

MESSAGE COST FACTORS AND THEIR INFLUENCE  
ON SELECTIVE EXPOSURE

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## ABSTRACT

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By

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This study investigated the effects of what are termed message cost factors on patterns of selective exposure <sup>to</sup> information. An individual who selects a message to bolster his predispositions, usually needs to expend some personal resources, such as money, time, or energy. Certain messages are perceived as more costly than others to obtain and process. This study varied cost attributes of an otherwise identical message. An attempt was made to investigate the effects of such attributes on selectivity.

A field experiment was conducted in which pre-disposition measures were obtained toward a two-sided issue. Letters were sent to all subjects making pamphlets available on both sides of the issue. The content of the letters was identical, except for the procedures outlined by which pamphlets could be obtained: (1) letters with postage-paid reply cards, (2) letters with reply cards requiring stamps, and (3) letters providing addresses to

enable letters of request to be written and mailed. Subjects were systematically assigned to the three message cost conditions.

Two hypotheses were examined. The first predicted lower overall willingness to expose oneself under higher message costs. The second and main hypothesis predicted an interaction effect, such that selective exposure would be observed more under higher than low-levels of message costs. The first hypothesis was confirmed. The second was not confirmed. The frequencies were too small in the experimental treatment cells of interest to adequately assess the findings. Even so, selectivity under high message costs was nearly twice that observed in the low condition. Further research would appear warranted.

Only a low overall rate of response to the letters was obtained. This was attributed to low saliency of the issue. Little overall selectivity was observed. These factors mitigated against the randomization procedures. They also prevented analysis of the extent to which the observed selectivity was in fact reinforcement seeking, or de facto selectivity.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Introduction

After reviewing the selective exposure literature, Freedman and Sears in 1965 concluded that there is no general psychological preference for supportive information as against discrepant information, and that attempts by researchers to clarify conflicting findings were inadequate. Up to that time the proposition had not been seriously challenged; for example, to Klapper (1960) it was of prime importance in his analysis of mass communication effects. The main selective exposure proposition, stated here in terms of dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), holds that following a decision individuals are motivated to reduce dissonance by seeking information which supports their initial opinions and to avoid information which is opposed to them.

It should be noted, however, that there are other ways to reduce dissonance, and that at times there can be other motivations to seek or avoid information; both points having been argued prior to 1965 (e.g., Festinger, 1957, and Sears and Freedman, 1963). Even so, the general psychological preference interpretation had not before been



seriously challenged, no doubt because it "somehow seems to deserve to be true . . ." (McGuire, 1968a), and because of numerous field studies (e.g., Lazarsfeld, et al., 1948; Star and Hughes, 1950) which had shown that people do tend to expose themselves disproportionately to mass media messages which reinforce their views. Freedman and Sears conceded the occurrence of these voluntary exposure patterns, and in a later review (Sears and Freedman, 1967) underscored the necessity to isolate factors which produce de facto selectivity (Sears and Freedman, 1967).

From an instrumental (as opposed to incidental) perspective, individuals seeking information appear to expose to messages primarily because of gratifications and utilities expected from them. Sears and Freedman and other investigators suggest that reinforcement of predispositions may be only one such need; utilitarian needs such as general surveillance, decision guidance and task performance may be others. In this thesis, only the supportive-nonsupportive dimension which is the concern of selective exposure investigators will be examined in detail, although recognizing that the choice of a message may have reward values on other dimensions. Also, message handling behavior will be examined more from the viewpoint of assumed instrumental (means-ends) seeking of information, rather than its incidental acquisition or active avoidance. This does not suggest that message cost factors are of no

influence in the latter cases; on the contrary it would seem that they are. However, the analysis here will be limited mainly to consideration of the instrumental types of behavior.

Supportive information may be perceived as potentially rewarding to an individual; however, he will first need to obtain and process it. Thus, in the analysis of the message acquisition process, from a temporal perspective the perceived costs of obtaining and processing the message intervene between what are the two usual data points in selective exposure studies: a measure of predispositions and the actual selection behavior. The two data points are usually defined (dichotomously) as consistent or inconsistent, i.e., along the reward dimension of supportiveness. Therefore, perceived costs to the individual in this process need to be considered as well as, and in relation to, the rewards of the message. The examination of these cost factors and their influence will be the major objective of this thesis.

This is a preliminary attempt, however, and more work is needed to evaluate the concepts and their relationships. It will be suggested that message cost factors do add some clarity to conflicting findings (e.g., those reviewed in Freedman and Sears, 1965). Certain limited empirical support from the study reported here will be presented, and directions for future research examined.

### Cost Factors

If a person goes to some trouble or effort to obtain and process a particular message, it is often assumed he must value the information that he thinks the message has for him more than if he were not willing to expend that amount of effort; his behavior indicates that the message was "worth" it. Given several messages involving moderate levels of effort to obtain and process, presumably he will see some as "worth" it and some not. The unselected messages may not be actively avoided, nor of no value; rather the chosen messages are valued more (whether the value derives from reinforcement, utility, or other motives), and "worth" the effort expenditure. If the perceived cost is high, but relative to the reward value not so high as to prevent any message selection, the knowledge of expenditures of resources introduces additional dissonant cognitions, i.e., additional to whatever decisional dissonance there may be were costs only minimal. To reduce the increased magnitude of dissonance, the individual becomes more likely to choose supportive than discrepant dissonance-arousing messages. On the other hand, following a choice between messages where little dissonance has been aroused and there are only minimal expenditure in message selection, an individual may not be motivated to choose selectively; instead he may expose to either or both sides of an issue.

### Communication

In 1954 Schramm suggested that message selection behavior could be conceptualized in terms of the ratio of an individual's expectation of reward to the effort required to obtain and process alternative messages. This "fraction of selection" has been variously cited (e.g., Berlo, 1960), but neither Schramm nor other communication scholars who have indicated its potential have examined the concept in depth at theoretic or empirical levels. Whether rewards and costs do bear this particular relationship is unclear. Whereas rewards have been widely investigated by communication researchers, including those concerned with selective exposure, cost factors in general, and message cost factors in particular, have been relatively neglected. In inquiries outside the message selection or exposure area, such as in counterattitudinal advocacy, the effort variable has been operationalized. Some of these studies will be examined under the heading Related Research.

### Other Behavioral Areas

Selective exposure researchers often measure predispositions toward an issue by paper and pencil tests and then examine overt selection behaviors to observe the consistency between pairs of responses. In other areas of behavioral research the "consistency" question has been argued in terms of an interaction with a hierarchy of costs.

For example, in psychology Campbell (1963) suggests apparent inconsistencies can be explained in terms of "thresholds" of response effort or difficulty. He examines a number of research findings, including the classic La Piere (1934) study with the Chinese couple who were refused accommodation in 0.4 percent of places visited as against 92.5 percent refusal rate in paper and pencil responses. Campbell considers different normative thresholds were involved: ". . . it is very hard to refuse a well-dressed Chinese couple travelling with a European in a face-to-face setting, and very easy to refuse the Chinese as a race in a mailed questionnaire" (p. 160). Similarly with Minard's (1952) study of prejudice among Pocahontas coal miners. Campbell notes that it was easy (low threshold) for miners to express prejudice in the town, but it was more difficult for them to do so in the mines because of social-distance factors.

Political participation can be conceptualized in a similar way, in terms of effort expenditures, the range of behaviors, and the consistency between them. For Milbrath (1965) "levels of participation constitute a hierarchy of costs. Time and energy costs are least for the activities at the bottom of the hierarchy. Behaviors higher in the hierarchy obviously require a greater expenditure of energy . . ." (p. 19). "There seems to be a kind of threshold that must be crossed . . ." (p. 20). At levels



of minimal participation, measures of individual predispositions are liable to show less consistency with the partisan vote, than at higher levels. Campbell suggests that "If the items (in hierarchical effort responses) are all symptomatizing the same disposition, then the person who shows the disposition in the situation with the highest threshold should show it most frequently" (p. 158). Conflicting findings in selective exposure studies in laboratory settings typically involve minimal effort in message selection, i.e., it is easy for subjects to state preferences for supportive or discrepant messages, or to select both if there is an opportunity to do so.

#### Toward a Definition of Message Costs

Consider an individual seeking information (for reinforcement or some other reward value) and given a choice between two identical messages, except that one is perceived as more costly to obtain or process. Other things being equal, he will undoubtedly select the low-cost message. The difficult or costly alternative psychologically implies nonaction or nonselection.<sup>1</sup>

Suppose now a similar situation where the messages have high and low reward values, and the costs are held

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<sup>1</sup>This argument is adapted from discussion on the behavior of rats in T-maze experiments in Lawrence and Festinger, 1962, pp. 38-39.

constant. Other things being equal the individual will undoubtedly select the high reward message. In this case, however, the low reward message does not psychologically imply nonaction or nonselection. Rewards are not deterrents to selection, but incentives; costs are clearly both deterrents and dissonance arousing in instrumental seeking situations, since they psychologically imply the obverse of message selection. This is in accord with Festinger's (1957) definition that ". . . two elements are in a dissonant relation, if considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other" (p. 13). The deterrents aspect has implications for selective exposure investigations where message preferences are merely rank-ordered (e.g., Rosen, 1961; Mills, et al., 1959). The main selective exposure empirical evidence, though not at all clear, leans more in favor of the supportive part of the proposition than the non-supportive. Most studies have examined incentives to selection with deterrents held constant at minimal or near-zero levels. These procedures do not reflect most individuals' day-by-day selection behaviors among messages which have deterrent as well as incentive attributes.

Lawrence and Festinger (1962) distinguish between deterrents and incentives as follows:

If one increases the magnitude of some variable and observes hesitation of behavior, one may conclude that the variable is a deterrent. If one decreases the magnitude of the variable and then observes hesitation of behavior, one may conclude that it is an incentive (p. 162).

They term the distinction "crucial" for dissonance theory; one would not want to say that any incentive, however small, introduces dissonance. However, we need to be cautious in generalizing to human behavior, and with rats in T-maze experiments the distinction at the level of operations may be clearer to make than in humans. Even so, the distinction seems useful. In this analysis, costs are conceptually and operationally defined as deterrents, including message costs to be discussed shortly.

In addition to being deterrents, however, and in agreement with Steiner (1970), costs are viewed as affecting an individual's probability about an outcome and of being contingent upon available resources: "The costs an individual incurs include all those expenditures of effort, time, social capital, money, or other resources that are believed by the individual to affect his probability of obtaining an outcome" (1970, p. 191). Cost considerations thus precede an outcome such as selection and acquisition of information, and at an operational level in research they follow the predisposition measures. In the message selection process, therefore, cost factors are defined as intervening.

Confronted by a set of objects, a person discriminates among them by evaluating various attributes of the objects (Chaffee and Tipton, 1969); and attributes are defined as the characteristics, traits or qualities of the object as the person perceives them (Donohew and Palmgreen, 1971). Message selection usually takes place on the basis of summary statements (letters or notices, verbal statements, message coverleaf, program guide, etc.) about actual alternative messages. Outside the laboratory, such summary statements include both reward and cost attributes of the message to which they refer.

Reward attributes can includes supportiveness, utility, etc. Cost attributes of the message seem likely to include monetary expense, inaccessibility (spatial or temporal), ambiguity, incomprehensibility, complexity, etc. From an instrumental message-seeking frame of reference, and from a functional analytic one, the cost attributes of a message are mostly contingent attributes.

An individual considers the reward value of a message in relation to the personal expenditures in money, time, or physical or mental energy to obtain and process it. Whether or not message cost attributes are perceived to involve expenditures too great will depend partially on the individual's resources of money, time, and energy. Obvious correlates of these resources are the individual

difference variables of education, age, race, socioeconomic status, sex, etc. These have been widely stressed by selective exposure reviewers as likely to affect selection behavior (for example, Sears and Freedman, 1967).

Which message attributes should be considered message costs? Can expenditures of different types of resources be directly observed, or must they be merely assumed? In examining these questions, the acquisition of messages will be distinguished from their processing or decoding. Monetary and inaccessibility attributes will be viewed as closely concerned with message acquisition. Ambiguity, incomprehensibility, and complexity, will be subsumed under a higher-order concept. Furthermore, they will be viewed as primarily related to message processing rather than message acquisition.

Monetary attributes of a message obviously involve expenditures of money resources to obtain the message. Similarly, messages perceived as relatively inaccessible to obtain will involve greater expenditures of energy or time. In a spatial context, expenditures of energy may be directly observed: for example, in terms of different distances walked or driven, or even in the mere scanning of voluminous material to obtain a desired message. In a temporal context, time expenditures may involve different durations or waiting or scheduling.



It has been suggested that expenditures of resources may be incurred where the message content is perceived as ambiguous, incomprehensible, or unduly complex. Expenditures here are likely to be in terms of mental rather than physical energy. They are thus less amenable to direct observation. These expenditures may also be in terms of whether an individual possesses sufficient time. Ambiguity, incomprehensibility, and complexity, probably are sufficiently unidimensional for them to be subsumed under a higher-order concept, noise. In information theory, noise is usually defined from a source viewpoint, and as a property of the channel rather than the message. In message selection situations, however, noise from a receiver orientation may often be perceived as a message property. Research has shown adverse effects on the performance of receivers in decoding noisy messages (for example, in Smith, 1966, pp. 275-321). It seems likely that such effects can be partially anticipated by an individual in perceiving various attributes of a message. Noise clearly involves difficulty in processing. It is likely to be a deterrent to selection. And it affords a more parsimonious conceptualization of a number of possible cost attributes, such as ambiguity, incomprehensibility, complexity, etc.

To summarize, message costs are defined as attributes of a message which act as deterrents to selection

or exposure, are usually regarded as contingent in nature, and appear to intervene in the process of instrumental selection or exposure. Message attributes which may be included are monetary expense, inaccessibility, and decoding noise. An analysis of message costs also necessitates taking into consideration the individual's resources of money, time, and energy. The key concept which relates the cost attributes of the message to the resource properties of the individual, is expenditures. An individual is seen as most likely to incur expenditures only where perceived reward attributes in some sense "outweigh" perceived cost attributes.

### Theories and Costs

#### Learning Theory

Lawrence and Festinger (1962) summarize learning theory viewpoints as follows:

Some theories of learning have proposed that effort increases response inhibition. Other theories have been inclined to regard effort as a negative incentive. But, in one form or another, most learning theories include the proposition that increased effort weakens the response strength (p. 6).

This suggests that the greater the cost, the fewer the messages of any type that will be chosen. What has been said so far is consistent with this view but goes beyond the gross exposure or response rate. Those selection responses within the higher cost categories are likely to be made only if the reward value is high. And where

the dimension of reward is supportiveness--given that there is dissonance and this is an appropriate strategy to reduce it--more supportive messages will be chosen at these levels than at lower levels.

### Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theorists (e.g., Homans, 1950; Adams, 1965) have viewed social interactions as analogous to economic exchanges, in which effects obtain from relationships between outcomes and investments or rewards and costs. However, greater weight is given to the principle of equity in interacting with others with respect to outcomes and investments, than to effects of rewards and costs in instrumental seeking behavior by the individual. To Homans, social interaction is governed by desires for "distributive justice." Distributive justice obtains when each person in the interaction achieves rewards proportional to costs. That rewards and costs are in some sense commensurate will be discussed under the heading Reward Values and Costs. Homan's definition of costs is discussed below.

### Dissonance Theory

Festinger (1957) discusses two major determinants of the magnitude of dissonance. The first, in part, is:

Other things being equal, the more important the decision, the stronger will be the dissonance. Thus, a decision to buy one automobile rather than another will result in more dissonance than a decision to buy one brand of soap rather than another . . . (p. 37).

Here Festinger, at least implicitly, suggests the relevance of reward values assuming that cars have higher reward value for most people than soap. But, do cars not also cost more than soap?

The second major determinant of post-decision dissonance is the relative attractiveness of the unchosen alternative (p. 37). This appears to be almost identical with Homan's (1962) definition of cost: "Cost is value foregone" (p. 288). Economists (see e.g., Samuelson, 1967) usually define different types of cost, including what they term "opportunity" cost which appears comparable here to Festinger's second determination of dissonance and Homan's definition. Thus, it is possible to infer that costs are major determinants of dissonance, such that, other things being equal, under high-cost conditions there should be more post-decisional dissonance than under low-cost conditions.

A number of strategies by which dissonance can be reduced have been mentioned by Festinger (1957). Three of these are:

1. Increasing the attractiveness of the chosen alternative, decreasing the attractiveness of the unchosen alternative, or both.

2. Changing attitudes to be consistent with overt behavior, particularly under forced compliance and counterattitudinal conditions.

3. Seeking consonant (supportive) information.

Of course different situations may restrict free choice among the strategies, and certain ones are more applicable to particular study objectives: e.g., decision-making, counterattitudinal advocacy, disconfirmation of expectancy, forced compliance, listening to a persuasive communication, etc. However, as well as being alternatives at the level of theory, there is empirical support for:

- a. Their functional equivalence, at least between changing attitudes and seeking supportive information.

Clarke (1966) found that "individuals who changed their beliefs were significantly more likely to seek supportive information, than were subjects who remained unconvinced" about the contents of an attacking message. He concluded, "Belief change and selective information seeking appear to be functional equivalents . . . ."

- b. Cost variables acting to intensify dissonance in two of the three modes: first, attractiveness of the chosen alternative (see e.g., Aronson and Mills, 1959; Gerard and Mathewson, 1966) and second, changing attitudes (see e.g., Zimbardo, 1965; Wickland et al., 1967; Cohen, 1959). These studies will be examined below.

That cost factors are influential in two of three functionally equivalent strategies for reducing dissonance



suggests that they could be in the third also, i.e., in the seeking of supportive information.

### Related Research

In previous studies experimental manipulations of cost factors have mostly involved subjects' expenditures of mental and physical effort, and time. Unfortunately, however, none has used criterion measures of message selection let alone selective exposure. Furthermore, in only one study (Cohen, 1959) could it be said that message costs were manipulated.

Cohen had all subjects read a counterattitudinal communication. Half had been told simply that they would expend a great deal of effort to understand the communication while the other half were told they would not have to expend much effort to understand it. Subjects anticipating greater effort expenditure expressed more attitude change consonant with the counter-communication.

Effort manipulations in ten different studies are summarized on the next page (Table 1). In each case it would appear that greater dissonance was aroused in high-cost conditions, and greater dissonance reduction took place in high-cost conditions. In all studies, except one, this meant a greater shift in preferences or attitudes for high-cost subjects.

TABLE 1.--Effort Manipulations in Ten Studies.

Author	Type of Study	Effort Manipulation	Results
Aronson (1961)	Decision-making	"Fishing" for metal containers (high effort), or selecting with magnet (low effort)	More consistency in preferences
Aronson and Mills (1959)	Forced compliance	Reading obscene words as initiation into a group	Greater attractiveness of group
Arrowood and Ross (1966)	Disconfirmation of expectancy	Preparations to take a test	Increased belief in expected outcome (test)
Cohen (1959)	Counterattitudinal advocacy	Altered instructions to create task perceptions	Greater attitude change
Gerard and Mathewson (1966)	Forced compliance	Electric shocks as initiation into a group	Greater attractiveness of group
King and Janis (1956)	Counterattitudinal advocacy	Degree of improvisation in encoding counterattitudinal statements	Greater attitude change
Shaffer and Handrick (1971)	Forced compliance	Complexity of instructions for (a) anticipated task, and (b) actual task	Greater attractiveness of tasks (under anticipated and actual effort)
Wickland, Cooper and Linder (1967)	Listening to counterattitudinal communication	Waiting time prior to hearing counterattitudinal communication	Greater attitude change
Yarren and Festinger (1961)	Disconfirmation of expectancy	Preparations to take a test	Increased belief in expected outcome (test)
Zimbardo (1965)	Counterattitudinal advocacy	Length of delay in auditory feedback whilst improvising counterattitudinal position.	Greater attitude change

This exception (Aronson, 1961) is worth noting, since it was the closest to a free-choice message selection study. Unlike the others it involved instrumental decision-making and no counter-communications. Effort was varied in relation to subjects obtaining rewarded and unrewarded stimuli. One frequent interpretation of this study (see e.g., Carlsmith and Freedman, 1968) is that, on unrewarded trials, dissonance was reduced by increasing the perceived attractiveness of empty metal containers (which sometimes included money rewards). However, when the high and low reward data are collapsed, as is shown in Table 2, the change scores in preference ratings in the two effort conditions show much greater shifts in the Easy condition than in the Effortful condition. In other words, the greater the effort expenditure in obtaining rewards (high or low), the more stable or consistent were the preferences with stated predispositions.

TABLE 2.--Preference Rating Changes Under Different Levels of Effort.\*

	Easy	Effortful
Mean	+ .97	+ .02
Standard Deviation	1.18	.92
N	30	30

\* From Aronson (1961).

A somewhat similar "consistency" effect was found in experiments on rats by Lawrence and Festinger (1962). As effort during behavior acquisition was increased, resistance to extinction increased.

This was true whether one was dealing with 100 percent reward situations or with partial reward situations. This uniformity of effect, however, was not found in connection with an incentive such as magnitude of reward. . . . Clearly, incentives and deterrents do not produce the same results and must be distinguished operationally and conceptually (p. 163).

The well-known imprinting studies of Hess (1962) with birds found greater behavioral consistency in terms of resistance to extinction with increased effort expenditures.

Correlational data in a field study of exposure patterns to different message sources suggest that cost factors were influential. Rogers and Atkin (1972) surveyed female college students about their attitudes toward hypothetical unwanted pregnancies and abortions, and their rates of exposure to different information sources on abortion. Their findings are presented in summarized form in Table 3.

A cost-factors interaction interpretation necessitates an assumption about attributes of messages from different possible sources, specifically in this case about monetary expense and inaccessibility attributes. Messages from information sources such as electronic media and close interpersonal ones are more accessible and lower

TABLE 3.--Exposure Patterns to Different Information Sources.\*

Source of Information About Abortions	Attitudes Toward Hypothetical Abortion		Difference Between Groups
	In Favor	Against	
Friends			
Boyfriend/husband			
Roommate			
Acquaintances	20%	21%	1%
Mother			
Television			
Radio			
Magazines			
Newspapers			
Medical column in newspapers	43%	33%	10%
Sex education books			
Pamphlets	45%	27%	22%
Medical personnel			
	N=114	N=33	

\* Adapted from Rogers and Atkin (1972).

in monetary expense (require fewer expenditures of effort and money) than messages obtained and processed from the printed media, in particular books, and from professional interpersonal sources. A corollary to this assumption from an information-avoidance rather than instrumental seeking perspective (which is our main focus here) is that greater resource expenditures are necessary to avoid messages from some sources rather than others. The interpretation outlined is clearly open to question in survey type data; message cost factors need to be manipulated for a more adequate assessment.

### Reward Values and Costs

In selective exposure studies the supportiveness of a particular exposure alternative is often confounding with other factors which may be rewarding for the individual. The "most common" (Sears, 1968) confounding factor is utility, defined as any information which is perceived to help in the performance of a role or the successful completion of a task (Katz, 1968). Where de facto selectivity occurs, Sears (1968) suggests that the various reward attributes of messages--supportiveness, utility, interest, truth value, etc.--are often correlated. However, in any one instance, whatever the reward attributes of a particular message are, there will be some perceived costs in obtaining and processing it. The higher the reward value, the more likely it is that a person will be willing to expend greater resources to obtain and possess it. Hence, the two may covary to some extent and costs may actually provide some sort of operational index of rewards.

Steiner (1970) writes:

Good things cost much; and things that cost much are good. But it is not only the Puritan ethic and the writings of Horatio Alger that maintain this stance. Blau (1964), for example, contends that love and approval that are easily gained tend to be lowly valued (p. 201).

Steiner then reviews several studies (e.g., Gerard and Mathewson, 1966; Aronson and Mills, 1959), and concludes that "payoffs are commensurate with costs" (p. 202), and suggests that

. . . people who are required to work inordinately hard or endure uncomfortable circumstances in order to obtain a goal tend to evaluate the payoff (after it is obtained) more highly than do those who are not required to incur such heavy costs (p. 202, italics supplied).

Steiner is not concerned here with free-choice situations. Presumably, if they were free-choice, heavier costs would not be incurred, unless the payoff (reward) was highly valued before it was obtained. Given free-choice situations therefore, such as in many selective exposure studies, costs may in some sense provide an operational index of relative reward values.

### Conflicting Findings

A basic question in laboratory selective exposure studies has been: "If a person is given a choice between supportive and nonsupportive information, will he prefer exposure to the former, all other things being equal?" (Sears and Freedman, 1967). However, the ceteris parabus condition does not obtain in field situations where the strongest evidence for selective exposure is usually found. Messages in field situations do have different contingent expenditures in effort and time to obtain and process them.

Freedman and Sears (1965) reviewed the findings of seventeen laboratory studies on preferences. Typically, laboratory procedures measure a subject's opinion on an issue and then ask him which of several communications he would like to read or hear. The dependent variable is

often really a measure of interest in supportive, relative to nonsupportive, information (Rhine, 1967). It is usually only a verbalized or check-marked expression of preference (and, incidentally, often not altogether free-choice because of "demand" characteristics--Orne, 1962).

In Campbell's (1963) terms the threshold of effort or difficulty is easy or minimal; in Milbrath's (1965) terms the response is at the bottom of the hierarchy of costs; and, as noted earlier, in free-choice situations, responses involving little expenditure of resources tend to be ambivalent. Furthermore, Festinger (1964) in discussing Brehm and Cohen's (1962) emphasis on commitment,<sup>2</sup> distinguishes between merely stating preferences among alternatives where no consequences follow, and making a decision among them. Hence, had cost factors been manipulated or held constant at higher than the near zero levels, the supportive side of the main selective exposure proposition may have been evidenced more often in these studies.

#### Hypotheses for Present Study

This study will focus on two criterion variables:

(a) frequency of selections, and (b) frequency of types of

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<sup>2</sup>The commitment variable, however, has been found wanting in empirical support (see e.g., Mills and Ross, 1964; Sears and Freedman, 1963).



selections--supportive only versus both sides of the issue. The independent variable will be message costs.

- H1: More information will be sought under low-cost conditions than under higher-cost conditions.
- H2: Information on both sides of an issue will be sought under low-cost conditions, but supportive information will be preferred over both sides under higher-cost conditions.

The first hypothesis concerns gross levels of message acquisition. It is, in effect, a manipulation check of message costs. The second is an interaction hypothesis and the main one of interest in this study.

## CHAPTER II

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### Overview

In a field experiment in lower-central Michigan, farmers were interviewed to obtain their opinions on a proposal to introduce a marketing tax on beef cattle. Approximately two weeks later they were sent letters offering pamphlets on both sides of the issue, but varying certain cost attributes of the pamphlets. The requests for information by respondents to the letters were noted according to their consistency or otherwise with earlier stated opinions in the interviews, and according to different message cost conditions.

#### Description of Sample

Strictly speaking, the study dealt with a population of farmers who: (a) had at some time in the past requested beef cattle publications from the Department of Animal Husbandry, Michigan State University; (b) were listed in telephone directories in the following locations accessible via University-rented Watts lines: Lansing, Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor, Detroit, Pontiac, Battle Creek, and St. Johns; (c) self-identified as "farmer," including

those who were retired or only part-time; (d) were able and willing to be interviewed within five or fewer attempts at contact. The 303 farmers interviewed, however, could also be viewed as comprising a judgementally selected non-probability sample. This view was taken in preference to considering them strictly as a population. This was principally because the particular few hundred farmers were selected mainly for reasons of convenience and limitations of funds, rather than for purposes of possible inferences about behavior being applicable only in this highly limited population.

### Data Collection

#### The Issue

The issue chosen centered on the desirability of instituting a marketing tax for beef cattle, with the funds collected to be used for promoting the beef industry. This proposal was before the Michigan State Legislature, to introduce a tax of 30¢ or 40¢ per head, depending on weight, on all cattle sold in Michigan. Pretesting of the questionnaire and advice from agricultural experts suggested that (a) this was a two-sided issue that the sample was likely to be about equally divided on, and (b) it would be a relevant topic in that a fair proportion of persons would have some prior knowledge of it through farming cooperatives

and the farming press. Three further issues<sup>1</sup> were selected for inclusion in the questionnaire for the following reasons: (a) to "mask" the main issue, i.e., to help avoid sensitizing individuals to inferring a link between questions on the beef tax issue and later being offered pamphlets about it, and (b) to provide agricultural experts at Michigan State University with data they had indicated would be useful in their work.

### The Questionnaire

In mid-August, 1972, a questionnaire (see Appendix A) was administered to members of the sample by telephone. It had first been pretested on twelve randomly chosen farmers with characteristics similar to those included in the sample. Eight work-study student interviewers were paid with funds provided by the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Education Institute. They attended interview briefing sessions lasting one and a half hours before their first interviews. Instructions were to interview only the person whose name appeared on the coversheet. However, if after a minimum of three call-backs the designated person was still not available but

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<sup>1</sup>These issues were also being considered by the State Legislature. They were: unionization of farm workers, collective bargaining in agriculture, and a specific land tax instead of the present property tax. The data in this study were collected for personnel in the Cooperative Extension Service and the Department of Agricultural Economics at Michigan State University.

another family member was who was apparently quite knowledgeable about the farm's operations, they were to be interviewed and the fact noted. The questionnaire's introduction stressed that this was a study of farmers' opinions, and if any person disagreed about the applicability of the label "farmer," interviewers were instructed to terminate the interview. Several questions related to each of the four issues, and those on the beef tax proposal were placed third in the questionnaire. Finally, a number of demographic questions were asked: age, education, number of cattle owned, and the respondent's sex.

### The Letters

On August 29, 1972, letters from the College of Agricultural and Natural Resources Education Institute were sent to all members of the sample offering to make available what were stated in the letters as "free informational pamphlets," one of which was entitled "Arguments in Favor of a Beef Marketing Tax" (see Appendix B), and the other "Arguments Against a Beef Marketing Tax" (see Appendix C). The letters were identical except for message cost factors.

### Operationalization of Variables

Using a variant of Milgram's lost letter technique of inquiry, Forbes and Gromoll (1971) dropped stamped and unstamped letters in several cities and towns. Their

overall return rates were 79% for stamped letters and 45% for unstamped letters. They suggested that the inconvenience accounted for the differences.

In the present study a similar operationalization was employed but with cost factors being message properties rather than situationally bound. The sample was systematically divided into three equal sized groups of 101. Message cost was operationalized for the group as different levels of effort and expense needed for persons to select informational pamphlets offered through the mail by varying the monetary expense and inaccessibility attributes of the message. As mentioned, all the letters were identical in content, but varied in the procedures by which pamphlets could be obtained: letters with postage-paid reply cards (see Appendix D), letters with reply cards requiring stamps (see Appendix E), and letters providing addresses to enable letters of request to be written and posted (see Appendix F). These conditions are summarized in Table 4. Separate addresses were used within each condition so that greater expenditures of effort and monetary expense would be required to select more than one message. The two addresses, Fee Hall East and South Kedzie Hall, both on MSU campus, had neutral connotations compared with possible addresses such as Agricultural Hall or Anthony Hall (location of Department of Animal Husbandry).

TABLE 4.--The Message Cost Manipulation.

Cost Condition	N	Letter	Procedure for Obtaining Pamphlets
Low	101	Offered "in favor" and/or "against" pamphlets	Letter enclosed separate <u>postage-paid reply cards</u> to: (a) address A to obtain an "in favor" pamphlet (b) address B to obtain an "against" pamphlet
Medium	101	Offered "in favor" and/or "against" pamphlets	Letter enclosed separate <u>reply cards requiring stamps</u> to: (a) address A to obtain an "in favor" pamphlet (b) address B to obtain an "against" pamphlet
High	101	Offered "in favor" and/or "against" pamphlets	Last paragraph of letter informed that <u>letters of request could be written and posted</u> to: (a) address A to obtain an "in favor" pamphlet (b) address B to obtain an "against" pamphlet.

### Criterion Variables

There were two criterion variables: frequency of selections, and frequency of selections of message types.

Frequency of selections was defined simply as the gross number of respondents who made any request for pamphlets; this was the measure for the test of the first hypothesis.

Message types were determined according to consistency or inconsistency between predisposition measures and the exposure or selection behavior; this was the measure for the test of the second hypothesis. (Selecting

a pamphlet in favor of the beef tax was behavior consistent with a favorable predisposition toward the issue, but inconsistent with an unfavorable predisposition toward the issue; and vice versa for selecting a pamphlet against the beef tax.) Preceding the predisposition measures in the interview, individuals were asked whether or not they had heard of the beef tax proposal.<sup>2</sup> If they had not heard of it they were given a few key points about the proposal and then asked their opinions for or against.<sup>3</sup> Those who had heard of it were asked if they had reached a decision (Festinger, 1957, proposes dissonance as a post-decisional state only), and, if so, were they for or against the issue.<sup>4</sup> The combined opinion responses of those who had heard and those who had not heard of the issue represented the predisposition measures.

#### Control Variables

In addition to obtaining demographic data, measures on three variables were obtained to examine their possible influence on the relationships hypothesized. Although the evidence is by no means clear-cut, there have been some studies which suggest that they influence selective exposure rates:

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<sup>2</sup>See Appendix A, question 10.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix A, question 14.

<sup>4</sup>See Appendix A, question 11(a).



a. Past history on an issue (see e.g., Sears and Freedman, 1967). In the present study this was operationalized simply as whether or not individuals had heard of the issue.<sup>5</sup>

b. Confidence in decision (see e.g., Canon, 1964, and Mills and Ross, 1964, who found that persons lower in confidence seek supportive information more than those high in confidence). This was operationally defined here by asking individuals who had made up their minds how certain they were that their decision was the correct one.<sup>6</sup>

c. Social utility (see e.g., Clarke and James, 1967, who found that persons who expect to discuss an issue with others are more likely to seek supportive information). Individuals in this study were asked if they expected to discuss the issue with any farmers in the next few months, and if so, did they expect them to be mostly for or against the issue.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, measures on the following demographic variables were obtained: years of formal education, number of cattle owned, age, and sex.

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<sup>5</sup>See Appendix A, question 10.

<sup>6</sup>See Appendix A, question 11(b).

<sup>7</sup>See Appendix A, questions 12, 13.

### Data Analysis

The data were at the nominal level of measurement only. Simple descriptive statistics were used for most of the analysis. Chi-square tests of significance were computed, where appropriate and where a sufficiency of data permitted. The first hypothesis was tested by comparison with the Chi-square distribution. Relationships relevant to the second hypothesis were described in percentages. Characteristics of respondents to the letters in relation to characteristics of nonrespondents were analyzed through the use of contingency tables.

## CHAPTER III

### FINDINGS

#### Description of Sample

In Chapter II it was noted that all members of the sample had previously requested beef cattle publications from the Department of Animal Husbandry at Michigan State University and resided within seven particular telephone areas. The number of such theoretically possible persons to include totalled 542, but this figure was reduced to a sample of 303 studied. Attrition reason with numbers in parentheses were as follows: unlisted telephone numbers or numbers untraceable from address only (96), disconnected or incorrect numbers (30), deaths (7), persons who had been included in a questionnaire pretest (12), persons who did not identify as "farmer" (36), refusals (32), and failure to make contact after four or more call-backs (26).

With the exception of Detroit and Pontiac areas, the sample was fairly well distributed by area with the greatest number (about one third) in any one area residing in or near Ann Arbor.

Some personal characteristics of sample members are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5.--Some Characteristics of the Sample, and Comparisons of Respondents to the Letters to Non-respondents.

	Respondents to Letters	Nonrespondents to Letters	Total Sample
<u>Education:</u>			
Under 8 years	3%	16%	15%
9-12 years	47	56	55
13-16 years	41	22	24
17 years and more	8	5	6
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Cattle Ownership:</u>			
No cattle	11%	30%	28%
1-15	24	17	18
16-39	27	21	22
40-99	19	14	15
100-299	8	12	11
300 and more	11	6	6
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Age:</u>			
Under 30 years	3%	6%	5%
30-39	22	14	15
40-49	19	22	21
50-59	30	25	26
60 years and older	27	34	33
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Sex:</u>			
Male	100%	95%	96%
Female	0	5	4
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Heard of Issue:</u>			
Had heard	14%	21%	20%
Had not heard	86	79	80
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	N=37	N=266	N=303

Note: Entries do not total 100 percent where rounding errors are involved.

Nearly three-quarters owned beef or vealing cattle and would thus be subject to the beef tax if it were to come into effect. A third owned 40 or more head of cattle, and an isolated few (3) owned as many as 1,000. The largest percentage of cattle owners had between 15 and 40 head.

Over half the sample had received formal education to within the last few years of high school. Between one quarter and one-third had completed some college education.

More than half the sample was over 50 years of age, and about one-third was over 60 years. Only one-fifth of the sample was younger than 40.

Not surprisingly, the farmers were nearly all men (95%).

Only one-fifth had heard of the beef tax proposal before, even though there had been a fair coverage of the issue in the farming press.

#### Description of Respondents to the Letters

Only 12% (37) of the sample requested any pamphlets. Such a low response rate suggests that respondents may have differed systematically on certain attributes from the non-respondents. Some comparisons in percentages are shown in Table 5.

Respondents to the letters differed significantly from non-respondents in the amount of formal education they had received,<sup>1</sup> and in whether or not they owned any cattle.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly half the respondents to the letters had some college education compared with about one-quarter of the nonrespondents. About 90% of the respondents owned some cattle as against 70% for the nonrespondents. However, among those in the sample who were cattle owners, the two groups did not differ beyond chance expectations with regard to numbers of cattle owned. Education and cattle ownership were considered to be indicators of socio-economic status, and on only these two demographic variables did the two groups differ significantly; no differences were observed in age, nor in having heard about the issue beforehand. It should be added that none of the 13 females in the sample responded to the letters. Although this sex difference cannot be tested readily for significance<sup>3</sup> it appears appreciable--100% of respondents to the letters were males compared with 95% of the non-respondents.

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<sup>1</sup>Chi-square = 6.95, d.f. = 1;  $p > .01$ .

<sup>2</sup>Chi-square, with correction for continuity = 5.27, d.f. = 1;  $p > .05$ .

<sup>3</sup>For a chi-square test the smallest expected frequency should not be less than 5 (Cochran cited in Siegel, 1956, p. 110); in this case it is 1.6. And factorials involved are too large for an Exact test.

### Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested. The first was a straight forward one sample test of the effects of message costs on overall selection behavior; this was confirmed. The second and major hypothesis predicted an interaction effect between choosing supportive messages and message costs; insufficient data precluded its acceptance or rejection, but the data direction was as hypothesized.

H1: More information on an issue will be sought under low-cost conditions than under higher-cost conditions.

Frequencies of selections by each respondent to the letters within each message-cost condition are shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6.--Effects of Message Costs on Overall Message Selections.

	Message Costs			Total
	Low	Medium	High	
Percent	64.9	32.4	2.7	100%
F's	24	12	1	N=37

The differences are highly significant ( $p > .001$ ),<sup>4</sup> and thus H1 is confirmed.

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<sup>4</sup>Chi-square, with correction for continuity = 19.63, d.f. = 2.

In order to examine whether persons who responded to the letters within the different cost conditions had different demographic characteristics or not, the medium and high-cost frequencies were collapsed and termed the high-cost group (N=13). This was compared with the low-cost group (N=24). Proportions within each group on several characteristics are shown in Table 7.

Compared with respondents to the letters at the low-cost level, high-cost respondents had the following characteristics: they were more likely to be younger, slightly more likely to have had a college education, and were less likely to be owners of cattle or to have heard about the issue beforehand.

H2: Information on both sides of an issue will be sought under low-cost conditions, but supportive information will be preferred over both sides under higher-cost conditions.

The frequencies of message type selected by each respondent within cost conditions are shown in Table 8. Only 16% of all the respondents chose selectively as against 78% choosing messages on both sides of the issue. Slightly more selections for both pamphlets occurred under low-cost than high-cost conditions, and supportive pamphlets were preferred nearly twice as much by respondents in the high-cost as in the low-cost condition. The observed relationships cannot be readily tested for



TABLE 7.--Some Comparisons of Respondents to Letters  
Offering Low-cost Messages with Respondents to  
Letters Offering High-cost Messages.

	Respondents Who Sought Low-cost Messages	Respondents Who Sought High-cost Messages	Total Respondents
<u>Education:</u>			
High school or less	54%	46%	51%
Some college or more	46	54	47
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Cattle Ownership:</u>			
No cattle	8%	15%	11%
1-40	54	46	51
41 or more	38	38	38
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Age:</u>			
Under 40 years	17%	38%	24%
40-60	42	62	49
60 years and older	42	0	27
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
<u>Heard of Issue:</u>			
Had heard	17%	8%	14%
Had not heard	83	92	86
	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>100%</u>
	N=24	N=13	N=37

Note: Entries do not total 100 percent where rounding errors are involved.

TABLE 8.--Effects of Message Costs on Type of Message Selected.

	Low Cost		High Cost		Total	
	%	f	%	f	%	f
Supportive pamphlet only	12.5	3	23	3	16.2	6
Discrepant pamphlet only	4.2	1	-	-	2.7	1
Both pamphlets	79.2	19	77	10	78.4	29
Neither supportive* nor discrepant	4.2	1	-	-	2.7	1
TOTAL	100%	N=24	100%	N=13	100%	N=37

\*S's predisposition was "not sure," and he chose an "in favor" pamphlet.

Note: Data collection took place under three cost conditions: low, medium, and high. The high-cost condition in this table represents the original medium and high categories combined, since there was only one respondent in the original high-cost category; that respondent selected supportively.

statistical significance.<sup>5</sup> However, at the descriptive level only, the main hypothesis receives partial support bearing in mind the low frequencies.

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<sup>5</sup>For a chi-square test the smallest expected frequency should not be less than 5 (Cochran cited in Siegel, 1956, p. 110); in this case examining the "supportive" and "both" categories only in relation to cost levels, it is 3.8. Factorials would be too large for an Exact test.

Respondents who selectively exposed as against those who exposed to both sides of the issue did not differ greatly on demographic characteristics. However, the frequencies are too small and unstable for any conclusive statements about them.

To the extent that the observed reinforcement information-seeking derived from dissonance rather than other motivations, the hypothesized relationships should hold for post-decisional persons, rather than those whose predispositions were "not sure" or "not really decided yet." Persons in the pre-decisional state totalled 81 in the sample and 11 in the respondents. Ten of these 11 selected both pamphlets--6 in the low-cost, and 4 in the high-cost condition--and the remaining person chose an "against" pamphlet. Table 9 examines the main interaction hypothesis in terms of post-decisional message selection behavior only.

A comparison of Table 9 with the data in Table 8 shows much the same pattern of relationships.

Table 10 examines the first hypothesis in terms of post-decisional overall selection behavior. A comparison of Table 10 with Table 6 shows a similar pattern with the observed differences, again significant ( $p > .01$ ).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Chi-square, with correction for continuity = 13.01, d.f. = 2.

TABLE 9.--Effects of Message Costs on Type of Message  
Selected: Post-Decisional Respondents Only.

	Low Cost		High Cost		Total	
	%	f	%	f	%	f
Supportive pamphlet only	17.6	3	33	3	23.1	6
Both pamphlets	76.5	13	66	6	73.1	19
Discrepant pamphlet only	5.9	1	-	-	3.8	1
TOTAL	100%	N=17	100%	N=9	100%	N=26

TABLE 10.--Effects of Message Costs on Overall Message  
Selections: Post-Decisional Respondents Only.

	Message Costs			
	Low	Medium	High	Total
Percent	65.4	30.8	3.8	100%
f	17	8	1	N=26

Past History, Confidence,  
and Social Utility

Insufficient data prevented analysis of the hypothesized relationships in terms of these three variables. Only five of the 37 respondents to the letters had heard of the issue, and they were about evenly

distributed throughout the different treatment cells. Only one of the 37 respondents to the letters was uncertain about the decision he had reached on the issue. Finally, only two respondents to the letters expected to discuss the issue with any other farmers in the next few months.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

A field experiment was designed to assess the effects of message costs on selective exposure to information. Two hypotheses were examined: one predicted effects on overall exposure rates, and the other--the main hypothesis--predicted an interaction effect between message costs and selectivity.

Findings came from a quite small sub-sample of respondents (i.e., those who made any requests for information), and an even smaller number of respondents who requested selectively. Thus, the problem of the "disappearing" sample so common in mailed surveys and the possibility of individual difference variables being unduly influential are questions raised about the results obtained.

Indeed, respondents to the letters were higher in education and socio-economic status (measured as cattle-ownership) than nonrespondents, a finding not uncommon for individuals who voluntarily expose to supportive communications (e.g., Star and Hughes, 1950). Furthermore, respondents who made relatively greater expenditures of

of resources to obtain and process information (high-cost condition) differed from those who expended fewer resources (low-cost condition): They were younger and better educated, but were less often owners of cattle. Even so, we cannot be sure about such characteristics with so few persons in each treatment condition. But they do point to a repeated theme in the literature, the importance of demographic variables and the possibility of observed selectivity being in fact de facto selectivity. This and the small sub-sample size are points that should be kept in mind in interpreting the results.

The experiment included provision to examine separately and beyond the mainstream of the study, three variables which have been evidenced, with some reservations, to influence exposure patterns. They were past history on the issue, level of confidence, and social utility. None of the three could be adequately assessed in terms of possibly facilitating selective exposure, again because of low frequencies. However, as will be discussed shortly, an absence of past history did appear to be associated more with two-sided exposures than one-sided exposures.

Message-cost attributes of monetary expense and inaccessibility were varied over three levels. The first hypothesis, which also acted as a check of the manipulation, was confirmed at high levels of significance for both respondents and post-decisional respondents when considered

separately. The deterrent notion in the conceptualization of message costs, and its correspondence at the level of operations in terms of observed hesitancy, was well supported. Clearly also the costs were attributes of the message and not situationally located as in some of the effort manipulations reviewed in attitude change studies. However, further than that, H1 did not tell us a great deal which could not be reasoned from common sense grounds. The relationships of main interest were those in the second hypothesis.

Because of low obtained frequencies the second hypothesis was not tested for significance. However, the results do point to an observed interaction in the right direction. This was true in analyses both of all respondents to the letters and post-decisional respondents only. Thus, some tentative support is lent to the hypothesis. However, on close examination of the original wording, supportive information was actually not, as stated, "preferred over both sides under higher-cost conditions"; rather "information on both sides of an issue" was preferred under both high and low costs. Little overall selectivity occurred, only six out of 37 cases (16%). However, as mentioned before, these few cases were disproportionately located in the high-cost condition which is clearly in the predicted direction. A low level of precision, particularly in terms of the



small sub-sample size, can therefore be implicated for failure to obtain more clear-cut results.

A follow-up telephone survey of a small number (16) of randomly selected respondents to the letters and nonrespondents was carried out for two purposes: to examine reasons for the low response rate in the sample as a whole (12%), and to assess what degree of sensitization occurred from the "before" measures. With regard to the response rate, it appears that it was not an unusually busy time of the year for most farmers, although as had been found out in administering the main questionnaire, it was a period during which a number of farmers took their vacations or were preparing for them. Presumably this accounted for some nonresponses to the letters. The beef tax issue was ranked only about fourth in interest relative to five other agricultural issues mentioned. This is consistent with few in the sample (20%) having heard of the issue, and with the general finding that interest and exposure are correlated (e.g., Rhine, 1967). Thus, either the pretest sample which had been asked whether or not they had heard of the issue was biased or too small and the responses unstable, or the opinions of agricultural experts on likely knowledge and saliency of the issue were inaccurate, or both. The possible linking of administration of the questionnaire to the receipt of letters offering

information, thus sensitizing responses, did not appear to have been a problem.

As mentioned before, the first hypothesis was in effect a check on the message-cost manipulation. In the three equal-sized treatment groups of low, medium, and high message costs, the response rates to the letters offering information were 24%, 12%, and 1% respectively. Only the rate in the low-cost treatment group is approximately comparable with obtained rates in other studies. But even at this level they are not fully comparable, since rather than merely offering information the more usual practice is to carry a persuasive appeal for purposes of increasing response rates. And, of course, acquisition of information (e.g., supportive) is only one way to satisfy a need (e.g., dispositional reinforcement).

Dissonance theory has been criticized for its imprecise definitions of fundamental concepts and vague rules of correspondence with the empirical plane (e.g., Pepitone, 1966). The presence of dissonance must be inferred; in most studies it is simply assumed. This study was no exception. No attempt was made to gather data either on the presence or magnitude of dissonance in relation to the extent of support-seeking. One field experiment has made such an attempt (see Troidahl, 1963). However, on the basis of an overwhelming preference for information on both sides of the issue (78%), much

selection behavior appears to have been motivated more by utilitarian needs, such as surveillance or decision guidance (see e.g., Blumler and McQuail, 1969), than reinforcement needs.

This alternative explanation of utilitarian needs overriding reinforcement as the main source of rewards is given support from an examination of respondents' past histories on the issue and their education. First, on past history Freedman and Sears (1965) cite data from their jury studies that

. . . a two-sided presentation . . . is preferred most by individuals who have not been previously exposed to the partisan arguments of either side . . . [on this basis they suggest that] any information which will help the naive individual become familiar with both sides of the issue will be favored, regardless of whether or not it supports his initial preference (p. 85).

Eighty-four percent of respondents to the letters who had not heard of the issue beforehand (N=32) exposed to both sides, whereas among those who had heard of the issue beforehand (N=5), 40% exposed to both sides. With suitable reservations about the paucity of data, some support is given the Freedman and Sears argument. Second, a greater amount of education was observed among respondents than nonrespondents (49% of the former against 28% of the latter had some college education). One effect of more years of education may be a wider tolerance for divergent ideas with accompanying behaviors of nonpartisan selection and exposure.

Several aspects of the research design can be examined in the light of the findings. Sears (1968, p. 780) points out that very few selective exposure experiments have been conducted "outside of college sophomores and other staunchly middle-class groups." Numerous field studies have been conducted in other populations, but, as Kerlinger (1964) points out, ex post facto research lacks control of independent variables which may account for the dependent variable under observation. As well there is the inability to randomize to treatment groups. Thus, plausible explanations such as a general psychological tendency to prefer supportive information, can be inferred if respondents assign themselves into groups on the basis of common characteristics.

Katz (1968) suggests the "ideal test" of selective exposure should take account of time-order, and "involve a situation in which communications are available on both sides of an issue, and where there is a corresponding division of opinion" (p. 795). Several reviewers (Sears and Freedman, 1967; Katz, 1968; McGuire, 1968b) have called for the testing of interaction hypotheses rather than main effects and direct observations of exposure rather than reliance on self-reports.

The present field experiment has met these various criteria, but yet a basic problem remains: was the selectivity observed reinforcement-seeking or de facto selectivity?

Because of the extent of sample shrinkage mitigating against the randomization procedures, individuals could and did group according to common characteristics: in the case of respondents versus nonrespondents, on education and socio-economic status; in the case of high-cost versus low-cost, on age and education; and, unfortunately in the case of the 2 x 2 design, cells contained too few respondents for reliable demographic crossbreaks.

The low response rate appears to have resulted primarily from the comparatively low saliency of the issue. Thus, the present design seems to have had merit, but an issue of greater interest would most likely have given more clear-cut findings, not only as regards statistical significance, but also data interpretation in terms of pure reinforcement-seeking versus de facto selectivity.

As mentioned earlier, selective exposure experiments typically involve measures at two points in time,  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ , and observe whether the two are consistent or inconsistent. At a higher level of abstraction this of course accords with Festinger's definitions about the state of two cognitions, one of which "follows from," or is "the obverse of" the other, considering these two alone. But in field conditions the ceteris parabus conditions rarely obtain, and it has been argued that cost factors interact with the consistency/inconsistency dimension such

that not only is there more frequently observed consistency at higher levels of cost, but there is also a greater degree of consistency. In most selective exposure experiments, including the present one, the key variable of consistency (and of course its  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  component measures) has been treated only dichotomously rather than continuously. "The extent to which two different estimates or measures are correlated" is one definition of convergent validity (Fishbein, 1966, p. 217). Where the "given variable" is "disposition toward an issue" and the two measures are at  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  as above, convergent validity appears quite suited as a measurement approach to conceptualization of consistency. For convergent validity, the  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  measures must each have construct and discriminant validity, reliability, and preferably the highest level of measurement possible. This and most other selective exposure studies have not paid sufficient attention to conceptualizing the key variables from a measurement theory perspective and operationalizing them accordingly. Consequently it is likely that much variation in the dependent variable is not accounted for, information is lost, precision is low, and findings tend to remain inconclusive.

### Implications

It would appear that cost factors in general, and message cost factors in particular, have been much ignored relative to the research efforts on various reward dimensions

of individual behavior. First, this study reports that they do intervene to affect absolute rates of exposure. Although advertisers have long known it is important to construct messages which are as easy to obtain (and process!) as possible, researchers have found out "little" about the determinants of absolute exposure rates (Sears, 1968, p. 782). Other variables are no doubt involved, but the findings here suggest that message costs certainly should be taken into account. Second, these factors may interact along various reward dimensions. Limited support for this view comes from the data in the case of reinforcement rewards; and, if, as has been proposed (e.g., Sears, 1968) supportiveness correlates with utility, attractiveness, truthfulness, and other rewards, then it is likely that message costs are similarly influential along other reward dimensions and in other contexts of instrumental information seeking.

Much research is necessary before any implications can be suggested on a practical level. However, speculation is possible on likely practical implications should future research confirm the relationships hypothesized in this study. Persons concerned with the construction of one-sided messages directed at mass audiences may find that the more costly messages are, the fewer people they will reach, and the fewer people with contrary views they will reach. Thus, if one's intention were to persuade, the cost attributes would most probably need to be minimal.

Conversely, and apart from arbitrary circulation restrictions, if one's intention were to reach only as many people as possible with similar views to the one being advocated, the message might be best designed so as to include higher message costs. However, if message costs were too high in relation to message reward values, it might be that few people at all would be reached. Among other factors, it appears that the saliency of the issue to the intended audience would need to be taken into account. In this study low saliency was suggested as a primary reason for few people having been reached.

Chapter I noted that several researchers have observed that costs and rewards are often broadly commensurate, and it was suggested that under certain conditions they may covary. One such condition seemed to be free-choice between alternative messages in instrumental seeking situations. If there are constraints to free-choice--beyond an experimental manipulation of message costs--individuals may expend resources because of the constraints (such as social conformity, etc.) rather than the message reward value expected. Therefore, given free-choice between messages and the possibility of message costs and rewards showing covariance, message costs may be worthy of intensive research in order to pursue the goal of scaling message reward values.



Message costs can be manipulated and, it will be suggested, they can be measured on interval scales. Laboratory research along these lines would need to be carefully designed to avoid a possible ceiling effect on message costs. Both Weick (1964) and Collins (cited in Aronson, 1966, p. 126) report such effects in laboratory studies where levels of effort were varied. Collins is cited as suggesting that it is difficult to demonstrate laboratory differences in effort, since ". . . in most psychological experiments subjects are trying extremely hard, even in the low reward condition." Relatively free-choice message selection, under different cost conditions, may thus be difficult to obtain in laboratory settings. On the other hand, field studies do not take account of time order. Therefore field experiments may have the most potential for this type of study.

This study was a preliminary attempt to examine message cost factors and their influence on selective exposure patterns. To extend the applicability of indications from the present findings and to more clearly delineate the relationships involved, more research is necessary. Such research might determine which attributes of messages are clearly cost ones, and whether the relationships can be expected to operate in similar manner for different types and valences of message costs.

It was suggested earlier that selective exposure variables are continuous underlying and that they should be operationalized at the highest level of measurement possible. The same can be said for message costs. Pre-dispositions could be scaled rather than treated dichotomously; exposure could be measured as rates per unit of time, or pages read, etc.; and message costs could be measured as expenditures in terms of distance or time, or monetary expenditures, to obtain and process different messages. The exact nature of the rewards/costs relationship in instrumental seeking situations is as yet little understood. Does it operate as a ratio as Schramm suggests, and if it does often do so what are the conditions that obtain? In this investigation message costs did affect overall rates of exposure. Beyond this gross level it was suggested that message costs might interact along the reinforcement-seeking dimension, and that one of the conditions that could obtain is for there to be free choice between "reasonably" salient messages. However, more research is needed since an insufficiency of data in this study did not enable conclusions about these relationships.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

# AGRICULTURAL ISSUES STUDY

Interviewer's Name	Date completed		
	1st Call	2nd Call	3rd Call
No answer			
# busy			
Respondent not home			
Refused interview			
Call back at _____			

Hello, may I speak to (respondent's name) please?  
This is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling from the Department  
of Communication at Michigan State University. We're doing  
a study, and we're interested in finding out what farmers  
think on a number of agricultural issues. I'd like to ask  
a few questions, and what you say will help us to put  
together an overall picture from talking to a number of  
farmers, but your individual answers won't be made known  
to anyone.

1. First, do you raise or feed any cattle, for meat purposes . . . and if so, about how many do you normally sell each year?

# of cattle

No cattle

2. Now, your opinion on the possible "unionization of farm workers." Do you think that full-time farm employees are likely to be unionized within the next ten years?

No

Yes

In about how many years do you think that they might be unionized?

73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. If farm employees do unionize, would their unionization hurt, help, or have no effect on Michigan agriculture?

Hurt

Help

No effect

4. Why do you think this is so? [IF NEC., PROBE: What reasons . . . ?]

5. Do you expect to discuss this issue with any farmers in the next few months?

Yes

No

GO TO Q.7

6. Would most of them think that unionization will hurt, help or have no effect on Michigan agriculture?

Hurt

Help

No effect

7. As well as farm workers organizing, there is also talk of farmers becoming more organized . . . sometimes the term "collective bargaining in agriculture" is used. Have you heard of this term?

Yes

↓

No →

GO TO Q. 10

8. When you hear "collective bargaining in agriculture," what do you think of, what does the term mean to you? [IF NEC., PROBE: What do you think its main influences are?]

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What should farmers do, if anything, to become more effective in collective bargaining?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. There has been talk of a possible marketing tax on cattle, i.e. a tax on all cattle sold in Michigan. The money would be used by a State-wide commission for promoting the beef industry. Have you heard anything about this proposal?

Yes



No



GO TO Q. 14

11. Have you made up your mind already for or against this tax, or haven't you really decided yet?  
[IF "yes" ANSWER, PROBE: Which way . . . are you for or against?]

Not really  
decided yet



For



Against



I'd like to know just how certain you are that the position you've taken is the right one on this issue . . . do you feel somewhat sure, or very sure that this position is the right one?

Somewhat sure



Very sure



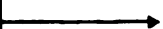
What are your reasons for being (in favor of/against) a tax like this?

12. Do you expect to discuss this issue with any cattle owners in the next few months?

Yes



No



GO TO Q. 15

13. Do you expect most of them to be for or against a tax like this?

Most for                      Most against                      Don't know

GO TO Q. 15

14. The proposal is that you would have to pay about 30¢ or 40¢ per head (depending on weight) for all cattle that you sell. The money would then go to a State-wide commission to generally promote the beef industry. Do you think that you would be for, or against, a tax like this, or aren't you sure how you would feel about it?

For                      Against                      Not sure

15. Farmers now have to pay a property tax. There has been talk that instead of a property tax, farmers should pay a specific land tax. This would be based on dollars per acre for different classes of land. The rates would be set at \$9 per acre for the better farm land, \$7 for the next best, and \$5 and then \$3 for other classes. Do you think you would be for, or against, a tax like this instead of the present property tax?

For                      Against                      Not sure

GO TO Q. 17

16. Would you commit your land to a tax like this, and in doing so agree not to change its use for 5 years? [IF NEC., ADD: That is, would you agree not to develop it to another class of land, say for housing, business, etc.--you could of course put in whatever crops you want.]

Yes                      No                      Not sure



17. Finally, can you tell me your age group please . . .  
are you in your 60's, 50's, 40's, 30's or 20's?

60's and above	
50's	
40's	
30's	
20's and below	

18. And, how many years of formal education did you finish?

\_\_\_\_\_grade

\_\_\_\_\_year in college

THANK RESPONDENT

-----

Code respondent's sex:

Male

Female

APPENDIX B

PAMPHLET: ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF  
A BEEF MARKETING TAX

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR  
OF A  
BEEF MARKETING TAX

## ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A BEEF MARKETING

### TAX (CHECKOFF OR ASSESSMENT) \*

Preface: In a recent telephone survey, over 300 farmers in southern Michigan were asked their views on the proposed marketing tax and beef industry commission. Most of the farmers contacted owned cattle. Approximately half were in favor of the issue, and approximately half were against it. From respondents' answers, two separate mimeographs have been prepared--this one, and one entitled Arguments Against a Beef Marketing Tax (Checkoff of Assessment). In both, the words and phrases that respondents actually used have been retained as much as possible, consistent with avoiding redundancy among the main themes that respondents put forward--i.e., the following arguments are direct, or almost direct, quotations chosen from the interview responses.

--Advertising works for other things, why not meat?

Similar schemes, and in some cases almost identical ones, operate in the cherry, potato, apple, bean, milk and pork industries. Generally they have proved satisfactory, and where there has been dissatisfaction by farmers, it has often been through lack of understanding of behind-the-scenes work which has gone on to consolidate or expand markets. Advertising stimulates business. You've got to

advertise to sell anything these days, or at least to stay in the race.

--Each type of farming needs its promotion, just as does each type of manufactured product. The beef industry is competing with other raw farm products and processed foods for the consumer's attention. The industry needs to win over that attention and capture increasing purchasing power.

--Consumers now eat about 110 pounds of beef per person each year. However, available money that the consumer has for spending on food products is increasing all the time--at a rate relatively faster than per capita beef consumption. We need to compete for these extra dollars the consumer is spending, through promotion of beef and beef products. Increasing affluence will lead to more discernment in food selection, and hence to more beef purchases, but we still need to work on the consumer's awareness of the advantages of beef and keep reminding him of them.

--People buy too much artificial and processed foods these days--there is a real need for the public to be educated to choose pure foods, nutritious ones, and especially beef.

--Beef prices are as high now as they were 20 years ago, but the cyclical nature of farm prices suggests that they may not retain their relative level, unless we act now! The market could and should be expanded with a lot more advertising. Sure, consumer demand is high now, but in looking ahead, who will help us but ourselves?

--Processors and middlemen have their restricted advertising, but who is going to take the broader message of the industry to the public to increase awareness unless we do? The checkoff is a cheap way to advertise beef. Successful promotion programs have to be carried to the public, to be planned for attack from different angles, and for these to complement each other. This isn't an easy task--we need the best talent and resources available, and the beef commission will embody these--all for a few cents cost to the farmer.

--The long-run view needs to be taken by farmers. By outlaying a few cents in checkoff we will get higher returns later, through promotion and education, and the higher returns will more than offset the checkoff costs involved.

--In the next 10 to 20 years, farmers are likely to be asked to make payments for all sorts of things, e.g. pollution control, etc. Rates are likely to be high on such future payments, and in comparison, the marketing tax

payments seem almost negligible, but yet something we need to keep up if we want the beef industry to remain viable. And with the squeeze on the smaller farmer, we should do what we can to help his returns and help him stay in business.

--We seem assured of reasonable farmer representation on the commission, rather than control of the funds by people remote from our interests and lacking knowledge of the industry. (Of 11 members, five will be breeders or feeders, and one a dairyman. Of the other five, these will be entitled to vote.)

--We need a better mouthpiece. Farmers in general, but the beef industry in particular, need an effective lobby to look after their interests.

--The present 6¢ checkoff for promotion has been voluntary (refundable on request) and goes to the National Livestock and Meat Board. The new scheme will, and should, be mandatory, since where promotion benefits the whole industry, either everybody, or nobody, should pay for it.

--The farm-to-table marketing system has its inefficiencies, and the checkoff money should go toward ironing out some of these. Through marketing research and other methods, the commission should play an important role in developing a more orderly system of marketing.

--We need to be informed as to changes in marketing situations. Information from research, in the same sort of way that Michigan Milk Producer's Association works for producers, will help in decision making, scheduling and farm management.

--Michigan farmers can produce more cattle. There is plenty of capacity, and yet we don't want to depress cattle prices. But, through promotion programs and consumer education, the commission can create or expand markets to encourage greater numbers of cattle. With growing urbanization and potential markets, we need to be active in doing this.

--There is a need to educate the public to understand the costs involved in raising and feeding cattle, i.e. land, feed, etc. The city man has little awareness of farm problems and of what the farmer receives for his products. There is a long list of middlemen, from shippers to processors, to meat cutters, to merchandisers. Their increased wages and operating costs are reflected in the price the consumer pays. There is a communication gap at present between the city man and the farmer, which well-directed information programs can help to overcome.

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\*Beef marketing tax, checkoff and assessment are here used as interchangeable terms, although some respondents stated a preference for one term over others.

This mimeograph was compiled from a recent survey by MSU graduate assistants, but the views do not necessarily reflect those of any staff member at Michigan State University.



## PROPOSED BEEF INDUSTRY COMMISSION--

## BACKGROUND NOTES

Purposes: A bill which proposes the establishment of a beef industry commission is at present being considered by the Michigan State Legislature. If passed, the bill would create an 11 member state beef industry commission within the Department of Agriculture. The commission's primary function would be to promote the sale of beef and beef products. To do this it would engage in promotion programs, research, consumer education and marketing programs in conjunction with the national livestock and meat board. It would also function in a liason capacity among the beef industry, food industry and consumers of the state.

Finances; The commission would have the power under the bill to impose an assessment (checkoff, or marketing tax) upon all sellers of cattle in the state. This amount would be up to one-tenth of one percent of their gross receipts. Sellers would be required to keep records of all purchases and sales, and pay the assessment monthly. (The existing scheme of 6¢ per head payment to the National Livestock and Meat Board, through the Michigan Livestock Exchange (refundable upon request) is not referred to in the bill; the question of what would happen to it is apparently

left open at this stage.) It is proposed under the bill that up to 50% of funds collected would be appropriated to the National Livestock and Meat Board.

Avenues for change: The bill allows for a referendum of sellers, after three years of commission operation, to determine if the commission should continue. Also, upon written petition from sellers, a referendum could be held to determine if the commission should continue.

Legislative moves: The bill passed the House of Representatives; it has not yet been decided upon in the Senate.

APPENDIX C

PAMPHLET: ARGUMENTS AGAINST  
A BEEF MARKETING TAX

ARGUMENTS AGAINST  
A  
BEEF MARKETING TAX

ARGUMENTS AGAINST A BEEF MARKETING  
TAX (CHECKOFF OR ASSESSMENT)\*

Preface: In a recent telephone survey over 300 farmers in southern Michigan were asked their views on the proposed marketing tax and beef industry commission. Most of the farmers contacted owned cattle. Approximately half were in favor of the issue, and approximately half were against it. From respondents' answers, two separate mimeographs have been prepared--this one, and one entitled Arguments in Favor of a Beef Marketing Tax (Checkoff or Assessment). In both, the words and phrases that respondents actually used have been retained as much as possible, consistent with avoiding redundancy among the main themes that respondents put forward--i.e., the following arguments are direct, or almost direct, quotations chosen from the interview responses.

--Beef prices are the highest they have been for 20 years--the market is satisfactory--there is no need to advertise beef. The situation for lamb and pork is different, in that to the consumer they are regarded as more or less alternative meats to beef. Beef is constantly in front of the public, and the consumer eats as much of it as he can afford. The few extra pounds that would be sold

through promotion and consumer education wouldn't be worth the added cost.

--At present, supplies of beef are short. What goes on to the market sells pretty well, and with the increasing spending-power of consumers, it is likely to stay that way. Over time this might change, but the need isn't there now and it doesn't warrant us paying a checkoff to promote beef.

--We don't need to create more white collar jobs. There are already too many middlemen supported by the farmer, in many cases receiving a higher net income for less work than the farmer. Whose interests would be looked after--those in administration, or ours? What would they know about problems in farming, and how responsive would they be to them? As well, there are a lot of questions left open about what the commission would do, and how the money would be spent.

--It sounds as though net returns to farmers would be increased, but instead they would be less. Either they will be absorbed by costs of administration, or what's left over will be so small as to prevent the commission from being effective. Some limited good could come from it, but farmers' experiences with bureaucracies are often that the benefits to farmers seem to evaporate.

--Supply and demand operate best with little interference from governments--although intervention of this type may be a function for meat packers or producer organizations. We are already paying a checkoff through the Michigan Livestock Exchange, the funds going to the National Livestock and Meat Board. This payment is optional, and it works well. We shouldn't have to pay any checkoff.

--There are too many taxes now. The small farmer is being squeezed, and can't afford to make more payments than those that are necessary. If beef promotion is really the best course to take, and if 51% of the producers agree on setting it up, that's ok--but if not, it shouldn't be imposed.

--There is a ceiling, in effect, on meat prices. With reasonable consumer demand for beef, and some sort of ceiling on prices present, there is no need to bother with advertising. It won't do much good.

--Similar schemes with other farm products don't appear to have benefited farmers much. The cherry tax doesn't seem to have helped the cherry growers.

--What about others paying for promotion designed to benefit the whole industry? Packers and stores have large markups. We're not able to do this, yet we're expected to provide the funds for the commission's activities.

--Prices of cattle are too high now for the feeder, and this will raise prices even more.

--The commission might not be aggressive enough in its promotion; also, it could tend to duplicate other advertising of meat, e.g. by stores. Therefore, in a sense, we would be "stuck" with the commission, and payments made to it.

--The diverse nature of the commission's programs suggest that implementation will be difficult. The ideals for the industry are fine, but how effective can they be? The last thing that we need is another tax that won't provide any benefits to the farmer or help increase his returns.

---

\*Beef marketing tax, checkoff and assessment are here used as interchangeable terms, although some respondents stated a preference for one term over others.

This mimeograph was compiled from a recent survey by MSU graduate assistants, but the views do not necessarily reflect those of any staff member at Michigan State University.



## PROPOSED BEEF INDUSTRY COMMISSION--

## BACKGROUND NOTES

Purposes: A bill which proposes the establishment of a beef industry commission is at present being considered by the Michigan State Legislature. If passed, the bill would create an 11 member state beef industry commission within the Department of Agriculture. The commission's primary function would be to promote the sale of beef and beef products. To do this it would engage in promotion programs, research, consumer education and marketing programs in conjunction with the national livestock and meat board. It would also function in a liason capacity among the beef industry, food industry and consumers of the state.

Finances: The commission would have the power under the bill to impose an assessment (checkoff, or marketing tax) upon all sellers of cattle in the state. This amount would be up to one-tenth of one percent of their gross receipts. Sellers would be required to keep records of all purchases and sales, and pay the assessment monthly. (The existing scheme of 6¢ per head payment to the National Livestock and Meat Board, through the Michigan Livestock Exchange (refundable upon request) is not referred to in the bill; the question of what would happen to it is apparently

left open at this stage.) It is proposed under the bill that up to 50% of funds collected would be appropriated to the National Livestock and Meat Board.

Avenues for change: The bill allows for a referendum of sellers, after three years of commission operation, to determine if the commission should continue. Also, upon written petition from sellers, a referendum could be held to determine if the commission should continue.

Legislative moves: The bill passed the House of Representatives; it has not yet been decided upon in the Senate.

## APPENDIX D

LETTER (WITH CARDS): LOW COST CONDITION

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY • EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN 48823

College of Agriculture  
and Natural Resources  
Education Institute  
Agriculture Hall

AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

August 29, 1972

Dear Farmer:

Currently we are preparing two brief publications, which will be distributed free of cost if you wish to obtain either of them.

The Michigan State Legislature has before it a bill which proposes a tax (checkoff or assessment) of approximately 20¢ to 40¢ per head on all cattle sold in Michigan. This would establish a commission to administer a program of beef promotion, consumer marketing, industry information, research and education.

There are varying opinions on this proposal, and in the interests of providing information on it we are preparing two mimeographs:


-ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A BEEF MARKETING (CHECKOFF OR ASSESSMENT)

and

-ARGUMENTS AGAINST A BEEF MARKETING TAX (CHECKOFF OR ASSESSMENT).

If you would like either or both, complete the enclosed business-reply card/s (postage paid) and your request will be forwarded shortly (free of cost).

Sincerely,



Carroll H. Wamhoff  
Acting Director  
College of Agriculture and Natural  
Resources Education Institute

CHW:klw

enclosure

## Sample of Enclosure Cards:

(please print)  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_   
zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me

ARGUMENTS AGAINST A  
BEEF MARKETING TAX  
(CHECKOFF, OR ASSESSMENT)

(please print)  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_   
zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A  
BEEF MARKETING TAX  
(CHECKOFF, OR ASSESSMENT)

APPENDIX E

LETTER (WITH CARDS): MEDIUM

COST CONDITION

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY • EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN 48823

AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

College of Agriculture  
and Natural Resources  
Education Institute  
Agriculture Hall

August 29, 1972

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There are varying opinions on this proposal, and in the interests of providing information on it we are preparing two mimeographs:

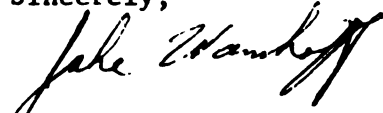
-ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A BEEF MARKETING TAX (CHECKOFF OR ASSESSMENT)

and

-ARGUMENTS AGAINST A BEEF MARKETING TAX (CHECKOFF OR ASSESSMENT)

If you would like to receive either or both, complete and stamp the enclosed card/s, and your request will be forwarded shortly (free of cost).

Sincerely,



Carroll H. Wamhoff  
Acting Director  
College of Agriculture and Natural  
Resources Education Institute

CHW:klw

enclosure

## Sample of Enclosure Cards:

(please print)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me

ARGUMENTS AGAINST A  
BEEF MARKETING TAX  
(CHECKOFF, OR ASSESSMENT)

(please print)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A  
BEEF MARKETING TAX  
(CHECKOFF, OR ASSESSMENT)



## APPENDIX F

LETTER: HIGH COST CONDITION

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY • EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN 48823

AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

College of Agriculture  
and Natural Resources  
Education Institute  
Agriculture Hall

August 29, 1972

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There are varying opinions on this proposal, and in the interests of providing information on it we are preparing two mimeographs:

-ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A BEEF MARKETING TAX (CHECKOFF OR ASSESSMENT)

and

-ARGUMENTS AGAINST A BEEF MARKETING TAX (CHECKOFF OR ASSESSMENT)

If you would like to receive either or both, your request will be forwarded shortly (free of cost)--write to:

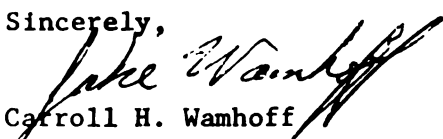
-(for Arguments in Favor of a Beef Marketing Tax)

M. Peterson  
527 South Kedzie Hall  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

-(for Arguments Against a Beef Marketing Tax)

L. Nash  
A202 Fee Hall East  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Sincerely,

  
Carroll H. Wamhoff  
Acting Director  
College of Agriculture and Natural  
Resources Education Institute

CHW:klw

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