Behavioral Dimensions of Channels of Distribution: Review and Synthesis

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The purpose of this paper is to review and synthesize the past research in the area of behavioral dimensions of channels of distribution. The authors will explore the focal points of the works and suggest future research directions.

A review of the literature concerning channels suggests the following concepts as most representative of the work in behavioral aspects of channels: bargaining, conflict, cooperation, power, performance, member roles, member satisfaction and political economy. Research may concentrate on conceptual issues, the development of models, or empirical tests of hypotheses. Table 1 shows the contributors to behavioral research in channels of distribution and indicates the focal points of each study. Also, Table 1 shows whether the work was empirical or emphasized model development. Table 2 (Table Codes) depicts the categories of sample size and channel types used in the empirical research reviewed in this paper. The remainder of the paper explores each major behavioral concept.

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Table 1
BEHAVIORAL DIMENSIONS OF CHANNELS LITERATURE

	Dahl '57	Balderston '58	French '59	Wittreich '62	Alderson '65	McCammon '65	Galbraith '67	Heflebower '67	Mallen '67	Palamount '67	Stern '67	Assael '68	Bucklin '68	Assael '69	Beier '69	Carlson '69	Evan '69	Gill '69	Grabner '69	Kriesberg '69	Mallen '69	Merton '69	Palamount '69	Ridgway '69	Stern/Brown '69	Stern/Gorm '69	Stern/Hesk '69	Thompson '69	Heskett '70	Little '70
1. Bargaining		X		X				X					X		X				X						X	X		X		
2. Conflict				X	X					X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X	X		X		X	X	X			
a. actual																														
b. potential																														
c. functional														X				X								X	X			
d. dysfunctional														X				X								X	X			
e. causes of					X							X														X	X			
3. Cooperation					X	X			X																					
4. Power	X	X	X				X	X			X		X	X	X					X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
a. sources	X		X												X									X					X	
b. dependency			X												X								X				X	X		
c. countervailing							X							X	X															
d. control									X		X		X		X					X			X	X						
5. Performance											X		X														X			
6. Role																	X	X		X		X			X	X				X
7. Satisfaction												X								X							X			
8. Political-Economy																														
9. Empirical Study														X																
a. laboratory																														
b. field														X																
c. # channels														1																
d. sample size														n																
e. channel type														a																
10. Model Development		X														X					X									

Table 1
BEHAVIORAL DIMENSIONS OF CHANNELS LITERATURE
(continued)

	Raven '70	Rosenberg '70	El-Ansary '71	Hickson '71	Rosenberg '71	Stern '71	Walker '71	El-Ansary '72	Wileman '72	Bucklin '73	Foster '73	Korpi '73	Rosenbloom'73	Stern/Schul73	Stern/Stern73	Wilkinson '73	El-Ansary '74	Firat '74	Guiltinan '74	Hunt '74	Porter '74	Rosenberg '74	Weigand '74	Wilkinson '74	El-Ansary '75	Mason '75	Robicheaux'75	Webster '75	Etgar (a) '76
1. Bargaining						X	X		X								X	X											
2. Conflict	X	X			X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X			X	X			X			
a. actual	X											X						X											
b. potential	X										X							X									X		
c. functional		X				X							X					X									X		
d. dysfunctional		X				X							X					X									X		
e. causes of		X			X					X																	X		
3. Cooperation																											X		
4. Power	X		X	X				X	X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X
a. sources	X							X				X		X		X		X		X				X		X	X		X
b. dependency			X	X	X				X		X					X		X			X			X					X
c. countervailing								X	X																				X
d. control				X		X			X	X				X			X		X	X							X		X
5. Performance		X								X	X	X	X							X							X		
6. Role		X								X	X																X	X	
7. Satisfaction					X					X								X		X							X		
8. Political-Economy																													
9. Empirical Study					X		X	X			X			X	X					X		X			X				X
a. laboratory							X							X	X														
b. field					X			X			X									X		X			X				X
c. # channels					1			1			1									1		8			1				1
d. sample size					b		b	a			c			b	d					e					a				c
e. channel type					g			f			j			h	h					d		j			f				i
10. Model Development		X	X		X	X		X		X		X	X				X	X		X		X					X		X

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Table 1
BEHAVIORAL DIMENSIONS OF CHANNELS LITERATURE
(continued)

	Etgar(b) '76	Lusch '76	Pearson '76	Robicheaux '75	Brown '77	Etgar(a) '77	Etgar(b) '77	Kelly '77	Roering '77	Angèlmar '77	Etgar(a) '78	Etgar(b) '78	Etgar(c) '78	Fornell '78	Grimes '78	Lusch '78	Mallen '78	Michie '78	Rosson '78	Wilkinson '78	Cadotte '79	Etgar '79	Reve '79	Wilkinson '79	Brown(a) '80	Brown(b) '80	Bennion '80	Dwyer '80	Guiltinan '80	Moore '80	Pitts '80	Stern '80
1. Bargaining									X	X			X																X			X
2. Conflict		X	X		X			X		X	X			X		X			X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X	X
a. actual														X								X										
b. potential		X												X							X	X										
c. functional																							X		X							X
d. dysfunctional		X																					X		X							X
e. causes of											X											X			X							
3. Cooperation	X		X										X										X						X		X	X
4. Power		X			X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X		X			X
a. sources		X									X	X	X	X	X			X					X	X								
b. dependency		X			X	X			X			X									X		X						X			X
c. countervailing												X		X													X					
d. control				X		X	X						X		X		X			X				X								
5. Performance		X	X	X				X																	X					X		X
6. Roles																							X			X						
7. Satisfaction		X			X													X						X								
8. Political-Economy																												X				X
9. Empirical Study	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X					X		X		X		X		X		X	X	X		
a. laboratory									X	X										X								X				
b. field	X	X		X	X	X	X	X					X					X				X				X			X	X		
c. # channels		1		1	1	8		5					8					1				8		1		8			1	1		
d. sample size	c	e		b	a	b		c	c	d			b					c		b		c		a		b		b	c	b		
e. channel type	h	a		e	a	i	h	d	i	i			c					a		i		i		g		j		e	d	b		
10. Model Development				X	X													X			X						X				X	X

Table 1
BEHAVIORAL DIMENSIONS OF CHANNELS LITERATURE
(continued)

	Teas '80	Brown(a) '81	Brown(b) '81	Brown(c) '81	Dwyer '81	English '81	Schul '81	Sibley '81	Zusman '81	Bennion '82	Brown '82	Izraeli '82	Lusch '82	Parameswaran '82	Patti '82	Phillips '82	Robbins '82	Ross(a) '82	Ross(b) '82	Ross(c) '82	Sibley '82	Wong '82	Achrol '83	Arndt '83	Frazier '83	Neslin '83	Schul '83
1. Bargaining					X									X												X	
2. Conflict		X					X							X			X		X			X	X	X			X
a. actual																						X					
b. potential																											
c. functional																							X				
d. dysfunctional														X									X				
e. causes of																	X		X			X	X				
3. Cooperation			X									X							X		X						X
4. Power						X				X	X		X	X	X			X		X	X				X		
a. sources											X		X												X		
b. dependency						X									X					X							
c. countervailing										X																	
d. control						X								X	X			X									
5. Performance								X	X							X											
6. Role	X																								X		X
7. Satisfaction																											
8. Political-Economy							X																X	X			
9. Empirical Study	X	X	X		X		X	X			X		X			X	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X
a. laboratory					X																					X	
b. field	X	X	X				X	X			X		X			X	X	X	X		X	X			X		X
c. # channels	1	1	1		1		1	1			1		1			1	4	1	1		1	1			1	1	1
d. sample size	c	d	b		a		e	c			c		e			a	c	f	b		c	e			e	b	e
e. channel type	k	a	l		e		d	n			L		a			i	L	k	k		d	m			d	e	d
10. Model Development				X					X	X		X	X		X								X	X			

Table Two

TABLE CODES

SAMPLE SIZE

(a) 0 - 50	(d) 201 - 300
(b) 51 - 100	(e) greater than 300
(c) 101 - 200	(f) not reported

CHANNEL TYPES

(a) Automobile Dealers	(h) Manufacturing
(b) Building Materials	(i) Multiple Channels
(c) Distributors	(j) Specialty Consumer Products
(d) Franchising	(k) Food Broker
(e) Student Surrogates	(l) Retailers
(f) Heating & Cooling	(m) Services
(g) Household Durables	(n) Farm Implements

Theoretical and Empirical Development on Channel Bargaining

Most of the existing research emphasizes bargaining as inherent in a channel of distribution (Robicheaux and El-Ansary 1975; Stern and Reve 1980; Wittreich 1962). One of the early investigators of bargaining in channels, Balderston (1958), using *economic analysis*, developed a model which included communication links and their costs in bargaining networks. Grabner and Rosenberg (1969) criticized the purely economic explanation of communication, suggesting dimensions of communication may be better viewed by using the concepts of *message flows*. These flows would include system components, timing of the flows, and the permanence of the flows.

Stern and Brown (1969) emphasized the need to use a *social systems* approach in studying bargaining. Stern (1971) hypothesized bargaining strategy will be more likely when the degree of perceived vertical interdependence is low. Parameswaran et al. (1982) contended that the systems perspective is the ideal framework for studying channel bargaining, efficiency and control.

Several researchers have proposed bargaining as a way of resolving conflict and the problems brought on by excessive power (Beier and Stern 1969; El-Ansary and Robicheaux 1974; Firat, Tybout, and Stern 1974; Heflebower 1967; Stern and Gorman 1969; Thompson 1969; Wileman 1972). The bargaining relationship is theorized to be a function of each channel members relative position within the system.

Walker (1971) explored the relationship between the *routineness* of bargaining, the learning process and efficiency. Results indicated negotiation processes become more efficient and routine as bargainers learn the economic and situational parameters effecting their partners' accommodation levels. Roering (1977) explored the relationship between dependency of channel members and the *number of bargaining sessions*. Results indicated low dependence bargainers made more extreme initial offers and conceded less often. Typically, sellers emerged better off than the buyers from such negotiations. Similarly, Dwyer and Walker (1981) found that compared to a balanced power setting, the negotiating process in an asymmetric market is more efficient.

Angelmar and Stern (1978) used content analysis to diagnose bargaining behavior, discover its determinants and to develop prescriptive bargaining principles. Neslin and Greenhalgh (1983), in a study of media purchases, found that knowing how a buyer's preferences conflict with those of a seller makes possible the predictions of the final agreement reached.

Theoretical and Empirical Development on Channel Conflict

The consensual conclusion of many investigators of channel conflict, is that conflict is pervasive throughout all channels (Robicheaux and El-Ansary 1975, Rosenberg and Stern 1970, and Rosenberg and Stern 1971). Carlson and Kusoffsky (1969) were two of the early researchers to classify conflict, based on analysis of organizational goals, decisions, and communications. Palamountain (1967) identified three different forms of channel conflict, including horizontal, intertype and vertical conflict.

Conflict will increase, decrease, or stay the same depending on other *behavioral phenomena*. For this reason, Brown (1980) emphasized the need to determine whether conflict causes other behavioral dimensions or whether the other dimensions cause conflict. Two major dimensions that potentially could cause conflict are *power* (Beier and Stern 1969; Cadotte and Stern 1979; Korpi 1973; Lusch 1976; Lusch 1978; Raven and Kruglanski 1970; Stern, Schultz, and Grabner 1973) and the *performance* of other channel members (Foster and Shuptrine 1973; Gill and Stern 1969).

Rosenberg and Stern (1971) hypothesized goal incongruity, domain dissensus, and perceptual differences as the major causes of conflict. Etgar (1979) proposed channel roles, expectations, perceptions, communication and the structural dimensions of goal divergence, drive for autonomy, and competition for scarce resources as the major causes of conflict.

Major responses to conflict are: political action to resolve intense conflict (Assael 1968); bargaining and expansion of alternatives outside of the buyer seller dyad (Firat, Tybout, and Stern 1974); litigation (Mason 1975); joint goal setting (Rosenberg 1974); membership exchange when interdependence is high (Stern 1971); and arbitration (Weigand and Wasson 1974).

Strong differences have emerged regarding the importance of having the least possible amount of conflict in a channel. Rosenbloom (1973) proposed modest levels of channel conflict as a means to improve channel efficiency. The possibility of the functional consequences of conflict has also been proposed by Assael (1968); Brown (1980); Firat, Tybout, and Stern (1974); Robicheaux and El-Ansary (1975); Rosenberg and Stern (1970); Stern (1971); Stern and Gorman (1969); Stern and Heskett (1969); and Stern and Reve (1980). Assael (1969) hypothesized that effective communication, standardization of modes of conflict resolution, and a creation of a balance of power in the channel must exist before constructive channel conflict can exist.

Conflict has been perceived as both an *independent* and *dependent* variable in many works. Alderson (1965) examined the possible effects of conflict relative to achieving cooperation. Brown and Frazier (1978), Etgar (1978a), Mallen (1969), Palamountain (1969), Stern and Gorman (1969), and Wilkinson and Kipnis (1978) all considered *power* to be a function of conflict. Kelly and Peters (1977), Pearson and Monoky (1976), and Rosenbloom (1973) considered channel *performance* to be a function of conflict. Guiltinan (1974) proposed *government intervention* as a function of conflict.

Most measures of conflict use the *frequency of disagreements* (Lusch 1976) or the *differences of perceptions* on issues (Rosenberg and Stern 1971). Brown and Day (1981), examining separate measures of manifest conflict, concluded that the most promising measures of conflict were frequency of disagreements and the intensity of conflict behavior.

Rosenberg and Stern (1971) explored the causes of conflict. They found the longer the respondents had been with the channel, the higher the level of conflict with the manufacturer. El-Ansary and Stern (1972), researching power and conflict in channels, found when power was diffused throughout the channel, high amounts of conflict were present. Similarly, Foster and Shuptrine (1973) found that when key channel members have ample alternative sources of supply (less dependency) a higher potential for conflict exists.

Stern, Sternthal, and Craig (1973), using laboratory experimentation, found that an uncertainty absorbing mechanism, such as an exchange-of-persons program, might bring about effective long-term-problem solving solving behavior among conflicting parties. Rosenberg (1974) concluded that conflict reduced efficiency, a dysfunctional result, but that conflict also caused a strong motivating force for management to remain active in upgrading activities, which was functional. Lusch (1976) explored the relationship between coercive versus noncoercive power and conflict. His results indicated dealers will engage in more conflict with manufacturers, when the manufacturer is perceived as likely to use coercive tactics.

Etgar (1979) attempted to determine the causes of conflict in affective and manifest situations. Attitudinal causes of conflict were slightly more correlated with affective conflict than with manifest conflict, while structural causes of conflict were slightly more correlated with manifest conflict than with affective conflict.

Recent work by Robbins et al. (1982) on retail channel conflict suggests that the contractual vertical structures and conventional structures may be more effective than the corporate chain structures in reducing conflict. Wong and Robicheaux (1982), studying health services channels, found conflict to center on policy matters and patient care issues. Ross and Lusch (1982) researched domain dissensus (disagreements regarding the range of products to carry, population to serve, and services to render) and perceptual incongruities in food broker-food wholesaler dyads. Their findings indicated both domain dissensus and perceptual incongruities effect levels of cooperation more so than levels of conflict.

Theoretical and Empirical Development on Channel Cooperation

Researchers have viewed cooperation as the opposite of conflict (Pearson and Monoky 1976), as a situation which is not entirely voluntary (McCammon 1965; Mallen 1967), and as a major dimension of channel performance (Pearson and Monoky 1976). Mallen (1967) investigated cooperation, conflict and power in forced versus agreed-upon terms. His major conclusion was *the channel must cooperate and act as a unit for the maximization of channel profits.*

McCammon (1965), examined how centrally-coordinated systems of channels, whether voluntary or forced, have emerged as a basic component of the competitive process. Centrally-coordinated systems are more likely to exist and are more likely to be perceived effective if channel members are made to feel a part of the decision-making structure (Guiltinan, Rejab, and Rodgers 1980).

Cooperation and conflict are opposites, according to Pearson and Monoky (1976). Management's role is to promote the cooperative dimensions with the purpose of improving channel performance. The interrelationship between channel cooperation and channel coordination has been theorized (Izraeli and Etgar, 1982) to be a function of task environments (levels of certainty, stability and/or uniformity in channels interactions) and coordination requisites (technological sophistication of transportation, warehousing, storage, data processing, payments and deliveries).

Recently, Pitts and Bello (1980) investigated the impact of public policy on channel cooperation and conflict. Findings indicated that a government regulation altering the business practices at one point in the channel may cause other channel members to change their operations, and will subsequently effect overall channel cooperation. Other researchers investigating cooperation have concentrated on the relationships between cooperation and conflict, performance, and communication. For example, Pearson and Monoky (1976) found channels that were high in performance exhibited more *cooperative* dimensions, while low performance channels manifested *conflict* dimensions.

Guiltinan, Rejab, and Rodgers (1980) investigated factors which influence perceived coordination in a franchise channel. Results indicated that coordination appears to be related to the effectiveness of channel communication, the degree of uncertainty reduction, and the extent of participative decision-making. Sibley and Michie (1982), also studying franchise channels, found perceived channel cooperation to be positively related to noncoercive sources of power (i.e. positive inducements). The intensity of channel cooperation has also been found to be positively related to the degree of channel formalization (Brown 1981).

Theoretical and Empirical Development on Channel Power

Research concerning a channel member's power has mainly focused on the sources of power, the dependency or interdependence of channel members, countervailing power, and the control one member has over others in the channel.

Sources of Power: Dahl (1957) described power as a relationship between people, where actor A is trying to get actor B to do something he would not normally do. French and Raven (1959) explored five sources of power: referent, expert, reward, coercive, and legitimate. For all five forms, they hypothesized the stronger the basis of power a person has, the greater the power he will have. Raven and Kruglanski (1970) proposed that utilization of particular power sources would alter the perceptions which each person has with respect to himself and others. These perceptions would then lead to changes in power preference on the part of each of the parties involved.

The first marketing investigators to apply the five types of power to a channel setting were Beier and Stern (1969). They hypothesized that while the domain of power within a channel may be rather broad, the scope of power could be quite limited. Although Grimes (1978) suggested persuasion, inducements, constraints, and place as a hierarchy for power, most channel researchers have followed Beier and Stern (1969) and used the five traditional power sources in their research.

Hunt and Nevin (1974) hypothesized the existence of a significant relationship between the power of a channel member and the sources of power available to him. They utilized the five traditional power sources, but condensed them into two categories of sources: coercive and noncoercive. Wilkinson (1974) concurred with Hunt and Nevin (1974) establishing power as a function of the sources of power.

Stern, Schultz and Grabner (1973) examined the conflict resulting from the use of the five different power bases. They hypothesized each power base would be significantly different from the others in predicting conflict. Lusch (1976) proposed that coercive sources tend to increase the level of intrachannel conflict while noncoercive sources tend to decrease it. Wilkinson (1979) predicted a direct relationship exists between noncoercive types of power and satisfaction in a channel.

Dependency: Beier and Stern (1969) proposed that in some power relationships, there may be a balance of power which is referred to as *dependency*. Other investigators have proposed that overall power is a function of the dependence of one member on the other (El-Ansary 1971; Stern and Heskett 1969; Thompson 1969; Wilemon 1972; Wilkinson 1974). Thompson (1969) hypothesized that when competing for support of the individual firm, organizations try to gain power without increasing dependency. This may take the form of contracting, co-opting, or coalescing, but such maneuverings will be costly and disruptive. Foster and Shuptrine (1973) hypothesized that when key channel members have ample alternative sources of supply which lessen their dependency, a potential for conflict exists. Recently, Ross et al. (1982) hypothesized the existence of a strong relationship between power and dependency in settings where channel members perceptions of power were similar and in settings where they differed. Empirical results supported their hypothesis.

Countervailing Power: John Kenneth Galbraith's (1967) theory of countervailing power proposed that when the market has a concentration of suppliers, an automatic force arises that will lead to a concentration of middlemen. In a similar manner, Beier and Stern (1969) proposed that weaker members of a channel will try to equalize the relationship through the use of countervailing power, while Wileman (1972) hypothesized that coping strategies in a channel will differ depending on the existence of countervailing power.

Porter (1974) contended that retailers' countervailing power vis-a-vis manufacturers was a function of how heavily the retailer contributed to differentiating products. Bennion (1982) extended the theory, adding the size of the product line, its substitutability with competing products, the size and power of the channel intermediaries, and the motivation to succeed of the manufacturer as determinants of channel power.

Control: When actor O's power over actor P is at the maximum, then O has control over P (Beier and Stern 1969). The above mentioned "O", in most cases, has been the supplier or manufacturer (Etgar 1977a; Mallen 1967). In the last century, Mallen (1967) affirmed, the "controller" in the channel was the wholesaler, now it is the manufacturer, in the future it will be the retailer. English et al. (1981) argued that channel dominance is coming full cycle with the re-emergence of the wholesaler as the "dominant force within the channel" (p. 78). Patti and Fisk (1982) conceptualized how channel dominance for the wholesaler was based upon price competition, while manufacturer and retailer dominance has been achieved with a combination of advertising and branding.

Many have offered explanations for the existence of control and how control can be achieved (Etgar 1976a; 1978c). Stern (1967) proposed that the emergence of channel control can be explained by the fact oligopolists have stabilized competition among themselves. Etgar (1977b) argued that vertically coordinated channels in which channel members no longer operate as independents have emerged. In these channels, a central decision-maker unit level emerges and controls the activities of the other members. Etgar (1977a) stated that control is accepted because interchannel competition motivates channel members to accept the control of others.

Bucklin (1968, 1973), emphasizing the positive aspects of control, proposed that control should be at the level in the channel where competitive forces are the greatest, because control produces efficiency in channels. Guiltinan (1974) added that one reason to have strong control in a channel, is because channels will remain in early development when control is weak or undefined. El-Ansary and Robicheaux (1974) questioned this approach, they disagreed that channel coordination can be achieved only through total control as suggested by Bucklin (1973).

El-Ansary and Stern (1972) and Etgar (1976a) proposed that power is the control that one channel member exerts over the selection of particular elements of another's marketing strategy and is a function of a member's dependency on other channel partners. This power can be offset by the countervailing power available to the other channel members.

Measurement of channel power has been controversial. Most researchers have followed El-Ansary and Stern's (1972) example, and have used members' perceptions of power and power attributions as direct measures. Etgar (1976a) criticized the use of power perception; he used ability to control focal dimensions as a measure. However, Etgar (1977a) proposed that perceived measures of control were also acceptable. Ross and Kraft (1982) proposed using scenarios to investigate the complexities of channel control, because they were more realistic than laboratory setting.

Hunt and Nevin (1974) found that thirty-four percent of the variance in perceived power could be explained by coercive power sources, while only seventeen percent of the variance could be explained by the noncoercive sources. Lusch and Brown (1982) modified the Hunt and Nevin (1974) model to include an evaluative component to the previous measures of coercive and noncoercive power sources. However their results afforded no increase in predictive ability over the Hunt and Nevin model.

Michie (1978) investigated the relationship between franchise satisfaction and sources of power. A significant relationship between the two was found. However, unlike Hunt and Nevin (1974), Michie's (1978) results indicated that franchisors relied primarily on noncoercive sources of power. Etgar (1978c) found economic power sources contributed more to the generation of channel power than did the non-economic sources. Wilkinson (1979) determined the existence of only a modest direct relationship between noncoercive types of power and member satisfaction.

A few researchers have investigated the relationship between the sources of power and channel conflict. Stern, Schultz and Grabner (1973) found no support for the hypothesis that different levels of conflict would result depending on what power source was employed. Lusch's (1976) findings showed dealers will engage in more conflict with manufacturers, if the manufacturer is perceived as being more likely to use coercive sources of power.

Several researchers investigated the influence control has on behavioral aspects of channels. Etgar's (1976a) results indicated that in conventional channels where dealers are highly independent and have countervailing powers, control over dealers can be achieved through noncoercive services, rather than with threats or monetary rewards. Etgar's (1977a) results indicated that suppliers exercise more control when the product is in the maturity phase, when interchannel competition is high, when servicing of customers is of greater importance, and when demand for the channel product is unstable. Brown et al. (1982), in an extension of the previous research, concluded that suppliers in more centrally coordinated marketing channels, more effectively utilize their sources of power than do suppliers in less centrally coordinated channels.

Wilkinson and Kipnis (1978) attested that control was used significantly more when the target company resisted being influenced; the target firm was less powerful than the influencing firm; and the influencing firm was reacting to some initial action of the target firm, rather than attempting to change the behavior of the target firm. Wilkinson (1979) found retailers' satisfaction with manufacturers' performance was most strongly correlated with their own control over manufacturer policy.

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Michie (1978) investigated the relationship between franchise satisfaction and sources of power. A significant relationship between the two was found. However, unlike Hunt and Nevin (1974), Michie's (1978) results indicated that franchisors relied primarily on noncoercive sources of power. Etgar (1978c) found economic power sources contributed more to the generation of channel power than did the non-economic sources. Wilkinson (1979) determined the existence of only a modest direct relationship between noncoercive types of power and member satisfaction.

A few researchers have investigated the relationship between the sources of power and channel conflict. Stern, Schultz and Grabner (1973) found no support for the hypothesis that different levels of conflict would result depending on what power source was employed. Lusch's (1976) findings showed dealers will engage in more conflict with manufacturers, if the manufacturer is perceived as being more likely to use coercive sources of power.

Several researchers investigated the influence control has on behavioral aspects of channels. Etgar's (1976a) results indicated that in conventional channels where dealers are highly independent and have countervailing powers, control over dealers can be achieved through noncoercive services, rather than with threats or monetary rewards. Etgar's (1977a) results indicated that suppliers exercise more control when the product is in the maturity phase, when interchannel competition is high, when servicing of customers is of greater importance, and when demand for the channel product is unstable. Brown et al. (1982), in an extension of the previous research, concluded that suppliers in more centrally coordinated marketing channels, more effectively utilize their sources of power than do suppliers in less centrally coordinated channels.

Wilkinson and Kipnis (1978) attested that control was used significantly more when the target company resisted being influenced; the target firm was less powerful than the influencing firm; and the influencing firm was reacting to some initial action of the target firm, rather than attempting to change the behavior of the target firm. Wilkinson (1979) found retailers' satisfaction with manufacturers' performance was most strongly correlated with their own control over manufacturer policy.

Theoretical and Empirical Development on Channel Performance

Research on channel performance has been secondary in emphasis. Dwyer and Walker (1981) studied the relationship between bargaining and performance. Brown (1980), Rosenberg and Stern (1970), Rosenbloom (1973), and Stern and Heskett (1969) investigated the influence conflict has on performance. Bucklin (1973) and Robicheaux (1976) examined the relationship between a firm's control and performance. Pearson and Monoky (1976) and Kelly and Peters (1977) researched the relationship between service-level performance and the channel's position on a cooperation-conflict continuum. High performance channels appeared to be on the cooperation end of the continuum.

Zusman and Etgar (1981) evaluated channel performance in terms of risk sharing and allocative efficiency. Results indicated that risk aversion of channel members, and the cost of monitoring and enforcing allocations, negatively affect channel efficiency. Sibley and Michie (1981) found three noncoersive sources of power (operations support, advertising support, and training support) to be significant predictors of dealer performance.

Moore (1980) criticized measuring performance of a channel member only at one point in time. He investigated manufacturers' perceptions of agent wholesalers, merchant wholesalers, and sales branches performance over a period of five years. The perceptions of performance did not change significantly.

Phillips (1982) tested the hypothesis that performance (efficiency) of a vertically integrated system depends on the adaptation of organization forms which enable the firm to limit control loss and subgoal pursuit. His results demonstrated the important influence of organizational structures and control systems on channel performance.

Theoretical and Empirical Development on Channel Roles

Although early researchers emphasized the importance of roles, little recent attention has been given to this construct. Gill and Stern (1969) defined a role set as "a group of socially defined prescriptions delineating what is acceptable behavior for the position-occupant" (p. 47). The behavior of a channel member is determined by his individual role and the sanctions imposed by others because of that role. Merton (1969) proposed that since the channel members hold different statuses, they will have different expectations of each other. If social mechanisms resulting from the articulation and discussion of differences are not effective, then conflict will prove to be dysfunctional.

Brown and Purwan (1980) found where retailers had no choice of suppliers, those retailers belonging to administrative channels tended to rate the supplier's promotional support role less important than those retailers belonging to conventional or contractual channels. Frazier (1983) revealed that the role performance of a firm in its primary channel responsibilities determines the level of other firm's dependence in their relationship. This, in turn, determines the former firm's power over the latter firm.

Little (1970) examined the question of who should have the role of channel leader, and proposed that the firm in the best position to do so and has the power, should fill that role. Webster (1975) found that the industrial distributor was assuming increased importance in the marketing channel, but that the quality of distributor management was below the expectations of many suppliers. Teas and Sibley (1980), studying leadership roles in food brokerage channels, indicated that reducing role stress, role ambiguity and role conflict is beneficial to overall channel relationships. Similarly, Schul et al. (1983) found channel leadership style emphasizing participation, support and direction in carrying out channel activities can result in diminished channel conflict.

Theoretical and Empirical Development on Channel Satisfaction

Like many of the other behavioral concepts, satisfaction with the channel environment can be both a dependent and independent variable. Hunt and Nevin (1974), Michie (1978), and Wilkinson (1979) proposed that the sources of power employed determine the amount of satisfaction in the channel. Dwyer (1980) presented evidence suggesting satisfaction stems from perceived self-control over decision areas and perceived cooperativeness of partners in the channel. Schul et al. (1981) provided evidence that channel satisfaction intervenes in the relationships between conflict antecedents and level of conflict. Dwyer and Walker's (1981) results indicated that more power does not necessarily bring more satisfaction.

Overall, results from satisfaction research imply that a powerful member of a channel is no more satisfied than a nonpowerful member. However, if the powerful member chooses to use coercive sources of power, the other channel members will become dissatisfied, leading to increased conflict within the channel.

Theoretical Development on Political Economy

The political-economy paradigm represents the most recent attempt to integrate economic and sociopolitical constructs into a useful framework to analyze marketing channels. The main dimension of the paradigm identified by Stern and Reve (1980) are: 1) polity-economy, and 2) external-internal considerations. Polity refers to the power and control system of a channel of distribution. Economy represents the productive exchange system of the social units which transforms inputs into outputs. The external-internal considerations refer to the processes and structures both sociopolitical and economic that affect the functioning of any channel of distribution. These dimensions help identify the major variables influencing channel development and behavior. Stern and Reve (1980) for illustrative purposes presented twelve propositions which could be tested with the framework.

Arndt (1983) introduced the concept of "relations to the environment" (p. 48) to integrate the political and social forces acting upon a channel structure. Such integration ensures that the interactive effects of sociopolitical focus will not be overlooked in channel research. Achrol et al. (1983) also added the primary task environment (suppliers and customers), the secondary task environment (secondary suppliers, customers, and regulatory agents), and the macro environment (social, economic, political and technological forces) to the political economy framework. To this end, they put forth ten propositions for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

A review of the past channel studies suggests several areas for future research. Conflict and power have received the majority of research attention to the neglect of other behavioral constructs. For this reason, the channel cooperation, performance, roles and satisfaction constructs need further empirical work. Also, other behavioral constructs, previously found to be useful in behavioral research, merit investigation within the channels area. Examples here would include how values, beliefs and attitudes affect channel members; the effect of loyalty, alienation, self-esteem, and stress on channel efficiency; group influences in channels; situational influences, as they relate to channel behavior, socialization and persuasions in channels; and attribution theory as it applies to channels.

Few of the more general conceptual models or systems developed in the past few years have been tested. Indeed, the question of whether these models are testable at all has remained unanswered. The general models which are empirically verifiable should be tested.

Almost all behavioral channel research to date has been cross-sectional in nature. These "one-shot" studies need to be supplemented with ongoing longitudinal studies that could uncover changing relationships and their influence on channel performance over time. Future cross-sectional studies should incorporate the new analytical techniques now available to researchers. In particular, confirmatory factor analysis would aid in assessing the underlying nature of behavioral constructs. Likewise, the use of causal modeling, latent variable structural equations, and LISREL techniques to simultaneous measure multiple relationships in channels would enhance knowledge.

Finally, operationalization of the political-economy paradigm is needed. This paradigm has received wide attention and support as a conceptual model for channels research. However, without future empirical work, the political-economy approach will remain dormant in terms of explaining and predicting channel performance and efficiency.

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