependencies will change over time and situations. The result of studies examining the exchange relationship show that these relationships encourage the organization to acquire scarce resources and to gather information to reduce uncertainty (Leifer & Huber, 1977; Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967).
Population Ecology Perspective

The final perspective on the organizational-environmental relationship is the population ecology model, also known as the natural selection model (Ulrich, 1987). This model focuses on the examination of organizational differences within a group of related organizations (Singh & Lumsden, 1990).

Organizations develop differences because new configurations of organizations are created. Social conditions affect the generation of new organizational shapes and the death of past organizational types. The population ecology perspective takes a pessimistic view of the environment, when compared to the other two approaches. Whereby the information and resource dependent perspectives offer strategies to deal with the environment, the population ecology perspective offers none. Managers cannot fully understand what strategies to employ to be successful. Since the environment cannot be fully understood, organizational success cannot be guaranteed. Success is elusive because of the randomness involved in organizational success. The population ecology perspective supports the view that a company is not successful because of its expertise, but because it is fortunate to survive when other organizations have failed. Management has little impact upon the success of the firm.
Unlike the other two perspectives, the population ecology model focuses on how a group of related organizations change over time and becomes a better match with its environment and not on how specific organizations accommodate the environment (Aldrich, 1979; Wholley & Brittain, 1986). This study adopts the information perspective on the environment due to its focus on the characteristics of the environment and the perceived uncertainty that may exist within the department store environment.

The Current Status of Department Stores

Developments in recent years have challenged the management of department stores. Levy (1991) outlines six disadvantages experienced by the department store format. First, "department stores...have become captives of their resources" (p. 59). They have been "forced to serve as a stage for brands and designers to play to their audiences" (p. 59). This means that instead of being proactive in their search for new market trends, they have relinquished control to the manufacturers, and hence, have weakened their position with vendors and not served as the interpreter of trends for their customers (Levy, 1991).

Second, the muddled merchandise offerings along with dependence upon manufacturers have compelled department stores to spend their advertising budgets on sales promotions geared to capture business, instead of building a
promotional campaign that promotes their image and "points of differentiation" (Levy, 1991, p. 59).

Third, due to the high cost structure established in department stores, along with the proliferation of the discount industry, department stores have been systematically eliminating one of their major points of differentiation— one stop shopping— by eliminating unprofitable departments. As a result, department stores are being turned into apparel warehouses stocking unimaginative merchandise. Levy (1991) points out that department stores should be revising their organization's structure, reducing their cost structure, changing the merchandising function, and/or changing the organization's culture.

Fourth, department stores have been slow to adopt the most advanced technology. This technology would help department store retailers reduce their cost structures and gain attendant efficiencies (Levy, 1991).

Fifth, the department store has not reacted quickly to the fragmentation of consumer markets. This has truly been the domain of the specialty retailers. Rather, department stores have retained their departmental structure that responds to manufacturer needs and not consumer needs. As a result, the department store houses the manufacturer's line instead of the buyer carefully editing the manufacturer's offerings to tightly focus on goods that will meet the needs
of their client base. The end result is customer confusion and merchandise duplication. This is in stark contrast to specialty retailers that strive to offer tightly focused assortments geared to the needs of the consumer. Again, the department store's points of differentiation are difficult to surmise in this mass of merchandise (Levy, 1991).

Finally, Levy (1991) states that department stores are slow to react to the changing wants and needs of their consumers because they are dependent on their suppliers for direction, unlike specialty retailers who design most of their own private label merchandise.

Although Levy (1991) and other observers paint a bleak picture, all is not lost for the future of department stores. In fact, many industry observers are hopeful that the department store will recover and foresee a stronger, more focused organization emerging in the future (Darnton, Barrett, Nelson, King, & McCormick, 1989; Levy, 1991; Zinn, et al). Various turnaround strategies for the department store have been prescribed. Overall, Levy (1991) says that "to thrive in the years ahead and to capitalize on their many natural advantages requires that management reconceptualize the department store and the way it is organized and operated. Failure to do so will result in a corporate culture...that has stifled the vital ability to respond to market and consumer changes" (p. 60). Department
stores are still being organized by departments instead of by targeted consumer types.

In order to help the department store to focus on their customer targets; reap the benefits of technological efficiency; develop tight, relevant, merchandise assortments; and develop their competitive advantage, department stores must begin or continue, to direct attention to the following points.

First, department stores must begin to assume a proactive, rather than reactive stance, when seeking to meet customer needs. A stronger focus is needed on the external environment in order to monitor the sectors that have the potential to shape consumer behavior (Levy, 1989; 1991). After a proactive stance is adopted, department stores must reevaluate their traditional resource structure in order to create and develop more of their own private branded products that will meet the wants and needs of their target market. To accomplish this, the department store structure must change to accommodate a private label design staff and trend spotting team that propels the department store private label merchandise past one of copying the designs of others to creating exclusive, imaginative merchandise that serves the needs of their customers ("Industry says," 1990, Levy, 1991). As a result, buyers should evolve from selling agents for their vendors to purchasing agents for their customers (Shuch, 1988).
Next, more department stores need to reorganize their buying structures to integrate a planner/distributor level. In essence, the buyers would purchase the merchandise and the planner/distributor would be responsible for breakouts at the store level. This arrangement permits the buyer to concentrate on more of the market scanning and purchasing functions rather than on some of the more administrative tasks (Levy, 1991; McGoldrick, 1990; Robins, 1989).

Furthermore, Levy (1991) encourages department stores to adopt the tactic of the specialty stores; he suggests that department stores "should also create a series of vertical specialty businesses that...would be self contained operations, serving a specific and clearly defined market niche. These businesses would be built around a specific customer segment, lifestyles (active, casual, formal), end use (gardening, entertainment), or even a specific commodity (cutlery, lamps) or as at present, size (women, petite, and junior)" (p. 60). Levy (1991) stresses that "these departments would be organized as separate businesses, each with its own merchandise staff, dedicated POS space, identity, fixturing, and sales people" (p. 60). Some departments that can be organized along general merchandise classifications would be retained and then broken down into their appropriate end usages. For example, a general classification of home merchandise can then be broken down into kitchen usage, i.e., housewares (Levy, 1991).
Most importantly, department stores would still permit brands and designers to inhabit their own departments, but these brands and designers must be able to show that they have a strong consumer following and what is called "perceptual dominance", i.e., that they are the designer that stands for this type of look in the marketplace. The brands and designers should have a "fully balanced and integrated offer that can stand on its own, as in cosmetics or a Ralph Lauren shop" (Levy, 1991, p. 60).

Furthermore, department stores must recapture the excitement that once permeated the main floor, (or key traffic areas in the branch stores), by setting aside high traffic areas that house merchandise involved in emerging trends and/or key items (Levy, 1991).

Finally, department stores need to reevaluate their pricing structure; Levy (1991) recommends an "everyday fair value price. "This is predicated on initially pricing merchandise, branded or private label, at a price point where the inherent values of the product, its features, and workmanship are acknowledged by consumers as fair and where the item's greatest volume will be generated" (p. 60).

Accomplishing this will mean a change in the way pricing is currently negotiated. Many times, manufacturers must build retail buyer demands into the price of their goods in order to cover their outlays. The new approach would force buyers to work backwards from the customer, and
not the market, to establish "customer needs and payment capabilities, the demand for the product, and the price point at which merchandise with comparable features reaches its greatest volume potential" (Levy, 1991, p. 60). This information will guide the retail buyer as to the price ranges that will be acceptable to the customer over a variety of merchandise classifications. At this point, the retail buyer should seek out products that can meet this criteria at a cost that will meet both markup and sales volume goals (Levy, 1991). The end result will be a merchandise price that closes the "gap that has arisen between the inherent value of products and what they are marked" (Levy, 1991, p. 60).

The department store must reposition itself to attract the affluent market segment. A more savvy customer and the increasingly diverse market segments make the mass market department store obsolete. Due to the strong performance by discounters like Wal-Mart and upgraded department store chains like J.C. Penney, the mass market business, formerly belonging to department stores, has been forfeited to them. As a result, the department store must target the affluent customer who still favors the upscale "high ego-involvement" fashions and diverse services found in department stores. At the same time, department store executives must play down hard and staple goods (Rosenbloom, 1980).
Some observers see the stronger department store franchises already adopting many of the suggestions put forth by Levy and Rosenbloom (Feinberg, 1990a; "Industry says", 1990; Loeb, 1992; Robins, 1989). As a result, some department store groups are becoming stronger and able to compete within today's highly competitive market while the weaker players are being phased out. In fact, it is projected that by the year 2000, retailers that attract half of the current retail sales will be merged, acquired or bankrupt (Moin, 1990; Schiller et al., 1992; Zinn, et al., 1990). As a result, the number of department stores will be fewer, but the existing ones will be stronger and able to compete ("Industry says," 1990). "The department store probably has the greatest staying power of any retailing format just by virtue of its varied merchandise offerings. It actually affords flexibility to expand or contract individual segments as demand warrants" (Feinberg, 1990b, p. 11).

Furthermore, the department store is the ideal retail format to exploit the popular "theme" merchandising trend with formats such as Macy's Cellar, Bloomingdale's urban chic and Ralph Lauren's Double R shops (Macdonald, 1990). Retailing, if nothing else, is theatre. "The retailer is always on stage. Every scene-every department, every act every floor, every play-every store, must be flawlessly directed. Poor direction-poor reviews-box office closed"
(Samuels, 1980, p. 182). Overall, experts predict the successful players will be those who control their debt load, accurately target their customers and merchandise, adopt the new technology, control costs, and deliver superior customer service (Zinn, Power, Flynn, Siler, DeGeorge and Zellner, 1990).

**General and Task Environment**

Scholars have been unable to construct an inclusive body of literature concerning the environment's influence on organizations and organizational characteristics because of three concerns: (a) disagreement in identifying relevant dimensions of the environment, (b) divergent opinions regarding measurements of the environmental domain, and (c) "uncertainty as to the effects each dimension has on organizational strategies, structures, processes or outcomes" (Dess & Rasheed, 1991, p. 701).

However, many scholars have agreed that the environment is becoming more uncertain and dynamic (Bennis, 1966; Emery & Trist, 1965; Terreberry, 1968; Thompson, 1967). The environments of organizations are changing from a state where goals and positive and negative elements were comparatively stable and randomly distributed to situations in which irregularities are due to the environment itself in addition to those caused by the interaction between systems. Terreberry (1968) stated that "organizational change is increasingly externally induced. Organizational
adaptability is a function of the ability to learn and to perform according to changes in the environment" (p. 590). She indicates that organizations are becoming increasingly interdependent. Stinchcomb (1965) says an organization must be able to respond to environmental changes in order to survive and prosper.

An important distinction must be made between the general environment and what Dill (1958) called the "task environment." The environment consists of sectors. These sectors are "distinctive subdivisions of the external environment that contain similar or related elements" (Daft, 1992, p. 71). Daft (1992) has identified ten sectors that can impact any organization: industry, raw materials, human resources, financial resources, market, technology, economic conditions, government, socio-cultural, and international. The general environment includes those sectors of the environment that have an indirect or infrequent effect on the organization (Daft, 1992). Sectors often included in the general environment include the government, socio-cultural and economic conditions, technology, and financial resources. In contrast, the task environment "includes sectors with which the organization interacts directly and which have direct impact on the organization's ability to achieve its goals" (Daft, 1992, p. 7). The task environment commonly includes the industry, raw materials, market, human resources, and international sectors (Daft, 1992). However,
the type of industry will dictate which sectors fall within the general and task environment.

Furthermore, change in the various sectors affects the composition of the general and task environment. Specifically, there are four ways in which the environmental sectors influence the decision process of the buyer. First, environmental sectors define the securability of goods and services to the organization. Second, they delineate the business conditions under which the firm must perform. Third, they prescribe the values and norms accepted by society; as such, they act as a guide to buying decisions. Lastly, the environmental sectors supply streams of information to buyers on the above matters (Webster & Wind, 1972).

Almost every sector has affected the retail industry and has contributed to environmental uncertainty. For example, within the industry sector, competition has intensified due to the variety of new retail formats, i.e., discount department stores, warehouse clubs, outlet stores, home shopping, catalogs and the new "category killers" which are stores that specialize in one classification or a narrow classification of merchandise (Zinn et al., 1990). In addition, the industry has downsized as the weaker players find themselves merged, acquired, or bankrupt. Furthermore, the industry is over stored due to the building boom in the 1970s. Currently, there is twenty square feet of retail
space per capita--much more than is needed (Morgenson, 1993).

The raw materials sector in this example includes apparel manufacturers. These manufacturers find themselves undergoing the same merging as their retail partners mostly because larger capacity will be needed by manufacturers in order to serve the needs of these huge retail organizations (Schiller, Zellner, Stodghill, & Maremont, 1992). Weaker players have filed for bankruptcy protection. Retail buyers and manufacturers' representatives must now heal their adversarial relationship and form partnerships in order for both to prosper.

The human resource sector also challenges the retail industry. Due to a slowing birth rate, stores find a smaller pool of workers willing and/or able to staff their stores. Investments in training must be made in order to upgrade sales people from clerk status to associates who strive to render excellent customer service. Finally, retail trainers at the executive level are busy developing new curricula to train buyers in the new computer applications that are bursting on the retail scene (Galle & Jones, 1992).

The financial sector has hit the retail industry particularly hard. It is just in the last year or so that prominent department stores are recovering from the junk bond scandals that forced some of the most recognizable
names in retailing into bankruptcy and now, hopefully, into recovery ("Industry says," 1990).

In the market sector, the most noteworthy development has been the change in customer values. Because of the stock market crash of 1988, customers shifted from a pattern of lavish spending and consumer confidence to a cautious value orientation that affects what they purchase and how they purchase (Rogers, 1991). Also, aging baby boomers tend to spend more dollars on health care and leisure products rather than apparel and home fashions (Schwartz, 1990).

The technological sector is contributing to much of the uncertainty in the environment. Retailing has moved away from manual operations to computer and decision supports systems that have revolutionized the business (Moin, 1990). Sales, assortments, open to buy, color and size information, for example, can be traced down to the store level—a feat unheard of a few short years ago (Robins, 1989). This revolution in technology is affecting everything in the retail industry—from the skills needed by buyers and other executives, to the duties within the buying function to new efficiency goals. In fact, due to sluggish purchasing patterns forecast for the rest of the decade, growth-oriented retailers must turn to technology, and not to continued store expansion, to improve profits (Levy, 1989). The efficiency measures trim costs through the chain of distribution to the point of sale. The goal is to trim
distribution and other costs while optimizing the merchandise mix. Improvements in bar code scanning, on-line receiving, and merchandise tracking are helping retailers to reduce inventory, increase merchandise turnover, speed deliveries, and shorten lead times required to move the merchandise through the channel into the store.

Furthermore, the new technological systems cannot produce the efficiency savings needed by both retailers and manufacturers if trust is not developed and sharing of information and strategies is not practiced by both parties (Salmon, 1989). The conditions in the economic sector have generally made consumers cautious in their purchases and searching for value (Standard & Poor's, 1992a).

The government sector affects retailers by the trade agreements it negotiates with other countries. The debate concerning the North American Free Trade Agreement will affect trade throughout the North American continent and eventually the Caribbean and Central and South America (Daub & Cooper, 1993). As a result, retailers are reevaluating their domestic versus international purchases for the most advantageous buy (Jacobs, 1991).

The socio-cultural sector affects retailers immensely. The shifting value orientation, higher educational attainment, aging of the population, and the growing consumer and environmental movements affect retailers in their products offered for sale and their attention to
community service and involvement (Rogers, 1991). Finally, the international market, almost inconsequential a few decades ago, has changed the industry forever. This sector affects everything from new avenues for product sourcing, expansion into new markets, and intensified competition (Rogers, 1991). It is apparent from this brief review that the environment confronting department stores is uncertain and in a state of flux.

**Perceived Environmental Uncertainty**

A general definition of uncertainty is "an individual's perceived inability to predict something accurately. An individual experiences uncertainty because he/she perceives himself/herself to be lacking sufficient information to predict accurately or because he/she feels unable to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant data" (Milliken, 1987, p. 136).

The concept of uncertainty has been one of the most researched concepts in the study of the organization-environmental interchange (Dill, 1958; Duncan, 1972; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Thompson, 1967). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) point out that uncertainty becomes a concern for the organization when the uncertainty involves a facet of crucial organizational interdependence. In fact, Thompson (1967) states: "Uncertainty appears as the fundamental problem for complex organizations, and coping
with uncertainty, as the essence of the administrative process" (p. 159).

As an open system, the organization is influenced by its environment. According to Duncan (1972), the environment influences the organization in two ways: (1) organizations need information about the environment to aid in decision making, and (2) organizations need resources from the environment to produce their output. Both of these influences could affect organizational uncertainty. When organization decision makers do not have enough information about relevant environmental factors, it is difficult to adapt or predict outside changes. The risk of failure increases as uncertainty affects the organizational response to the environment. Furthermore, organizations find it more difficult to weigh decision alternatives when the environment is uncertain (Daft, 1992).

Duncan (1972) has identified some major definitions of uncertainty in the literature. Duncan found that "information theorists" like Garner (1962) defined perceived uncertainty in a narrow fashion: "the uncertainty of an event is the logarithm of the number of possible outcomes"; "decision theorists" like Luce and Raffia (1957) defined uncertainty as the inability to assign probabilities to events. From a broader perspective, Lawrence and Lorsch suggested that uncertainty consists of three dimensions: (1) "lack of clarity of information regarding job requirements,
(2) uncertainty about causal relationships and difficulty of accomplishing the job within resource constraints and (3) length of time required for feedback concerning results" (Gerloff, Muir, & Bodensteiner, 1991).

Duncan (1972) believed the information and decision theorists approach was too narrow and the Lawrence and Lorsch approach too expansive and unclear. Additionally, to the chagrin of Duncan, the information theorists ignored the user of the information—the human being. Therefore, Duncan merged the two approaches, while including human perception, to arrive at his definition of uncertainty. Duncan's definition of uncertainty is comprised of three components: (1) "lack of information regarding the environmental factors associated with a given decision situation, (2) not knowing the outcome of a specific decision in terms of how much the organization would lose if the decision were incorrect, and (3) inability to assign probabilities with any degree of confidence with regard to how environmental factors are going to affect the success or failure of the decision unit in performing its function" (p. 318).

In studying the three components of Duncan's perceived environmental uncertainty construct, Downey and Slocum (1975, p. 570) found that the components were "explicitly or implicitly grounded in the concept of information as a counterpoint of uncertainty." Therefore, in order to handle perceived environmental uncertainty, the organization was
advised to design its internal functional areas and adopt strategies and planning approaches enabling it to collect and distribute information to ease decision making (Tung, 1979).

The concept of environmental uncertainty has been investigated in two ways: as a descriptor of environmental states and as the condition of a person who perceives himself or herself to be missing vital information about the environment. The former suggests that environments can be categorized in terms of how objectively uncertain they are; the latter suggests that uncertainty differs among individuals and thus should be investigated as a perceptual concept (Milliken, 1987).

Some scholars like Tinker (1976) believed the objective environment is most important; he suggests that studying perceptions alone lowers the analysis of organizations to "a problem of psychoanalysis of actors" (p. 507). Others like Weick (1979) believe that the objective environment does not exist; instead the environment is comprised of those external sectors that the organization "enacts" by recognition.

Various scholars (Duncan, 1972; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) have chosen not to focus on the objective environment, but to stress that perceptions, especially about uncertainty, shape managerial decisions. Leifer and McDonough (1979) concluded that it is more valid to use a
perceptual measure of uncertainty, rather than an objective measure, because the way in which individuals react to the environment is based on their perception of it. Similarly, other researchers (Downey & Slocum, 1975) refer to the environment "as a set of stimuli which lack meaning or information value until perceived by the individual" (p. 567). In fact, most researchers who studied the concept have suggested that it is "the perceptions of uncertainty, rather than actual uncertainty, that are the important determinants in decision making and strategy formulation processes in organizations" (Tung, 1979, p. 676). Downey and Slocum (1975) also believe that "uncertainty as a counterpart to information should be considered as perceptually based" (p. 567). They suggest that uncertainty can be thought of as a characteristic of an individual's behavioral environment, rather than a characteristic of the physical environment. Uncertainty, therefore, is based on individual cognitive processes.

Downey and Slocum (1975) cautioned that the concept of uncertainty, as a perceptual measure, does permit changes in uncertainty to be associated with traits of the individual. However, uncertainty is also associated with environmental characteristics. Characteristics of the objective environment are inclined to evoke comparable perceptions of uncertainty by individuals. These comparable perceptions of uncertainty by individuals emanate from similarities in
perceptual processes rather than from the presence of uncertainty as a characteristic of the objective environment. "Uncertainty and the degree of complexity and dynamics in the environment should not be considered as constant features in an organization. Rather, they are dependent on the perceptions of organizational members and thus can vary in their incidence to the extent that individuals differ in their perceptions" (Duncan, 1972, p. 325).

More recent scholars (Dutton & Jackson, 1987; Smirich & Stubbart, 1985) also support the view that perceptions mold behavior and environment is "enacted" by organizational members. These divergent perspectives have produced different conceptualizations and operationalizations of the concept of environmental uncertainty.

Measures of uncertainty. Two measures of uncertainty have captured much of the attention in the literature: Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967) and Duncan's (1972) Scale of Perceived Environmental Uncertainty. Lawrence and Lorsch's work is of great significance because it was one that signaled a shift in organizational theory from the human relations paradigm to the contingency approach in management. The human relations paradigm tried to discern the one best way to manage workers and organize the firm. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967, 1986) were instrumental in shifting the question to "what approach to management and
structure is appropriate in this situation?" The goal was to match an organization to its environment. Hence, a new chapter in organizational studies had begun.

Although Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967) study focused on the concepts of organizational differentiation and integration, they also developed a measure of uncertainty. They hypothesized that varying levels of sector uncertainty are associated with degrees of organizational differentiation and integration. Their research suggests that effective organizations develop functional units that match the requirements of their environmental sectors more accurately than ineffective organizations.

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) developed their uncertainty measure by gathering data via interviews and questionnaires from senior level executives. The researchers suggest that uncertainty surrounding three functional areas (marketing, production, and research) consists of three dimensions: (1) "lack of clarity of information regarding job requirements, (2) general uncertainty about causal relations and difficulty of accomplishing the job within resource constraints, and (3) the length of time required for feedback concerning results" (Gerloff, Muir & Bodensteiner, 1991, p. 751). Ten firms were surveyed; respondents were employed in the plastics, container, and food packaging industries.
The questionnaire included nine items constructed to tap uncertainty in the three internal functional areas of marketing, production, and research. The respondent was asked three questions about each of the functional areas. The "lack of information" and the "general uncertainty about causal relations" dimensions were measured using Likert-type scales; the third dimension, "length of time required for feedback," was measured by responses to questions asking about the length of time required for follow up on the success of job performance in each environmental sector (1 day, 1 week, 1 month, 6 months, 1 year or more, 3 years or more). Responses for the three items in each functional area were summed to produce three functional area scores and summed again to produce a total uncertainty score for each respondent.

The Lawrence and Lorsch (1967, 1986) instrument has been criticized by researchers. Tosi, Aldag and Storey (1973) pointed out that reliability and validity checks were not calculated. When Tosi et al. calculated the reliability coefficients for each dimension of the scale, only one dimension reached the suggested 0.50 level for instrument reliability suggested by Nunnally (1967). The total measure, however, reached "marginally adequate internal consistency (r = 0.513)" (Tosi, et al., p. 33). Furthermore, the researchers were unable to validate the Lawrence and Lorsch measure against measures of volatility.
that were developed for each industry and firm represented. The correlation between the two was "low and inconsistent" (Tosi et al, 1973, p. 31). In conclusion, Tosi et al. called for more research into the development of uncertainty measures as the Lawrence and Lorsch instrument was deemed methodologically inadequate.

Soon after, Downey and Slocum (1975) critiqued the research of Tosi et al. (1973) and expressed reservations about their approach. They criticized Tosi's et al omission of data and the lack of discussion regarding techniques used in their correlational analysis. Furthermore, the respondents in each study were not in the same hierarchical level in the organization; therefore, comparisons between respondents may not be possible (i.e. middle level managers, as opposed to senior level executives, may not have access to information regarding industry-wide uncertainties faced by the organization as a whole). Downey and Slocum (1975) also criticized Tosi's et al. calculation of their volatility measures. Finally, the researchers pointed out that the "objective" measurement of volatility may not be a satisfactory criterion measure of "perceived" uncertainty.

Downey, Hellriegel, and Slocum (1975) also tested the Lawrence and Lorsch measure and, after revision, found it to be reliable ($r = .57$). The revision involved changing the focus of the instrument from one centered on subenvironments (research, technology, and marketing) to one that was topic
centered. Questions related by topic (job requirements, degree of difficulty and feedback time) were summed rather than summing questions emanating from the same subenvironment as Lawrence and Lorsch had done. The researchers stressed that the reconceptualization was put forth only to demonstrate that the Lawrence and Lorsch instrument has "potentially reliable subdimensions" (Downey, et al., 1975, p. 622).

The second measure of uncertainty to receive widespread attention in the literature is one developed by Robert B. Duncan (1972). Duncan reviewed the environmental literature and concluded the concept of environment was not well enough defined to facilitate empirical research. Duncan, therefore, developed a measure of perceived environmental characteristics (dynamism and complexity) and a measure of perceived environmental uncertainty to facilitate empirical research on organization-environment interactions.

Duncan's (1972) research initially focused on identifying the dimensions of the environment. After reviewing theoretical works in the literature (Duncan, 1972; Emery & Trist, 1965; Terreberry, 1968; Thompson, 1967), identified and operationalized two dimensions of the environment that could be used "to make predictions about the kinds of environments in which different levels of perceived uncertainty are expected to exist" (p. 314): the simple-complex dimension and the static-dynamic dimension.
The environment is considered simple if the "factors in the decision unit's environment are few in number and are similar to one another in that they are located in a few components. The complex phase indicates that the factors in the decision units environment are large in number" (p. 315).

An organizational decision unit was defined as "a formally specified work group within the organization under a superior charged with a formally defined set of responsibilities directed toward the attainment of the goals of the organization." The environment of decision units is defined as the "totality of physical and social factors that are taken directly into consideration in the decision-making behavior of individuals in the organization" (Duncan, 1972, p. 313).

To develop an instrument to measure the complexity of the environment (simple-complex environmental index), Duncan gathered information, in the initial phase of the study, via semi-structured interviews with nineteen employees of various decision units in several different functional areas and hierarchical levels of a large manufacturing organization. Then, from the interviews, a list of factors was developed and grouped into components by their degree of similarity. Respondents were then asked to check as many factors that were applicable in decision situations. The number of decision factors (F) considered in decision making
is multiplied by the square of the number of components in which the factors are found: \( (C)^2 \). Therefore, the simple-complex index is \( (F) \times (C)^2 \). This formula combines the contribution of both the number of factors and the degree to which they are similar (found in one component) or are dissimilar (found in several components). The number of components is squared to indicate the similarity-dissimilarity of components in that the more components the factors are in, the more dissimilar they are. The "amount of variance between components is greater than the amount of variance between factors and, thus, should be weighted in the development of the index" (Duncan, 1972, p. 316).

Individuals in organizations dealing with more complex environments will perceive greater uncertainty and have more information processing requirements than individuals located in simple environments (Duncan, 1972; Tung, 1979).

Then, Duncan developed an instrument to measure the dynamism of the environment. The dynamism of the environment (static-dynamic dimension) "indicates the degree to which the factors of the decision units' internal and external environment remain basically the same over time or are in a continual process of change" (Duncan, 1972, p. 316). It is comprised of two subdimensions. The first subdimension consists of one question which targets the degree of stability of the factors (i.e., remain consistent over time) selected by the decision unit members in the
internal and/or external environment. The subdimension is measured by asking respondents how often each of the factors that they chose as being important in decision making in their internal and/or external environment change. Individual responses are averaged to produce a total decision unit score on this subdimension.

"The second subdimension (of the static-dynamic dimension) focuses on the frequency with which decision unit members take into consideration new and different internal and/or external factors in the decision process.... This...subdimension consists of one question and is measured by asking respondents of a given decision unit how often they consider new and different factors in decision making" (Duncan, 1972, pp. 316-317). Individual members scores are averaged to arrive at an average decision unit score.

"The scores obtained on these two subdimensions of the static-dynamic dimension of the environment are added to obtain the decision unit's static-dynamic index. Units are then rank ordered according to index scores and split at the median. The high scoring half of the distribution is defined as decision units having a dynamic environment and the low scoring half as units having a static environment" (Duncan, 1972, p. 317).

The simple-complex and static-dynamic dimension help to identify the nature of the organization's or decision unit's environment. The combination of these two dimensions can
help identify the condition of the organization or decision units environment.

Once the scales measuring the characteristics of the environment were developed, Duncan turned his attention to the development of his uncertainty measure. Duncan included aspects of both the internal and external environment in his view of the organization's environment.

The research itself was conducted among twenty-two decision units in three research and development organizations and three manufacturing organizations. Validity of the measure was based on the ability of the respondents to verbalize their perception of uncertainty. From the interviews, Duncan (1972) outlined three dimensions in his definition of perceived environmental uncertainty: (1) "lack of information regarding the environmental factors associated with a given decision-making situation", (2) lack of knowledge about the outcome of a specific decision, and (3) the ability or inability to assign probabilities as to how environmental factors will affect success or failure of the decision unit in performing its function (p. 318).

Duncan's uncertainty instrument is comprised of 12 items. The respondent selects factors (from a list of 25 possible internal and external environmental factors, grouped into components by their degree of similarity) that are important to him or her in decision making situations. The respondent then selects the three most important factors
of those already checked and then is questioned about the three chosen factors.

The two dimensions, lack of information and lack of knowledge, are measured by six questions each; both are measured by Likert-type items. Each respondent receives an average score on each of the questions on the scale for the first dimension by using the following formula (Duncan, 1972):

\[
\text{total score on a given question} = \frac{\text{sum of answers for each factor}}{\text{number of factors taken into consideration}}
\]

The average scores for each question are then averaged to compute a respondent's lack of information score. To compute a respondent's lack of knowledge score, the raw scores of each question are averaged.

The third dimension, the inability to assign probabilities, is measured by one, two-part question. The subjects are asked how certain they are between 0 (completely unsure) and 1.0 (completely sure) about how each of the factors is going to affect the performance (success or failure) of the unit in following through with its task. In addition, the subject identifies the range being considered in assigning the probability value, i.e. how confident the respondent feels toward the estimate. A narrow spread in the range would signal confidence in the estimate.
The degree of inability to assign probabilities is determined by weighing the respondents certainty about the effects of a given factor (part one of the question) by the range between 0 and 1.0 he or she considers in making this assessment (part two of the question).

The formula is:

\[
\text{degree of ability to assign probabilities score for each factor} = (\text{certainty of effects of factor}) \times (1 - \text{range of certainty estimate})
\]

Finally, Duncan summed the three dimension scores to produce a total uncertainty score, i.e., general lack of information concerning the environment.

The adequacy of Duncan's research has been questioned by Downey, Hellriegel and Slocum (1975); they questioned the operationalization of the concept of uncertainty. The researchers suggest the following scoring adjustments because the summation of scores on the various dimensions of uncertainty seem to produce a flawed total uncertainty score. Duncan assumed that the dimensions of uncertainty were independent. Therefore, each subscale should contribute equally to the perception of uncertainty, but, Downey et al. (1975) show that Duncan's scoring method gives unequal weight to the subscales. Since the subscales are different in their range of scores, Downey et al. (1975) recommend standardization of scores (using sample means and sample standard deviations) prior to summation to reduce the chance of inaccurate results. Standardization of scores
permits the weighing of dimensions equally. In fact, standardizing subscale scores improved the reliability coefficients. Additionally, the researchers felt the third dimension (inability to assign probabilities) should be given a negative weight in order to measure uncertainty, not certainty.

Once the dimensions of the environment are identified, predictions can be made regarding the kinds of environments in which different levels of perceived environmental uncertainty are projected to exist (Duncan, 1972) (See Figure 1). Duncan found that decision units in simple-static environments experience the least amount of perceived uncertainty; the highest degree of perceived uncertainty was found in decision units in dynamic-complex environments.

Furthermore, Duncan identified the static-dynamic dimension as the more important dimension in the perception of uncertainty. "Decision making units with dynamic environments always experienced significantly more uncertainty in decision making regardless of whether their environment was simple or complex. However, the differences in uncertainty between decision units with simple and complex environments was not significant unless the decision units environment was also dynamic" (Duncan, 1971, pp. 169-170). "A changing environment means that the decision unit has to continually adapt to a new situation by developing new responses as opposed to relying solely on past practices
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple + Stable =</th>
<th>Complex + Stable =</th>
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<tr>
<td>Low Uncertainty</td>
<td>Low-Moderate Uncertainty</td>
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<td>Static</td>
<td>ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE</td>
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<td>High-Moderate Uncertainty</td>
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<td>High Uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Small number of external elements, and elements are similar</td>
<td>1. Large number of external elements, and elements are dissimilar</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Elements remain the same or change slowly</td>
<td>2. Elements remain the same or change slowly</td>
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<td>Examples: Soft drink bottlers, beer distributors, container manufacturers, food processors</td>
<td>Examples: Universities, appliance manufacturers, chemical companies, insurance companies</td>
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<td>High-Moderate Uncertainty</td>
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<td>High Uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Small number of external elements, and elements are similar</td>
<td>1. Large number of external elements, and elements are dissimilar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Elements change frequently and unpredictably</td>
<td>2. Elements change frequently and unpredictably</td>
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<td>Examples: Personal computers, fashion clothing, music industry, toy manufacturers</td>
<td>Examples: Electronic firms, aerospace firms, telecommunications firms, airlines</td>
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Figure 1: Duncan's Perceived Environmental Uncertainty Model (1972): Adapted and reprinted from "Characteristics of Perceived Environments and Perceived Environmental Uncertainty" by Robert B. Duncan, published in Administrative Science Quarterly 17(3) (1972), pp. 313-27.
in its adaptation. This then implies that the social system, whether it be a decision unit or an entire organization, must continually learn how to adapt to new situations as they arise in the environment and build in strategies for dealing with change" (Duncan, 1971, p. 174). These results concur with the theoretical work of Terreberry (1968), Thompson (1967), and Emery and Trist (1965).

Duncan's operationalization of the uncertainty construct, with scoring adjustments suggested by Downey et al. (1975), is a reliable, widely used perceptual measure. Its dimensions incorporate both micro and macro views of the construct and is therefore believed to be appropriate for the study of perceived environmental uncertainty in the department store.

**Boundary Spanning Concepts**

**Boundaries.** Historically, the open systems perspective of organizations has been put forth by scholars studying organizations and boundary spanning (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Kast & Rosenzweig, 1979; Thompson, 1967). An organizational system is "a set of interacting elements that acquires inputs from the environment, transforms them, and discharges outputs to the external environment. Interacting elements mean that people within departments depend upon one another and must work together" (Daft, 1992, p. 10). Organizations designated as open systems have penetrable barriers with the environment; organizations designated as closed systems have
impenetrable boundaries. Therefore, boundaries identify the
territory of organizational activities (Thompson, 1967).

In open systems, there are two types of boundaries:
external and internal. The first type of boundary separates
the organization from its environment while the second type
of boundary delineates functional areas within the
organization (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1974). Researchers who
have studied internal boundary spanning have focused on the
lateral relationships and interaction between functional
areas within the organization (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967;
Strauss, 1962). Researchers who have studied external
boundary spanning focus on the processes and interactions
that occur between an organization and its environment
(Leifer, 1975; Thompson, 1967).

The department store organization can be seen as an
open system. The diverse inputs into this organizational
system can include executive trainees, wholesale goods for
resale, information concerning market trends, and financial
assistance from vendors (co-op advertising or markdown
dollars). The transformational process changes these inputs
into something of value that can be exported back into the
environment. Outputs, using the example of the department
store, can include a variety of products including
merchandise, customer services and customer satisfaction.

An organizational boundary is an idea that is difficult
to precisely define. Boundaries mark the limits between the
organization and the environment. It is through these boundaries that resources, including information, flow.

Researchers have identified some functions of boundaries. First, boundaries distinguish between the organization and the environment which determines the scope of the organization (Leifer, 1975). Second, boundaries act as a protection device. Boundaries are "subsystems that hold together the components, protect them from environmental stresses, and exclude or permit entry to various sorts of matter-energy and information" (Miller, 1972, p. 20). The final function of a boundary is to act as a regulator of information and materials between the organization and its environment. At the organization-environment interface, boundaries sort through and censor information, materials, energy and individuals who enter or exit the organization (Kahn et al., 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1966; Miller, 1972; Utterback, 1971).

Katz and Kahn (1966) suggest that organization requirements prescribe the completion of certain activities, which create organization boundaries. In the same vein, Kast and Rosenzweig (1979) suggest that organizational boundaries fluctuate due to their nature as open systems and because they are defined by people's activities, i.e., activities which are required to transform inputs into outputs define an organization's boundaries. Leifer and Delbecq (1978) combine functions in their definition of
organizational boundaries: "the demarcation line or region between one system and another, that protects the members of the system from extrasystemic influences and that regulates the flow of information, material and people into or out of the system" (p. 41).

Other researchers see organizational boundaries differently. They believe that boundaries of social systems, unlike those of physical systems, are difficult to specify. In fact, Aldrich and Herker (1977) state that "the definition and location of a specific boundary may be possible only given a specific conceptual and empirical context" (p. 218). Bell (1974) believes that boundaries vary based on their visibility, expansiveness, stableness, and degree of penetration. Starbuck (1976) adds that "the two (organization and environment) are not separate, and a boundary between them is partially an arbitrary invention of the perceiver" (p. 1071). Miles, Snow and Pfeffer (1974) conclude that a boundary definition should be aligned with the problem under examination.

Boundary permeability. Organizations differ in the amount and type of interactions that are contracted with their environment, i.e., in the degree of boundary permeability (Brown, 1966). Organizational permeability is defined as "the degree to which the focal organization is open to influences from its environment" (Aiken & Hage, 1972, p. 4). Closed systems possess rigid boundaries that
lead to few interactions with the environment while open systems possess permeable boundaries and can accommodate many interactions with the environment. "The degree and kind of permeability will affect the adaptation of the organization to its environment" (Brown, 1966, p. 321). Based on organizational needs, organizations can choose the degree of boundary permeability most suited to the requirements of the organization (Brown, 1966). Boundary spanning has been a means to study the degree of boundary permeability of an organization and the degree of interaction and interdependency between the organization and environment. Boundary spanning concepts are the focus of the next section.

**Boundary spanning.** Boundary spanning has been defined as a role, an activity, and a position; it has been studied in relation to job satisfaction, role stress, role conflict, personality attributes and hierarchical level, among other variables. Boundary spanning has been defined in the literature in diverse ways. One definition put forth by Keller and Holland (1975) states that boundary spanning is a "vital behavior for effective monitoring of the environment and the transfer of technology and information across boundaries" (p. 388).

In sum, the diverse nature of boundary spanning makes it difficult to synthesize and categorize the literature.
For this review of literature, we begin by defining boundary position, role and activity.

**Boundary positions.** One of the most often quoted definitions of boundary position comes from Kahn et al. (1964). "A boundary position is a position for which some members of the role set are located in a different system...either another unit within the same organization or another organization entirely" (p. 101).

Adams (1976) says that "boundary positions have a number of unique properties deriving from their structural relationship to other roles and from the fact that occupants of these positions must effect transactions with external agents" (p. 1176). These properties include boundary role person distance, reciprocal representation, and reciprocal influence agent. Adams defines these properties as follows:

1. **Boundary role person distance:** "The boundary person is more distant, psychologically, organizationally, and often physically, from other members of his organization than they are from each other, and he is closer to the external environment and to the agents outside the organization" (p. 1176).

2. **Reciprocal representation:** The boundary role person represents his organization to the external environment as well as represents the external environment to his own constituency.

3. **Reciprocal influence agent:** The boundary role person is his organization's agent of influence over the external environment as well as the receiver of influence from internal and external groups.
Boundary roles. Thompson (1962) coined the term boundary spanner when he described roles which place an individual at the interface of the organization and its environment. Thompson (1962) believed that organizational adjustment to the environment was eased by roles that "span the boundaries of the organization" (p. 309). Thompson (1962) defined the boundary spanning role in this way:

Complex purposive organizations receive inputs from, and discharge outputs to, environments, and virtually all such organizations develop specialized roles for these purposes. Output roles, designed to arrange for distribution of the organization's ultimate product, service, or impact to other agents of the society thus are boundary-spanning roles linking organizations and environment through interaction between member and nonmember. Organizational output roles are defined in part by reciprocal roles of nonmembers...Each output role together with the reciprocating non member role, can be considered built into a transaction structure. Because output roles exist in structures that span the boundaries of the organization, they may be important sources of organization adaptation to environmental influences (p. 309).

Aiken and Hage (1972) add an important distinction to their definition; they stress the importance of linking boundary roles with the idea of goal attainment. Without its inclusion, many organizational participants could be erroneously considered as boundary spanners.

Tushman (1977) believed that boundary spanning roles were useful when dealing with problems in communication across boundaries. "Individuals filling these roles are capable of translating contrasting coding schemes and therefore of acting as boundary spanners between the work
unit and external information areas" (Tushman, 1977, p. 591). Furthermore, boundary spanners act as recoders by recoding external information to make it comprehensible to their less visible colleagues (Tushman & Katz, 1980). Recoding is important where there are new and unexpected environmental forces affecting the organization (Huber & Daft, 1989).

Miles (1974) defined boundary roles as "roles which require a substantial amount of transacting or coordinating activities across intra- or interorganizational boundaries" (p. 2). Organ (1971) used the term "linking pin" when describing the role of the boundary spanner. He stated that interorganizational linkages take the form of roles with boundary spanners occupying those roles.

Thompson (1962) analyzed the routineness of the boundary spanning activity via what he called "output roles". "Output roles, designed to arrange for distribution of the organizations ultimate product, service, or impact to other agents of the society thus are boundary spanning roles, linking organization and environment through face-to-face interaction between member and non-member. Each output role, together with the reciprocating non-members role, can be considered as built into a transaction structure" (Thompson, 1962, p. 309).

From this, Thompson (1962) developed a typology of transaction structures, determined by "the extent to which
the organization has armed its agents with routines, and the extent to which the non-member is compelled to participate in the relationship" (Thompson, 1962, p. 310). Found within these transaction structures are prescriptions for behavior for both member and non-member. Results suggest that when boundary spanners lack routines (i.e., are to adjust his or her actions to the non-members needs), boundary spanning activities are considered professional, and the criterion for successful boundary spanning performance would be results of the interaction rather than conformity to established procedures (Thompson, 1962).

When boundary spanners follow set procedures in interacting with non-members, boundary spanning activities are more clerical in nature and the criteria for successful boundary spanning performance is conformity to established procedures. The boundary spanner can exert greater control over the transaction process when non-members participation is mandatory rather than optional (Thompson, 1962).

In addition, Arlow (1979) recognized six components in Thompson's representation of boundary spanning roles. First, there is an exchange relationship between member and non-member. Second, face-to-face interpersonal contact is stressed rather than all types of contact in general. Third, boundary spanning roles absorb input roles. Fourth, role behaviors extend from programmed to non-programmed. Fifth, interaction between member and non-member results in
some conclusion and the interaction may be continuous or limited to one occurrence. Finally, boundary spanning roles stress contact with non-members who are outside of the organization. Thompson (1962) concluded that output relationships cannot be dictated by the organization because the transaction structures include elements outside the organization's control.

**Boundary spanners.** Boundary spanners are those individuals who assume boundary roles (Leifer, 1975). Adams (1976) defined boundary spanners as "those whose activities place them at the organizations' boundaries for the purpose of effecting transactions with the environment" (p. 1176). Wall and Adams (1974) described boundary spanners as having a unique position by being a member of the organization subject to internal expectations and also a member of a "boundary interaction system" which makes the boundary role person subject to influence attempts by a boundary role person in another functional area of the firm or a boundary role person in an outside organization. This is why Strauss (1962) called a boundary spanner a "man in the middle" caught between diverse pressures from external groups and colleagues within the organization. Boundary spanners play the role of change agent as they attempt to influence colleagues and superiors. In addition, boundary spanners are influenced in the way they perform their functions by the kind of technology employed by the organization, the
amount of environmental uncertainty, the size of the organization and their level within the hierarchy (Leifer & Huber, 1977; Strauss, 1962; Thompson, 1967).

Boundary spanners have been described using a host of titles: gatekeepers, marginal men, integrator, innovator, change agent, detector function, linking pin and member of the extraorganizational transaction structure, to name a few (Leifer, 1975). In research where the identical boundary spanner title has been used, the definitions are not the same or when the occupational titles for boundary spanners differ, so do the functions performed by them (Leifer, 1975; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Organ, 1971; Pruden, 1969; Strauss, 1962). Some scholars believe that the ambiguous findings in the literature are due to the confounding of the various roles and titles (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Also, the personal attributes of boundary spanners influence the performance of the various functions (Organ, 1971; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981).

In summary, the diverse nature of boundary roles, boundary spanners and their importance in the organization has been explored. Next, the activities performed by boundary spanners will be discussed.

**Boundary spanning activity.** Keller and Holland (1975) defined boundary spanning activity as "the interpersonal transfer of information across organizational boundaries" (p. 130). Leifer (1975) defined boundary spanning activity
as "those activities which link the focal organization with other organizations or social systems and are directly relevant for the goal attainment of the focal organization" (p. 6). Furthermore, the "actual or perceived need to reduce uncertainty" is the vital element affecting boundary spanning activity (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, p. 42). Leifer (1975) also suggested why boundary spanning should be defined in terms of activities and not roles.

...boundary spanning activity defines a boundary spanner rather than an organizationally defined role. Although organizationally defined roles may describe expected behavior, two people with the same role may...engage in different amounts of the same activity. Two social workers (organizationally defined role) may engage in different amounts of boundary spanning activities. A statistical clerk, an organizationally defined role that...would not entail boundary spanning, may...engage in organization/environment interaction (Leifer, 1975, pp. 18-19).

It is questionable to use only roles to measure boundary spanning as this approach ignores informal activities. Both informal and formal roles of boundary spanning are included in Leifer's definition. Miles (1977, 1980) and Almubarek (1982) grouped boundary spanning functions under three broad activity headings: (1) face activities include representing and protecting (2) processing activities include monitoring, scanning and gatekeeping, and (3) relation activities include transacting, linking and coordinating. Additional functions attributed to boundary spanners include bargaining,
searching, communicating, and negotiating among others (Adams, 1976; Spekman, 1979).

In conclusion, the performance of boundary spanners contribute to the effectiveness of the organization. The success of the boundary spanner and the organization is a function of their ability to adapt to changing environments. Some researchers have studied boundary spanning in the context of a changing environment. The following is a review of selected studies.

**Perceived environmental uncertainty and boundary spanning.**

A few researchers have studied boundary spanning in conjunction with perceived environmental uncertainty. Leifer and Huber (1977) surveyed 182 people working in twelve work units in a health and welfare organization. The researchers hypothesized that "if organizational members attempt to reduce perceived environmental uncertainty by obtaining more information, it follows that those having high perceived environmental uncertainty would engage in more boundary spanning activity in order to bring that uncertainty down to some manageable level" (p. 239). The hypothesis was supported, but subject to qualification: the positive relationship between uncertainty and boundary spanning was influenced by the organicness, i.e., flexibility and adaptability of the organization in question.
Using this same sample, Leifer and Wortman (1976) suggested that boundary spanning activities were found in routine and non-routine environments; therefore, they implied that boundary spanning activities are related more to organizational structure, not environment.

At-Twaijri and Montanari (1987) and Almubarek (1982) found positive significant relationships among dynamism, complexity and boundary spanning activity. More specifically, Almubarek (1982), in his study involving purchasing agents in the electronics industry, investigated the direction among these and other variables. This was accomplished via path analysis. This tool "tests for possible sequential linkages that could be inferred from the hypothesized relationships" among the variables (Almubarek, 1982, p. 113). Almubarek (1982) completed a path analysis to analyze the three types of boundary spanning activity: face, process, and relation. The path analysis results show that "complexity and dynamism directly affect the relation activity (linking and coordinating) and total boundary spanning. Complexity directly affects face activity (representing and protecting) and dynamism directly affects process activity" (scanning and monitoring) (p. 163-164).

Almubarek's (1982) results also supported the positive correlation between dynamism and complexity, and boundary spanning. Support was given to the hypothesis that a heterogeneous environment calls for more boundary spanning
activities. Previous theoretical and empirical works also support these findings (Cox, 1977; Cox, et al., 1978; Thompson, 1962, 1967). As a result, purchasing agents' activities are affected by their perception of the complexity and dynamism of the environment: a heterogeneous environment intensifies boundary spanning activities.

Leifer and Delbecq (1978) conceptualized a four-cell paradigm describing the degree of routineness of boundary spanning activity. The model shows that boundary spanning activity is a "function of both the organizational need for information and the perceived level of uncertainty of the environment, such that combinations of the two determine the type of boundary spanning activity" (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, p. 47).

The horizontal axis described the informational needs of the organization: anticipated regular through unanticipated irregular. The vertical axis describes perceived environmental uncertainty: low to high. Leifer and Delbecq (1978) suggest that when the organization is able to anticipate a constant need for information from the environment, boundary spanning activity would be formalized by the organization using rules, procedures, and organizing a formal boundary spanning unit. On the other hand, when the organization need for environmental information is unanticipated and irregular, the boundary spanner will use
his or her own judgement in deciding how to obtain the needed information.

Finally, "when the organization's need for information is unanticipated and irregular, and where the environment is perceived as highly uncertain, boundary spanning will be nonregulated and nonroutine" (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978, p. 45). Therefore, their model suggests that boundary spanning activities not only fluctuate in relation to the level of perceived environmental uncertainty, but boundary spanning activities also affect the structuring of organizations.

These studies indicate predominantly positive correlations between perceived environmental uncertainty and boundary spanning activity. The next section discusses various approaches to measuring boundary spanning.

**Boundary Spanning Measures.** Various researchers have studied boundary spanning by using activity measures (Allen & Cohen, 1969; Jemison, 1978; Keller & Holland, 1975; Leifer, 1975; Miles, 1980). The objective for some researchers was to measure the frequency of boundary spanning activities or functions. For example, Keller and Holland (1975) measured boundary spanning activities by asking respondents the number of magazines and journals read, and the number of times information sources were recommended to or sought from a counterpart outside of the organization. Informational activities were the only
dimension of boundary spanning measured by these researchers.

Leifer (1975) measured boundary spanning activity by asking respondents about the frequency of participation in informational processing activities. He then tallied the number of frequencies of verbal, written, formal, and informal communications with those external to the organization and also those inside the organization, but outside one's department. Frequency was associated with the number of times an activity was completed or the number of hours devoted to an activity.

Kahn et al. (1964) measured boundary spanning activity by recording the time spent interacting with business contacts and the significance of those contacts. In addition, Kahn's et al. report of frequency of contacts masks the type of contact used by the boundary spanner—written or oral, formal or informal. Zeitz (1976) used two items to measure boundary spanning activity. The first item measured unscheduled external contacts and the second measured scheduled meetings with external contacts. Because researchers used a variety of different activities in operationalizing their views of boundary spanning, comparisons of studies using activity measures cannot be made (Ford & Slocum, 1977; Jemison, 1978; March & Simon, 1958; Miles & Snow, 1978; Pennings, 1973).
Recently, researchers have called for studies using broader definitions of boundary spanning where sets of activities are used rather than one type of activity. Miles (1980) and Jemison (1978, 1979) are among the few researchers who have developed multiple activity measures that address these broader categories of boundary spanning activities. Jemison drew on the work of prominent scholars (Adams, 1976; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Miles, 1980) in developing his multiple activity measure of boundary spanning. His measure covers the range of activities that characterize boundary spanning. He categorized these activities under three broad headings: (a) face activities, which include representing and protecting; (b) process activities, which include scanning, monitoring and gatekeeping; and (c) relation activities, which include transacting, linking and coordinating. Miles (1980) says that these activities comprise the "institutional-adaptive" function ascribed to boundary spanners because of their external orientation. A review of these type of boundary spanning activities, as used in the Jemison measure, follows.

Representing is defined as "presentation of information about the organization to its environment for the purpose of shaping the opinions and behavior of other organizations, groups, and individuals in the service of the organization" (Adams, as cited in Miles, 1980, p. 320). "The
representational function of boundary roles is intended to create and manage the image of the organization to its outside constituencies; to create impressions which will lead, at least indirectly, to the enhancement of the organization's power and autonomy in its environment" (Miles, 1980, p. 322).

Protection refers to "warding off environmental influences and noises which might otherwise disrupt the ongoing operations and structures of the focal organization" (Miles, 1980, p. 324). Strategies that protectors may use when protecting the organization include buffering--i.e., stockpiling of inventory, smoothing-through pricing and scheduling, forecasting, and rationing (Thompson, 1967).

Scanning and monitoring refers to "two types of information gathering activities in organizations. Scanning is primarily a search for major discontinuities in the external environment that might provide opportunities or constraints to the organization." (Miles, 1980, p. 322). "Monitoring..involves tracking continuous, sometimes gradual, changes in environmental indicators which have been established as relevant strategic contingencies of the organization" (Miles, 1980, p. 323). "Organizations must develop two classes of boundary scanning units: the kind that engages in highly specialized, focused monitoring; and the kind that engages in broad-gauged, general scanning" (Miles, 1980, p. 323-324).
Information processing activities include both interpretation and translation aspects. As information processors, boundary spanners "interpret the meaning of environmental information in terms of the opportunities, constraints, and contingencies they pose for the organization" (Miles, 1980, p. 330). Also, as information processors, boundary spanners "translate these implications into terms comprehensible to organizational decision makers" (Miles, 1980, p. 330). The gatekeeping activities include making decisions about what and when to communicate.

Transacting "refers to the activities necessary for the acquisition of inputs and the disposal of outputs" (Miles, 1980, p. 335). The final activities of linking and coordinating involve three levels: "establishing and maintaining relationships between the organization as a whole and other individuals, groups, or organizations" (Miles, 1980, p. 338).

In summary, boundary spanning measures, over time, have increased in sophistication. Initially, the concept was measured by counting the frequency of boundary spanning activities (Holland, 1975; Leifer, 1975; Zeitz, 1976). Others recorded the time spent interacting with business contacts and the importance of these contacts (Kahn, et al, 1964). Jemison answered the call for the development of a more comprehensive boundary spanning measure. His categorization of boundary spanning into face, process and
relation activities provides a more complete
colorization of the concept of boundary spanning.
Another variable studied in association with boundary
spanning activities and perceived environmental uncertainty
is influence on decisions. It is the focus of the next
section.

**Boundary Spanner's Power.** Scholars (Schwab, 1980;
Strauss, 1962; Pettigrew, 1972; Zeitz, 1976) have
investigated boundary spanner's power resulting from access
to important information in the environment. While this
influence is acknowledged, it has received scant attention
in empirical research. In fact, the concept of power as
boundary spanning activity specific is a recent addition to
the study of organizations (Almubarek, 1982). Power has
been defined as "the all inclusive concept which covers any
and all modes by which behavioral change is induced in
individuals or groups" (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1978, p. 329).
In the boundary spanning research, the concept of power is
seen as an attribute of the social relationship forged by
the structure of the organization and not of the role
incumbents (Emerson, 1962). The role of individual
differences is believed, though, to affect power. Further­
more, "for an individual to acquire power, his expertise
must also be critical to the successful functioning of the
organization" (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 166).
Boundary spanning activity is an important power resource (Pettigrew, 1972; Zeitz, 1976). Furthermore, boundary spanning is correlated with characteristics which have been identified as power sources: professional activity, level of education, and hierarchical level in the organization (Aiken & Hage, 1972; Schwab, Ungson, & Brown, 1985). When organizational members participate in vital bargaining interactions, their activities give them a power base independent of the organization. It seems, then, that boundary spanning activity creates a power resource for boundary spanners.

George Strauss (1962) studied the influence that boundary spanners (industrial purchasing agents) attained in the execution of their duties. He suggested that "lateral negotiations," not the traditional line and staff organizational structure, influence the decision making process and the behavior of other functional departments within the organization (p. 161). Schwab (1980) reported that boundary spanners believe they influence organizational decisions simply because they engage in boundary spanning activity. Burns and Stalker (1961) state that information may be used as a tool that fosters status. Wilensky (1967) believes that information is an asset that represents status and intensifies authority.

Easton (cited in Pettigrew, 1972) believed that boundary spanners have the potential to control decisions
because of their interactions with members of a variety of communication networks. Therefore, the power and influence boundary spanners gain in their performance of their duties is thought to enhance their power within their organizations.

Thompson (1962) said that boundary spanners may become powerful in the organization when the environment is diverse and unstable and where "contingencies" are significant to the organization. The organization becomes dependent on the individual, which enables the individual to gain power (Emerson, 1962). In the same vein, Mintzberg (1983) says power is related to those individuals who deal with vital constituencies.

When the need for information increases in uncertain environments, boundary spanners will gain increased power in the decision making process (Spekman, 1979). Boundary spanners gain power in the organization and may use the power by participating in and influencing decisions. Dubin (1963) found that individuals within organizations are given power if the functions performed are perceived as important and if the person is not easily replaced in the performance of his or her duties. Because of their crucial role in the organization and their low substitutability, boundary spanners can be thought of as having power which can be used to influence decisions within the organization. March and Simon (1958) agree that boundary spanners have "gatekeeper's
power" and become more influential if they make correct judgments and if the information is crucial for the organization to thrive.

Although the above researchers link boundary spanners with power, few researchers have empirically studied the relationship. Of the few who have, Spekman (1979) found that boundary spanners who successfully cope with environmental uncertainty become more influential as the level of uncertainty increases.

Almubarek (1982) found significant relationships among boundary spanning activity, environmental uncertainty, and influence on decisions with a sample of industrial purchasing agents. He stated that influence on decisions could predict environmental uncertainty and boundary spanning activity. Influence on decisions did not correlate with boundary spanning activity or relation type activity (linking and coordinating). But, influence on decision was found to be positively correlated with complexity and face activity (representing and protecting) and negatively correlated with process activity (scanning and monitoring). Therefore, influence on decisions is boundary spanning specific, i.e., industrial buyers rely on certain types of boundary spanning activities when dealing with the environment. When purchasing agents feel they possess influence, face activities (representing and protecting) are implemented more often. When purchasing agents feel they
possess less influence, process activities (scanning and monitoring) are implemented more often. Influence on decisions was a good predictor of complexity and face activity (representing and protecting), based on the results of multiple regression analyses (Almubarek, 1982).

Other scholars (Cox, 1977; Cox, et al., 1978; Jemison, 1978; Reiman, 1975) have also found significant relationships among these variables. Jemison (1978, 1979) was one of the few scholars to empirically investigate the influence of boundary spanning activities on the strategic decisions in three diverse industries. Jemison explored the boundary spanning activity-influence on decision connection in hospitals, food processing, and finance. Jemison's boundary spanning roles consist of: (1) Information acquisition and control (acquires information from outside sources), (2) Domain determination and interface (determines the customer base and provides information to them) and (3) Physical input control (regulates the inputs needed by the organization) (Jemison, 1979).

Based on these boundary role classifications, Jemison found that the role of domain determination and interface (i.e., determines the customer base and provides information to them) had the most influence on strategic decisions regardless of technology or industry. Jemison's findings lend support to the importance of boundary spanning roles on strategic decision making. Allen's (1988) results support
Jemison; she found that boundary spanners who contact and interact with clients have more influence than boundary spanners who engage in informational processing. In addition, Almubarek (1982) stated that "influence on decisions is a predictor of complexity...i.e., complexity can be partially predicted from the knowledge of the ability to influence decisions" (p. 175).

Diverse environmental requirements and contingencies may cause differences in influence based on boundary spanning activities (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Miles, 1980). Therefore, when gathering and disseminating information about the environment to the organization, boundary spanners' power may affect environmental perceptions and the types of boundary spanning activities needed in a particular situation (Almubarek, 1982).

**Summary.** The concept of boundary spanning has been studied from diverse perspectives. Past research has focused on the function of boundary spanners, boundary spanning and the environment, and boundary spanning and power. In addition, the boundaries and their difficulties and permeabilities were discussed. Boundary spanning as a position, role and activity were reviewed. Participation in boundary spanning activities via boundary spanning roles permits individuals and departments to gain control over the environmental contingencies that enable them to influence decisions. The specific boundary spanners under
consideration in this study, retail buyers, will be discussed in the next section.

Retail Buyers

Although the influence of retail buyers on members of the distribution channel has been well documented, comparatively little research on retail buyers themselves has been reported. As recent as 1989, the study of retail buying behavior was still labeled an overlooked area within retail research (Anthony, 1989). A goal of this review of retail buyer research is to merge, for the first time, the textiles and clothing and marketing literature in order to construct a more comprehensive review of the retail buyer literature.

First, the influence and importance of retail buyers will be reviewed. Next, retail buyer research is categorized by programmatic themes (e.g., traits and skills of the successful buyer, buyer decision making processes, sales forecasting, retail buyer behavior and other studies). Finally, retail buyer studies will be presented.

Influence and Importance of Retail Buyers

Retailing can be defined as the "activity of selling goods and services to ultimate consumers" (Mason, Mayer & Wilkinson, 1993, p. 7). Although retailing organizations perform many functions such as sales promotion, merchandise control, selection of human resources, and guiding store
operations, buying and selling merchandise are their primary functions (Forrester, 1981). All store executives, regardless of functional area, exist to ease and "assist the buyer in activities designed to achieve the corporate goals of increased sales, gross margin dollars, and net profit" (Messenger, 1975, p. 2). As such, "buying is where the action is" (Shuch, 1988, p. 1). Since the buying and selling of merchandise has been linked to success in a retail establishment (Martin, 1973), the importance of retail buyers has come into greater focus. In fact, the buyer is the critical factor in the success or failure of any retail venture (Messenger, 1975).

Keaveney (1988) points out that retail buyers influence three vital groups in the distribution channel: retail stores, manufacturers, and consumers. First, retail buyers directly affect the financial performance of their store. According to the U. S. Industrial Outlook (1992, p. R77), department store buyers in the United States invest nearly $38 billion dollars in inventory. This amount represents one of the largest store assets. Furthermore, buyers directly influence store profits. Retail buyers affect costs when they negotiate discounts, advertising allowances, prices, delivery dates, terms of purchase, shipping and merchandise returns. Retail buyers affect revenues when they choose products for resale to the ultimate consumer, i.e. poor inventory choices produce poor store revenues.

However, the duties and responsibilities of the buyers for a typical department store extend beyond those of purchasing agents, i.e., placing orders and selecting vendors for selected merchandise classifications. Retail buyers control one of the most important components of the firm's marketing mix—the product offering (typically 40% to 60% of the assets of the average retailer) (Lusch, 1976). Although buyers confer with divisional merchandise managers (and are subject to their approval in product mix decisions), historically, retail buyers were surprisingly autonomous (Cox, 1984). The decisions of the buyer are almost always supported, even in retail businesses dominated by buying committees, e.g., supermarkets (Borden, 1968). The reason upper management has entrusted the vital product mix to the care of buyers is due to the vast array of merchandise carried by stores. Some department stores were carrying, by 1983, more than 100,000 pieces of merchandise (Berman & Evans, 1983). Due to the large volume of merchandise, it was deemed prudent to assign the decision making to retail buyers (Borden, 1968), most of whom make their decisions independently.
However, it seems that the role of the independent, decision-making, department store buyer is being reviewed and revised by some department store groups. Department stores are beginning to group apparel buyers either into teams, much like the structure used in grocery retailing or in the new planner-distributor configuration (Hartnett, 1993; "One hundred twenty", 1993; Rutberg, 1992). The BPS system divides the responsibilities of the buyer among two other positions within the organization. Under this new system, the buyer shops the market and the competition to find the appropriate merchandise, and negotiate the best cost and delivery of the merchandise. Then, the planner takes over and tests various retail prices and distributes merchandise assortments by store. The planner also determines the customer reaction by store by summarizing selling reports. Finally, the store manager, as he or she interacts with the customer, is responsible for refinements in merchandise quantities and assortments overlooked by the buyer and planner, and reacts to local trends emerging from his or her particular unit by notifying the buyer of new developments.

Another buying strategy, the team buying process (at Federated Stores, for example), functions by gathering the best merchants from both the stores divisions and Federated Merchandising Corporation (i.e., the resident buying office). This group then works together on selecting,
buying, marketing, and presenting merchandise in the stores.

This reconsideration of roles could be a reaction to the aftermath of the 1980s—the merging of department store groups. Overnight, some buyers found themselves responsible for many more stores; this increase in responsibility could have been the catalyst to review the power of department store buyers. Furthermore, some stores may have realized that buyers could not have dealt overnight with such a large increase in buying responsibility. Also, a goal of corporate uniformity in merchandise assortments suggests a team buying approach rather than the autonomous buyer of the recent past. Overall, the change in buying structure and responsibility points to a more specialized buying function.

Retail buyers are also important to manufacturers. Retail buyers perform as gatekeepers when they develop assortments from the vast array of merchandise available for resale in the marketplace. As such, they act as a link to bring the manufacturer’s goods to the ultimate consumer (Hirschman & Stampfl, 1980). One researcher called buyers the "purchasing agents for customers" (McVey, 1960).

Retail buyers affect consumers in diverse ways. For example, retail buyers, in their role as change agent, alert consumers to unfulfilled needs and may also awaken dormant needs. Also, retail buyers, as representatives of the retail organization, provide customers with product information that will be used in the customer decision—
making process (Hirschman & Stampfl, 1980). Cox (1984) suggests that consumers delegate much of the brand selection process to retail buyers. Furthermore, buyer's merchandise selections influence of customers' images of retail stores (Hansen & Deutscher, 1977-78; Marks, 1976). Having established the importance of retail buyers to their firms, manufacturers, and customers, the next section will review retail buyer research.

Retail buyer research. Although scholars have called for retail buyer research (Harris & Mills, 1982; Siegel & Slevin, 1974), others have revealed that few studies have been forthcoming (Cox, 1984; Ingene, 1981) even after studies suggested that retail buyers were crucial to the financial success or failure of retail stores (Martin, 1973). In fact, during thirty years of research, Cox (1984) uncovered only twenty-six studies dealing with retail buyer behavior (as compared to more than one thousand studies dealing with industrial purchasing behavior). In an attempt to spur interest in retail buyer research, Kotler and Levy (1973) went so far as to exclaim in the title of their article that Buying is marketing tool. Furthermore, most retailing studies concentrate on the consumer responses to retailer's decisions, and not on the retailer's behavior (Cox, 1984).

Keaveney (1988), in her "census" of retail buyer research, identified six categories of conceptual and
empirical research. This researcher has merged the marketing and textile and apparel literature to expose the reader to a broader perspective of retail buyer research than has been previously reported, rather than to discuss each study in great detail. It is suggested that the reader consult individual studies for additional information.

The first group of studies, as identified by Keaveney (1988), investigates the differences between successful and unsuccessful retail buyers on selected skills, personality, and/or demographic variables. Saunders and Deeble (1965) studied retail buyers in a multi-state chain. A personality factor test was administered to gauge the personality profile of the buyers and compare the results between superior and average buyers and the general population. Significant differences were revealed between buyers and the general population, while the group of buyers rated superior were found to be more confident and self reliant than buyers rated as average.

Sauls (1987) tested the hypotheses that Adlerian or Jungian or a combination of Adlerian and Jungian personality characteristics both differentiate high performing retail buyers from those who are not high performing. Discriminant analysis revealed that a combination of Adlerian lifestyle characteristics and Jungian typologies together discriminate between the groups.
Joseph (1977) predicted the success of department store buyers by evaluating personality and demographic variables. Buyers' performances were determined by their immediate supervisors, i.e., divisional merchandise managers. The findings indicate that higher performing buyers were emotionally stable, independent, efficient in their work habits, high in self esteem and endurance levels, determined, educated, male, married, and raised in a family where parents were employed in retailing.

Martin (1973) investigated the demographic and behavioral differences between buyers employed by successful and unsuccessful stores. Success was determined by studying the five year sales trend for the stores. The researchers suggested that differences between the buyer groups can be attributed to store policies and procedures; these differences can help explain the divergent sales performance of the stores. Buyers employed by the successful stores were better paid, more self confident, perceived themselves to have more influence over decision making, demonstrated strong leadership traits (especially when adopting new merchandise trends) and were aggressive in negotiations with vendors concerning "perks" such as advertising and markdown monies and return privileges. The researchers maintain that the above buyer characteristics have strengthened the sales position of the successful stores.
Siegel and Slevin (1974) measured need satisfaction, using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, of a group of buyers and department managers employed by a midwestern department store. The buyers and department manager's performance ratings were reported by their direct supervisor. Results indicate that retail buyers are more dissatisfied with their jobs than department managers although both groups were rated "appreciably higher" when compared to other occupational groups. When need satisfaction was correlated with work performance ratings, "the dissatisfied buyer tends to rate his performance much higher than the satisfied buyer" (p. 70). A negative correlation resulted between satisfaction and work performance of department managers.

Although neither study sampled retail store buyers, Bertram (1950) and Dudley (1945) interviewed divisional merchandise managers to gather their opinions as to the qualifications of the successful department store buyer. Bertram compared the results of both studies and similarities and differences were noted. In summary, these studies indicate that significant differences between successful and unsuccessful buyers exist on selected demographic, skill, attitudinal, and/or personality variables.

The second category of retail buyer research attempted to identify the skills that buyers need to possess in order to successfully purchase merchandise for resale to customers.
(Keaveney, 1988). White (1976) studied the consistency of retail buyer's and their customer's perceptions of merchandise attributes. He reported overall general agreement between retail buyer's and customer's evaluations of the salience of selected clothing attributes such as price, fashion, size or fit, material, color, quality and construction, although some differences existed. Ettenson and Wagner (1986) studied the judgement strategies of retail buyers, assistant buyers, and fashion merchandising students regarding the saleability of a basic misses' blouse. The results suggest that, of the three levels of experience, experienced buyers relied predominantly on quantitative cues (i.e., markup, sales history, advertising monies) rather than qualitative cues (i.e., fiber, cut, color, brand, and country of origin) in their decision-making process. Additionally, more experienced retail buyers systematically evaluated the saleability of merchandise offerings more so than assistant buyers and merchandising students. This consistency of evaluation may be explained by their greater level of experience.

Kean (1984) measured buyer perceptions of the importance of selected skills and found that retail buyers chose decision making, negotiating and interpersonal skills as the three most crucial skills for buyers to possess with leadership and mathematical skills also rating high. In summary, this second group of research studies supports the
view that successful buyers possess selected skills. These skills lead to differences in merchandise decision making between buyers, assistant buyers, and customers.

A third group of retail buyer research investigated buyer decision-making processes (Keaveney, 1988). Scholars have studied various aspects of the vendor selection process of retail buyer behavior. Vendor selection among retail buyers employed in various merchandise divisions was analyzed by Wagner, Ettenson, and Parrish (1989). The top three vendor selection criteria mentioned were selling history, markup, and delivery. Selling history was a more influential factor affecting vendor selection decisions for buyers located in women's, men's, and accessories divisions, as compared to buyers located in the home division. The second decision criterion, markup, affected the vendor selection decisions of home and accessories buyers as compared to men's buyers.

Dickinson (1967), in his study of hard goods buyers, developed normative and descriptive models of the selection process, compared the models and put forth directives to aid the buyer in the performance of his or her duties. In another study of the vendor selection process, Arbuthnot (1990) identified the criteria for merchandise and vendor selection across merchandise classifications and store types. She also identified the source of information used by buyers in the procurement process.
Hirschman (1981) studied the extent of customer orientation in buyer's decision criteria by asking retail buyers to list criteria used when choosing new merchandise and vendors. Findings support the view that buyers lack a consumer orientation when choosing merchandise and vendors; they seem to be concerned with meeting and exceeding departmental objectives i.e., sales.

Parrish (1982) also explored retail buyer's vendor selection process. Department store buyers, located in four different merchandise divisions, were asked to indicate whether or not they would purchase merchandise from selected vendors. Buyers were asked to evaluate a set of hypothetical vendors that were described in terms of eight criteria extracted from the organizational buying literature (e.g., reputation, service, country of origin, quality, fashionability, delivery, markup, and selling history). The findings indicated that selling history, markup, and delivery are the top vendor selection criteria, followed by quality and fashionability. Reputation, service, and country of origin were deemed to have marginal importance.

Hix (1971) "investigated the decision criteria used by men's wear buyers in the selection of a new product..." (p. 4). Findings indicate that few menswear buyers conform to a set list of decision criteria when evaluating new products. However, the most influential criteria used by the buyers are those criteria linked to customer satisfaction and
profitability while interpersonal influences were found to be least important.

Quality indicators used by retail buyers when purchasing women's sportswear was studied by Rogers and Lutz (1990). One finding revealed that garment construction and brand name were identified as the top two (out of nine) indicators of garment quality. However, garment construction, price, and brand name were the most salient cues used in purchase decisions.

Anthony (1989) utilized the various subcomponents of the Sheth (1973) model of industrial buyer behavior to study the use of information sources by retail buyers when making decisions under uncertain conditions. Results indicate that buyers do employ different sources of information when unsure about certain product characteristics.

Miler and Drake (1987) explored the influences that affect the retail buyer's purchase decision concerning three levels of women's fashion garments: emerging fashion, continuing fashion, and classic fashion. Of the forty-six influences tested, the top ten influences were as follows: expected sales, quality, cost, key seasonal items, a "good buy", color(s), fibers, styling, planned retail price, and merchandise mix.

Stone and Cassill (1989) contrasted the product vendor and informational source saleability judgments of two groups of retail store buyers: women's wear buyers and men's wear
buyers. Using the Merchandise Buying Behavior Model as a conceptual framework, the results indicate that the men's and women's apparel buyers differed significantly on three factors: vendor reputation, vendor price and promotion, and competition from competing stores. Women's wear buyers rated all three factors significantly higher than menswear buyers pointing to differences in saleability judgments in merchandise purchase decision-making.

Taylor (1985) explored the effectiveness of retail buyer's purchasing decisions in satisfying the needs and wants of their target market. A sample of department and specialty store buyers and a sample of their corresponding customers were separately exposed to vendor sales presentations. Both groups were to indicate their apparel selections from the full line of manufacturing offerings. Findings indicate that specialty store buyers tend to be selecting apparel items that differ from the stated choices of the targeted consumers. Variations in sales performance were noted.

Sternquist, Tolbert, and Davis (1989) examined the reasons for foreign procurement in apparel merchandise, more specifically, women's and men's sportswear. In addition, the researchers investigated whether these reasons for foreign procurement differed across store type (i.e., department, specialty, or discount store). Results indicated that the top three reasons for foreign procurement
were (a) higher quality merchandise for the price, (b) increased markups, and (c) possibility of exclusive and private label merchandise. Differences among the buyers representing the different store types revealed that specialty and discount store buyers differ in their evaluation of exclusive merchandise/private branding, with specialty store buyers rating this reason higher than discount store buyers.

Cadeaux (1986), in his study of merchandising a vendor's line, hypothesized that a lack of vertical coordination (i.e., supplier-retail buyer) in merchandise planning regarding assortments, depth, inventory and advertising has a positive effect on retailer performance, especially when dealing with products possessing high levels of fashion volatility.

Entrikin (1976) analyzed the deletion decision process used by five levels of department store management (e.g., corporate level, general merchandise managers, divisional merchandise managers, department managers, and buyers). Regarding department store buyers, findings indicated that the buyers were selected as the management person who should lead the individual product and product line deletion decisions. Buyers were asked to select the performance criteria used in deletion decision-making. Apparel buyers unanimously selected three criteria: markdowns, gross margin in dollars, and gross margin percent. Furthermore,
department store buyers reported gross margin per square foot, contribution return on investment and net profit percent as the three criteria used during deletion decision implementation. Lastly, when asked to select qualitative performance criteria used, department store buyers chose store image and customer expectations first and company alternatives second. The researchers conclude that many performance standards are employed in the deletion decision arena.

McNeil (1962) was another scholar who studied buyer decision processes in the industrial and distributive setting. By interviewing retail buyers (and additional senior officers), he was able to construct flow charts of the decision process of a home furnishings buyer as he or she builds the assortments in the department. The model was not tested to ascertain its predictive power.

An extension of McNeil's approach was adapted by Berens (1969) in his study of the merchandise assortment building process. Unlike McNeil, he applied the model to actual buyer decision-making situations in order to predict future assortments, (i.e., which vendor's merchandise would be carried in the future). The model correctly predicted 57 per cent of the assortment decisions.

Myers (1965) also studied the decision-making process of retail buyers. Through interviews with retail buyers, he developed models that reflected buyer's decision processes.
in regard to planned purchases. Unlike Berens (1969), Myers was not interested in the actual vendors selected in the planning process, but was interested in planning decisions in regards to five variables: classification decisions, type of plan decisions, price line decisions, dollar decisions, and unit decisions. His predicted results varied widely over the possible range of decisions.

Finally, Massy and Savvas (1964) built a model (via logical flow diagrams) to predict which manufacturer product lines would be carried in an appliance department of a department store. Unfortunately, the researchers did not report their results as to predicted lines purchased by the buyer. It seems that the primary focus of the study was on logical flow modeling and not with the department store buyer, per se.

A fourth group of retail buyer research focused on sales forecasting by retail buyers (Keaveney, 1988). Cox (1984) found that most buyers failed to accurately predict sales performance regardless of the years of experience. Cox put forth a model, incorporating the concept of regression toward the mean, that significantly improved buyer's sales forecasts. Hartley (1982) studied the effect of task structure and environmental complexity on the accuracy of judgmental sales forecasts. Findings provide support for the impact of task structure and environmental
complexity on judgmental forecast accuracy although
direction of the effects are unclear.

A fifth group of retail buyer research includes concep-
tual papers discussing retail buyer behavior (Keaveney,
1988). Ingene (1981) developed a model of buyer decision
making under conditions of uncertainty. The goal was to
design organizational rewards for retail buyers that would
merge buyer and store management attitudes concerning risk.
Cravens (1981) and Cravens and Finn (1981) modeled patronage
decisions of retail buyers, conceived as a series of
patronage decisions regarding suppliers, manufacturers,
distributors, retailers, and customers. Dickinson (1966)
applied game theory to department store buyers with the aim
of strengthening buyer’s effectiveness in vendor
negotiations. Finally, Harris and Mills (1982) and Sheth

The final group of retail buyer studies can be
classified as unrelated studies (Keaveney, 1988). Howerton
(1983) investigated role conceptions, buying functions, and
demographic characteristics of retail buyers in order to
develop a profile of retail buyers. Swinney and Sisler
(1987) examined retail buyers to determine if any
relationship exists between their perception of leadership
style and intent to leave the retail organization. Findings
indicate no correlation.
Summers and Church (1987) explored the regional apparel mart as a service industry. The researchers surveyed retail buyers to uncover the reasons why buyers frequented the mart and the importance buyers placed on support services used or wanted at the mart. Factor analysis revealed that four areas of buyer interest in the mart and services: convenience, travel, comfort, and location. Further analysis revealed that the areas of buyer interest differed significantly by characteristics of market sources used, years of buying experience, gender, age, workload (i.e., the number of vendor lines purchased), and miles traveled to visit the mart.

A comparative study of retail buyers of apparel and appliances was conducted by Francis and Brown (1985-86). Significant differences were noted among four variables: buyer objectives, information source, type of purchase (new task, straight rebuy, modified rebuy), and choice of supplier. Williams (1989) surveyed retail buyers to determine the effect of new computer technologies on perception of their roles as buyers. Role perceptions were operationalized by measuring role ambiguity, role conflict, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Findings indicate that most buyers were not experiencing role ambiguity or conflict, were satisfied with their jobs, and committed to their organizations. Upon further analysis,
demographic characteristics revealed differences among the variables.

Fiorito and Fairhurst (1989) "investigated the content of a buyer's job in small apparel stores and to compare various aspects of the buyer's job content across four merchandise categories: (a) men's apparel, (b) women's apparel, (c) children's apparel, and (d) accessories" (p. 10). To accomplish this, the researcher's administered the Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ) to a random sample of retail buyers from small apparel stores. The results indicate that the buyers most important/frequently used job components were quality assessment of merchandise offerings, decision making skills, reacting to feedback from consumers via sales and/or personal interactions, and a focus on detail. The least important/infrequently used job components were estimating time for activities and events, using keyboard devices such as calculators and computers, utilizing the services of buying offices, public speaking, and interacting with supervisors. Among the retail buyers of the four merchandise classifications, significant differences were revealed. Depending upon merchandise category, buyers differed in their emphasis regarding color perception, assessment of range of merchandise selection, amount of physical exertion, persuasion, contact with semi-professional personnel, participation in civic obligations,
travel, and responsibility for waste (merchandise defects, damages).

Hathcote (1989) investigated economic profitability of domestic versus imported apparel in the United States. She used both estimates from price elasticities of import demand functions from twelve different exporting areas and profit estimates from retailers to estimate apparel profitability of six categories of imported merchandise.

Keaveney (1992) surveyed a probability sample of small store and chain store retail buyers in order to determine what job attitudes and characteristics of the buyer's job contributed to dysfunctional turnover. Of the five job attitudes studied, four were able to predict buyer turnover (intentions to leave, role conflict, role ambiguity, and intrinsic motivation). Of the five job characteristics, two variables revealed significant results. Increased input of immediate supervisors was negatively correlated to organizational turnover among higher performing buyers, while increased input of others involved in the corporate hierarchy (e.g., general merchandise managers, resident buying offices) were positively related to organizational turnover.

Atkins and Jenkins (1988) surveyed retail buyers to determine, by store type, the attitudes and practices of buyers when dealing with imported versus domestically manufactured sportswear. Tolbert, Sternquist, and Davis
(1988) surveyed retail buyers to determine their perceptions of the "Buy American" campaign that was promoted by the apparel industry.

Linowes (1983) studied the full range of information processing activities that are found in the operations of major apparel retailers. Department store retail buyers were surveyed to determine how "merchandise information systems contribute to operations, helping buyers perform their complex tasks, smoothing the work flow, and influencing buyer-branch store relationships" (p. i.i.). Results show that informational needs are dependent upon the characteristics of the merchandise and that informational systems target these differences to a certain degree. Information processing systems were found to improve buyer morale, diminish operating problems, and improve financial results.

Ruyle (1990) "investigated differences in buyer's perceptions of garment characteristics and vendor behavior for domestic and imported apparel" within two apparel classifications: women's blouses and women's dresses (p. 1).

The above review of literature points to three areas where the research has occurred: personality, skill, and/or demographic characteristics of successful buyers; retail buyer behavior; and merchandise decision-making involving retail buyers.
Summarizing the bulk of retail buyer research leads to a few conclusions. Cox, in 1984, described the retail buyer literature as a small body of literature, consisting of isolated studies with little citation among them. He observed that much of it remains unpublished. It seems in the years since Cox made these observations, credit must be given to textiles and clothing scholars who have advanced the programmatic nature of the research and who are the authors of many of the published retail buyer studies.

Chapter Summary, Discussion, and Related Research Questions

Thompson's (1967) and Almubarek's (1982) model of organizational boundary spanning is presented to concisely summarize the major variables under investigation in this study and summarize relationships among them. The model contains four premises:

1. Organizations are open systems that strive to buffer or protect themselves from uncertainties in the environment.

2. Boundary spanning activities are initiated to respond to perception of threats and/or opportunities in the task environment.

3. Boundary spanners are those individuals in the organization who are assigned to act upon contingencies (uncertainties) within the environment.

4. Boundary spanners who are successful in dealing with or dominating critical environmental contingencies (uncertainties) gain power in the organization.

Almubarek's (1982) model suggests that uncertainties in the task environment trigger the initiation of boundary
spanning activities. Empirical support is provided for the premises of the model (Almubarek, 1982; Cox, 1977). Boundary spanners who influence or master relevant sectors of the task environment should gain power in the organization due to the dependent nature of the relationship (Emerson, 1962; Jacobs, 1974). Since some researchers (Bacharach & Aiken, 1976; Jemison, 1978) support the use of influence on decisions as a substitute for individual power, it can be deduced that boundary spanners have influence and power within the organization. Boundary spanners exert this influence by sharing the responsibility of decision making or through making recommendations to actual decision makers within the organization.

Prior research has supported the existence of relationships between perceived environmental uncertainty and boundary spanning activity (Almubarek, 1982; Cox, 1977) and between boundary spanning activity and influence on decisions (Almubarek, 1982; Jemison, 1978).

The activities of the department store buyer can be thought of as boundary spanning activities (Aldrich & Herker, 1977) and that department store buyers are worthy of additional study (Cox, 1984; Harris & Mills, 1982; Martin, 1973; Siegel & Slevin, 1974). Department store buyers must interact and successfully work with individuals located in diverse internal functions such as sales promotion, control, finance and distribution (Forrester, 1981; Messenger, 1975).
Furthermore, buyers frequently interact with those individuals located above them in the organizational hierarchy such as divisional and general merchandise managers as well as those individuals below them in the hierarchy, such as assistant buyers, department managers, sales and distribution personnel.

Department store buyers also spend a great deal of time interacting with those outside of the organization (Hirschman & Stampl, 1980); the interactions with these constituents are crucial to the success of the buyer. As a result, buyers initiate boundary spanning activities in response to uncertainties in the environment in order to control the environment to successfully reach organizational goals (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978).

A model can be constructed to illustrate the above relationships (Figure 2). The model shows that the environment is comprised of two characteristics: complexity and dynamism. A dynamic, complex, environment can lead boundary spanners to perceive the environment as uncertain. Daft (1992) has suggested that the apparel industry falls within the high-moderate range of environmental uncertainty. Uncertainty in the environment triggers the initiation of boundary spanning activities on the part of the boundary spanner. Buyers, in their role as boundary spanners, gather information that is crucial to the successful functioning of the organization. In addition, buyers
Figure 2: Model of Relationships Among Study Variables: Perceived Environmental Characteristics, Perceived Environmental Uncertainty, Boundary Spanning Activities, and Perceived Power.
interact with individuals in external factors which can have an impact on the success of the firm. Because of their access to crucial information and to influential players, buyers find themselves having power over the decisions that affect the firm.

While the study of the above variables have all taken place in industrial organizations and environments and with industrial buyers, this study is the initial effort to study the relationships among variables in the department store setting. The relationships found to exist in the industrial environment should not be expected to be duplicated in the department store environment.

The collective opinion is that retail or distributive buying differs enormously from industrial buying (Harris & Mills, 1982; Hirschman, 1981; Hirschman & Mazursky, 1982). Not only are there differences in the buying process, but also differences between industrial and distributive firms. One reason for these differences centers on the different type of goods inherent to the successful operation of the industrial and retail firm. Merchandise which is considered as soft lines emphasize fashion while hard lines emphasize durable goods.

The inherent distinctions between the types of goods suggest a difference in the type of risk involved in the buyer's decisions. Because social trends affect fashion goods, retail buyers are aware of social risks in product
selection. However, durable goods, are more likely to be judged on their technical performance. Because price and performance play heavily when buyers evaluate durable goods, industrial buyers are more aware of economic risk in product selection (Westbrook & Fornell, 1979).

Retail buying differs from industrial buying in other important ways. First, retail buyers purchase more different items, experience less risk per one item purchase and experience more leeway in their roles as buyers, when compared with industrial buyers. Furthermore, retail buyers depend more on outside sources of information and do not deal with, for the most part, the transformational process of changing purchased goods into finished products for sale. Retail buyers also play an active role in the advertising and promotion of their goods, unlike many industrial buyers. Finally, retail decision making has historically been performed by individuals, not committees, as more common in industrial purchasing, although this is changing. These differences suggest that the environment, roles, and responsibilities of retail buyers are substantially different from buyers in industrial environments.

Overall, the buying process is complex, varies by product, industry, and buying situation (Bello, 1986; Harris & Mills, 1982; Sheth, 1973). In fact, researchers studying industrial buying behavior have said it is nearly impossible
to generalize findings outside the industry under investigation (Bonoma & Zaltman, 1978).

Due to the changeable nature of the fashion industry and the differences stated between industrial and retail firms, the caution of Hrebiniak and Snow (1980) must be heeded. "Industry differences in response to environmental uncertainty have not been noted currently by researchers...there are distinguishing characteristics of industries that affect the type of external issues or problems salient to management. Characteristics of industries...affect the perceptions of managers regarding type of uncertainty and appropriate responses to it" (Hrebiniak & Snow, 1980, p. 750).

Furthermore, boundary spanners located in diverse industries and environments adopt different boundary spanning activities when interacting with the environment and in their search for information (Miles, 1980). In other words, because of the differences between retail and industrial buying and their environments, the results of this study, using department store buyers (retail buying) may differ dramatically when compared to the results of a study using a sample of purchasing agents located in the electronics industry (industrial buying). The above discussion and summary leads to the generation of the following research questions:
1. What is the level of environmental complexity perceived by independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?

2. What is the level of environmental dynamism perceived by independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?

3. What is the level of perceived environmental uncertainty reported by independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?

4. What is the level of boundary spanning activities (face, process, relation) used by independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?

5. What is the level of the apparel buyer's discretion, i.e., the inclination to solve current problems facing the organization by using boundary spanning activities?

6. What is the level of perceived power of independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?

7. What are the relationships among environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, buyer discretion and perceived power of independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to describe the relationships among perceived environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, managerial discretion and perceived power of independent, team and combination department store apparel buyers. Included in this chapter is a brief discussion of the following topics: sample selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategies.

An exploratory, descriptive approach was used due to the uncertainty that the relationships among variables in industrial settings would hold in the department store environment.

Sample Selection

Participants in the study consisted of a purposive sample of department store apparel buyers chosen by the researcher from the 1993 edition of Sheldon's Retail Directory. Due to a printing problem, the publication of the 1994 directory was delayed for six months, hence, was
unavailable to the researcher for use in this study. Sheldon's Retail Directory lists, along with other information, the names, area of merchandise responsibility, addresses and store affiliation of resident, specialty, and department store buyers in the United States and Canada.

A nonrandom sampling method, purposive sampling, was used. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects the sample for a specific purpose. In this study, the purpose was to study all buyers whose buying duties involved moderate-to-better misses sportswear (both coordinates and separates). Misses apparel buyers, in particular, were targeted for study because the misses sportswear apparel classifications are a major contributor to department stores' sales and profitability (Martin, 1980). As such, a better understanding of this influential group can benefit the department store format as a whole.

The anticipated level of perceived environmental uncertainty was also a factor in selecting the moderate-to-better misses sportswear areas for study. First of all, the moderate-to-better areas are more affected by changing fashion and environmental trends than the budget areas. The moderate-to-better areas are expected to respond faster to environmental changes than are the budget area, home furnishing, children's and/or men's market. Second, budget areas are increasingly difficult to find in the department store due to the relinquishing of this business to the
national discount stores such as Wal-Mart and K-Mart, and off-price stores such as T.J. Maxx. Also, misses sportswear buyers were targeted for study as misses moderate-to-better sportswear is a major contributor to the sales and profits of the department store (Martin, 1980). As such, a better understanding of this influential group could strengthen the department store format as a whole.

Since the larger, well-known, department store will be the prototype department store of the future, it seemed prudent to study buyers associated with them ("Industry says," 1990). The researcher chose the department store buyers for study by consulting the top retailers list prepared annually by the National Retail Federation and published in Stores magazine (Schultz, 1993). From the list of top department store groupings, buyers who purchased merchandise in the moderate-to-better sportwear areas were identified in Sheldon's Directory and contacted for inclusion in the study.

A total of 312 buyers comprised the moderate-to-better sportswear area of buying responsibility in the top ten grouping and were considered the accessible population. Questionnaires were sent to these 312 buyers. The usable sample consisted of 58 questionnaires for a response rate of 19 percent. This response rate can be compared to other studies whose researchers used Sheldon's Directory in their
research (e.g., Shim & Drake (1991), 14.9%; Anthony, (1987),
48.1%; ZuHone & Morganosky (1995), 44.8%).

**Instrumentation**

The mailed questionnaire consisted of several existing instruments. The Duncan (1972) Perceived Environmental Uncertainty Scale, and the Duncan (1972) Environmental Characteristics Scale, both modified by Almubarek (1982), were used to measure perceptions about the environment. Montanari's (1979) Managerial Discretion Scale, as modified by Almubarek (1982), was used to measure buyer discretion and Montanari's Perceived Power scale measured buyer's perception of power. Then, this researcher factor analyzed this scale in order to identify two subdimensions: organizational power and merchandise power. Jemison's (1978) Boundary Spanning instrument measured boundary spanning activities of apparel buyers. Finally, buyers were asked to classify their buying responsibilities as independent buying (buying decisions that were independently made), team buying (buying decisions that resulted from interaction with corporate buyers), or combination buying decisions that resulted from both individual decision-making and team interaction (See questionnaire in Appendix B).

**Environmental characteristics measure.** To operationalize complexity, respondents were given a list of 10 external environmental factors and were instructed to check those of chief importance in his or her decision.
situations. (Almubarek's revised instrument, targeting purchasing agents, consisted of 13 factors. However, results from this researcher's field test supported the deletion of three external factors that did not apply to apparel buying. Therefore, the measure consisted of a list of ten factors).

To calculate a score on the simple-complex dimension, the number of factors \( F \) identified by the respondent was multiplied by the square of the number of components \( C^2 \) (Duncan, 1972). In order to get an indication of the similarity or dissimilarity of components, the number of components was squared to recognize that the "amount of variance between components is greater than the variance between factors and, thus, should be weighted in the development of the index" (Duncan, 1972, p. 316). Inclusion of more components indicates dissimilarity. For example, a respondent checking two factors in two components would have a simple-complex score of \((2) \times (2)^2 = 8\). A respondent with three factors in one component would have a simple-complex score of \((3) \times (1)^2 = 3\). The internal reliability coefficient related to the complexity scale is .84 (Almubarek, 1982). Question number one on the questionnaire measures the complexity dimension.

Dynamism was measured by questions number two and three. Question number two deals with stability, i.e., the static or dynamic nature of the three factors chosen from
the ten factors listed. The third question deals with the frequency of new factors taken into consideration in decision making. To obtain a score for dynamism, the average score of the first subdimension was added to the average score of the second subdimension. The internal reliability has been established for this instrument at .83 (Almubarek, 1982). Researchers have measured and supported the construct validity of the dynamism and complexity measures in prior investigations (Almubarek, 1982; Duncan, 1972; Cox, 1977).

Environmental uncertainty measure. The Duncan (1972) Perceived Environmental Uncertainty Scale includes three dimensions that are summed into a total uncertainty score. The three dimensions of uncertainty, as defined by Duncan (1972) are: (1) "lack of information regarding the environmental factors associated with a given decision-making situation", (2) lack of knowledge about the outcome of a specific decision, and (3) the ability or inability to assign probabilities as to how environmental factors will affect success or failure of the decision unit in performing its function (p. 318). Some items were dropped from Duncan's (1972) lack of information and lack of knowledge subdimensions after results from Almubarek's (1982) validation procedure revealed ambiguity in some factors. This researcher used the instrument, as refined by Almubarek,
because of the increased validity of the instrument and the adaptations by Almubarek which targeted purchasing agents.

Likert-type scales were used to measure the first two dimensions: lack of information and lack of knowledge. Lack of information was measured by asking five questions (questions 4 through 8 in the questionnaire). Lack of knowledge was measured by asking five questions (questions 12 through 16 in the questionnaire).

The lack of information dimension was scored using the Duncan (1972) formula:

\[
\text{total score of a given question} = \frac{\text{(i.e., sum of answers for each factor)}}{\text{number of factors taken into consideration}}
\]

The average scores for each question were then averaged to produce a respondent's lack of information score. To compute a respondent's lack of knowledge score, the raw scores of each question were averaged.

In Duncan's original research, the third dimension, the ability to assign probabilities, was measured by a two-part question. The subjects were asked how certain they were, between 0 (completely unsure) and 1.0 (completely sure), how the factors were going to affect the performance (success or failure) of the unit in following through with its task. In addition, the subject identified the range of probabilities being considered in assigning the probability value, i.e., how confident the respondent felt toward the estimate. A
narrow spread in the range of probabilities signaled confidence in the estimate. However, Almubarek (1982) discovered that Duncan's original ten point scale to measure inability to assign probabilities was unclear. A panel of experts in the purchasing field supported this concern; they believed that a ten point scale from 0 to 1.0 created doubt and hesitation (although Duncan developed the range to correct these problems). It was believed that respondents would leave this section of the survey blank. For this reason, Almubarek (1982) redesigned the scale from a single, two-part item to three separate items with a range from 1 (not sure) to 5 (sure). The inability to assign probabilities subdimension was scored by summing and averaging the raw scores of the three items that comprise this dimension. This researcher used the instrument as adapted by Almubarek (1982). The inability to assign probabilities was measured by items 9 through 11 on the questionnaire.

Finally, Duncan summed the three dimension scores to produce a total uncertainty score, i.e., general lack of information concerning the environment. This researcher also included a question asking the respondent to describe a major decision that was typical of the work situation as suggested by Cox (1977). The addition of this question simplifies the scale for use in a mail questionnaire i.e., the respondents only considered three factors in their item
responses and not the twenty five factors in Duncan's (1972) original scale.

Downey et al. (1975) reported internal reliability coefficients for the three dimensions: \( r = .59, .26, \) and \( .66 \) respectively. The internal reliability coefficient for the entire uncertainty instrument was \( r = .67 \). The second dimension was not included in Downey's et al. (1975) reliability calculation for the entire instrument due to its low reliability coefficient. But, in a study completed by Cox (1977), all three dimensions were included in the reliability calculation. By adopting the suggestions of Downey et al., (1975, 1977), the internal reliability coefficients were strengthened. Cox (1977) reported coefficients of \( r = .70, .76, .78 \) respectively and a total uncertainty coefficient of \( .85 \).

**Managerial discretion measure.** Montanari's (1979) Managerial Discretion measure, as modified by Almubarek (1982) for use with purchasing agents, was used in this study. Almubarek (1982) defines buyer discretion as "purchasing agent's expressed inclinations to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental conditions" (p. 98).

Buyer discretion was measured by three questions consisting of a seven point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Questions 17 through 19 in the questionnaire measured this
variable. Scoring was accomplished by summing and averaging the raw scores. Because the original items were revised to fit a population of purchasing agents, Almubarek (1982) factor analyzed the dimensions of buyer discretion to identify the dimensions that were present in order to "generate more valid and parsimonious scales" (p. 99). He also calculated the new internal reliability coefficients for the reworded scales at $r = .82$. Construct validity of the measure has been investigated and supported in previous research (Almubarek, 1982; Jemison, 1979; Montanari, 1979).

Perceived power measure. Perceived power was measured by seven questions. Six of the seven questions consisted of a five point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (absolutely not) to 5 (definitely) and one question consisting of a five point Lickert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (very high). Questions 20 through 26 in the questionnaire measured this variable. The first question, 20, involves the probability that several of the propositions and recommendations would be adopted. All other questions asked the respondents to indicate the likelihood that one or more of their recommendations would be accepted by their colleagues and peers (Almubarek, 1982, p. 99). The variable was scored by summing and averaging the raw scores. Internal reliability coefficients, as reported by Montanari and Morgan (1983), were .76 for the scale. After reformulation by Almubarek (1982) to better
fit a population of purchasing agents, the internal reliability coefficient rose to $r = .88$. Construct validity of the measure has been investigated and supported in previous research (Almubarek, 1982; Jemison, 1979; Montanari, 1979).

**Boundary-spanning measure.** Jemison's (1978) Boundary Spanning Measure was chosen for use in this study because of its comprehensiveness; it is the one scale whose questions cover the gamut of activities that would be performed by a boundary spanner. The instrument is a Likert-type scale, consisting of twenty-five items, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Questions 27 through 51 measured the various boundary spanning activities. The respondent records how often each activity was completed in the performance of his or her duties.

Questions 33, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42, 46, 47, and 48 of the questionnaire measured the face activities of representing and protecting. Scores on the face dimension were calculated by averaging the nine raw scores. Questions 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 49, and 50 of the questionnaire measured the process activities of scanning, monitoring and gatekeeping. Scores on the process dimension were calculated by averaging the seven raw scores. Finally, questions 27, 28, 29, 30, 35, 43, 44, 45, and 51 of the questionnaire measured the relation activities of transacting, linking, and coordinating (Almubarek, 1982; Miles, 1980; Jemison, 1978).
Scores on the relation dimension were calculated by averaging the nine raw scores. The average scores for each subdimension were summed to produce a respondent's total boundary spanning score. The internal reliability coefficients were reported as $r = .84$ for face activities, .77 for process activities, .76 for relation activities, and .89 for the total boundary spanning scale reliability (Almubarek, 1982). Construct validation has been confirmed in previous research (Almubarek, 1982; Jemison, 1979).

In total, the questionnaire consists of a scale to measure characteristics of the environment (dynamism and complexity), a scale to measure environmental uncertainty, a scale to measure boundary spanning activities, a scale to measure managerial discretion, a scale to measure perceived power, a question identifying the nature of the buying responsibilities (team, independent or combination) and selected demographic questions.

**Procedure**

The questionnaire was field tested for face and content validity by three former and current department store apparel buyers and two former department store assistant apparel buyers. They were directed to complete the questionnaire, assess it (format, wording, length, etc.) and comment on the process of using it and list any other concerns. A panel of experts (statistician and committee members) were also consulted. Revisions were made at the
discretion of the researcher and the panel of experts based on results of the field test. The instruments were tested for reliability in previous studies (Almubarek, 1982; Downey, et al, 1975; Cox, 1977; Montanari & Morgan, 1983; Jemison, 1978).

A mailed questionnaire was utilized to collect data. An initial mailing and three follow up mailings were sent to respondents explaining the reason for the study, the benefits of responding, and the respondent's role in the success of the study. Letters were printed on university letterhead, personalized, and signed in blue ink. Respondents were offered a summary of results, given a reasonable deadline for completing the questionnaire, given directions on what they should do if they had questions, and were assured of confidentiality. The questionnaire was printed in booklet form on quality wheat colored paper. The university logo and an appropriate graphic surrounded the title on the cover page of the booklet (Dillman, 1978).

The complete questionnaire package included the following items: personalized cover letter, questionnaire, colorful stamped return addressed envelope, and two incentive items. The first incentive, included in the package sent to all buyers, was a colorful packet of chocolate cappuccino. The second incentive was explained to the respondents in the body of the cover letter: all buyers who completed and returned their questionnaire were eligible
to be included in a five hundred dollar drawing to be awarded at the conclusion of data collection. Two incentives were thought to be necessary due to the historically low response rate that has been found to exist with studies involving retail buyers (Hathcote, 1989).

Questionnaires were stamped with identification numbers in order to facilitate follow up mailings. One week prior to the initial mailing, a postcard was sent to all buyers advising them of the project, asking them to look for the incoming packet, and asking for their participation. One week after the initial mailing, a postcard was sent to the buyers either thanking them for their response or reminding them to complete and mail their questionnaire. A second follow-up package was sent three weeks after the original mailing. A final package was sent five weeks after the initial mailing. The data collection process was completed within a seven week period.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed with the SAS statistical package. Appropriate statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlations and multiple regression were used to address the research questions. A significance level of .10 was selected for use in this study. This level of significance is considered appropriate for use in exploratory studies (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996).
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The chapter is organized under four headings: purpose of the study, discussion of the response rate, description of respondents, and results and discussion of research questions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship among environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, and managerial discretion and perceived power of department store apparel buyers who assume independent, team, or a combination of buyer responsibilities. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of environmental complexity perceived by independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?

2. What is the level of environmental dynamism perceived by independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?

3. What is the level of perceived environmental uncertainty reported by independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?
4. What is the level of boundary spanning activities (face, process, and relation) used by independent, team, and combination department store buyers?

5. What is the level of the apparel buyer's discretion i.e., the inclination to solve current problems facing the organization by using specific boundary spanning activities?

6. What is the level of perceived power of independent, team, and combination department store apparel buyers?

7. What are the relationships among perceived environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, managerial discretion and perceived power of independent, team and combination department store apparel buyers?

Response Rate

A total of 312 survey instruments were mailed to the sample. Sixty-six questionnaires were returned for an overall response rate of 21.2 percent. The usable data sample dropped to 58 (19%) due to invalid responses on five questionnaires and the deletion of the three team buyer questionnaires due to the inability to adequately perform statistical analyses with three subjects. The researcher attempted to control for non-response error by comparing early to late respondents (Miller and Smith, 1983). A t test procedure was performed with no statistical significance shown.

Description of Respondents

The respondents were described on the following attribute variables: type of buying responsibility, age, gender, number of years employed in current department
store, number of years employed in present buying position, number of years employed in department store retailing, number of buying positions held in the past five years, and description of the organization's buying structure.

**Type of buying responsibility.** Sixty-six questionnaires were returned to the researcher. The majority of responding buyers (n=42, 72%) assumed combination buying responsibilities, that is, acted independently in some buying decisions while seeking team input for others. A sizeable number of respondents (n=16, 28%) identified themselves as independent buyers who made buying decisions without the input of other buyers. Since only three respondents categorized themselves as team buyers, this category was eliminated from further analysis. Furthermore, five respondents gave invalid data on this and other survey items, hence, the total number of respondents dropped to 58 (Table 1). Note: Not all respondents answered all survey questions resulting, at times, in an unequal distribution of responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buyer Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Type of Buying Responsibility

126
Age. The age distribution of each category of buyers is shown in Table 2. The most common age range reported by combination and independent apparel buyers was 35 to 44 years of age. Over 90 percent of responding combination and independent buyers fell within the 26 to 44 age range.

Table 2
Apparel Buyer's Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Combination Buyers</th>
<th>Independent Buyers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-34</td>
<td>15 35.7</td>
<td>26-34 7 43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>23 54.8</td>
<td>35-44 8 50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>4 9.5</td>
<td>45-54 0 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>55+ 1 6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42 100.0</td>
<td>Total 16 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender. The distribution of buyer types by gender is shown in Table 3. Most were female.

Table 3
Apparel Buyer's Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Combination Buyers</th>
<th>Independent Buyers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38 90.5</td>
<td>Female 14 87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4 9.5</td>
<td>Male 2 12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>42 100.0</td>
<td>Totals 16 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Length of employment with current department store.

Responses regarding length of employment with their current department store are given in Table 4 for each type of buyer. Combination buyers tended to be employed longer at their current department store than independent buyers. Combination buyers tended to have roughly equal years of service divided among the first four ranges, (i.e., one to 20 years) while the independent buyers (81 percent) were clustered between the first two ranges (i.e., one to ten years of employment with current employer).

Table 4
Length of Employment with Present Store

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Employment with Present Store</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 21 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Employment with Present Store</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 21 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Years in present position. Data regarding years of service in their present positions are shown in Table 5 for the two categories of buyers. All combination and independent buyers indicated they fell within the range of one to 15 years of experience in their present buying position. However, combination buyers were more seasoned in their assignments as 26 percent indicated between eleven and fifteen years in current assignment while only six percent of independent buyers fell into this category.

Table 5

Years in Present Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Present Position</th>
<th>Combination Buyers</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 21 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Years in Present Position | Independent Buyers | Percent |
|---------------------------|                    |---------|
|                           | Frequency          |         |
| 1-5 years                 | 10                 | 63.0    |
| 6-10 years                | 5                  | 31.0    |
| 11-15 years               | 1                  | 6.0     |
| 16-20 years               | 0                  | 0.0     |
| over 21 years             | 0                  | 0.0     |
| Totals                    | 16                 | 100.0   |
Number of years in department store retailing. Table 6 shows the distribution of total department store experience for the two buyer types. Both combination and independent buyers were experienced employees of the department store format. All but one respondent reported at least six years of employment experience in the department store format with nearly twenty percent of both combination and independent buyers indicating over 21 years of employment in this setting.

### Table 6

#### Number of Years in Department Store Retailing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Yrs in Dept Store Retailing</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination Buyers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 21 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Yrs in Dept Store Retailing</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Buyers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 21 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of positions held in the past five years. The number of positions held by respondents in the past five years is shown in Table 7. The independent buyers in this study had fewer different buying assignments when compared to combination buyers. Seven percent of combination buyers were rotated among five or more positions over the past five years where none of the independent buyers indicated holding five or more assignments. This finding could indicate somewhat more stability among the ranks of the independent buyers in the study.

Table 7

Number of Positions Held in the Past Five Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Positions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 positions</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 positions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ positions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Totals        | 42        | 100.0   |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Positions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 positions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 positions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ positions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Totals        | 16        | 100.0   |
**Type of buying structure.** The respondents were asked whether or not their department store had realigned its organizational chart to accommodate the new planner-distributor level that is currently being implemented in the industry. The majority of buyers (n=38, 66%) indicated that their stores had not adopted the new structure while the remainder (n=20, 34%) revealed that their stores had adopted the new organizational structure (Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buying Structure</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No: had not adopted new structure</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes: adopted new structure</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion of normality statistic.** The Lillifors and Wilkes-Shapiro tests of normality were performed to insure that variables involved in further statistical testing conformed to the assumption of the normal distribution. Results indicated that the sample was from a normally distributed population; the assumption of normality was supported.
Results and Discussion of Research Questions

01: What is the level of environmental complexity perceived by independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

In Duncan's study, decision unit scores were rank ordered according to their score on the index and split at the median. Scores below the median were defined as decision units having a simple environment and scores above the median were defined as decision units having a complex environment. In this revised measure, it was discovered that there were 26 scores possible on the complexity measure, ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 250 (Table 9). In this study, combination buyers reported a mean score of 113 while independent buyers reported a mean score of 131. The midpoint of possible scores on the measure was 63.5. Both combination and independent buyers scored well above the midpoint. Hence, combination and independent buyers perceived the environment as complex. This finding does not support the observation of Daft (1992) who placed the apparel industry at the simple end of the Duncan complexity measure. A simple environment consists of a small number of external elements with similarity within elements. Scores on the complexity scale have moved away from the simple environment. This resulting shift from a simple to a more complex retail environment supports the substantial evidence documenting the increase in the number of environmental
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Outcomes</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A t-test was computed to compare the means of two groups of apparel buyers on their perceptions of the complexity of the environment. Results show no significant difference between sample means. Perceptions about environmental complexity did not differ significantly between buyers who assumed combination or independent buying responsibilities (Table 10) (See Appendix C for raw data).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>113.27</td>
<td>65.70</td>
<td>-.94</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>131.20</td>
<td>52.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RQ2:** What is the level of perceived environmental dynamism reported by independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

Possible scores on the dynamism measure ranged between two and 10. The unused scores ranged between two and 5.67.
The median of possible scores was six. Combination apparel buyers mean score was 8.46 while independent apparel buyers mean score was 8.29. Since all respondents reported scores of six or above, all combination and independent buyers perceived the environment as dynamic. This finding supports the observation of Daft (1992) who placed the apparel industry within the dynamic end of Duncan's (1972) dynamism measure. A dynamic environment is one whereby environmental elements change frequently and unpredictably. This finding supports the wealth of information documenting the changing retail landscape (Feinberg, 1990a; "Industry says," 1990; Levy, 1991; Millstein, 1991; Moin, 1992; Soloman, 1993).

A t-test was computed to compare the sample means of apparel buyers on their perceptions of environmental dynamism. Results revealed no significant difference between sample means. Perceptions about environmental dynamism did not differ between buyers who assumed combination or independent buying responsibilities (Table 11).

| Table 11 |
| Differences in Means by Buyer Responsibility |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamism</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.46</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p = <.10
RQ1: What is the level of perceived environmental uncertainty reported by independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

Possible scores on the uncertainty measure ranged between three and 15. The unused scores ranged from three to 4.2 and ranged from 10.07 and 15. The median of possible scores was nine. Combination buyers reported a mean score of 7.00 while independent buyers reported a mean score of 6.99. Both scores fell below the midpoint of the scoring range. Since lower scores mean more uncertainty, combination and independent buyers perceived the environment of the department store as uncertain. This finding does not support the observation of Daft (1992) who placed the apparel industry within the moderate-to-high uncertainty quadrant on Duncan's Environmental Characteristics Model. A moderate-to-high uncertainty level is described as one in which the environmental elements change frequently and unpredictably (Duncan, 1972). Evidence is presented to support the move of the apparel industry to the fourth quadrant of Duncan's model (1972): high uncertainty.

A t-test was computed to compare the means of two groups of apparel buyers on their perceptions of environmental uncertainty. Results showed no significant difference between sample means. Perceptions about environmental uncertainty did not differ between buyers who assumed combination or independent buying responsibilities (Table 12).
Table 12
Differences in Means by Buyer Responsibility

Uncertainty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Environmental Uncertainty</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p=<.10

RQ4: What is the level of boundary spanning activities used by independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

Possible scores ranged between three and 15 on the boundary spanning measure. Combination buyers reported a mean score of 8.21 while independent buyers reported a mean score of 8.44. Since the mid-range is nine, the scores indicated that combination and independent buyers perceived themselves as occasional users of boundary spanning activities. This finding was supported by researchers who identified buyers as boundary spanners and users of boundary spanning activities (Leifer, 1975; Adams, 1976; Thompson, 1962; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978). However, it is surprising to find that buyers did not perceive themselves to be more frequent users of boundary spanning activities.

A t-test was computed to compare the means of two groups of apparel buyers on their perception of the usage of
boundary spanning activities. Results revealed no significant differences between sample means. Perceptions about the usage of boundary spanning activities did not differ between buyers who assumed combination or independent buying responsibilities (Table 13).

Table 13
Differences in Means by Buyer Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boundary Spanning Activities</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.44</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To determine if the mean scores between the types of boundary spanning activity (face, process, relation) differed by buyer type, individual t-tests were performed. The results revealed no significant differences between sample means. No significant differences were revealed among buyer type and type of boundary spanning activity (Tables 14, 15 and 16).
Table 14

Differences in Means by Buyer Responsibility
Type of Boundary Spanning Activity: Face

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p=<.10

Table 15

Differences in Means by Buyer Responsibility
Type of Boundary Spanning Activity: Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p=<.10

Table 16

Differences in Means by Buyer Responsibility
Type of Boundary Spanning Activity: Relation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p=<.10

140
RO5: What is the level of apparel buyer's discretion, i.e., the inclination to solve current problems facing the organization by using boundary spanning activities?

Possible scores ranged between one and seven on the buyer discretion measure. Combination buyers reported a mean score of 5.66 while independent buyers reported a mean score of 5.77. Both combination and independent buyers indicated they were highly inclined to use boundary spanning activities to deal with environmental uncertainty. This finding was supported by researchers who claimed buyers were inclined to use boundary spanning activities (Almubarek, 1982; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Leifer & Delbecq, 1977).

A t-test was computed to compare the means of two groups of apparel buyers on their expressed inclination to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty. Results revealed no significant differences between sample means. Perceptions regarding buyer discretion did not differ significantly between buyers who assumed independent or combination buying responsibilities (Table 17).

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buyer Discretion</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>-.38</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p<.10

141
RQ6: What is the level of perceived power of independent, team and combination apparel buyers?

Possible scores on the perceived power measure ranged between one and five. Combination buyers reported a mean score of 3.56 while independent buyers reported a mean score of 3.72. Both combination and independent buyers perceived it to be likely that one or more of their recommendations would be accepted by colleagues. This finding supported the position of Thompson (1962). He stated that perceived power increased in a diverse and unstable environment.

A t-test was computed to compare the means of two groups of apparel buyers on their perceptions of power in the organization. Results showed no significant difference between sample means. Perceptions of power did not differ significantly between buyers who assumed independent or combination buying responsibilities (Table 18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Power</th>
<th># of Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p=<.10

Table 18
Differences in Means by Buyer Responsibility
RO7: What are the relationships among perceived environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, managerial discretion, and perceived power of combination and independent apparel buyers?

The magnitude of all relationships reported in this study were interpreted using Davis' (1971) descriptors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.70 or higher</td>
<td>Very Strong Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.50 to .69</td>
<td>Substantial Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.30 to .49</td>
<td>Moderate Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.10 to .29</td>
<td>Low Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.01 to .09</td>
<td>Negligible Relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Combination buyers.** Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to describe relationships between combination apparel buyers and the study variables. A significant positive low relationship was found between environmental complexity and perceived power (r = .28, p = .09). Significant positive moderate relationships were noted between complexity and boundary spanning (r = .34, p = .03), boundary spanning and perceived power (r = .47, p = .004) and buyer discretion and perceived power (r = .30, p = .07). A significant negative low relationship was noted between boundary spanning and buyer discretion (r = -.28, p =
Finally, significant negative moderate relationships were noted between dynamism and uncertainty ($r = -0.43$, $p = 0.01$), perceived uncertainty and perceived power ($r = -0.36$, $p = 0.05$), and perceived uncertainty and boundary spanning activity ($r = -0.33$, $p = 0.07$) (Table 19).

Interpretations of the coefficients indicated when combination buyers perceived the environment to be complex, they perceived themselves to possess more power. As combination buyers navigated their way through numerous environmental sectors, the information gathered to support decision-making enhanced their perceptions of power. Support for this result was found in the literature (Almubarek, 1982; Emerson, 1962; Mintzberg, 1983; Thompson, 1962). Also, the less inclined a buyer is to use boundary spanning activities, the more activities they will actually use. This finding seemed at first to be at odds with the literature, however, it can be explained within the context of the role of the combination buyer. Combination buyers, by definition, assume dual buying responsibilities. Sometimes, they work independently when selecting, buying, and presenting merchandise for resale to department store customers. At other times, they work in conjunction with corporate buyers to develop private label merchandise and negotiate reduced prices for branded merchandise to be offered for sale to the entire corporation. It is very
Table 19
Summary of Relationships (Correlation Coefficients) Among Variables for Combination Buyers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Dynamism</th>
<th>Uncertainty</th>
<th>Boundary Spanning</th>
<th>Buyer Discretion</th>
<th>Perceived Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.19 (.24)</td>
<td>.10 (.58)</td>
<td>.34* (.03)</td>
<td>-.08 (.62)</td>
<td>.28* (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.10 (.58)</td>
<td>.10 (.58)</td>
<td>.34* (.03)</td>
<td>-.08 (.62)</td>
<td>.28* (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.43* (.01)</td>
<td>.26 (.12)</td>
<td>.17 (.30)</td>
<td>.13 (.44)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Spanning</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.33* (.07)</td>
<td>-.33* (.07)</td>
<td>-.13 (.46)</td>
<td>-.36* (.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyer Discretion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.28* (.09)</td>
<td>.47* (.004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.30* (.07)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10, significance levels in parentheses
likely that the ebb and flow of boundary spanning activity inclination and usage parallels the independent, then team approach of the combination buyer in the performance of his or her duties. At times, the buyer may be less inclined to use boundary spanning activities; at other times, he or she may use more boundary spanning activities due to the nature of his or her assignment in the team process. For example, during the process of negotiation, buyers may need to use more boundary spanning activities to accomplish their goal of lowest wholesale price, least expensive delivery, etc.

When buyers perceived the environment as complex, they used more boundary spanning activities. This finding is supported in the literature (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Almubarek, 1982; Cox, 1977; Cox et al, 1978; Thompson, 1962, 1967). As the number of environmental sectors increased, buyers interacted with the environment by representing and protecting the organization, scanning and monitoring environmental contingencies and transacting, linking and coordinating with individuals and organizations.

Buyers who engaged in more boundary spanning activities perceived themselves as more powerful. Since buyers who engage in boundary spanning activities gather information to aid decision-making, this access to information could empower the buyer. This finding is supported in the literature (Almubarek, 1982; Bacharach & Aiken, 1976;
Furthermore, buyers who were more inclined to use boundary spanning activities perceived themselves to be more powerful. This finding was supported by Almubarek (1982). Buyers who perceived a dynamic environment perceived more uncertainty. This finding was supported in the literature (Duncan, 1972). The more uncertain a buyer perceived the environment, the more boundary spanning activities they engaged in. Support was provided from previous researchers (Almubarek, 1982; Cox, 1977; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Leifer & Huber, 1977). This finding makes sense since uncertainty in the environment triggers boundary spanning activities in order to cope with the uncertainty. Finally, the more perceived uncertainty in the environment, the more power the buyer was perceived to possess. Support was provided in the literature by Spekman (1979) and Almubarek (1982). Buyers gain power as they gather information to deal with environmental uncertainty.

The relationships found among combination buyers and the variables studied in the department store environment were similar to the relationships found in the manufacturing and industrial environments. The industrial model is supported in the department store environment. Environmental complexity and dynamism lead to perceived environmental uncertainty. Uncertainty triggers the use of
boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty. The use of boundary spanning activities enhance the power of the buyer (Duncan, 1972; Miles, 1980; Thompson, 1967).

Independent buyers. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to describe relationships among the sixteen independent apparel buyers and the study variables. Significant positive substantial relationships were identified between dynamism and buyer discretion ($r = .53, p = .03$), boundary spanning and buyer discretion ($r = .58, p = .02$), and buyer discretion and perceived power ($r = .52, p = .04$). One significant positive moderate relationship was found between dynamism and boundary spanning activities ($r = .46, p = .09$) (Table 20).

Interpretations of the coefficients revealed that independent buyers who perceived the environment as dynamic were highly inclined to use boundary spanning activities. This finding was supported in the literature (Almubarek, 1982; Cox, 1977; Leifer & Delbecq, 1977). It suggests that independent buyers identified boundary spanning activities as a mechanism to cope with a dynamic environment.

Furthermore, when buyers were inclined to use boundary spanning activities, buyers increased their use of those activities. When buyers indicated they were inclined to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental
Table 20
Summary of Relationships (Correlation Coefficients) Among Variables for Independent Buyers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
<th>Dynamism</th>
<th>Uncertainty</th>
<th>Boundary Spanning</th>
<th>Buyer Discretion</th>
<th>Perceived Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.67)</td>
<td>(.82)</td>
<td>(.97)</td>
<td>(.72)</td>
<td>(.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.46*</td>
<td>.53*</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.69)</td>
<td>(.69)</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>(.03)</td>
<td>(.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.22)</td>
<td>(.58)</td>
<td>(.83)</td>
<td>(.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Spanning</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.58*</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td>(.56)</td>
<td>(.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyer Discretion</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10; significance levels in parentheses
uncertainty, they perceived themselves to be more powerful. This finding was supported in the literature (Schwab et al., 1985; Almubarek, 1982; Pettigrew, 1972).

Buyers increased their use of boundary spanning activities in a dynamic environment. Support for this finding was found in the literature (Almubarek, 1982; Cox, 1977; Cox et al., 1978; Leifer & Huber, 1977; Thompson, 1962, 1967). Buyers used boundary spanning activities to cope with a changing environment. The relationships that exist among independent buyers and the variables studied in the department store environment support the relationships found in industrial and manufacturing environments. The industrial model is supported in a department store environment.

Finally, Pearson's product-moment correlation was utilized to determine if any study variables were associated with a reformulated perceived power measure. Questions 20 through 26 comprise the perceived power measure. Upon further inspection of the seven questions comprising the scale, this researcher believed that they actually measured two different types of power: merchandise power and organizational power. If true, further analyses could determine whether or not buyer's perceived power emanated from power over merchandise decisions or power in the department store itself, organizational power. Factor analysis was used to determine if the seven item perceived
and organizational power. Factor analysis is used to determine patterns of intercorrelation among variables, isolating the dimensions to account for these patterns of correlations.

Two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 emerged. The two factors explained 60.9% of the variance. Examination of the items that had large factor loadings (>0.30) on the two factors indicated that the content of the items for factor one pertained to merchandise power. Therefore, merchandise power is measured by items 25, 20, 24 and 23 (Table 21). Question 25 asks the buyer to indicate the likelihood that recommendations regarding the search for new merchandise would be accepted by colleagues. Question 20 asks the buyer to indicate the probability that suggestions for buyer behavior (such as insuring a constant flow of merchandise and looking for new products) would be accepted and implemented. Question 24 deals with establishing relations with other companies. Finally, question 23 asks the buyer to indicate the likelihood that recommendations insuring the constant flow of new merchandise would be accepted by colleagues. The responses to these four questions were summed and averaged to develop a merchandise power measure.

The items with large factor loadings (>0.30) on factor two pertain to organizational power. Therefore, organizational power is measured by items 22, 21, and 26.
(Table 21). These questions ask buyers to indicate the likelihood that their recommendations regarding issues pertaining to the organization would be accepted by their colleagues. Question 22 refers to presenting positive information about the organization (e.g., the store's reputation). Question 21 refers to warding off environmental noises (e.g., false rumors of mergers). Finally, question 26 deals with examining the political situation. The responses to these three questions were summed and then averaged to develop an organizational power measure. In general, the factor analysis confirmed the hypothesized factor structure and supports the construct validity of the subscales (Table 21).

Next, the objective was to determine whether type of power was associated with the study variables. Since the results of the factor analysis lends support to the existence of subdimensions of organizational and merchandise power, all further analyses used the perceived power subscales. The goal was to further examine the perception of power of combination and independent apparel buyers. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to discover relationships between type of apparel buyer and the variables affecting organizational and merchandise power. Among combination buyers, one significant moderate correlation was revealed between buyer discretion and organizational power ($r = .33, p = .04$). As
Table 21
Principal Components Analysis with Varimax Rotation
of Perceived Power Subscales: Factor Loadings, Eigenvalues,
Communalities (in Parentheses) and Percentage of Total
Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Perceived Power Factors</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 1 Merchandise Power</td>
<td>Factor 2 Organizational Power</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 (.71)</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 (.63)</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 (.53)</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 (.53)</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 (.78)</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 (.69)</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 (.40)</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eigenvalues</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Total Variance</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Combination buyers identified themselves as inclined to use boundary spanning activities, they perceived an increase in their organizational power. This finding could be explained by the combination buyers close association with corporate buyers in the performance of their duties. Combination buyers are closer to the strategic decision-making of the corporation due to their interactions with buyers who are involved in developing corporate directives. This is in contrast with independent buyers who are the recipients of corporate directives.
One substantial correlation was revealed between boundary spanning activities and merchandise power ($r = .56$, $p = .01$). As combination buyers indicated high usage levels of boundary spanning activities, they perceived themselves to possess more power over merchandise decisions. The gathering of information gave these buyers merchandise power.

Finally, one negative moderate relationship was revealed between perceived environmental uncertainty and merchandise power ($r = -.48$, $p = .01$). Combination buyers perceived their power over merchandise decisions increased as the level of uncertainty increased (Table 22). This finding suggested that combination buyers were entrusted with merchandise decisions in an uncertain environment.

Figure 3 illustrates the relationships among combination buyers and merchandise power. The relationships found to exist among combination buyers and the study variables support the industrial model.

Among independent buyers, no significant relationships were found to exist between independent buyers and variables affecting organizational power. Independent buyers do not interact with corporate buyers in the performance of their duties. Since independent buyers are recipients of corporate buying directives, it makes sense that they do not perceive themselves to possess organizational power.
Table 22

Relationships (Correlation Coefficients) Between Buyer Type and Study Variables Affecting Merchandise and Organisational Power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Combination Buyers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Independent Buyers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational Power</td>
<td>Merchandise Power</td>
<td>Organizational Power</td>
<td>Merchandise Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>.25 (.12)</td>
<td>.21 (.18)</td>
<td>-.38 (.17)</td>
<td>.63* (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
<td>.10 (.54)</td>
<td>.14 (.38)</td>
<td>-.27 (.32)</td>
<td>.18 (.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>-.27 (.15)</td>
<td>-.48* (.01)</td>
<td>.32 (.26)</td>
<td>-.13 (.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Spanning</td>
<td>.23 (.17)</td>
<td>.56* (.01)</td>
<td>-.17 (.53)</td>
<td>.45* (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyer Discretion</td>
<td>.33* (.04)</td>
<td>.17 (.28)</td>
<td>.05 (.85)</td>
<td>.67* (.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.10; significance levels in parentheses
Figure 3: Relationships among Perceived Environmental Uncertainty, Boundary Spanning Activities, and Merchandise Power of Combination Buyers.
However two substantial positive relationships were revealed between independent buyers and the variables affecting merchandise power. The first association was revealed between environmental complexity and merchandise power ($r = .63$, $p = .01$). As the environment becomes more complex, independent buyers perceive themselves to possess more merchandise power. Successfully navigating multiple, diverse sectors increases merchandise power. The second substantial positive relationship was revealed between buyer discretion and merchandise power ($r = .67$, $p = .01$). When independent buyers perceived themselves inclined to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty, their perception of power over merchandise decisions increased. Finally, one positive moderate relationship was found between boundary spanning activities and merchandise power ($r = .45$, $p = .09$). When independent buyers perceived a high level of boundary spanning usage, they perceived themselves to have power over merchandise decisions (Table 22). Figure 4 illustrates these relationships among independent buyers and merchandise power. The relationships found to exist among independent buyers and the study variables support the industrial model.

**Comparison of results between combination and independent buyers.** Next, it seemed prudent to compare the results of the Pearson product-moment correlations between
FIGURE 4: Relationships Among Environmental Complexity, Boundary Spanning Activities, Buyer Discretion and Merchandise Power of Independent Buyers.
combination and independent buyers to determine if any areas of commonality appeared. Three sets of variables revealed significant results for both combination and independent buyers. The first set of variables revealed common significance between buyer discretion and boundary spanning activities. Although significant results were revealed between both types of buyers, there was a difference in both direction and magnitude of the coefficients. Results indicated that when combination buyers were less inclined to use boundary spanning activities, they increased their usage of those activities ($r = -0.28, p = 0.09$) (Table 23). As stated previously, the delegation and reassignment of duties inherent in the role of the combination buyer can explain the seemingly inconsistent results. However, independent buyers who were inclined to use boundary spanning activities increased their use of such activities ($r = 0.58, p = 0.02$) (Table 23). This finding makes sense since independent buyers work alone and must follow through themselves in all boundary spanning activities. There is no delegating of activities as is possible with combination buyers.

The second set of variables revealed common significance between combination and independent buyers on buyer discretion and perceived power. A comparison of the results indicated that when both buyer types were inclined to use boundary spanning activities, they perceived
### Table 23
Summary of Relationships (Correlation Coefficients) Among Variables for Combination and Independent Buyers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Complex</th>
<th>Dynamism</th>
<th>Uncertainty</th>
<th>BSA</th>
<th>Buyer Discretion</th>
<th>Perceived Power</th>
<th>Power Merchandise</th>
<th>Power Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.19 (.24)</td>
<td>.10 (.58)</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>-.08 (.62)</td>
<td>.28* (.09)</td>
<td>.21 (.18)</td>
<td>.25 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.12 (.67)</td>
<td>-.07 (.82)</td>
<td>.01 (.97)</td>
<td>.10 (.72)</td>
<td>.14 (.61)</td>
<td>.63* (.01)</td>
<td>-.38 (.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.43* (.01)</td>
<td>-.12 (.69)</td>
<td>.26 (.12)</td>
<td>.17 (.30)</td>
<td>.13 (.44)</td>
<td>.14 (.38)</td>
<td>.10 (.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncert</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.33* (.07)</td>
<td>-.13 (.46)</td>
<td>-.36* (.05)</td>
<td>-.48* (.01)</td>
<td>-.27 (.15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.32 (.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Spanning Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.28* (.09)</td>
<td>.47* (.004)</td>
<td>.56* (.01)</td>
<td>.23 (.17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyer Disc</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.30* (.07)</td>
<td>.17 (.28)</td>
<td>.33* (.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p=<.10; significance levels in parentheses  **Bolded Type = Combination Buyers**
themselves to be more powerful (Combination: \( r = 0.30, p = 0.07 \); Independent: \( r = 0.52, p = 0.04 \)) (Table 23).

The final set of variables revealed common significance between combination and independent buyers on boundary spanning activities and merchandise power. A comparison of the results indicated when both buyer types were heavy users of boundary spanning activities, they also perceived themselves to possess power over merchandise decisions. (Combination: \( r = 0.56, p = 0.01 \), Independent: \( r = 0.45, p = 0.09 \)) (Table 23).

Once the power measure was reformulated, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between type of boundary spanning activities (face, process, relation) and the study variables to determine if any association existed among them. Results indicated that certain types of boundary spanning activities were associated with certain study variables.

Results indicated differences between type of boundary spanning activity and buyer type. Combination buyers associated face (representing and protecting the organization) and relation activities (linking and coordinating with other organizations) with a complex environment. They associated process activities (monitoring and scanning the environment) with a dynamic environment. Finally, combination buyers associated face, process, and relation type activities with merchandise power and
associated all three boundary spanning activities with total power (i.e., merchandise and organizational power) (Table 24).

Independent buyers associated relation activities with a dynamic environment and associated process activities with uncertainty. Furthermore, face and relation type activities were associated with power over merchandise while relation type activities were associated with power (i.e., both merchandise and organizational power) (Table 24).

Caution must be used when comparing these results with results found in the industrial literature because the variables compared are not identical. Almubarek (1982), the only researcher who studied these variables using a sample of industrial buyers, selected an influence on decisions variable that combined the perceived power measure and the managerial discretion measure used in this study. He found that industrial buyers associated high levels of face activities and low levels of process activities with influence over decisions. In other words, industrial buyers used boundary spanning activities that represented and protected the organization and low levels of information processing activities when they perceived influence over decisions.

Conversely, combination and independent buyers also associated face activities with merchandise power. However, combination buyers associated high levels, not low levels of
process activities, with merchandise power, unlike industrial buyers who associated low levels of process activities with influence over decisions. Furthermore, both combination and independent buyers associated high levels of relation activities with merchandise power while industrial buyers did not associate relation activities with influence on decisions. In summary, department store buyers relied on information processing (process activities) and establishing and maintaining relationships (relation activities) more than industrial buyers when perceiving merchandise power. Industrial buyers relied on representing and protecting (face) activities when perceiving influence over decisions.

The differences in findings between apparel buyers and industrial buyers could be due to the dynamic nature of the department store environment. To successfully navigate a diverse, dynamic environment, more boundary spanning activities are employed to satisfy the changing needs of the consuming public. The somewhat more passive face activities (representing the organization) used by industrial buyers may reflect the needs of a more stable environment; the dynamic consumer environment is not a concern.

Results indicated both similarities and differences exist between buyer types and type of boundary spanning activities. Combination and independent buyers both used face and relation activities when perceiving merchandise power. They also are similar in their use of relation type
activities when they perceive power in general (i.e., merchandise and organizational power) (Table 24).

Differences also existed between buyer type. Combination buyers made more frequent use of face and relation activities when dealing with a complex environment. Independent buyers indicated no significant association between type of activities and complexity. This finding suggests that combination buyers associated more representing, transacting, linking, and coordinating activities with a complex environment. Independent buyers did not.

Additionally, combination buyers reported more frequent use of process activities while independent buyers reported more frequent use of relation type activities in a dynamic environment. This finding suggested that combination buyers associated information processing activities with a dynamic environment while independent buyers associated transacting, linking, and coordinating activities with a dynamic environment. Independent buyers relied on their established relationships to help make sense of a changing environment. They could increase the amount of interaction with their vendor representative in the apparel market or initiate contact with resident buyers in order to gain the information they need to facilitate decision-making. Combination buyers could be less concerned with outside relationships because the team provides the interactions.
necessary to successfully complete the assigned projects. Also, the financial clout that combination buyers possess, due to the large corporate financial resources at their disposal, could alter the balance of power in their favor. For example, vendors could cater more to the combination buyer by initiating more boundary spanning activities, in order to secure a lucrative corporate order or contract, in turn, making the combination buyer less responsible for initiating boundary spanning activities, when compared to the independent buyer.

Independent buyers reported more frequent use of process activities in an uncertain environment while combination buyers did not associate any one type of activity with uncertainty. Therefore, independent buyers associated monitoring and scanning activities with an uncertain environment; combination buyers did not. This difference could be attributed to the differences in buyer orientation. Independent buyers must gather the information necessary to aid decision-making because they work alone; this task cannot be delegated to others. Combination buyers, on the other hand, can delegate information gathering activities to another team member, hence, reducing their own participation in process activities, although the team, as a unit, performs these activities.

Combination buyers reported more frequent use of process activities when perceiving merchandise power while
independent buyers did not. In examining the merchandise power variable by buyer type, combination buyers reported more frequent use of all three types of boundary spanning activities while independent buyers reported more frequent use of face and relation activities. This finding suggests that independent buyers rely on their relationships, more than information processing, in merchandise decision-making. The reasons for this could again be attributed to differences in buyer orientation. Since independent buyers work alone, they may reach out to market representatives to supplement their own information gathering activities. Conversely, combination buyers have team interaction built into their buyer role, hence, reducing the need for primary reliance on external relationships.

Finally, combination buyers associated more frequent use of face, process, and relation activities when they perceived themselves to be powerful while independent buyers associated more frequent use of relation activities associated with power. Again, independent buyers relied on relationships to enhance their power while combination buyers relied on representing the organization and information gathering. Since independent buyers do not have team contact built into their interactions patterns, they may attempt to build in this interaction by relying on various relationships to enhance power (Table 24).
### Table 24

**Summary of Significant Relationships**

*(Correlation Coefficients) Among Types of Boundary Spanning Activities and Study Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Combination Buyers</th>
<th>Independent Buyers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face Process Relation</td>
<td>Face Process Relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>.41* .01</td>
<td>.31* .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamism</td>
<td>- .29* .07</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncert</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- -.51* .06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byr Disc</td>
<td>- -.32* .04</td>
<td>- .45* .08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merch</td>
<td>.47* .47* .43* .44*</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>.01 .01 .01 .09</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>.41* .39* .38*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p = <.10

**Multiple regression.** The final analysis performed attempted to identify variables that could predict power of the buyer over merchandise decisions and power within the organization. The establishment of variables that might predict the power of combination and independent apparel buyers was achieved through regression analysis. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was applied to the variables of interest.
The regression equation used was:

\[ \hat{Y} = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 \]

\[ \hat{Y} \] = dependent variable, merchandise power  
\[ b_0 \] = intercept, constant  
\[ b \] = unit change in \( Y \) associated with 1 unit change in  
\[ x \], controlling for all other variables  
\[ x \] = independent variables

All variables (complexity, dynamism, buyer discretion, boundary spanning activities, environmental uncertainty) were entered into the regression equation using stepwise regression. Since the literature cited in this study emanates from industrial and manufacturing environments, this researcher was not able to hypothesize about the relationships among the study variables in the department store environment. Hence, stepwise regression was chosen for use in the analysis.

Table 25 reports the two variables that emerged significant at alpha level .10 from the stepwise multiple regression procedure. Perceived environmental uncertainty accounted for 27% of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable, merchandise power. Boundary spanning activities accounted for 15% of the variance.
The predictor variables and their multiple regression correlation coefficients explained 42% of the proportion of variance in the dependent variables. Figure 5 illustrates these relationships.

The regression equation was:

\[ \hat{Y} = 3.92 + -0.172(\text{uncert}) + 0.468(\text{boundary spanning}) \]

**Table 25**

**Stepwise Regression of Merchandise Power on the Independent Variables: Combination Buyers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>sR²</th>
<th>CuR²</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Environmental Uncertainty</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Spanning Activities</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 30
*p = <.10
sR² = Partial R²
CuR² = Cumulative R²
F for model = 10.01, p for model = .01
FIGURE 5: Prediction Model of Merchandise Power

Power: Combination Buyers
Next, a stepwise regression analysis was performed to identify variables that could predict independent buyer's merchandise power. All variables (complexity, dynamism, buyer discretion, boundary spanning activities, environmental uncertainty) were entered in the regression equation.

The regression equation used was:

\[ Y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 \]

\( Y \) = dependent variable, merchandise power
\( b_0 \) = intercept, constant
\( b \) = unit change in \( Y \) associated with 1 unit change in \( x \), controlling for all other variables
\( x \) = independent variables

Table 26 reports the two variables that emerged significant at alpha .10 from the stepwise multiple regression procedure. Buyer discretion accounted for 36% of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable, merchandise power. The second variable to emerge in the regression equation was environmental complexity which accounted for 34% of the variance.

The predictor variables and their multiple regression coefficients explained 70% of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable, merchandise power.
Figure 6 illustrates these relationships.

The regression equation was:

\[ Y = 1.588 + .312(\text{buyer discretion}) + .006(\text{complexity}) \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( \text{sr}^2 )</th>
<th>( \text{CuR}^2 )</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buyer Discretion</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Complexity</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( n = 11 \)
\( *p = .10 \)
\( \text{sr}^2 = \text{Partial } R^2 \)
\( \text{CuR}^2 = \text{Cumulative } R^2 \)
\( F \text{ for model } = 10.5, \text{ p for model } = .01 \)
FIGURE 6: Prediction Model of Merchandise

Power: Independent Buyers
Comparing and contrasting the two regression models. According to the regression model, perceived environmental uncertainty and boundary spanning activities were the best predictors of merchandise power for combination buyers. For independent buyers, buyer discretion and environmental complexity were the best predictors of merchandise power. The similarities and differences in predictor variables between buyer types can be explained by differences in buyer orientation.

Boundary spanning activities and buyer discretion were identified as predictor variables for combination and independent buyers, respectively. Combination and independent buyers have in common either the inclination to use or the actual use of boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty. The differences arise in the second predictor variable. Combination buyers identified uncertainty as the second variable that predicts merchandise power. This finding could result from the role orientation of the combination buyer. It would seem that combination buyers deal with the highest level of uncertainty. They sit on the "front line". Not only do these buyers develop private label merchandise, but they also select merchandise for inclusion in special promotional packages which are
then offered for sale to buyers in the corporate divisions. It seems sensible that uncertainty would be identified as a predictor variable as combination buyers are selecting and developing merchandise for a national consumer located in geographically different regions, experiencing diverse climates, and living a variety of lifestyles.

It seems logical that independent buyers would not identify uncertainty as a predictor variable. Since independent buyers purchase merchandise for one division of the corporation, they do not have as much "ground to cover." Independent buyers have fewer variables to consider in merchandise decision-making since the combination buyer has assumed a large portion of managing environmental uncertainty. Therefore, complexity of the environment seems to be a logical concern for the independent buyer. Since combination buyers are attempting to manage uncertainty (which subsumes dynamism), complexity remains as a concern for the independent buyer. It seems logical that independent buyers who can successfully manage a complex environment would gain merchandise power.

Multiple regression: Organizational power. Finally, two stepwise multiple regression procedures were performed to identify variables that could predict combination and independent buyers' organizational
power. All variables (complexity, dynamism, buyer discretion, boundary spanning activities, environmental complexity) were entered into the equation. The regression equation used was:

\[ \hat{Y} = b_o + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 \]

\[ \hat{Y} \] = dependent variable, organizational power

\[ b_o \] = intercept, constant

\[ b \] = unit change in \( Y \) associated with 1 unit change in \( x \), controlling for all other variables

\[ x \] = independent variables

None of the variables entered into the regression equation emerged significant at alpha level .10 for the combination buyers. However, table 27 reports the one variable emerged significant at alpha level .10 from the stepwise procedure for independent buyers. Environmental complexity accounted for 25 percent of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable, organizational power. Figure 7 illustrates this relationship.

The regression equation was:

\[ \hat{Y} = 4.158 + -0.008(\text{complexity}) \]
Table 27

Stepwise Regression of Organizational Power on the Independent Variables: Independent Buyers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\text{sR}^2$</th>
<th>$\text{CuR}^2$</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.10*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$n = 11$

$p = <.10$

$sR^2 = \text{Partial R}^2$

$CuR^2 = \text{Cumulative R}^2$

$F$ for the model $= 3.28$, $p$ for the model $= .10$

This finding can be explained by differences in buyer orientation. It seems reasonable to think that independent buyers who master a complex environment could gain organizational power because some of the information acquired by these buyers could aid in long term strategic planning. Combination buyers could exert less influence over the organization; their influence may be exerted in the broader corporate environment.
FIGURE 7: Prediction Model of Organizational Power: Independent Buyers
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS,
RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary
The purpose of the study was to describe the relationships among environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, managerial discretion and perceived power of different types of department store apparel buyers. This investigation is necessary because the retail industry is undergoing a revolution of immense proportion (Feinberg, 1990a). The rules of the game have changed and many developments have contributed to the new climate. This new climate is a result of changes emanating from environmental sectors. As a result, the new retail environment is characterized as more complex and dynamic than in the recent past due to an increased number of important sectors that affect department stores and the changing nature of them.

Although all retailers are operating in an uncertain environment, department stores have been hit hard, more so
than most other retail formats. In particular, department stores have been losing their share of the $60 billion women's apparel market since 1985 (Millstein, 1991; Solomon, 1993). Furthermore, department store executives have been accused of ignoring customer service, allowing specialty stores to proliferate ("Industry says"). Developments like these have left department stores operating in an uncertain environment. To cope with environmental uncertainty at the department store level, the buyer initiates boundary spanning activities. Engaging in boundary spanning activities enable the buyer to exert power. With the advent of sophisticated information systems, it seems that the information barrier (and in turn the buyer's power) would weaken as higher level executives access the inventory management programs in order to monitor and/or second guess buyer activities. The examination of buyer responsibilities (combination and independent) may add to the understanding of the study variables. The study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What is the level of environmental complexity perceived by independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

2. What is the level of environmental dynamism perceived by independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

3. What is the level of perceived environmental uncertainty reported by independent and combination department store apparel buyers?
4. What is the level of boundary spanning activities (face, process, relation) used by independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

5. What is the level of the apparel buyer's discretion, i.e., the inclination to solve current problems facing the organization by using boundary spanning activities?

6. What is the level of perceived power of independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

7. What are the relationships among environmental characteristics, perceived environmental uncertainty, boundary spanning activities, buyer discretion and perceived power or independent and combination department store apparel buyers?

Limitations

The study was limited by the use of the Sheldon's Retail Directory to identify respondents in that findings are confined to a single limited population at a single point in time. The low response rate and the use of a mailed questionnaire are additional limits to the study.

Design of the Study

Descriptive research techniques were used to address research questions. A source of invalidity was considered. Response error was controlled by planned follow-up mailings (dealt with non-response) and comparing early to late respondents through a t-test procedure.

Subject Selection

The target population of this study was department store apparel buyers (combination and independent) whose buying activities involve moderate-to-better misses sportswear (both coordinates and separates). Buyers were
employed in the top ten department store groupings as ranked by the National Retail Federation in *Stores* magazine. Misses apparel buyers were targeted for study because the misses sportswear apparel classifications are a major contributor to the department store's sales, profitability and real estate allotment (Martin, 1980). As such, a better understanding of this influential group of buyers will benefit the department store format as a whole. A 19 percent (n = 58) response rate was achieved.

**Instrumentation**

All instruments were developed and adapted by previous researchers, except the reformulation of the Perceived Power scale, which was factor analyzed by this researcher.

**Environmental characteristics measure.** Instrument one, Duncan's Environmental Characteristics Measure, was designed to measure respondents perceptions of complexity and dynamism in the external organizational environment. Complexity is defined as the degree to which factors in the decision unit's environment are few or many in number and are similar or dissimilar to one another (Duncan, 1972). To operationalize complexity, the respondents were given a list of ten external environmental factors and were instructed to check those of chief importance in his or her decision situations. Question number one on the questionnaire measures the complexity dimension. To calculate a score on the simple-complex dimension, the
number of factors (F) identified by the respondent was multiplied by the square of the number of components (C)^2. The internal reliability coefficient related to the complexity scale is .84 (Almubarek, 1982).

The second subdimension of the Environmental Characteristics Scale measured environmental dynamism. Environmental dynamism "indicates the degree to which the factors of the decision unit's...external environment remain basically the same over time or are in a continual process of change" (Duncan, 1972, p. 316). Dynamism was measured by questions number two and three. Question number two dealt with the stability, i.e., the static or dynamic nature of the three factors chosen from the ten factors listed. The third question deals with the frequency of new factors taken into consideration in decision making. Both items consisted of a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). To obtain a score for dynamism, the average score of the first item was added to the average score of the second item. The internal reliability has been established for this instrument at .83 (Almubarek, 1982).

Researchers have measured and supported the construct validity of the dynamism and complexity measures in prior investigations (Almubarek, 1982; Duncan, 1972; Cox, 1977).

**Perceived uncertainty scale.** The Duncan Perceived Uncertainty Scale measures perceptions of a general lack of information concerning the environment. The three dimen-
sions of uncertainty, as defined by Duncan (1972) are: (1) lack of information regarding the environmental factors associated with a given decision-making situation, (2) lack of knowledge about the outcome of a specific decision, and (3) the ability or inability to assign probabilities as to how environmental factors will affect success or failure of the decision unit in performing its function. Likert-type scales were used to measure the first two dimensions: lack of information and lack of knowledge. Lack of information was measured by asking five questions (questions four through eight in the questionnaire). Lack of knowledge was measured by asking five questions (questions 12 through 16 in the questionnaire). The third dimension, inability to assign probabilities, was measured by three Likert-type items, as revised by Almubarek (1982). This subdimension was measured by items nine through 11 on the questionnaire. The three dimensions were summed and averaged to produce a total uncertainty score. This researcher used the instrument, as refined by Almubarek, because of the increased validity of the instrument and the adaptations by Almubarek which targeted purchasing agents. The internal reliability coefficients for the three dimensions are \( r = .70, .76, \) and \( .78 \) respectively. The internal reliability coefficient for the entire uncertainty instrument was \( r = .85 \) (Cox, 1977; Almubarek, 1982).
**Buyer discretion measure.** Montanari's (1979) Managerial Discretion Measure, as modified by Almubarek (1982) for use by purchasing agents, was used to measure the buyer's inclination to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental conditions. Buyer discretion was measured by three Likert-type items with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Questions 17 through 19 in the questionnaire measured this variable. The three items are summed and averaged to determine a score on the measure. The internal reliability coefficient, as reported by Montanari (1983) was .53 and with improvements by Almubarek to fit a population of purchasing agents, was recalculated and found to be .82. Construct validity of the two measures has been investigated and supported in previous research (Almubarek, 1982; Jemison, 1979, Montanari, 1979).

**Perceived power measure.** Montanari's Perceived Power Scale measured the buyer's "expressed likelihood that one or more of his or her recommendations will be accepted by his or her colleagues" (Almubarek, 1982). The measure, as revised by Almubarek (1982) to fit a population of purchasing agents, consisted of seven questions. Six of the seven questions consisted of a five point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (absolutely not) to 5 (definitely) and one question consisting of a five point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (very high). Questions 20 through 26 in the questionnaire
measured this variable. The items were summed then averaged to determine a score on the measure. The internal reliability coefficient for the reworded scales was .88 (Almubarek, 1982). Construct validity of the Managerial Discretion and the Perceived Power Measures were investigated and supported in previous research (Almubarek, 1982; Jemison, 1979; Montanari, 1979).

The Perceived Power scale was factor analyzed by this researcher and split into two subdimensions: merchandise power and organizational power. These two factors explained 43% of the variance. The factor loadings identified items 20, 23, 24, and 25 as measuring merchandise power and items 21, 22, and 26 measuring organizational power. Subsequent analyses used the merchandise power scale and organizational power scale.

**Boundary spanning measure.** Jemison's (1978) Boundary Spanning Scale measured "those activities which link the focal organization with other organizations or social systems and are directly relevant for the goal attainment of the focal organization" (Leifer, 1975, p. 6). The instrument is a Likert-type scale consisting of twenty-five items, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Questions 27 through 51 measure the construct. The items were summed and averaged to determine the boundary spanning scores. The internal reliability coefficient reported for
the measure was .89. Construct validity was confirmed in previous research (Almubarek, 1982; Jemison, 1979).

In total, the questionnaire consisted of a scale to measure characteristics of the environment (dynamism and complexity), a scale to measure environmental uncertainty, a scale to measure managerial discretion, a measure of boundary spanning activities, a question identifying the nature of the buying responsibilities (team, independent, or combination) and selected demographic questions.

**Conditions of Testing**

A mail questionnaire was utilized to gather all data. One week prior to the mailing of the questionnaire package a post card was sent to those in the sample to announce the forthcoming package. Three follow-up procedures were implemented after the initial questionnaire package was mailed. Questionnaires received after the data collection process were not included in the data analysis (one team buyer). A t-test procedure was run comparing early to late respondents with no statistical significance shown.

**Data Analysis**

All data were analyzed with the SAS statistical package. A significance level of .10 was selected for use in the study. This level of significance is considered appropriate for use in exploratory studies (Gall et al, 1996). Appropriate statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, Pearson
correlations, and multiple regression were used to address the research questions. All correlation coefficients were interpreted using Davis (1971) descriptors.

Summary of Findings

Age

The most common age range reported by combination and independent apparel buyers was 35 to 44 years of age selected by 55 percent (23) of the combination buyers and 50 percent (8) of the independent buyers.

Gender

The overwhelming number of respondents were females with 91 percent (38) of combination buyers and 88 percent (14) of independent buyers so identified.

Length of Employment with Present Department Store

Combination buyers tended to be employed longer at their present department store than independent buyers. Combination buyers tended to have roughly equal years of service divided among the first four ranges, (i.e., one to 20 years) while the independent buyers (81 percent) were clustered between the first two ranges (i.e., one to ten years) years of employment with their current employer.

Years in Present Position

All combination and independent apparel buyers indicated that they fell within the range of one to 15 years of experience in their present buying position. However, combination buyers were more seasoned in their assignments
as 26 percent indicated between 11 and 15 years in current assignment while only six percent of independent buyers fell into this category.

**Number of Years in Department Store Retailing**

Both combination and independent buyers were experienced employees of the department store format. All respondents reported at least six years of employment experience in the format with nearly twenty percent of both combination and independent buyers indicating over 21 years of employment in the department store setting.

**Number of Positions Held in the Past Five Years**

The independent buyers in this study had fewer different buying assignments when compared to combination buyers. Seven percent of combination buyers were rotated among five or more positions in the past five years where no independent buyer indicated five or more assignments. This finding could indicate more stability among the ranks of the independent buyers.

**Type of Buying Responsibility**

The majority of responding buyers (n= 42, 72%) assumed combination buying responsibilities, that is, acted independently in some buying decisions while seeking team input for others. A sizeable number of responding buyers (n=16, 28%) identified themselves as independent buyers, that is, made buying decisions without the input of other buyers. Since only three buyers identified themselves as
team buyers, this category was eliminated from further statistical analyses.

**Buying Structure**

The majority of buyers (n=40, 69%) indicated that their stores had not adopted the new structure while a minority (n=18, 31%) revealed that their stores had adopted the new organizational structure.

**RQ1:** Both independent and combination buyers perceived the environment as fairly complex. This finding did not support Daft's (1992) assumption that the industry should be classified within a simple environment.

**RQ2:** Both combination and independent buyers perceived the environment as dynamic.

**RQ3:** Both combination and independent buyers perceived the department store environment as uncertain.

**RQ4:** Both combination and independent buyers perceived themselves to be occasional users of boundary spanning activities. Furthermore, combination and independent buyers favored one type of boundary spanning activity (face, process, relation) over another in the performance of their duties. Both buyer types made more frequent use of face and relation activities when possessing power over merchandise decisions.

Differences also were present between buyer types. Combination buyers reported more frequent use of face and relation activities when dealing with a complex environment;
independent buyers did not. Combination buyers indicated more frequent use of process activities while independent buyers made more frequent use of relation activities in a dynamic environment. Independent buyers indicated an association between process activities in an uncertain environment while combination buyers did not associate uncertainty with any one type of activity. Finally, combination buyers reported more frequent use of process activities when they perceived power over merchandise decisions while independent buyers did not. However, both buyer types associated face and relation activities with merchandise power.

RQ5: Both combination and independent buyers were highly inclined to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty.

RQ6: Both combination and independent buyers perceived it to be very likely that one or more of their recommendations would be accepted by colleagues (i.e., perceived themselves to possess power). However, when the perceived power variable was split into merchandise power and organizational power, only combination buyers associated any study variables with organizational power. When combination buyers perceived themselves inclined to use boundary spanning activities, they perceived an increase in organizational power. Additionally, as combination buyers indicated high usage levels of boundary spanning activities,
they also perceived themselves to possess more power over merchandise decisions. Finally, as combination buyers perceived high levels of uncertainty, their perception of power over merchandising decisions increased.

As the environment becomes more complex, independent buyers perceived themselves to possess more merchandise power. Additionally, when independent buyers were inclined to use boundary spanning activities, their perceptions of power over merchandise increased. Finally, when buyers used more boundary spanning activities, they perceived themselves to have power over merchandise decisions.

For combination buyers, environmental uncertainty and boundary spanning activities were the best predictors of merchandise power. For independent buyers, buyer discretion and environmental complexity were the best predictors of merchandise power while environmental complexity was the best predictor of organizational power.

**RQ7: Summary of Relationships Among All Variables:**

**Combination Buyers** Combination buyers perceived the environment as complex, dynamic and uncertain. These buyers also perceived themselves as highly inclined to use boundary spanning activities and saw themselves as occasional users of these activities. Combination buyers perceived it to be very likely that their recommendations would be accepted by their colleagues (i.e., possess power). When buyers were inclined to use boundary spanning activities, they perceived
an increase in their organizational power. As these buyers increased their use of boundary spanning activities, they perceived themselves to be more powerful regarding merchandise decisions. As combination buyers perceived the environment as uncertain, their perceptions of merchandise power were increased.

Combination buyers associated certain types of boundary spanning activities with environmental variables. These buyers associated face and relation activities with a complex environment. Additionally, they associated process activities with a dynamic environment. Combination buyers also associated face, process and relation activities with power over merchandise decisions. Finally, environmental uncertainty and boundary spanning activities were the best predictors of merchandise power.

Summary of Relationships Among All Variables: Independent Buyers

Independent buyers perceived the environment as complex, dynamic, and uncertain. These buyers perceived themselves to be highly inclined to use boundary spanning activities and saw themselves as occasional users of these activities. Independent buyers perceived it to be very likely that their recommendations would be accepted by their colleagues (i.e., possess power). As the environment becomes more complex, independent buyers perceived themselves to possess more merchandise power. When independent buyers perceived themselves to be inclined to
use boundary spanning activities, they perceived themselves to possess more power over merchandise decisions. As buyers perceived usage of boundary spanning activities were increased, they perceived themselves to possess more power over merchandise decisions. Independent buyers associated certain types of boundary spanning activities with environmental variables. These buyers associated relation activities with a dynamic environment and process activities with uncertainty. Furthermore, they associated face and relation activities with merchandise power. They associated relation activities with total power (i.e., organizational and merchandise power). Finally, for independent buyers, buyer discretion and environmental complexity were the best predictors of merchandise power.

**Discussion of Models**

Differences were noted between the prediction models between combination and independent buyers and between the model supported in manufacturing and industrial settings.

For purposes of review, the industrial model suggested that a complex/dynamic environment led to perceived environmental uncertainty. The perception of uncertainty triggers the use of boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty. The use of these activities increased the boundary spanners perception of power (Almubarek, 1982; Jemison, 1978; Thompson, 1967).
The study variables, when tested in a department store environment, support the industrial model. The resulting associations found in the department store environment supported the results found in industrial and manufacturing environments. However, comparing the two predictive models, some similarities and differences were revealed. For combination buyers, environmental uncertainty and boundary spanning activities were the two best predictors of merchandise power. The use of boundary spanning activities, those activities that link the organization with other organizations or social systems, in conjunction with an uncertain environment predicted power over merchandising decisions. On the other hand, for independent buyers, buyer discretion (i.e., the inclination to use boundary spanning activities) coupled with an environmental characteristic—complexity—predicted merchandise power.

Comparing and contrasting the predictive models, both combination and independent buyers either highly use or are highly inclined to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty. However, the general lack of information about the environment (i.e., perceived uncertainty) not the degree to which factors in the organizational environment are many and dissimilar to one another (complexity) predicted merchandise power for combination buyers.
Since the combination buyers work both independently and with corporate buyers, the uncertainty could spur the group to work together as a team, discussing divergent options and strategies, hence, adding to the perception of power over merchandise decisions. Furthermore, combination buyers may deal with higher levels of uncertainty since some of their purchases target the entire department store corporation. It seems that massive corporate buys could add to the perceptions of uncertainty.

Independent buyers, on the other hand, work autonomously when making merchandise decisions. It makes sense that the complexity of the environment would be of concern, since the monitoring of diverse environmental sectors cannot be delegated to colleagues, as with combination buyers. It seems reasonable to believe that monitoring and successfully navigating a complex environment would lead to power over merchandise decisions.

Conclusions

The data collected and analyzed for this study allows several conclusions to be drawn regarding the study variables.
1. Both independent and combination buyers perceived the environment to be complex.
2. Both combination and independent buyers perceive the environment as dynamic.
3. Both combination and independent buyers perceive the department store environment as uncertain.

4. Both combination and independent buyers were inclined to use boundary spanning activities to cope with environmental uncertainty.

5. Both combination and independent buyers perceived it to be very likely that one or more of their recommendations would be accepted by colleagues.

6. Results of this study, studying combination and independent buyers in the department store environment, support the industrial model. However, combination and independent buyers target different predictor variables possibly due to differences in buyer orientation (i.e., combination or independent buyer responsibilities).

7. Combination and independent buyers indicated a preference for or reliance on certain type of boundary spanning activity (face, process, relation) in the performance of their duties.

8. Apparel buyers power is restricted more to power over merchandise decisions rather than power within the organization, per se.

9. There is evidence to challenge Daft's (1992) observation that the apparel industry (which is linked to department stores) is located in the third quadrant (moderate-to-high uncertainty) of Duncan's Perceived Uncertainty Model.
Results indicate support for placing the industry in the fourth quadrant (a highly uncertain environment).

10. This study gives support to the observation by Hrebiniak and Snow (1980): "there are characteristics of industries that affect the type of external issues or problems salient to top management. Industry differences in response to environmental uncertainty have not been noted currently by researchers". This study did reveal the nature of the relationships among the variables in a department store environment.

**Recommendations**

The first recommendation concerns the difficulty and length of the questionnaire. It has been documented that studies using retail buyers as respondents have poor response rates. This study was no different. Although the questionnaire was thought to be complex, the researcher thought that one acceptable incentive (packet of cappucino) and one generous incentive ($500.00 raffle) could overcome any initial hesitation to participate in the study. This was not the case. A recommendation would be to refine the instrument further by increasing its clarity and readability in order to increase the response rate.

A second recommendation concerns the research design. Although the mailed questionnaire was selected as the method that would conserve both time and money, a qualitative approach would have added a richness to the data. Since the
environment for buyers has changed significantly, buyers could voice concerns that researchers would not be aware of. It is recommended that buyers be interviewed in person or over the phone to gather data that more fully explain the variables of interest.

A third recommendation is addressed to the academic associations that support, promote, and advance the textile and apparel industries. The researcher recommends that these organizations strive to develop positive relationships with the major retailers. Retailers, like never before, are challenged by the changing industry. Academics are equipped to help retailers meet the challenges of their business by investigating areas of concern. However, due to the competitive nature of the industry, retailers develop a proprietary outlook that prevents competitors from adopting key business strategies. As understandable as this is, retailers have extended the "closed door" policy to include academicians. This researcher discovered that many department stores would not permit their buyers to participate in the study under any circumstance. It would be very difficult for a future researcher to follow through on the second recommendation: to conduct interviews with department store buyers located within the top ten department store groupings. Professional associations need to start, and in some cases, continue to build relationships with retailers for mutual benefit.
Future Research

This study has been the first attempt to look at the study variables in the department store setting. Since the survey method of research was employed, the results capture a slice in time. The results can be thought of as a baseline effort, but the population needs to be surveyed again in order to monitor changing buyer perceptions.

One recommendation, following this research is to give renewed attention to the buyer structure variable: buyers located in a planner-distributor structure. Over 30% of responding buyers indicated that their organization had adopted this new level of management, one that is very established in specialty retailing. The change in organizational structure seems to be in the implementation phase. Many more leading department stores are currently adopting this structure. The study should be repeated when a sizeable number of buyers can report that they reside in this type of structure. This new position has changed not only the organizational chart, but the traditional relationships among the existing staff. The planner-distributor must be studied along with the interaction patterns between the buyer and the planner-distributor since buying duties that were previously delegated to the buyer and that are critical to the success of the organization are now assigned to this new player. Buyers and planners are located at the same hierarchical level, however, it is not
known if their power levels are equal. Academic institutions interested in educating future retailers would benefit by this knowledge as the planner distributor is now a career path that is open to their students. Is the power of an apparel buyer reduced due to the emergence of the new planner distributor level? Further research could answer this question.

Finally, future studies need to focus renewed attention on face, process, and relation boundary spanning activities. Due to the low response rate, definitive prescriptions for buyer behavior cannot be made. However, with a larger sample of buyers, it is possible that future study results could identify which type of boundary spanning activity to use in what situation. These identified behaviors could guide buyer behavior in order to strengthen performance and therefore, enhance the profitability of the department store.
REFERENCES


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Hix, J. L. (1972). An inquiry into the decision criteria used by men's wear buyers in department and specialty stores in determining whether to include a new product in the product offering (Doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1972).


Leifer, R., & Wortman, M. S. (1976). *Boundary spanners: Their attributes, functions, and interactions with organizational characteristics in a health and welfare organization*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Massachusetts.


APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE
Because of your experience as a buyer for a major department store, you have been carefully selected to participate in a study concerning perceptions of the store's environment, buyer activities and decision making.

In the next week, you will receive an envelope containing a questionnaire and a postage paid return envelope. You will also be given a chance to win a $500 prize just for completing and returning the questionnaire. Please set aside approximately one half hour to complete the survey. Be assured that anonymity of responses is guaranteed. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Shirley Lazorchak
Ph.D Candidate
The Ohio State University

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn S. O'Neal, Ph.D
Associate Professor
The Ohio State University
Dear XXXXXX:

The environment of the department store has changed dramatically in recent years. The merging, acquisitions, and bankruptcies in the industry have produced large corporate entities in an industry that used to be dominated by regional chains and independent merchants. Due to these changes, it is imperative that the new retail environment be assessed, along with the changing influence patterns and activities of the buyer.

As an apparel buyer for one of the major department store groups, your thoughts are important to us as your responses will reveal the nature of this changed environment. Furthermore, you will have a hand in helping prepare students for careers in department store buying.

Your responses will be held in strictest confidence. Results are reported for the industry as a whole, and not by individual stores. The identification number found on the questionnaire is for mailing purposes only. Once your questionnaire has been returned, the number permits us to remove your name from the mailing list.

Please enjoy a cappuccino during the half hour it should take to complete the questionnaire. As an additional thank you for taking time out of your busy day, all buyers who complete and return their questionnaire will be eligible to win a $500 cash award by random drawing. If you have any questions, please call XXX-XXX-XXXX. We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Shirley A. Lazorchak
Ph.D Candidate

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn S. O'Neal, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Last week, a questionnaire asking about your perceptions of the department store environment was sent to you. You were chosen because you are representative of apparel buyers who are employed by the top department store groups in the nation.

If you have returned the questionnaire, please accept our thanks. If not, please do so today. Because the questionnaire has been sent to select buyers, it is very important that you be included in the study so that an accurate description of buyer opinions is collected.

If for some reason you did not receive the questionnaire, please call collect (XXX-XXX-XXXX) and I will send one to you today.

Sincerely,

Shirley Lazorchak
Ph.D Candidate
The Ohio State University

Gwendolyn S. O'Neal, Ph.D
Associate Professor
The Ohio State University
Dear XXXXXXX:

About two weeks ago, I wrote to you asking for your opinions on the new department store environment, activities, and influence patterns of the buyer. As of today, we have not received your questionnaire.

We have initiated this study in order to understand the relationship among these concepts in the changed environment, to report our results to buyers so that they may be aware of current industry thinking and practice and finally, to better prepare students for careers as department store buyers.

I am writing to you again to stress the importance each questionnaire has to the usefulness of the study. Only apparel buyers who are employed by the top ten department store groupings are being asked to participate in the study. To be able to accurately describe the perceptions of the industry leaders, it is imperative that each respondent return the questionnaire.

For your convenience, an additional questionnaire is enclosed. There is still time to add your name to the drawing for $500 if your completed questionnaire is promptly received.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Shirley A. Lazorchak
Ph.D Candidate

Gwendolyn S. O'Neal, Ph.D
Associate Professor
Dear XXXXXXXXXXX:

I am writing to you about our study of department store apparel buyers. As of today, we have not received your questionnaire.

We have received many completed questionnaires from your colleagues. But, our ability to describe buyer's perceptions accurately will depend upon you and the others who have not mailed in their questionnaire. It has been shown that respondents who do not participate may have very different opinions than those who do respond.

This is the first time that these questions have been asked of buyers who purchase apparel products. Therefore, the results are of interest to those who are involved in executive training in the department stores and those of us who are preparing the retailers of tomorrow. The usefulness of the study will depend upon how accurately we are able to describe the perceptions of buyers.

A replacement questionnaire is enclosed for your convenience. May I urge you to complete and return it as soon as possible? Remember, you still have a chance to win the $500 lottery prize if you respond by (mo, day, yr). Your contribution to the success of this study will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Shirley Lazorchak
Ph.D Candidate

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn S. O'Neal, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE
The following pages contain questions about your job as a buyer and about your department store's outside environment. I would very much appreciate it if you would share your thoughts on these topics so that we can better understand the buyer's activities as they relate to the department store's outside environment. There is no right or wrong answer. The correct answer is your first impression.

Thank you for your help and cooperation in this research.

For the purposes of this survey, ENVIRONMENT is defined as sectors with which the store interacts directly and which have impact on the store's ability to achieve its goals.

Examples include:  

a). industry sector  
b). raw material sectors  
c). human resources sector  
d). financial resources sector  
e). market sector  
f). technology sector  
g). economic conditions sector  
h). government sector  
i). socio-cultural sector  
j). international sector
Section I: ENVIRONMENT OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION

Q-1. Below, you will find a list of environmental factors. These factors reflect some of the elements that exist in the buyer's environment. Most buyers interact with at least some of these factors in the performance of their duties. (Please circle as many factors (letters "a" through "j") that are applicable to you in your typical decision situations).

FACTORS
Environment outside the firm

CUSTOMERS
(a) Actual users of our product or service

VENDORS
(b) Open market vendors (i.e., New York garment center)
(c) Factory Sourcing (e.g., for product development)
(d) Apparel components suppliers (e.g., notions for product development)

COMPETITORS
(e) Competition for vendors
(f) Competition for customers

GOVERNMENT/UNIONS
(g) Government regulatory agencies (e.g., dealing with customs & importing laws)
(h) Prevailing public and political attitudes towards your firm and/or industry (i.e., Made in the U.S.A. campaign)
(i) Relationships with trade unions

TECHNOLOGY
(j) New products in your industry each year (e.g., new fibers & fabrics, just-in-time purchasing, automatic replenishment systems)
Section II: BUYER'S ENVIRONMENT

A). This next section asks you to consider a major DECISION SITUATION in which you were involved during the past year. Your response here will be used to help answer future questions. Restrict the choice of this situation to one which you consider as typical of the crucial type of decisions which you face in the operation of your department(s).

For example: My department store has been repositioned to target an upscale customer. As such, my challenge is to buy or develop unique merchandise and develop innovative visual merchandising strategies to fit this new image while maintaining the profitability of my departments.

Please write a short description of your decision situation in the following space:
Of the factors listed in question 1, please list the THREE factors which you feel were MOST IMPORTANT in your decision situation stated above in part A.

For example: The factors that most impact my above decision situation (i.e., targeting upscale customers) are (1) open market vendors, (2) actual users of our product or service, and (3) apparel components suppliers.

Please write the description of your three factors most important in your decision situation in the following space:

FACTOR 1

FACTOR 2

FACTOR 3

The word "factor", used in the following questions, refers to the three factors that you just listed as most important in your decision situation. Please keep these three factors in mind as you answer the following questions. (Circle the numbered response that best represents your experience for the particular factor under consideration as it applies to your stated decision situation).

KEY: 1 = NEVER
     2 = ALMOST NEVER
     3 = SOMETIMES
     4 = FREQUENTLY
     5 = ALWAYS

Q-2. How often is each of the factors important in your decision-making?

Factor 1  (NEVER) 1  2  3  4  5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 2  (NEVER) 1  2  3  4  5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 3  (NEVER) 1  2  3  4  5 (ALWAYS)
Q-3. For each factor, please decide how often you consider new and different alternatives in decision making.

Factor 1  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 2  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 3  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)

Next, this series of questions asks you to consider the role of information in the department store's environment. Please use the following scale to answer questions 4, 5 and 6.

KEY: 1 = NEVER
2 = SELDOM
3 = OCCASIONALLY
4 = FAIRLY OFTEN
5 = ALWAYS

Q-4. How often do you believe that the information that you have about each factor is adequate for decision-making regarding vendor related matters?

Factor 1  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 2  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 3  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)

Q-5. How often do you feel that you have the NECESSARY INFORMATION about these factors to understand what your department is expected to do in making decisions regarding vendor matters?

Factor 1  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 2  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 3  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)

Q-6. How often do you feel that you are UNABLE TO PREDICT how these factors are going to be affected by decisions made by your department regarding vendor related matters?

Factor 1  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 2  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
Factor 3  (NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)
(Please use the following scale to answer questions 7 and 8).

**KEY:**
1 = EXTREMELY DIFFICULT  
2 = SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT  
3 = NEITHER EASY NOR DIFFICULT  
4 = SOMEWHAT EASY  
5 = EXTREMELY EASY

**Q-7.** How difficult is it for you to get the NECESSARY information about these factors for vendor related decisions?

Factor 1 (EXTREMELY DIFFICULT) 1 2 3 4 5 (EXTREMELY EASY)

Factor 2 (EXTREMELY DIFFICULT) 1 2 3 4 5 (EXTREMELY EASY)

Factor 3 (EXTREMELY DIFFICULT) 1 2 3 4 5 (EXTREMELY EASY)

**Q-8.** How difficult is it to obtain ADDITIONAL information about these factors when you need it for decision-making concerning vendor related matters?

Factor 1 (EXTREMELY DIFFICULT) 1 2 3 4 5 (EXTREMELY EASY)

Factor 2 (EXTREMELY DIFFICULT) 1 2 3 4 5 (EXTREMELY EASY)

Factor 3 (EXTREMELY DIFFICULT) 1 2 3 4 5 (EXTREMELY EASY)

In summing up your beliefs about each of the three factors in the section you have just completed, please indicate how sure you are about how each of these factors is going to AFFECT THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE of your firm in its tasks. After each factor listed below, please circle the response that indicates how sure you are of how that factor affects your organization.

**Q-9.** Factor 1 (NOT SURE) 1 2 3 4 5 (SURE)

**Q-10.** Factor 2 (NOT SURE) 1 2 3 4 5 (SURE)

**Q-11.** Factor 3 (NOT SURE) 1 2 3 4 5 (SURE)
In the following five questions, you are asked to consider your DECISION PROCESSES IN VENDOR RELATED MATTERS. (Please circle the response that you feel best fits your experience).

**KEY:**

1 = NEVER  
2 = SELDOM  
3 = OCCASIONALLY  
4 = FAIRLY OFTEN  
5 = ALWAYS

**Q-12.** How often do you feel that you are able to consider ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION before making a decision to follow a specific course of action relating to a vendor?

(NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)

**Q-13.** How often do you feel you can effectively consider the consequences of an alternative regarding a vendor before decisions are made?

(NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)

**Q-14.** How often do you feel that you are able to tell if the decisions you make regarding vendors will have a POSITIVE or NEGATIVE affect on your firm's overall performance?

(NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)

**Q-15.** How often can you determine what the OUTCOME of a decision concerning a vendor will be before it is made?

(NEVER) 1 2 3 4 5 (ALWAYS)

**Q-16.** What most nearly describes the typical length of time involved before you can obtain feedback or information concerning the effects on your firm of your decisions regarding a vendor?

Please circle one.

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Section III: INFLUENCE ON DECISIONS

This section is designed to determine your opinions as to how a buyer would cope with the environment outside of the store. (Please circle the numbered response which describes your level of agreement with each of the following statements).

Q-17. When environmental factors are not changing, a buyer should offer positive information regarding the firm to outsiders and try to ward off false rumors and reports (e.g., false reports regarding a change in leadership).

STRICTLY DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRICTLY AGREE

Q-18. When environmental factors are in a continual process of change (e.g., when department store groups are being merged and acquired), a buyer should insure a constant flow of merchandise and establish relations with a variety of vendors to obtain needed inventory.

STRICTLY DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRICTLY AGREE

Q-19. When minor changes occur in environmental factors (e.g., minimal change in trade regulations, few changes in target customer and vendors), a buyer should look for new merchandise and new changes in the market.

STRICTLY DISAGREE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 STRICTLY AGREE

This next section is designed to determine the probability of getting your ideas accepted by your professional colleagues (i.e., superiors and peers). (Please circle the appropriate numbered response).

Q-20. The probability that my suggestions for buyers's behavior (such as insuring constant flow of merchandise, establishing vendor relations, and looking for new products) will be accepted and implemented are:

1 LOW
2 BELOW AVERAGE
3 AVERAGE
4 MODERATELY HIGH
5 VERY HIGH
Assume that you would make recommendations on each item listed below. Then, indicate what you believe to be the likelihood that one or more of your recommendations will be accepted by your professional colleagues (superiors and peers). (Please circle the best choice. Use the following scale to answer questions 21 through 26).

**KEY: 1 = ABSOLUTELY NOT  
2 = NOT VERY LIKELY  
3 = PROBABLY  
4 = VERY LIKELY  
5 = DEFINITELY**

Q-21. Warding off environmental noises (e.g., false rumors regarding merging with another organization) ...............1 2 3 4 5

Q-22. Presenting positive information about the organization (e.g., the store's reputation, good financial standing) .........1 2 3 4 5

Q-23. Insuring constant flow of merchandise .........................1 2 3 4 5

Q-24. Establishing relations with other companies .....................1 2 3 4 5

Q-25. Looking for new merchandise ........................................1 2 3 4 5

Q-26. Examining the political situation (e.g., who is running for political office) ......1 2 3 4 5

Section IV: ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION

The following are activities that might be performed by a buyer. (Please circle the degree to which that activity is a part of your store's activities).

**KEY: 1 = NEVER  
2 = SELDOM  
3 = OCCASIONALLY  
4 = FREQUENTLY  
5 = ALWAYS**

Q-27. Deciding on the kinds of inputs to acquire from outside the organization (e.g., personnel, merchandise, advertising and markdown money) ......................1 2 3 4 5
| Q-28. | Deciding on the quality requirements for physical inputs (e.g., personnel, merchandise) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-29. | Deciding when to acquire certain physical inputs (e.g., personnel, merchandise) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-30. | Receiving solicited information from outside the organization, interpreting it, and passing it to another person in your organization | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-31. | Receiving unsolicited information from outside the organization, interpreting it, and passing it to another person in your organization | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-32. | Formally providing information to create a favorable image of your organization to groups outside the organization | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-33. | Informally providing information to create a favorable image of your organization to groups outside your organization | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-34. | Acquiring the physical resources needed for the organization's functioning (e.g., procure merchandise and supplies, hire personnel) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-35. | Deciding to minimize the effects of adverse external changes on the operations of your organization (e.g., inadequate inventory levels of bestsellers from major suppliers) | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-36. | Deciding what portions of outside information to be passed on to others in your organization | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-37. | Deciding when to pass outside information on to others in your organization | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-38. | Deciding to whom outside information should be sent | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-39. | Making speeches, to outside groups, on other than specifically company business | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| Q-40. | Meeting with customers and convincing them to use your organization's products | 1 2 3 4 5 |
Q-41. Deciding on the customers that your organization will pursue.................1 2 3 4 5
Q-42. Formally acquiring outside information needed by a department in your organization other than your own.........................1 2 3 4 5
Q-43. Informally acquiring outside information needed by a department in your organization other than your own..........................1 2 3 4 5
Q-44. Informally meeting with people from other organizations who can indirectly help your organization..............................1 2 3 4 5
Q-45. Formally providing information about your organization to outsiders will induce them to act favorably in behalf of your organization.........................1 2 3 4 5
Q-46. Informally providing information about your organization to outsiders will induce them to act favorably in behalf of your organization..........................1 2 3 4 5
Q-47. Deciding the ways by which your product will be provided to your customers.................................1 2 3 4 5
Q-48. Preparing formal reports about influential environmental factors outside the organization.................................1 2 3 4 5
Q-49. Preparing informal reports about influential environmental factors outside the organization.................................1 2 3 4 5
Q-50. Formally acquiring outside information needed by your department.................................1 2 3 4 5
Q-51. Informally acquiring outside information needed by your department.................................1 2 3 4 5
DEMOGRAPHICS

Section V: Finally, a few questions about your background. This information will be combined and categorized for statistical purposes. (Circle the appropriate numbered response).

Q-52. What is your gender?

   1  FEMALE
   2  MALE

Q-53. Please circle the range that reflects your age.

   1  UNDER 25 YEARS OF AGE
   2  26-34 YEARS OF AGE
   3  35-44 YEARS OF AGE
   4  45-54 YEARS OF AGE
   5  OVER 55 YEARS OF AGE

Q-54. How long have you been employed by this firm?

   1  1-5 YEARS
   2  6-10 YEARS
   3  11-15 YEARS
   4  16-20 YEARS
   5  OVER 21 YEARS

Q-55. How long have you held your present position?

   1  1-5 YEARS
   2  6-10 YEARS
   3  11-15 YEARS
   4  16-20 YEARS
   5  OVER 21 YEARS

Q-56. How many years have you worked in department store retailing?

   1  1-5 YEARS
   2  6-10 YEARS
   3  11-15 YEARS
   4  16-20 YEARS
   5  OVER 21 YEARS

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Q-57. How many positions have you had in the past five years?

   1  1-2 POSITIONS
   2  3-4 POSITIONS
   3  5 OR MORE POSITIONS

Q-58. (Please circle all statements that apply to your buying situation).

   a. I am a buyer who assumes team buying responsibilities on a full time basis.
   b. I am a buyer who assumes some team buying responsibilities, but also acts independently in some buying decisions.
   c. I am a buyer who is considered independent (i.e., who does not assume any team buying responsibilities).
   d. I am a buyer who is located within a buyer-planner-distributor organizational structure.

Thank you, again!

___ For a copy of the study results, check here.

Return to:
Ms. Shirley A. Lazorchak
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Code Number ________

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APPENDIX C

RAW DATA SCORES
### Raw Data Scores

**Key**
- **Res** = Respondents
- **Complex** = Complexity
- **Dynamism** = Dynamism
- **Uncert** = Perceived environmental uncertainty
- **Buydiscr** = Buyer discretion
- **Boundary** = Boundary spanning activities
- **Powers** = Perceived power
- **Powmer** = Merchandise power
- **Poworg** = Organizational power

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