

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION UTILIZED BY
CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL INTEREST GROUPS**

A Thesis

by

ELISA LYNN NOBLE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

August 2005

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Gary Briers
Committee Members,	Richard Cummins
	David Anderson
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ABSTRACT

Sources of Information Utilized by California Agricultural
Interest Groups. (August 2005)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Gary Briers

Existing interest group theory describes legislative decision-making as a communication process whereby interest groups research information on issues, combine this information with constituent opinions, and present the resulting information to legislators. Legislators then use this information in developing legislation. The original source of information used by lobbyists greatly impacts the interest group's ability to effectively represent its policy objectives in the decision-making process.

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate sources of information utilized by selected California agricultural interest groups. This study determined common sources used among selected California agricultural interest groups, how and why groups choose their sources, the role of trust in information source selection, and what purposes interest groups have for using the information.

Data from this study suggest lobbyists of California agricultural interest groups are primarily researching for lobbying purposes. Lobbyists acknowledged the importance of research in their lobbying work. Specifically, two main themes developed from the interviewees' responses: 1) lobbyists gather the political and technical

information needed to thoroughly understand an issue before lobbying on it, and 2) lobbyists find the appropriate information to support their organization's policy objectives.

The purpose of their research and the type of information needed drive how lobbyists research an issue and what information sources they utilize. Lobbyists rely on their previous experiences to determine which sources will provide them with the necessary information. Data from this study suggest four main factors that impact which information sources lobbyists choose to utilize: 1) what information is needed, 2) who their contacts and personal relationships are with, 3) how much they trust potential sources, and 4) other characteristics of the sources such as accessibility, quality and accuracy, brevity and readability, experience of source, current information, scientifically-based, sincere, and/or a source that provides needed pictures or graphics.

DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to Dr. William Browne, who passed away on April 19, 2005 after a long struggle with leukemia. Dr. Browne made many contributions to the agricultural policy and political process research fields. I discovered his extensive studies as I began researching my topic, and e-mailed him in hopes that he could provide some insight on my proposed research. What transpired was a lengthy exchange of e-mails, in which Dr. Browne shared with me his invaluable knowledge of the subject, history of research in the field, areas which required further investigation, theoretical frameworks of the topic, and methodology and interviewing advice. I was immediately, and continually, impressed by his enthusiasm for the subject and his willingness to help. While I never had the privilege of meeting Dr. Browne, it is evident that he was an excellent researcher and an amazing person. It is for these reasons that this manuscript is dedicated to his memory.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

California is the nation's leading agricultural state in terms of gross cash income, value of exports, and the diversity and number of commodities produced. Gross cash income from California agriculture was \$29.4 billion in 2003, with export value totaling \$7.2 billion. California produces more than 350 different commodities, including many specialty crops that are grown exclusively in California. There are about 78,500 farming operations in California, with an average farm size of 345 acres (California Agricultural Statistics Service, 2004, pp. 1-3). California's agricultural industry and community play a vital role in the production of food, fiber, flora, and forestry products for the state, nation, and world.

As the nation's leading agriculture state, California is at the forefront of legislation and policy related to agriculture. California agricultural interest groups play an important role in representing the agricultural industry and community in the legislative decision-making process. Research claims that lobbyists have essentially four roles in this process: "(1) connect an interest group with government; (2) communicate information; (3) persuade; and (4) monitor government activity" (Capell & Thomas, 2004, p. 155). Their study focused on the importance of the second role: "communicate information." The involvement of interest groups in legislative decision-making is often

This thesis follows the style of *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

described as a communication process whereby interest groups collect information on various issues, combine this information with constituent opinions, and present the resulting information to legislators. Legislators use this information in developing legislation (W. P. Browne, personal communication, April 30, 2004). The initial sources of information (in bold italics below) are what this study sought to identify. The entire communication process is seen in the model below:

Sources of Information → Interest Groups → Information (+Constituent Beliefs, etc.) → Legislators → Favored Legislation

(W. P. Browne, personal communication, October 30, 2003).

This study focused on the importance of information in legislative decision-making. Specifically, this study sought to identify information sources used and trusted by lobbyists of agricultural interest groups. Previous research (Bauer, de Sola Pool, & Dexter, 1972; Browne, 1988, 1990, 1995; Milbrath, 1963; Schlink, 1996) has shown information to be the most important resource that lobbyists provide to legislators. Milbrath (1963) stated, “the most widespread and tangible service [that lobbyists supply decision-makers] is providing information” (p. 307). While prior studies (Browne, 1988, 1995; Hamm, 1983; Schlink, 1996; Sulak, 2000) evaluated the role of information as it is transferred from interest groups to legislators, very little research has addressed the original sources utilized by interest groups. As the base of an interest group’s argument, the original source of information greatly impacts that group’s ability to effectively represent its policy objectives in the decision-making process.

Information Sources Used by Legislators

Research (Browne, 1995; Schlink, 1996) on information sources used and trusted by legislators is helpful in understanding information sources used by lobbyists.

Browne's 1995 study explored the selection of information sources by legislators.

Browne (1995) recognized that "members use information and sources of information as they engage in the tasks of representing people, places, groups, and various levels of policy ideas" (p. ix). Browne (1995) asked legislators about the importance of seven possible information sources, including constituents, interest representatives, USDA officials, other agency officials, recognized agricultural or policy professionals, news media, and professional or technical media. Seventy-seven percent of legislators reported that they selected issues to address based on constituent contacts. This is compared to only 11 percent who selected issues based on a combination of constituent and interest group contacts. In addition, constituents were ranked as the most important source for issue selection, determining issue position, trust, overall ranking of informants, and seeking out information (p. 111). Legislators value their constituents as an important information source (Browne, 1995; Browne & Paik, 1997).

Browne (1995) hypothesized that Congress was changing whom it relied on for information:

The agriculture domain has seen significant changes in relationships between information sources and members of Congress over time. The data set in this study show yet another shift in primary informants. Constituent informants appear to be replacing interest groups representatives, just as group leaders replaced partisan leaders in the 1920s. (p. 135)

Agricultural interest groups have been able to capitalize on this shift in information sources. The members of agricultural interest groups are ultimately constituents of a variety of Congressional representatives. Many of these groups are grassroots-based and are able to mobilize their members to lobby their Congressional representatives.

While constituents were ranked as the overall most important information source used by legislators, organized interests were decidedly identified as the “next most important” information source (Browne, 1995). Therefore, legislators reported interest groups were a more important information source than USDA, other governmental agencies, other agricultural professionals, news media, or technical media sources (Browne, 1995).

Schlink’s (1996) research examined the sources of information used by legislators, legislative aides, and lobbyists in the state of Texas. Her research revealed members of the state legislature to be the most important source of inside information identified by all three groups. Schlink (1996) stated “legislators and lobbyists perceived working together with contacts to solve problems as the most useful in learning where to get information” (p. 86). In her research conclusions, Schlink (1996) noted that “there is a need for an understanding of the process by which information is transferred from lobbyists to legislators and vice versa” (p. 82).

Trust and Credibility of Information Sources

Trust is a key factor in a legislator’s selection of information sources (Browne, 1995; Milbrath, 1963; Thomas, 2004). “When discussing the value of informants, those

in two-thirds of the offices spoke of trust as a criterion for listening to any information source” (Browne, 1995, p. 112). Interest groups should therefore consider the credibility of their own information sources. Selecting information sources is becoming increasingly important as inaccurate information becomes more widely available. The availability of inaccurate data has increased with the introduction of the Internet and other modern information technologies. Milbrath (1963) stated that lobbyists’ information must be credible, and that credibility is achieved by supporting information with research, data, and science. Legislators use information that lobbyists provide them for making legislative decisions, as well as for their own communications with constituents and the public. “If a lobbyist fails to provide reliable information, ...he or she rarely gets a second chance” (Browne, 1995, p. 112).

Often, legislators also seek to identify the original sources of lobbyists’ arguments and evaluate their credibility. Milbrath (1963) found that “[lobbyists] generally include research results as an integral part of their presentations” (p. 235). Milbrath’s study also showed that all respondents (lobbyists, congressman, congressional staff members) rated research very high as an important tactic in presenting information.

Legislators are inherently skeptical of interest groups. The very term “interest groups” suggests a specialized population seeking beneficial legislation. A legislator interviewed in Browne’s 1995 study was quoted, saying, “there is always a risk in listening to a lobbyist’s pitch” (p. 143). Browne’s 1995 research identified three primary criticisms legislators had about interest groups: 1) conflict between interest group

leaders and their grassroots members; 2) distrust, skepticism of interest groups' nationally determined policy, and interest groups' inability to explain how their proposals impacted others; and 3) lobbyists' concern only for their personal success, versus cooperating to reach a consensus.

Browne (1995) determined that "no [legislators] suggested that [interest] group representatives were dishonest, spread falsehoods, or lacked integrity. The lobbyists' problems were with what they represented and knew" (p. 139). Legislators criticized lobbyists for not understanding the issues, the local-versus-national dynamics, or the needs of members and constituents. Legislators wanted lobbyists to research their issues more thoroughly. The information sources lobbyists use for research will undoubtedly affect their understanding of the issues. Lobbyists ought to choose their sources carefully in order to enhance their credibility and effectiveness with legislators.

Possible Sources of Information Utilized by Lobbyists

Previous research (Browne, 1990; Salisbury, 1969; Salisbury, Heinz, Lauman, & Nelson, 1987) only alludes to possible sources of information utilized by interest groups. These possible sources of information include: 1) lobbyists' interaction with their organization's members and 2) communication between interest groups. Research (Browne, 1990; Milbrath, 1963; Salisbury, 1969) on lobbyists' interaction with the organizations they represent has focused primarily on the presence or absence of accurate interest representation, or the occurrence of "farming the membership." This term, "farming the membership," refers to lobbyists protecting their employment with

the organization by justifying their work to its members (Salisbury, 1969). However, Milbrath (1963) found that “members also serve as important sources of information for lobbyists” (p. 205).

Research involving the communication between interest groups primarily addressed the use of coalitions, and the fact that information is most commonly shared during collaborative efforts (Browne, 1988; Milbrath, 1963). Milbrath (1963) also found that communication between competing organizations is indirect, but that groups do regularly read others’ publications and gather information about opposing groups in order to prepare their own arguments.

In addition to interest group membership and communication between interest groups, one can predict that there are a variety of other possible sources of information utilized by agricultural interest groups. Other possibilities include the media, Internet, government agencies, educational and research institutions, consulting services, legal services, and many others.

Assuming any number of possible, accessible sources of information, how and why do interest groups select their sources? There has been little research regarding the rationale of information source selection and utilization by interest groups. Browne’s 1995 work suggested that lobbyists are purposeful in their selection of information

sources: “Agricultural lobbyists and activists are selective about more than just the spin, or biasing, they give their information. They avoid a considerable number of seemingly relevant arguments, types of information, issues, and entire public policy decisions” (p. xi). Browne (1995) noted that, “lobbyists’ selective use of information and selective attention to issues and policy decisions result from strategic considerations” (p. xi). Lobbyists undoubtedly have reasons for the information sources they choose to use. However, it is important to note that much of this rationale could be based more on the personal contacts, previous experience, and individual research methods of each lobbyist, rather than on processes or ideology of the interest group itself. These differences in individual research methods would be considered extraneous variables in an experimental study (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 358). However, this study did not attempt to identify interest groups by their research methods. Rather, I studied the purposive sample as a group in terms of their methods and selection of information sources.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate sources of information utilized by selected California agricultural interest groups. While there are a variety of possible utilized information sources, this study determined common sources used among selected California agricultural interest groups, reasons for utilizing various sources, and what ultimate purposes various groups have for using the information.

Research Objectives

The following research objectives were used to accomplish the purpose of the study:

1. Identify specific purposes for which lobbyists use this information (i.e., for lobbying/other political purposes, public education/awareness campaigns, responding to various member requests, etc.).
2. Identify sources of information used by lobbyists and their staff personnel (a list of possible sources will be compiled in advance).
3. Identify reasons why lobbyists utilize different types of information sources.
4. Identify common characteristics of information sources most frequently utilized by lobbyists.
5. Identify, specifically, the role of trust in the selection of information sources.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definitions

Policy Domain

The concept of a *policy domain* was introduced by Lauman and Knoke (1987) and further expanded by later researchers such as Browne (1990). A policy domain is a subject area within the policy-making process (i.e., the agricultural policy domain, the educational policy domain, the national defense policy domain, etc.). This is the same concept that Truman (1951) described as “group classifications” (p. 63).

Agricultural Interest Group

An *agricultural interest group* was considered an *interest group* within the agricultural policy domain. An *interest group* is “an association of individuals or organizations or a public or private institution that, on the basis of one or more shared concerns, attempts to influence public policy in its favor” (Thomas, 2004, p. 4). *Interest groups* will be considered voluntary, lobbying associations typed by membership, but representing any variety of issues within the agricultural policy domain (Browne, 1988; W. P. Browne, personal communication, July 29, 2004).

Lobbying and Lobbyists

Lobbying was defined as “the stimulation and transmission of a communication, by someone other than a citizen acting on his own behalf, directed to a governmental decision-maker with the hope of influencing his decision” (Milbrath, 1963, p. 8). Many definitions of lobbying involve communication processes as a key concept; Milbrath (1963) stated “all lobbying involves communication. Without communication, it is impossible to influence a decision” (p. 8). “Lobbying implies the presence of an intermediary or representative as a communication link between citizens and governmental decision-makers” (Milbrath, 1963, p. 7). Lobbying was studied as a communication process for the purposes of this study. Also, Browne (2004b) pointed out that, “in the United States, lobbying is generally agreed to be a First Amendment right, one that can be only minimally regulated” (p. 119). A *lobbyist* was defined as:

A person designated by an interest group to facilitate influencing public policy in that group’s favor by performing one or more of the following for the group: (1) directly contacting public officials; (2) monitoring political and governmental activity; (3) advising on political strategies and tactics; and (4) developing and orchestrating the group’s lobbying effort. (Thomas, Hrebenar, & Boyer, 2001, as cited in Thomas, 2004)

Thomas (2004) identified five types of lobbyists: “contract lobbyists; in-house lobbyists; government legislative liaisons; citizen, cause, or volunteer lobbyists; and private individuals, ‘hobbyists,’ or self-appointed lobbyists” (pp. 152-153).

Source of Information

“A source is an individual or an institution that originates a message” (Rogers, 2003, p. 204). This was the definition of *source of information* used for this study.

History of Interest Groups

Researchers (Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951) described how the interpersonal dynamics of society naturally led to the formation of interest groups. Truman’s (1951) basic theory was that society is complex, and therefore individuals will group with people who share their attitudes and beliefs. In fact, Truman (1951) stated, “in this respect all groups are interest groups because they are shared-attitude groups” (p. 33). Truman expanded on this premise in stating that norms of society are inevitably disrupted, thus prompting people to defend their beliefs. In order to enact change within society, groups of shared attitudes begin to lobby on their own behalf. In this way, shared-attitude groups start functioning as interest groups within society. In fact, Truman (1951) defined an “interest group” as “any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes” (p. 33). Browne (1998) stated,

interest groups are known by three necessary characteristics. One, they voluntarily bring together members and supporters, or joiners. Two, these joiners share a common characteristic that differentiates them from others. Three, the group’s purpose is to represent issues of public policy that fit the joiners’ common concerns. That’s their interest. Without all of the three, whatever an organization is, it isn’t an interest group. (p. 13)

Interest groups generally take on what Truman (1951) called an “inevitable gravitation toward government” (p. 104). Truman (1951) stated, “at various stages in their development, interest groups have become political,” (p. 104) and “if and when it makes its claims through or upon any of the institutions of government, it becomes a political interest group” (p. 37). This shift to political involvement occurs when interest groups can no longer settle disparities amongst themselves, and need to protect what they believe (Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951). Interest groups then begin to lobby governing institutions that have broader power with which to enact change. In most cases, national governments have been the common target of this lobbying. Truman (1951) stated,

collections of individuals interacting on the basis of shared attitudes and exerting claims upon other groups in the society usually find in the institutions of government an important means of achieving their objectives. That is, most interest groups become politicized on a continuing or intermittent basis. In this respect, therefore, such organized groups are as clearly a part of the governmental institution as are the political parties or the branches formally established by law or constitution. (p. 502)

Truman (1951) discussed interest groups as an integral part of the governmental process. Because, he claimed, everyone has interests that they will share with some people and not share with others:

Whether we look at an individual citizen, at the executive secretary of a trade association, at a political party functionary, at a legislator, administrator, governor, or judge, we cannot describe his participation in the governmental institution, let alone account for it, except in terms of the interests with which he identifies himself and the groups with which he affiliates and with which he is confronted. (p. 502)

It makes sense that people would attempt to effect change by joining with like-minded individuals and attempting to influence government as a group.

Most interest groups have two main purposes: 1) providing benefits to their members, and 2) lobbying on behalf of their members. Browne (1988) discussed the challenge interest groups face in balancing lobbying efforts with providing member services. Member-driven interest groups are ultimately supported and at the will of their members. Therefore, “lobbying, when it is necessary, usually results from an extension of an organization’s broadly defined purpose, including services, rather than from a desire to be the best lobby in Washington” (Browne, 1988, p. 23). Nownes, Baumgartner, and Leech (2004) identified six major developments that have occurred in the interest group universe since the 1960s: “the proliferation of interests, the dominance of business and occupational interests, the rise of public interest groups, the expansion of corporate activity, the rise of institutional interests, and the rise of political action committees (PACs)” (pp. 115-117).

In addition to interest groups, there are a variety of other influences involved in the policy-making process. Salisbury (1984) discussed the “dominance of institutions,” including entities such as “individual corporations, state and local governments, universities, think tanks, and most other institutions of the private sector” (p. 64). Salisbury distinguished between these “institutions” and “membership or purposive groups” (p. 75), and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each in the political environment. While these institutions are different from the membership-based interest groups studied in this research, they do play a role in the policy-making process. It is

important to note this distinction here, as the influence of institutions also affects how interest groups operate.

Thomas (2004) stated that “in addition to promoting the political interests of their members or organization, interest groups perform several important functions for political systems” (p. 10). These included, “aggregation and representation of interests, facilitating government, political education and training, candidate and public official recruitment, sources of campaign finance and sources of political party electoral support” (Thomas, 2004, pp. 10-11).

History of Agricultural Policy Domain

Lauman and Knoke (1987) discussed interest group theory in the context of “policy domains.” Instead of investigating each group in relation to the entire interest group lobby, they suggested evaluating groups within their “policy domain level.” In other words, groups should be analyzed in context of the issues they address, or within subject areas. Examples of policy domains include agriculture, education, energy, health care, defense, and labor, among others.

The agricultural policy domain has grown and diversified over time. Truman (1951) discussed the formation of farm organizations, describing them as “a bewildering array of interdependent movements” and “a succession of movements of national scope” (p. 87). Most farm organizations organized around interests in various commodities. Truman distinguishes between agricultural associations and trade associations, but

recognized that most agricultural associations operate like trade associations or are affiliated with a similar type of business group. Truman (1951) stated,

the best over-all picture of farm associations, however, can be drawn from the successive development of three national organizations that are still operating, the National Grange Order of the Patrons of Husbandry, the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union, and the American Farm Bureau Federation. All three emerged out of the increased interactions of farmers in response to intense disturbances of their accustomed behavior. (p. 87)

Browne (1988) discussed four “policy types” of private agricultural interest groups: “1) agrarian protest groups, 2) multipurpose organizations, 3) single-issue organizations, and 4) single-project organizations” (p. 58). All such farm lobby groups are seeking favorable policy for their farmer members.

Over the years there have been a wide variety of societal disturbances that have prompted farm organizations to organize and to act. After the Civil War, commercial farming spread throughout the North and the West, causing many changes in the way farmers did business. Truman (1951) observed,

the accompanying specialization [of commercial farming] exposed farmers to the unpredictable insecurities stemming from changes in the market, accentuated by the discriminatory practices of the railroads and by various speculative activities. By the 1870's the farmers of both East and West found themselves dependent upon the vagaries of marketing institutions, transportation facilities, and prices. (pp. 87-88)

In this way, many farm organizations began as farmer rebellions and protest groups (Browne, 1988, 2004; Cigler & Hansen, 1983; McConnell, 1953; Truman, 1951).

McConnell (1953) pointed out that until about the 1950's, farmers had been the majority; so, much of the farmer protest movements grew out of a shift in power and the rise in capitalism. Also, “the great farmer movements of the nineteenth century....were

made not merely against injustice to farmers but against injustice to all common men. Agrarianism spoke in the name of all. The enemy which it challenged was power” (p. 1).

Browne and Lundgren (1987) and Cigler and Hansen (1983) discussed why farm protest groups often are not sustained over time. Unless protest groups begin offering member services, they often disband once their primary issue is addressed or ignored. As Cigler and Hansen stated, “economic hard times may spawn new interest groups, but they cannot sustain them” (p. 103). The original grassroots farmer movements that survived became more politicized and eventually moved their efforts to Washington as the need grew to be seen and heard at the nation’s capital. McConnell (1953) stated, “whether by seeking control of a state legislature or a congressional district, or merely by sending letters to Congress to ask for increased appropriations for country roads, most farm organizations have acted politically” (p. 145). Today’s agricultural organizations are still politically motivated by many of the same types of issues that first initiated their organizations.

However, Browne (1988) pointed out that agricultural policy no longer entails just farm policy, or basic farm maintenance. The growth and diversification of the agricultural policy domain has led to a complex array of issues that affect and include many other segments of society. Now, “issues of nutrition, safety, quality, and domestic assistance have become institutionalized in agriculturally related legislation” (Browne, 1995, p. 3). Much of this is also due to the sheer growth in the number of lobbyists involved in the policy making process. “The number of registered lobbyists, including

part-timers and non-Washingtonians, more than doubled between 1976 and 1986 – from 3,420 to 8,800. Approximately 20 to 25 percent of these lobbyists represented some type of farm, food, fiber, or related trade issue” (Browne, 1988, p. 7). Baumgartner and Leech (1998), in their review of interest groups listed in the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, reported that “the total number of interest groups [increased] from fewer than 6,000 in 1959 to more than 23,000 in 1995” (p. 102).

Browne (1988) explained why agricultural policy involves so many aspects of society:

Although fewer than 3 percent of U.S. residents work on farms, nearly one in five workers is involved in some facet of farm production and supply or food and fiber distribution and service. Workers involved in these enterprises contributed 17.9 percent of the gross national product for 1984....Defined this way, the agricultural lobby represents most economic and social interests. (p. 4)

There are many competing interests within the agricultural policy domain. Some of these competing interests are stereotypical, such as environmental groups versus production farm groups. However, the complexity of issues within the agricultural policy domain creates divisions even between historical farm production groups. Differences in policy positions are especially evident between general farm organizations and specific commodity groups. Browne (1988) stated,

the intensive policy focus of the commodity groups displaced in importance the more diffuse demands of the general farm organizations. The heterogeneous memberships of the Farm Bureau and the Farmers Union apparently produce a variety of viewpoints, competing interests, a larger number of issues, and greater difficulty in compromise. Corn farmers or wheat growers can more easily coalesce around basic commodity programs. (p. 9)

Farm programs are one of the primary issues within the entire agricultural policy domain. Support for farm programs, especially subsidies, has been a contentious issue

for many years. Orden, Paarlberg, and Roe (1999) argued that these support programs are a result of “macroeconomic and macropolitical events – such as the Great Depression or the Second World War – that can induce large, discontinuous changes in policy regimes” (p. 51). Once policy has been established and maintained over a period of time, it is much more difficult to reform. Such is the case, Orden et al. argued, with farm support programs. “It is easier for organizations to defend programs in existence than to create new ones, because it is easier to motivate political action to preserve tangible benefits that are already being received” (Orden et al., 1999, p. 52). Browne (1988) agreed that the Depression era was the climax of specific support afforded farmers through agricultural policy. Browne (1988) also noted, “farmers had been identified by a wide spectrum of observers as special in their social, political, and economic importance” (p. 238). Browne (1988) elaborated on the numerous volatile conditions that created instability for the farmer. The presence of these conditions initiated government intervention in the form of marketplace regulations and farm support programs.

The multiplication of agricultural interest groups has caused these groups to focus on specific issues or policy priorities. Browne (1990, 1998) discussed this trend as the developing of “issue niches” by agricultural interest groups. Each agricultural interest group typically has a few very specific policy goals they are lobbying each legislative session. This has created a “new universe of organized interests,” as Browne (1988, p. 249) described it. Browne (1988) claimed the agricultural policy domain “has grown into one of a great many specialized interests, most of which are not regular

policy players, organized around highly specific goals” (p. 249). This environment has made it difficult for agricultural interest groups to present a united front for comprehensive agricultural policy reform. As Browne (1988) stated, “farmers are troubled, in the main, by their own representatives’ collective inability to resolve their differences about the direction agricultural policy should take” (p. 251). The agricultural lobby has created some unique challenges for itself, as groups with varying policy priorities simultaneously attempt to influence the legislative process.

Different organizations have different lobbying priorities based on their membership. “Groups move politically to protect what they know members value” (Browne, 1988, p. 24). This member-driven political action of individual agricultural organizations has often caused a lack of consensus amongst the agricultural lobby as a whole. In fact, “lobbying in agriculture is often said by policymakers to be uneven, biased, inconsistent, hit-or-miss, inattentive to detail, unconcerned with major issues, and too incremental” (Browne, 1988, p. 24). American agriculture is a complex system that involves many levels of transportation, processing, packaging, and distributing before products harvested on the farm reach the end consumer. In addition, there are many local, state, and federal laws and regulations that affect each step of this process. This complexity of issues combined with the membership goals of individual organizations often creates a lack of uniform policy objectives across the agricultural policy domain.

The origins of the agricultural policy domain, its evolution over time, and the diversity of interests that it represents today provide an excellent foundation from which

to study interest group theory (Browne, 1988, 2004a). “Scholars have frequently used agriculture-based explanations in generalizing about American politics, especially in the area of interest groups” (Browne, 1988, p. xii). Much historical research regarding interest group theory has been conducted within the agricultural policy domain.

Theoretical Framework

There exists a variety of theories regarding the role of interest groups in the policy making process. These theories provide the theoretical framework from which to study the legislative decision-making process. Key theories discussed include elitism versus pluralism, the iron triangle concept, group theory, exchange theory, transactional theory, and lobbying as a communication process. Finally, I examined how these theories impact the strategies and techniques of interest groups in the policy making process.

Elitism versus Pluralism

Theory regarding interest groups involves two primary schools of thought: elitism and pluralism (Browne, 1990; Dahl, 1961; Jordan, 2004; Polsby, 1963; Schattschneider, 1960). Achievement of the pluralist theory is dependent on all interest groups having the knowledge and ability to represent themselves in the decision-making process (Dahl, 1961). Conversely, the elitism theory suggests that a select group of political interests have ultimate influence on the legislative decision-making process, and

therefore pluralism (or equal representation of all interest groups) is not possible (Schattschneider, 1960).

Pluralism would enhance the quality of the flow of communication in the legislative decision-making process because all interest groups would be represented. While elitism might expedite the flow of information, it would not allow for complete representation of all interest groups.

The sources of information that interest groups utilize in acquiring knowledge and developing legislative positions can greatly impact the adequate representation and ultimate success of these groups. This research does not intend to prove or disprove either the pluralism or elitism theory. However, the sources of information that interest groups have access to and the reasons why they choose some sources over others affect the success of pluralism, elitism, or any combination of the two theories.

Original pluralist theory claimed that pluralism was achieved when a large number of different interest groups were involved in the decision-making process (Browne, 1990; Dahl, 1961). This theory is extrapolated to mean that numerous policy options would develop and effectively create an environment of pluralism. However, researchers (Jordan, 2004; Polsby, 1963; Schattschneider, 1960) have repeatedly argued this claim. Elitism theory proposes that true pluralism is simply not possible. Researchers (Jordan, 2004; Polsby, 1963; Schattschneider, 1960) claim that the inherent nature of politics does not allow for true equal representation of all interests in the legislative decision-making process. Therefore, a social, economic, and political elite dictate the actions of legislators and the outcomes of legislation.

There are certainly flaws in both theories. Pluralism is a more idealistic theory, while elitism is the more pessimistic theory. Many researchers (Browne, 1990; Jordan, 2004; Lauman & Knoke, 1987; Salisbury, 1984) question the pluralist theme due to its complexity and idealistic nature. The pluralist interest group theory is called into question on two primary accounts: the lack of true representation of all interest groups in the decision-making process (external) and the lack of true membership-driven policy positions of these interest groups (internal). Elitism, on the other hand, is increasingly challenged by the information age and the vast amount of knowledge and information that is available. This access to information undoubtedly increases the knowledge and enhances the representation of interest groups. In addition, Salisbury (1969) stated, “over time there will appear more and more different, diverse, specialized groups in the political arena as the processes of social fission continue” (pp. 4-5). More available knowledge and a continuing proliferation of interest groups allow legislators to be made aware of more possible policy ideas. These factors provide the environment necessary for pluralism to be realized.

The elitism/pluralism debate of interest group theory has become more complex as researchers (Browne, 1988; Jordan, 2004; Lauman & Knoke, 1987) have accounted for the many and changing dynamics of the legislative decision-making process. For example, Lauman and Knoke (1987) introduced the term, “elite interest group pluralism” in their attempt to more accurately describe interest group theory and the decision-making process (p. 377). The concept of elite interest group pluralism is based on the notion that true fragmentation of interests among all possible groups does not exist.

However, this fragmentation of interests which facilitates pluralism is found among the most powerful, or elite, interest groups. Other variations of the pluralism theory include neopluralism, reformed pluralism, critical pluralism, and anti-pluralism (Jordan, 2004).

Browne's (1990) research supports a political environment of "organized interests and their issue niches" (p. 477). Browne (1990) contends that interest groups identify issue niches in order to pursue clearly identifiable goals and avoid conflict with competing groups. This organizational structure supports the notion of pluralism through a new line of reasoning. Browne (1990) defends pluralism on the premise that pluralist theory is attained by the fragmentation and interactive negotiation that occurs between interest groups. In other words, while each and every group may not be directly represented on Capitol Hill, their interests will still be represented through another group or by another means. Consequently, the pluralist theory of equal representation is maintained. "In this way, the ideas that are valued – if not actively promoted – by all citizens can come into play as government makes decisions under interest-group pressure" (Browne, 1990, p. 479).

Interests represented in the agricultural policy domain have increased and diversified immensely over the past 30 years. As a result, most current research (Browne, 1988, 1990; Jordan, 2004) supports a form of the pluralistic theory:

The resulting proliferation of groups, both in number and type, has brought a multifaceted lobby with widely varying points of view to agricultural policymaking. Because critical views – if not active lobbying efforts – confront one another regularly, a form of pluralistic representation that has not been present since the 1920s has been restored to agricultural policymaking. (Browne, 1988, p. 250)

Pluralism theory refutes the idea that American government is simply a “pressure-group-driven model” (Browne, 1988, p. 252). Elitism is rejected because narrow special interests are not responsible for all policy initiatives. Browne (1988) stated, “even the most established interests operate in a setting in which key policy initiatives originate from many sources” (p. 213).

The complexity of the legislative process combined with the diversity of interest groups involved supports the basic concept of pluralism in today’s policy-making process. However, Jordan (2004) pointed out that “pluralism as a practical system cannot deliver satisfactory outcomes for all interest groups” (p. 46). In other words, the existence of pluralism does not guarantee that all interest groups will achieve their objectives all the time. What it does guarantee is that all interests will be represented throughout the process. Jordan (2004) went on to explain, “even the promise that different views can be addressed given time is little compensation for frustrated organizations, as there is no guarantee that their political position will improve in an acceptable period of time” (p. 47). Pluralist theory does not suggest that all interests will win; rather, it suggests that all interests will contribute to policy outcomes.

The Iron Triangle Concept

The iron triangle concept claims that the collective negotiations of three entities control all policy outcomes. These three entities are legislative committees, government regulatory agencies, and interest groups (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Browne, 1995, 2004; Gais, Peterson, & Walker, 1984; Hamm, 1983; Hardin, 1978; Knott & Miller,

1987; Rourke, 1976; Thomas, 2004). In discussing agricultural price policy, Hardin (1978) stated,

like much other American policy, [it] has been strongly influenced by what I shall call bureaucracy and others call ‘the triangle of power,’ or ‘political subsystem’ ...bureaucracies are found in centers of semi-independent power that arise in certain agencies plus the strategic legislators, committee chairmen usually, plus the affected and organized interests. (p. 467)

The iron triangle concept is described by other terms such as “‘whirlpools’, ‘cozy triangles’, ‘subgovernments’, [and] ‘subsystems’” (Hamm, 1983, p. 380).

Legislative committees provide a forum for comprehensive debate on specific policy topics. Many key policy decisions are made in committees where there is more time to consider each piece of legislation. Legislative committees are an important venue through which lobbyists pursue their political goals. In exchange, interest groups provide the financial and electoral support legislators need (Browne, 1995). Therefore, it behooves legislator committee members to listen to and consider the requests of these constituency groups.

Governmental regulatory agencies are, by law, neutral entities whose purpose is to implement the laws passed by the legislature. However, many political scientists argue that these agencies are in fact actively involved in the political process. “Agencies provide channels of ‘access’ through which segments of the public can advance or protect their interests in the executive branch in much the same way as they pursue their goals through other governmental institutions” (Rourke, 1976, p. 1). Cooperation with a well-organized constituency, such as an interest group, can help these agencies achieve their policy goals. Unfortunately, this can cause the intended consumers of the agencies’

services to be neglected. Agencies can establish a power base by serving interest group constituencies. Rourke (1976) observed, “strength in a constituency is no less an asset for an American administrator than it is for a politician, and some agencies have succeeded in building outside support as formidable as that of any political organization” (p. 42). In return for supporting agencies, interest groups receive more lenient interpretations of laws, less regulation, and fewer fees and fines. This cooperation that interest groups receive from agencies is sometimes termed “agency capture.” Regulatory agencies also cooperate with legislative committees by providing policy options and execution in exchange for funding and political support.

As well-organized groups of constituents and consumers, interest groups clearly have some clout with both regulatory agencies and legislative committees. In return, interest groups are expected to support regulatory agencies in their policy goals, and support legislators and committee staff with electoral and financial support.

Browne (1995) claimed that the power of the agriculture committees is primarily due to the integrated support from interest groups and the USDA. Browne admitted his observations support the iron-triangle theory of political decision-making. Orden et al. (1999) also noted the role of the iron triangle in supporting farm policy:

It is thus not surprising to find the Agriculture Committees of Congress and the USDA often working in conjunction with the leaders of farm organizations to keep the government programs in place. The three-sided nexus (farm lobbyists, congressional Agriculture Committees, and the USDA) that so often works to perpetuate existing farm programs has traditionally been described as an ‘iron triangle’. (p. 53)

While Browne (1986, 1995, 1998) acknowledged the historical concept of the iron triangle theory, he goes on to refute the theory and claim it as not feasible in today's policy arena. "The response to constituent demands in an already crowded universe of policy activists explodes the iron triangle metaphor. Neither that metaphor nor any of its extensions are any longer appropriate analytical tools for summarizing complex political relationships" (Browne, 1995, p. 134). This claim corresponds well with the increasing growth and diversity of the agricultural policy domain. Gais et al. (1984) agreed that, "there may never have been a period when the American political system was organized around a pervasive set of politically autonomous iron triangles" (p. 182). Browne (1986) stated, "As a cozy iron triangle, the decisional structure [of agricultural politics] has been outgrown rather than broken" (p. 197). Even if these iron triangle interactions don't occur, there are undoubtedly relationships between legislative committees, regulatory agencies, and interest groups that impact the policy-making process.

Group Theory

The basis of group theory is that individuals cannot be understood apart from their association with others (Hayes, 1986; Latham, 1952; Mohr, 1973; Olson, 1965; Truman, 1951). Society itself is associational, or comprised of groups. These groups have many internal and external dynamics, both of which are constantly changing. The internal dynamics consist of the structure of groups: who is in leadership, and who is being led. The external dynamics involve groups interacting with their environments

and with other groups. Simple groups typically become more complex the longer they operate within their environments.

Groups provide individuals a forum to express their values. Latham (1952) said, “the chief social values cherished by individuals in modern society are realized through groups” (p. 1). The purpose of group organization is the security and representation of the group’s members. By their very nature, groups contain a concentration of human resources. It is primarily the grouping of these resources that allows groups to exert themselves in society. Latham (1952) stated, “self-expression and security, ideology and interest, are sought by the group members through control of the physical and social environment which surround each group, and in the midst of which it dwells” (p. 29).

“Official groups” within society are entities such as the legislature, regulatory agencies, registered organizations, and others of the like (Latham, 1952). Mohr (1973) discussed how the structure of “official groups,” such as organizations, affects the goals that those organizations pursue. Mohr described two possible methods by which organizations set goals: 1) goals are collectively determined by the membership through a structured process, or 2) goals are determined for the organization by one or two individuals. Mohr suggested that, while the first situation is ideal, the second is likely more prevalent. Mohr also distinguished between “reflexive,” or internal, goals and “transitive,” or external, goals of organizations.

Like all other groups in society, legislatures “show a sense of identity and consciousness” (Latham, 1952, p. 37). Latham specifically mentioned that the constant power struggle between the judiciary, executive, and legislative branches of government

is no different from the struggles between any other groups. He asserts that we need to consider the legislative process within the context of societal group dynamics.

Legislative debate, then, “shows policy emerging as a by-product of group actions and interactions” (Latham, 1952, p. 221).

Group theory maintains some applicable concepts when applied to the role of interest groups in the legislative process. However, various researchers (Browne, 1988) take issue with the confines of interest group theory. Browne (1988) claimed group theory is too restrictive because it does not consider the role of individuals outside of bona fide groups. In addition to de facto lobbyists, consultants, and other individuals who impact the legislative process, there are many loosely structured groups that are involved besides just formally organized associations. “A great deal of tolerance must be allowed for the diverse structural characteristics assumed by those private interests that emerge as active lobbies” (Browne, 1988, p. 243). Browne (1988) asserted that group theory does not recognize all relevant private interests that are active in the policy process.

What is true of group dynamics is that they are always changing. Interest groups involved in the legislative decision-making process are no exception. Truman (1951) stated, “perhaps the most significant feature of group politics is that it is a dynamic process, a constantly changing pattern of relationships involving through the years continual shifts in relative influence” (p. 65). Interest groups evolve over time, both in their internal and external relationships. This continuously affects interest groups’ policies, goals, and success in achieving their legislative objectives.

Exchange Theory

Exchange theory describes the internal group dynamics of interest groups (Baumgartner & Leech, 2004; Browne, 1988; Salisbury, 1969; Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951). While group theory provides the rationale for why and how people form groups, exchange theory specifically explains the relationships between interest groups and their members. Interest groups provide lobbying and other member services in exchange for dues paid by members. Salisbury (1969) explained, “group organizers invest in a set of benefits which they offer to potential members at a price – joining the group” (p. 1).

Salisbury (1969) distinguished between the leadership of interest groups, or “organizers” or entrepreneurs,” as he called them, and the dues-paying members. Salisbury stated, “in order to sustain a group organization, it is necessary to maintain an adequate flow of benefits both to members *and* to the organizers themselves. In short, there must be a mutually satisfactory *exchange*” (p. 25). Salisbury (1969) claimed that exchange theory assumes group members have “public policy-related interests” that they believe can be met through the organization’s objectives and efforts.

Most agricultural organizations employ a grassroots, membership-driven policy process whereby group members determine policy objectives for the organization. Browne (1988) said, “few organizations move far from their members or patrons in deciding their policy options, both responding to and cultivating their views on pending issues” (p. 246). However, Salisbury (1969) contended that group leaders will often pursue their own objectives for the organization, regardless of priorities established by the membership. In fact, Salisbury (1969) stated, “a significant portion of what we

observe to be lobbying activity by group leaders may result not from a mandate derived from membership demands but from the personal choices and values of the group leaders” (p. 28). This supports Salisbury’s claim that group leaders spend a lot of time “farming the membership.” “Farming the membership” refers to attempts by group leaders to rally support from the membership for their own policy objectives.

Benefits provided to members typically range from insurance discounts and other goods and services to the potential public policy decisions that result from lobbying efforts. “An encompassing literature has shown that these services as well as an organization’s involvement in policy decisions are responsible for keeping successful interest groups together” (Browne, 1988, p. 243). There is, however, much debate over how much the lobbying efforts of interest groups are responsible for growing or maintaining group membership. Many researchers (Baumgartner & Leech, 2004; Browne, 1988; Salisbury, 1969) question how much concern interest group members have for the political activity of the groups they belong to. In fact, Browne (1988) claimed, “establishing or maintaining an organization on the basis of lobbying potential alone is clearly a risky business” (p. 19). Browne’s 1988 research concluded that “political action is by no means the central feature of [agricultural interest groups’] organizational lives” (p. 18). Therefore, most interest groups must offer other economic or tangible benefits of group membership.

Conflict within interest groups is one of the key dynamics of exchange theory. No group or organization is immune to the conflicting views that are inherent between

leaders and members, or between different factions of the group. Truman (1951)

provided this example:

Potential conflicts within the Farm Bureau between farmers who must buy supplementary feed and those who produce excess feed grains for the market, between soybean growers and dairymen, even between traditional Republicans and loyal Democrats, create serious political problems for the interest group. (p. 510)

Unfortunately, it is often this internal conflict that prevents interest groups from accomplishing any real objectives, both politically and otherwise. “If anything, the diversity of internal subinterests within these groups restricts rather than facilitates active position taking on important issues” (Browne, 1988, p. 248). These internal dynamics, or exchanges, within interest groups greatly impact the lobbying ability of the organization. Truman (1951) stated, “a group’s relation to governmental institutions is partly determined by its own internal relationships” (p. 108). Researchers (Baumgartner & Leech, 2004; Browne, 1988; Truman, 1951) argue that exchange theory, or internal group dynamics, is the root of successful or unsuccessful lobbying.

Transactional Theory

Transactional theory is similar to exchange theory. Exchange theory explains the symbiotic relationship between interest groups and their members; transactional theory describes a similar relationship between lobbyists and policymakers (Bauer et al., 1972; Browne, 1988, 1998; Hamm, 1983; Hayes, 1981). Lobbyists provide information and electoral and financial support to policymakers, in exchange for favorable legislation. Bauer et al. (1972) explained,

the appropriate general model [of this relationship] is not one of linear causality, but a transactional one, which views all the actors in the situation as exerting continuous influence on each other. All the actors are to some extent in a situation of mutual influence and interdependence; *A*'s influence on *B* is to some extent a result of *B*'s prior influence on *A*. (pp. 456-457)

Central to this transactional relationship between lobbyists and policymakers is a power struggle for who needs the other's services more. Transactional theory states that both parties need the benefits provided to them by the other. Therefore, Bauer et al. (1972) claimed that transactional theory refutes the idea that policymakers are controlled by the pressure groups that lobby them. In fact, the researchers proposed that legislators have a great deal of independence in choosing which constituents or interest groups to listen to or bargain with. This contradicts the pressure-group model of politics, which purports that special interests control issues and force policymakers to pass or fail legislation at their command. Hayes (1981) suggested an appropriate transactional theory is "one that recognizes the interdependence of legislators and lobbyists without underestimating the significance of groups in the policy process" (p. 4).

Policymakers need various services and information from interest groups. Browne (1988) said interest groups can provide some of the "valuable information about farm, food, and foreign policy conditions, problems, trends, and issues that would otherwise not be immediately forthcoming in a useful form from either bureaucrats or academic specialists" (p. 53). This information is important to policymakers both for identifying issues and for acting on legislation. Policymakers must "be prisoners of their information; they can only represent what they know about" (Hayes, 1981, p. 58). Policymakers need to be informed and active on issues important to their constituents.

In exchange for the information and support provided them, policymakers must respond to the requests of interest groups. Bauer et al. (1972) claimed, power held by a policymaker is based on the “favours he can perform. If [this power] is removed from his hands...the legislator is deprived of ways to win the support of constituents” (p. 456). Interest groups are typically seeking legislation favorable to the industries they represent. For example, interest groups “approach government in quest of benefits in such forms as tariffs, quotas, subsidies, and licensing authority....[They may also] actively seek regulation in an effort to shore up cartels, restrict market entry, and avoid antitrust prosecution” (Hayes, 1981, p. 18). However, interest groups are often only as successful insofar as they can relate their requests to those of the legislator’s constituents. Legislators often feel more directly accountable to the constituents in their districts than to specific interest groups. Browne (1995) pointed out, “interest group information is, then, a service both less useful and more suspect in an individualistic Congress. Consequently, members of Congress more routinely talk to those from [their districts]” (p. 150).

Legislators need to serve their constituents just as interest groups need to serve their members. Hayes (1981) commented,

the theory is...transactional. Legislators and lobbyists are viewed as interdependent insofar as they both survive by appearing to deliver benefits to their respective constituencies, an imperative that creates the conditions for a mutually beneficial exchange. Congressmen thus retain a great deal of freedom even as interest group leaders obtain – or what is more important, appear to obtain – benefits for their memberships. Typically, then, the relationship is less one of pressure than of symbiosis, as legislators and lobbyists find they have far more interests in common than in conflict. (p. 5)

Interest groups and legislators are constantly influencing each other. One party's communication with the other is undoubtedly influenced by a previous interaction. Bauer et al. (1972) asserted that neither party is "pressured," but rather there is a continuous exchange of information and bargaining between interest groups and legislators.

Hayes (1981) discussed the transactional process between legislators and interest groups as "political markets subject to their own laws of supply and demand" (p. 18). The requests and answered requests exchanged between the two parties do simulate the supply and demand of such a "political market" theory. "Legislatures as political markets must satisfy all the same underlying assumptions for efficient operation as apply to economic markets, such as perfect information and perfect competition on both the demand and supply sides" (Hayes, 1981, p. 5). Hayes agreed with Bauer et al. (1972) that this is a true transactional relationship, with neither legislators nor interest groups being controlled by the other.

Information is the key commodity exchanged between interest groups and legislators. As Browne (1988) stated, "there are few surprises about the transactions between agricultural lobbyists and policymakers. As was the case when Lester Milbrath first studied the Washington lobby, transactional relationships are based primarily on the exchange of information" (p. 53). In discussing the importance of this information to the legislative process, Hayes (1981) commented, "ultimately we are left with little hope but to improve the knowledge base of decisions" (p. 5). Ideally, the transactions between

legislators and interest groups facilitate a comprehensive information base from which to make legislative decisions.

Lobbying as a Communication Process

Milbrath (1963) most extensively discussed lobbying as a communication process. The flow of information and communication in the legislative decision-making process is also demonstrated by Congressman Emanuel Celler's definition of lobbying: "the total of all communicated influences upon legislators with respect to legislation" (Milbrath, 1963, p. 185).

Thomas (2004) observed, "the process of lobbying involves three stages that may overlap in practice: first, gaining access to policy makers; second, creating an attitude among policy makers conducive to the group's goals; and third, influencing policy makers in the group's favor" (p. 6). Each of these stages is part of the larger communication process.

Rogers (2003) defined communication as "the process by which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding" (p. 18). As a communication process, lobbying combines factual information with constituent opinion in an attempt to influence legislation. Rogers (2003) distinguished, "mass communication channels are primarily knowledge creators, whereas interpersonal networks are more important in persuading individuals to adopt or reject" (p. 305). The communication process is essentially the dynamic interaction of two variables: 1) information and 2) relationships between people.

Information

The lobbying communication process acts as a medium for information exchange. Rogers (2003) stated, “a communication network consists of interconnected individuals who are linked by patterned flows of information” (p. 337). Milbrath (1963) claimed “a lobbyist is not so much a doer as he is a receiver of information” (p. 260). Information has value in the policy-making process.

Information is valued as a commodity that interest groups can provide to legislators. All legislators are constantly in need of current and relevant information on any number of topics. Truman (1951) claimed, “access is likely to be available to groups somewhat in proportion to their ability to meet this need” (pp. 333-334). This is because legislators use the information to make very important decisions. Researchers (Capell & Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951) discussed the two primary types of information that legislators need: “technical knowledge that defines the content of a policy issue; and political knowledge of the relative strength of competing claims and of the consequences of alternative decisions on a policy issue” (Truman, 1951, p. 334). Technical knowledge includes information about commodities, markets, management practices, trends, and other industry-specific facts. Schlink (1996) found that “legislators perceived research to be the most effective technique or specialty in terms of effectiveness in achieving results on animal agricultural issues” (p. 87). This technical knowledge is the type of information that interest groups and trade associations can best provide to legislators. Industry groups’ command of this knowledge often provides them access to legislators who are seeking such information. Capell and Thomas (2004) noted

that employee lobbyists typically have extensive technical knowledge about their industry, while contract lobbyists are more versed in the political process.

Legislators receive information from both lobbyists and constituents in a variety of ways. Methods of communication include personal visits, mail, telephone, fax, e-mail, and many others. Bauer et al. (1972) noted, “visitors and telephone-callers have an impact similar in character to that of mail. They are listened to as indicators of feeling back home” (p. 436). Bauer et al. also recognized personal contacts, fellow legislators, and legislative staff as important sources of information for legislators.

Relationships between People / Contacts

Information is useless unless it is exchanged between people. Rogers (2003) defined a communication channel as “the means by which messages get from one individual to another” (p. 18), and as “the means by which a message gets from the source to the receiver” (p. 204). Lobbying as a communication process depends on these channels and the personal relationships associated with them. “Decision-makers also want such [trusting] relationships because they need the reliable information, services, and pleasant trusting associations they can find with lobbyists” (Milbrath, 1963, p. 287). Research (Browne, 1988; Hansen, 1991; Milbrath, 1963; Schlink, 1996; Sulak, 2000) has shown the importance of reliable contacts between lobbyists and legislators. “You get much better information from people who know you, know what your interests are, and know that they can trust you” (Milbrath, 1963, p. 260). The decisions that legislators make are certainly influenced by the relationships and contacts they have. Truman (1951) explained,

the politician-legislator is not equivalent to the steel ball in a pinball game, bumping passively from post to post down an inclined plane. He is a human being involved in a variety of relationships with other human beings. In his role as legislator his accessibility to various groups is affected by the whole series of relationships that define him as a person. (p. 333)

Relationships Determine Access

Relationships determine the degree of access that interest groups have to the governmental structure and the governmental decision-making process (Browne, 1988; Hansen, 1991; Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951). Truman (1951) stated, “toward whatever institution of government we observe interest groups operating, the common feature of all their efforts is the attempt to achieve effective access to points of decision” (p. 264). Thomas (2004) noted that “the separation of powers system operating in the United States fragments power, and thus there are many more points of access” (p. 143). Hansen (1991) agreed that “members of Congress establish close working relationships with policy advocates; those advocates thereby gain access” (p. 11). Truman (1951) discussed in detail the many avenues by which interest groups can gain access to, what he terms, “key points of policy determination” (p. 319). Such avenues include political parties, elections, the legislature, legislative committees, the executive office, the administration, and the judiciary branch. Hansen’s (1991) “theory of access” stated, lawmakers grant interest groups access, then, only when circumstances fulfill two conditions: (1) when interest groups enjoy competitive advantage over their rivals in meeting congressional reelection needs; and (2) when legislators expect the issues and circumstances that established the competitive advantage to recur. (p. 5)

Characteristics of interest groups determine how successful they will be in gaining access. Such characteristics include group status in the social structure, knowing “the right people,” the skills and qualifications of the group’s leaders, and the effective organization of the group (Truman, 1951). Also, “the relation between group organization and access is not, it should be noted, a matter just of being organized but equally of being organized appropriately for the problem at hand” (Truman, 1951, p. 269). Effective and efficient organization and communication is key to organizations seeking access.

Truman (1951) asserted that the most important level of government structure for interest groups to gain access to is the legislative process. This is because, “especially in the United States, the legislature, far more than the judiciary or the executive, has been the primary means of effecting changes in the law of the land” (Truman, 1951, p. 321). In fact, the legislature and the legislative committees are where interest groups traditionally focus the majority of their efforts. This is also why “[interest] group activities in legislatures is reflected in a popular synonym for the political interest group, the word *lobby*” (Truman, 1951, p. 321).

Researchers (Hamm, 1983; Milbrath, 1963; Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951; Zeigler & Peak, 1972) discussed the importance of legislative access for interest groups, and recognized that some groups are more successful in this effort than others. Truman (1951) stated, “in some forms [access] provides little more than a chance to be heard; in others it practically assures favorable action” (p. 321). Gaining access is clearly only the first step in being able to actually influence legislation.

The structure, procedures, and leadership of legislative committees have a major impact on the ability of interest groups to gain access. Truman (1951) reminded us that the primary debates and decisions on issues occur in committee hearings, not in the main legislative sessions:

The effect that this system of committees has upon access stems not only from the relative finality of their actions but also from the comparative independence that they enjoy. These bodies are subject to little or no co-ordinating influence from any source. A committee majority, or even its chairman alone, effectively constitutes a little legislature, especially in so far as it blocks action on a proposal. Therefore access to a committee majority or even to a chairman may give a group effective advantage in the legislature itself, to the virtual exclusion of its competitors. (p. 331)

Browne (1988) agreed that, “research stresses the importance of congressional committees and subcommittees and the accompanying decline in the influence of central legislative leaders” (p. 46). Interest groups seeking access in a committee are at the mercy of the committee leadership. Committees have the ability to control an issue by the amount of time they allow for debate and through other tactics. The access of interest groups is therefore limited largely by the committee process.

Lobbying Strategies and Techniques of Interest Groups

The interest group theories discussed previously all influence the strategies and techniques that lobbyists use. Browne (1985) stated,

the strategic approach that lobbyists take to influence policymakers is a product of both state level political activity that also defines what interests become represented and those particularized needs endemic to lobbying that demand interaction between knowledgeable and committed group representatives and targeted state officials. (p. 460)

Lobbying as a communication process specifically discussed how lobbyists can gain access to the policy-making process. Many researchers (Browne, 1988, 1998; Truman, 1951) point out that legislative access is only the first step toward influencing legislation. The techniques and strategies of interest groups greatly impact the success of getting favored legislation passed. Truman (1951) said, “access must be made effective, and an important determinant of the interest group’s success is, therefore, the skill with which it and its ‘members’ in the legislature are able to exploit their position. This is a matter of techniques” (p. 352). Browne (1988) stated, “lobbying must be discussed...as an encompassing political strategy that involves many tactics” (p. 242).

The techniques lobbyists employ are generally based on the information and relationships available to them. Browne (1988) explained,

policy decisions are influenced as organized private interests either directly manipulate or assist policymakers in handling three sets of variables: the formal and informal rules by which policy is made, positive knowledge or the analysis of policy problems and their solutions, and value knowledge about the emotional and traditional appeal of certain policy proposals and goals. (p. 241)

These “variables” are managed in different ways by lobbyists. Most researchers (Browne, 1985, 1988; Milbrath, 1963; Schlink, 1996; Truman, 1951) discussed the relationships lobbyists have with legislators as one of their most important tactics.

Beyond these relationships, there are many other strategies that lobbyists employ. As Browne (1988) stated,

on the one hand, agriculture represents an issue area in which an old style of close and established relationships dominates policymaking....lobbying within [the agricultural issue area] probably confronts the broadest array of political problems possible, and its practitioners probably employ the widest gamut of strategies and tactics found anywhere. (p. 6)

An extensive, but not exhaustive, list of lobbying strategies employed by interest groups includes: constituent pressures, grassroots mobilization, protests and demonstrations, political action committees and funds, consultants, communication with legislative committees, communication with legislative staff, communication with regulatory agencies, communication with the executive branch, research and supplemental evidence, litigation, media, public awareness campaigns, issue selection/policy agenda, coalitions, and compromising with opposing groups (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Browne 1985, 1988, 1998; Hamm & Hogan, 2004; Schlink, 1996; Sulak, 2000; Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951).

Interest group lobbyists often call upon the group's membership to mobilize and contact legislators regarding a given issue. Interest groups recognize this grassroots approach as a tactic that resonates with legislators. Browne (1988) and Schlink (1996) discovered legislators pay particular attention to communications from their constituents. "Most farm groups rely heavily on constituents to plead the organization's case. Those who come from back home on a group's behalf bring with them a sense of what district voters want, or so legislators believe" (Browne, 1988, p. 89). Schlink (1996) found that "lobbyists believed having an influential constituent or friend contact legislators to be [the] most effective [strategy]" (p. 87). Political Action Committees (PACs), campaign contributions, and electoral support are other methods by which interest groups can gain policymaker support. Legislators are unlikely to neglect these groups that contribute to their campaigns and policy agendas.

Consultants are being used increasingly more by interest groups. With the growing complexity of issues surrounding agriculture, even the best-staffed interest group cannot know the details of every issue. Therefore, specialized consultants are often contracted to assist with lobbying, analyzing, or public relations efforts. Browne (1988) said, “consultants and [non-profit educational or research] foundations have come to play an especially important and permanent role in shaping the focus of agricultural policy debates” (p. 166).

Besides direct communication with legislators, lobbyists know that communication with legislative staff, legislative committees, and regulatory agencies are also important tactics (Browne, 1988; Hamm, 1983; Milbrath, 1963; Schlink, 1996; Thomas, 2004; Zeigler & Baer, 1969). Schlink (1996) stated “lobbyists established contacts with staffs of committees and staffs of members of state legislators very often and saw them of equal importance” (p. 86). A lobbyist will often first interact with legislative staff when attempting to influence a legislator. Almost all information intended for a legislator will first be funneled through one of their staff members (Browne, 1988; Schlink, 1996). The results of Schlink’s (1996) research suggested “lobbyists should work with a specific legislative aide in order to influence a specific legislator” (p. 97).

Communicating with legislative committees is another important aspect of influencing policy. Agricultural interest groups have historically interacted the most with agricultural committees and subcommittees. These agricultural committees still handle a majority of the issues surrounding agriculture; however, Browne (1988) also

pointed to the importance of appropriations committees. “Appropriations committees, with their agricultural subcommittees, are of vital concern when programs must be funded, since some financial limitations will affect the degree to which services and benefits can be provided” (Browne, 1988, p. 45). The growing diversity of agricultural issues, combined with budgetary concerns, has required agricultural interest groups to lobby a wider breadth of legislative committees and regulatory agencies. While the USDA is still the primary agency responsible for agricultural programs, regulatory growth and expansion of agricultural issues have increased the number of governmental agencies that agricultural groups interact with. Browne (1988) gave examples such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Transportation, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Trade Representative’s office. Browne (1988) stated that, while lobbying the leadership was not as important as lobbying the legislature or regulatory agencies, it was still important “in the total dynamics of policymaking” (p. 51).

Research is increasingly relied on in the lobbying process. Legislators respond to arguments that are based on scientific studies. Therefore, “lobbyists search diligently for supplemental evidence in support of group positions both inside and outside agriculture” (Browne, 1988, p. 44). Science-based research is weighted heavily in the policy decision-making process. This research is equally as important if and when lobbyists pursue policy objectives through litigation. Browne (1988) observed that “according to [interview] respondents, litigation as a proactive lobbying tactic gains more proponents

each year” (p. 44). While lobbying styles may change, the research-based content of these arguments will most likely remain central to the process.

Interest groups commonly use public relations and media campaigns to promote their policy objectives. Browne (1988) stated, “if carefully coordinated and able to strike a responsive chord, public relations campaigns can bring awareness of an issue or policy option directly to the public and to the media-conscious policymakers by forcefully dramatizing it” (p. 47). Public relations efforts generate public awareness as well as influence policymakers. These public relations efforts remain key lobbying strategies.

Before an interest group can roll out a media campaign or begin lobbying, they must internally select their issues, or set their policy agenda. Issue selection is a fundamental lobbying tactic in and of itself (Browne, 1998). Lobbyists strategically choose issues they believe are important, are necessary, or are easy to win. Browne (1988) observed, “organizations are most likely to structure their agendas on the basis of winnable policy demands, and an ability to win seems to be greatly determined by an interest’s expertise, recognition of the issue at hand, and acceptance by policymakers” (p. 201). The policy agendas of interest groups are the first of many lobbying strategies employed throughout a legislative session.

The lobbying strategies for promoting an issue are different from the lobbying strategies used to defeat an issue. “When the lobbying goal entails defeating a proposal or reforming a current program, strategies for working with members often change. Soliciting one or more spokespersons remains the preferred method” (Browne, 1988, p.

46). In general, lobbyists indicated that defeating a piece of legislation was not as time-intensive as promoting a piece of legislation. When interest groups proactively sponsor legislation, they must spend more individual time with the legislator who carries their bill. They also must spend time informing other legislators about the issue and generating support.

One way lobbyists can more efficiently garner support for their issues is by working with other interest groups. Coalitions are an extremely important strategy used by interest groups (Browne, 1988, 1998; Sulak, 2000; Truman, 1951). Truman (1951) said, “rarely can any single group achieve its legislative objectives without assistance from other groups” (p. 362). Coalitions are often formed around specific issues, but they can be temporary or permanent, formal or informal, large or small. “Lobbyists share information and contacts, work toward mutually agreeable positions, and jointly plan strategy” (Browne, 1988, p. 51). While interest groups recognize the importance of coalitions for accomplishing policy goals, there are many challenges associated with forming coalitions. The individual goals, structures, and personalities of interest groups cause conflict in coalition relationships. Nonetheless, individual groups form these coalitions “in pursuit of a policy which bears some substantive relation to the interests of each” (Truman, 1951, p. 363). Therefore, compromise is central to the success of coalition efforts. Interest groups must compromise amongst themselves when forming a coalition, before attempting to influence policy. Browne (1988) noted that, “to overcome uncertainty, lobbyists negotiate with other private interests at least as much as they do with policymakers” (p. 51). A classic example of agricultural interest groups

compromising and forming coalitions with environmental groups is explained by Orden et al. (1999):

In Congress, although members from farm districts were fewer in number than ever before, they found a new logrolling partner to help defend farm programs: the environmental lobby, which had emerged from the 1970s with considerable political clout. It was something of a challenge for the farm lobby to overcome the mistrust between farmers (protective of their private property rights) and environmental activists (ready to impose sharp governmental regulations). Yet, the advantages seen by some farm groups from idling land to boost prices dovetailed neatly with the interests of environmentalists in idling land to reduce soil erosion, groundwater contamination, and loss of wildlife habitats. (p. 77)

Not all of the individual policy goals of every interest group can be realized through the policy process. Compromise must happen at every level. Truman (1951) stated, “even a temporarily viable legislative decision usually must involve the adjustment and compromise of interests” (p. 392).

Despite the extensive use of coalitions amongst agricultural interest groups, many researchers argue that these coalitions are not effectively used to address broader agricultural policy reform. Browne (1988) observed, “coalitions of multiple interests have not been important vehicles for resolving macrolevel – or even mid-range – policy differences that divide agriculture” (p. 168) and “there is little sense of a collective system of representation in American agriculture” (p. 167). Agricultural interest groups vary widely in the types of commodities and issues they represent, and, therefore, in the policy priorities they pursue.

Many factors influence the strategies and techniques that lobbyists use. One of the most notable is the characteristics specific to the state or national government they are lobbying. Browne (1985) stated, “lobbying, it seems, must reflect how state

government operates rather than a set of techniques always appropriate to a specific occupation” (p. 466). Browne (1988) also observed that “group strategies and tactics – or the style of lobbying – may vary considerably under different political circumstances” (p. 53).

Truman (1951) discussed how the differences in national and state governmental structures affect the methods and success of interest groups. He specifically mentioned the importance of interest groups gaining access to committees. This access is often more difficult to achieve at the state level because “state legislative sessions are shorter and less frequent and since many State legislators perform their duties on a part-time basis, there is usually less opportunity for prolonged committee consideration in the States” (Truman, 1951, p. 331). The role of committees in the state legislatures varies widely. In some, their place is roughly similar to that of the congressional committee, whereas in others it is sharply different. Truman (1951) discussed how equal representation of states in the U.S. Senate “has allowed agricultural interest groups that are predominant in many thinly populated States more points of access in the Senate than urban groups whose members are concentrated in a few populous States” (p. 322).

How districts are drawn, both for state and national governments, affect the make-up of the legislature, and therefore how lobbyists must approach it. Browne (1985) observed, “different styles of lobbying and interaction emerge which are supported by state-specific definitions, or norms, about appropriate relationships between lobbyists and policymakers” (p. 466). Government dynamics specific to different legislatures affects the ease of access and the lobbying strategies used by

lobbyists. Schlink (1996) recognized the need for more studies investigating the dynamics of legislative decision-making processes at the state level.

Not all researchers credit the strategies and techniques of lobbyists for their success or failure in achieving policy objectives. Orden et al. (1999) discussed how political, economic, and social environments over time have sustained the success of farm lobby groups. Orden et al. claimed that the success of agricultural interest groups has been due to these environments, rather than any specific lobbying techniques. The researchers primarily discussed the role of farm lobby groups in protecting farm programs. Orden et al. claimed that a shrinking farm population has not decreased the clout of farm lobby groups, primarily because these groups are well organized and self-serving. The researchers' primary argument for farm policy reform was that most of the current U.S. farm programs are no longer necessary. They claimed that current farm policy is not determined by interest group competition or by compromises that result from political discussions. The researchers asserted that the occurrence of historical events, and the policy that resulted, has facilitated the success of farm lobby groups. Orden et al.'s thesis was that the environment and dynamics of the political process has not allowed current farm policy reform to transpire as it should.

Browne (1988) agreed that,

when policymakers of the 1930s decided to make farm economic policy by assigning benefits to distinct commodity producers, they unwittingly set into motion a rewards process that policymakers later would adjust to for better monitoring. Private interests would also react and adjust to the process to get what they could from government. (p. 240)

However, Browne (1988) continued by stating,

there is no evidence, however, that these organized interests have ever had the influence, individually or collectively, to set the policy agenda within agriculture or adjust it. The blame seems to fall on the policy process, of which interest groups are just a part. Any such blame...should be assigned to a factor long addressed by the traditions of political science, the structure by which policy decisions are made. (p. 240)

Regardless of which entities may have influence, there are political, social, and economic dynamics that impact the success of interest groups in influencing the policy-making process. Thomas (2004) stated,

interest groups do not develop or operate in a vacuum. The development of an interest group system, the types of groups and interests that exist, and the way they attempt to influence public policy are determined by historical, geographical, cultural, social, economic, political, governmental structural and other factors. (p. 67)

Interest groups are an integral part of the political environment; they both influence and are influenced by other entities within the process.

Theoretical Framework and Sources of Information Utilized by Interest Groups

As mentioned in the introduction, the involvement of interest groups in the policy-making process is described by Browne (personal communication, October 30, 2003) as a communication process:

Sources of Information → Interest Groups → Information (+Constituent Beliefs, etc.) → Legislators → Favored Legislation

Most of this study's theoretical framework is associated with the latter stages of this communication process. However, elitism versus pluralism, the iron triangle concept,

group theory, exchange theory, transactional theory, and lobbying as a communication process are all theories that relate to information sources used by lobbyists.

Most of the research (Browne, 1988, 1990, 1998; Milbrath, 1963; Salisbury et al., 1987; Thomas, 2004) related to lobbying as a communication process has studied the dynamics of communication between lobbyists and legislators. However, these findings can be extrapolated to the interactions that occur between lobbyists and the information sources they use. The lobbying communication process between lobbyists and legislators was described as the interaction of information and personal relationships, or contacts. This dynamic is also true of the interaction between lobbyists and their sources of information. While some sources are easily accessible, many involve personal relationships, or knowing whom to contact for information. Browne (1988) observed, “the lobbyist simply asks, usually on a case-by-case basis, ‘whom shall I contact and why?’” (p. 43). This observation was made in reference to a lobbyist’s effort to influence the legislature; however, lobbyists likely ask the same question in their attempt to contact sources and gain information.

Relationships and personal contacts were discussed as the primary determinant of an interest group’s access to the legislative process. An interest group’s access to information sources is based on many of the same factors as its access to the legislative process. It could be argued that an interest group’s access to information sources is equally as important as its access to the legislative process. An interest group needs adequate and correct information to have any success in lobbying the legislature. Access

is clearly important at all stages of the policy-making process, including the initial gathering of information by interest groups.

The strategies and techniques of lobbyists reveal more about how information is gained, analyzed, and transferred as part of the policy-making process. Just as the techniques lobbyists use are based on the information and contacts available to them, the sources of information they use are based on these same two factors. The majority of lobbying strategies and techniques discussed are also avenues by which lobbyists can gain information initially or throughout the process. Constituents, members, consultants, legislative committees, legislative staff, regulatory officials, research, litigation, media and public relations efforts, internal issues selection processes, and coalitions can all be sources of information for lobbyists.

I sought to identify the sources of information utilized by California agricultural interest groups, as well as the rationale and process of this selection. The findings will contribute to the broader theoretical framework and existing theories regarding interest groups.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative, exploratory approach was used in this study. The research design was aligned with Glaser and Strauss' (1967) "grounded theory." Grounded theory is defined as "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2). This study design supported the use of the constant comparative method of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 2002). Grounded theory is an inductive research method whereby the researcher collects and analyzes data in an effort to develop theory.

The research design was intended to facilitate the collection of data regarding California agricultural interest groups and the sources of information they utilize. From these data, theory was developed regarding the process by which California agricultural interest groups select sources of information. This theoretical development will, ideally, be integrated into existing theory regarding the communication process used by interest groups.

Qualitative research has some inherent weaknesses in terms of objectivity and quality of participants' responses. The participants had control over the responses, and I had to be careful to remain objective when reporting these results. This exploratory research was also challenging due to the open-ended nature of the questions; responses varied greatly between participants. I was vigilant to not identify an interest group by its

participant's responses. In addition, participant responses could represent the participant's own opinions, and not necessarily the overall identity of the interest group he or she represented. Finally, Patton (2002) stated, "the challenge of qualitative data lies in making sense of massive amounts of data" (p. 432).

Conversely, "one of the strengths of qualitative analysis is looking at program units holistically" (Patton, 2002, p. 228). "A qualitative research design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of whatever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry. Qualitative designs continue to be *emergent* even after data collection begins" (Patton, 2002, p. 255). Thus, a primary strength of this research design was the immense amount of detailed, thorough data that it provided. This exploratory, interview-based research should provide meaningful data to the study of interest group theory.

Population and Sample

A purposive sample was selected for this research. Patton (2002) stated,

what would be 'bias' in statistical sampling, and therefore a weakness, becomes intended focus in qualitative sampling, and therefore a strength. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling (p. 230).

Purposeful sampling is also known as purposive or judgment sampling.

The purposive sample was comprised of agricultural interest groups representing the top ten agricultural commodities in California. These top ten agricultural commodities were determined in terms of economic profitability based on data from the

California Agricultural Statistics Service. The top ten commodities provided a diverse sample of California's total agricultural production: milk and cream, grapes (all), nursery, lettuce (all), cattle and calves, almonds, strawberries, flowers, tomatoes (all), and hay (all).

I purposefully selected the groups with the advice of Jack King, Manager of the National Affairs and Research Division at the California Farm Bureau Federation. Mr. King served as a gatekeeper in helping me identify an appropriate sample. Mr. King works closely with these groups and was therefore able to provide me with advice on developing a representative sample of the top ten commodities in California. I chose not to include any state commodity boards or commissions because these groups are quasi-governmental, and are therefore under certain restrictions regarding their lobbying abilities. The groups initially chosen, and the commodities they represent, included: Western United Dairymen (milk and cream), California Association of Winegrape Growers (grapes), Wine Institute (grapes), California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers (nursery), Western Growers Association (lettuce, strawberries, tomatoes, hay, etc.), California Cattlemen's Association (cattle and calves), Blue Diamond Growers (almonds), California Association of Flower Growers and Shippers (flowers), California Tomato Growers Association (tomatoes), California Alfalfa and Forage Association (hay), and the California Farm Bureau Federation (all commodities). However, this sample changed as I familiarized myself with the population.

The original intent was to interview only employee lobbyists of agricultural interest groups in California. However, I discovered that, for various reasons, some of

these groups employ contract lobbyists. And, many of these contract lobbyists represent more than one agricultural interest group. As expected, the employee lobbyists and contract lobbyists know each other and often work together. By talking to various lobbyists, I was able to gain an understanding of who represents what in California's agricultural lobby. In this way, I determined which lobbyists would provide a quality representation of the top ten agricultural commodities in California. Table 1 summarizes the lobbyists interviewed by commodity. A total of 15 interviews were conducted. Twelve of the 15 interviewees were registered lobbyists. The other three were not registered because their roles in their respective organizations are more administrative; therefore, they do not work a sufficient percentage of their time on activities for which the law requires registration.

Table 1

Purposive Sample of Lobbyists Interviewed by Primary Commodities

CA Value	Commodity	Interest Group/Organization	Interviewee
1	Milk and Cream	Western United Dairymen	Gary Conover
2	Grapes, All	The Gualco Group, Inc. (representing California Association of Winegrape Growers)	Jack Gualco
		Wine Institute	Mike Falasco
3	Nursery	Kahn, Soares & Conway, LLP (representing California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers)	Louie Brown
4	Lettuce, All	Western Growers	Jasper Hempel
5	Cattle and Calves	California Cattlemen's Association	Susan LaGrande
6	Almonds	Agricultural Council of California (representing Blue Diamond Growers)	Don Gordon
7	Strawberries	Western Growers	Jasper Hempel
8	Flowers	California Cut Flower Commission	Rich Matteis
9	Tomatoes, All	Agricultural Council of California (representing California Tomato Growers Association, Inc.)	Don Gordon
		Western Growers	Jasper Hempel
10	Hay, All	California Grain and Feed Association	Rich Matteis
		California Seed Association	
		Agricultural Council of California	Don Gordon
	All Commodities	California Farm Bureau Federation	Jack King
			Pam Giacomini
			Cynthia Cory
			Roy Gabriel
			John Gamper
			Anthony Francois
			George Gomes

As mentioned, some of these lobbyists represented more than one agricultural organization. This allows many lobbyists to be familiar with a variety of issues affecting the agricultural industry, which in turn enhanced their responses to interview questions. Table 2 indicates the agricultural organizations represented by each lobbyist interviewed.

Table 2

Lobbyists Interviewed by the Agricultural Organizations They Represent

Interest Group/Organization	Groups they Represent (if applicable)	Person Interviewed
Western United Dairymen		Gary Conover
California Cattlemen's Association		Susan LaGrande
Agricultural Council of California	Agrilink Foods	Don Gordon
	Alliance of Western Milk Producers	
	Allied Grape Growers	
	Apricot Producers of California	
	Blue Diamond Growers	
	Butte County Rice Growers Association	
	Calavo, Inc.	
	Calcot, Ltd.	
	California Association of Winegrape Growers	
	California Canning Peach Association	
	California Cattlemen's Association	
	California Fig Institute	
	California Planting Cotton Seed Distributors	
	California Poultry Industry Federation	
	California Tomato Growers Association, Inc.	
	California Wool Growers Association	
	Cal-Pure Pistachios	
	Cal/West Seeds	
	Central California Almond Growers Association	
	Certified Farmers' Markets of Sacramento	
	CoBank	
	Dairyman's/Land O'Lakes	
	Diamond of California	
	Dos Palos Cooperative Gin, Inc.	
	Fruit Growers Supply Company	
	Hazelnut Growers of Oregon	
	Laton Cooperative Gin, Inc.	
	Mid-Valley Cotton Growers, Inc.	
	Pacific Coast Producers	
	Raisin Bargaining Association	
	San Joaquin Valley Hay Growers Association	
	San Luis Obispo County Farm Supply Company, Inc.	
	South Valley Gins, Inc.	
	Squab Producers of California	
	Sunkist Growers, Inc.	
	Sun-Maid Growers of California	

Table 2 Continued

	Sunsweet Growers, Inc.	
	Sutter Basin Growers Cooperative	
	Tule River Cooperative Dryer, Inc.	
	Valley Fig Growers	
	Visalia Cooperative Cotton Gin	
	US AgBank, FCB	
	Westside Farmers Cooperative Gin, Inc.	
Wine Institute		Mike Falasco
The Gualco Group, Inc.	California Association of Winegrape Growers	Jack Gualco
	Agricultural Council of California	
	California Association of Pest Control Advisors	
	SunMaid Raisins	
	Imperial Irrigation District	
	Kern County Water Agency	
	Modesto Irrigation District	
	Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District	
	San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority	
	Solano County Water Agency	
	other non-agricultural business entities	
(see names of organizations)	California Grain and Feed Association	Rich Matteis
	California Seed Association	
	Pacific Coast Renderers Association	
	Central Valley Project Water Association	
	California Fisheries & Seafood Institute	
	California Warehouse Association	
	California State Floral Association	
	California Pear Growers	
	Pacific Egg and Poultry Association	
	California Bean Shippers Association	
	California Grape Rootstock Improvement Commission	
	California Egg Industry Association	
	Buy California Marketing Agreement	
	California Association of Wheat Growers	
	California Cut Flower Commission	
	California Aquaculture Association	
Western Growers		Jasper Hempel
Kahn, Soares & Conway, LLP	California Citrus Mutual	Louie Brown
	California Cotton Growers Association	
	California Cotton Ginners Association	
	California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers	
	Nisei Farmers League	
	California Grape and Treefruit League	
	Western Plant Health Association	
	California Agricultural Aircraft Association	
	Alliance of Western Milk Producers	
	California Apple Commission	
	California Asparagus Commission	
	California Avocado Commission	
	California Cut Flower Commission	
	California Date Commission	
	California Forest Products Commission	
	California Grape Rootstock Improvement Commission	
	California Kiwifruit Commission	
	California Pepper Commission	
	California Pistachio Commission	
	California Rice Commission	
	California Rice Industry Association	

Table 2 Continued

	California Sheep Commission	
	California Tomato Commission	
	California Walnut Commission	
	California Wool Growers Association	
	Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission	
	Mendocino Wine Growers Alliance	
California Farm Bureau Federation	All Commodities	Jack King
		Cynthia Cory
		Pam Giacomini
		Tony Francois
		Roy Gabriel
		John Gamper
		George Gomes

Measurement Procedures / Instrument

The research instrument (see Appendix A) was an interview guide that consisted of seven open-ended series of questions. Some questions had multiple parts, or addressed more than one aspect of a single concept. A list of possible information sources was compiled before the interviews, in order to provide participants with possibilities and to stimulate other ideas. See Appendix B for the list of possible sources.

Overall, the seven interview questions addressed the five objectives of this study. Questions one and seven provided the interviewer with a general understanding of the interest group and its role in the agricultural policy domain. This information helped to compare responses between interest groups, and to evaluate each participant's responses within the context of this study. Questions two, three, four, five, and six each specifically addressed one of the five study objectives.

The interview guide did not distinguish between state and national issues, in an effort to better understand the entirety of the lobbyists' methods and issues. Most of the interviewees were lobbyists who lobby on behalf of interest groups at the state level. However, many of these lobbyists also address issues and efforts of national scope.

The interview guide was an unpublished, untested instrument. The design was reliable as other researchers have used this form of interview procedure when conducting exploratory studies (Browne, 1988, 1990, 1995; Dahl, 1961; Lauman & Knoke, 1987; Milbrath, 1963; Salisbury et al., 1987). In addition, the instrument was developed through the advice and recommendations of researchers who have conducted similar studies.

Some of the instrument guides used by previous researchers included specific answer options for the interviewees to choose from. However, even these interview guides maintained some open-ended questions and allowed for additional comments beyond the specified answer options. The interviews for this study were face to face. The open-ended nature of the interview questions did create some ambiguity and lack of response from the interviewees. It was therefore the role of the interviewer to stimulate interest and probe for information during the interview processes.

Data Collection

Overall, data were gathered in three ways: 1) interviews, 2) document analysis, and 3) persistent observation. The interviews provided the bulk of the data. "The purpose of interviewing...is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective.

Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

The interviews were standardized open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002). Two primary reasons for this method were: “1) the exact instrument used in the evaluation [will be] available for inspection by those who will use the findings of the study...[and] 2) analysis [will be] facilitated by making responses easy to find and compare” (Patton, 2002, p. 346). All interviews were conducted using the interview guide, and were about one hour long. However, if the participant required additional time to answer questions, that time was allowed. The interviews were audiotaped and the proceedings were transcribed accordingly. Member checking was done by mailing each typed interview proceeding to the respective participant to confirm that the data reflected the participants’ intended responses.

Interview participants were contacted by letter, telephone, and/or e-mail to request their participation in the study and to schedule interview times. Interviews were conducted at the agricultural interest group’s main offices or other locations that were convenient for each participant.

The triangulation trustworthiness criterion of credibility, transferability, and dependability was achieved through peer debriefing and member checking. The use of triangulation helps ensure data validity, and strengthens a study by combining methods (Patton, 2002). Confidentiality was ensured as I used the same interview guide when interviewing all participants. No personal identification was placed on the results in

order to ensure confidentiality. All results were coded and only group data were reported in the findings.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is based on the researcher immersing himself/herself in the data, or being grounded in the data, in order to identify categories and relationships as they emerge. “Grounded theory is meant to ‘build theory rather than test theory’” (Patton, 2002, p. 489). Grounded theory supports the constant comparative method of research analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using the four steps of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method is a method of data analysis that uses “explicit coding and analytical procedures” to systematically develop theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 102). The four stages of the constant comparative method include: “1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, 2) integrating categories and their properties, 3) delimiting the theory, and 4) writing the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105). While each stage eventually leads to the following one, all previous stages may simultaneously remain in operation until the process is complete.

Thick description was used as a trustworthiness criterion to ensure transferability. Patton (2002) said, “thick, rich description provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting” (p. 437).

The constant comparative method is an inductive method of theory development. “Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one’s data. Findings emerge out of the data, through the analyst’s interactions with the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 453).

Initial analysis of the data included reading and determining reoccurring themes throughout the data. After initial analysis was complete, I engaged in a peer debriefing whereby committee members and colleagues reviewed initial findings, suggested additional analysis, and provided advice regarding the progress of the research.

While the interview instrument was composed of open-ended questions, I predicted at least some similarities in responses among participants. These similarities in the data generated identifiable categories within each objective area. The defining rule for the constant comparative method is “while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 106). Data were coded into as many categories as emerged. Finally, through constantly comparing the categories and their properties, I began to develop a theoretical concept from the data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Issues Addressed by California Agricultural Interest Groups

Lobbyists of California agricultural interest groups were asked what the principal agricultural issues were that their organizations addressed. While some interviewees went into greater detail than others, a frequency count of the issues mentioned is useful. See Table 3 for a summary of issues addressed by interviewees. The seven most commonly mentioned issues included: water resources - water supply, flood control, water quality regulations, etc.; air quality regulations; business issues - fees, economic concerns, etc.; tax issues - death tax, inheritance tax, tax preferences, etc.; land use; farm labor or immigration; and pesticide use and pesticide registration.

Table 3

Issues Addressed by California Agricultural Interest Groups

Issue	Total mentioned
Water resources - water supply, flood control, water quality regs	8
Air quality	6
General business issues, fees, economics	6
Tax matters - death tax, inheritance tax, tax preferences	5
Land use	5
Farm labor, immigration	5
Pesticide use, pesticide registration	5
Commodities, in general	4
Labor employment - working conditions, minimum wage	4
Pest control strategies - prevention, exclusion, eradication	4
Workers compensation	4
Endangered species protection	3
Funding for research	3
Employee housing	3

Table 3 continued

General environmental issues	3
Health insurance for employees	2
Transportation	2
Cooperative-specific provisions	2
Trade, trade competition	1
Exports	1
Multiple use of public lands, grazing rights	1
Wilderness designation of public lands	1
Natural resources	1
Wildlife habitat	1
Property, property rights	1
Farm Bill issues	1
Specialty crops	1
Fresh produce industry	1
Farm program commodities	1
Forestry	1
Conservation measures	1
Research	1
Appropriations	1
Funding for state programs	1
Employment health and safety regs	1
Homeland Security	1
Border protection	1
Disease problems	1
New animal identification program	1
Biotechnology	1
Animal welfare	1
Animal health	1
Water rights	1
Public utilities	1
Nutrition, obesity	1
"Hard to find an issue in which we will not be involved"	1

One interviewee specifically noted the political environment in California since 1998 has greatly impacted what issues their organization addresses (5). The political shift created a new emphasis on environmental issues. In fact, many interviewees discussed how California's political environment impacts their work as a lobbyist for an agricultural interest group.

Lobbyists were proud of the work they did representing California agriculture. One interviewee stated, “agriculture is a very difficult business....weather dependent, as you know, pest problems, it’s cyclical in nature, has a tendency for oversupply....somebody finds a new crop to grow, then before you know it, a whole bunch of people are doing it and the price goes to heck. It’s a very challenging business and it’s my pleasure to represent farmers in trying to keep their businesses profitable” (9).

Defending Issues Versus Asking for New Protections

Lobbyists were asked whether they were generally defending issues or asking for new protection. Many of the interviewees answered with some combination of the two; they spent time both defending and being proactive on issues. Many had difficulty determining whether the lobbying activities they engaged in were considered defending or asking for new protection. In many cases, lobbyists discussed asking for new protections as a form of defending the industry. In general, lobbyists discussed “defending” as maintaining current exemptions, or as fighting against new proposed regulations. Lobbyists discussed “asking for new protection” as being proactive and looking for other legislative or regulatory solutions to problems the industry faces.

Other interviewees noted that whether they were defending or asking for new protection was issue specific. Still others said they weren’t doing either, but just asking that regulations and legislation be “balanced and based on science” (2). The complexity

of issues often caused lobbyists to be both defending and asking for new protection on different aspects of the same issue.

Most lobbyists admitted they needed to be, and desired to be, more proactive. Examples of proactive efforts included lobbying for: 1) funding for research or programs; 2) legislation that allowed growers to impose a self-tax to address a specific problem in their industry, such as an invasive species; 3) continued exemptions for agriculture; and 4) exemptions to new legislation moving through the process. However, one lobbyist emphasized “new exemptions” do not give new protection, but rather serve only to maintain the status quo (12).

One lobbyist annually introduces five or six pieces of legislation on a proactive basis. The lobbyist does this for two reasons: 1) “there is always an opportunity to improve the lot of [the people you represent] in some way,” and 2) “it helps keep you connected” (13). Another lobbyist noted their organization recently decided to be more proactive: “we’ve been very defensive for the last few years, since 1998, and frankly, we don’t like it. So, for the last two years, we’ve been very aggressive at the state level and at the federal level” (14). “At the state level, our board has, over the last five years, become even more activist and said, ‘let’s not wait and try to kill bills; let’s be very proactive’” (14).

Time and busyness were revealed as factors that caused lobbyists to commonly be in a defensive mode. “We don’t have a lot of time anymore to sit and read and think. We have to act....If you’re proactive you have to sit down and you have to think, you have to write, you have to analyze, you have to ask people, you have to include people

and if you're not afforded that ability then you tend to be defensive in your nature....You don't have time to be proactive" (5).

Despite the proactive efforts of some organizations, most lobbyists admitted that the majority of their time is spent defending against new regulations. A primary reason was because of the economic burden that increasing regulations have had on agricultural operations. One lobbyist stated, "we are defending ourselves in the fact that most of the regulations that end up adopted, if not all of them, are expensive items to operate on a ranch or adopt on a ranch" (5). Two lobbyists specified that 80% of their time was spent defending against issues that would negatively impact the agricultural industry (4,15).

Every year there are numerous legislative and regulatory statutes introduced that lobbyists of agricultural interest groups must act upon. Many lobbyists noted that there has been a sharp increase in potentially burdensome proposals over the past several years. This has caused lobbyists to spend the majority of their time in a defensive mode.

Role of California's Political Environment

Many lobbyists discussed how California's political environment has a major impact on the work they do (5,6,7,8,11,13,15). Many specifically identified it as a primary reason why they spend so much of their time on the defense. One lobbyist stated,

the make-up of our legislature with primarily liberal, urban legislators that, in most cases, have very little sympathy towards business and industry in this state, has resulted in a substantial deterioration of our business climate here. A lot of employers, agriculture and otherwise, have either downsized, or quit farming. Other companies have out-sourced jobs to other states or even other countries. So it's very difficult to be in business in this state and compete with the onerous

number of rules and regulations and statutes which come down on employers on a daily basis. (8)

Other lobbyists agreed that increasing regulations were making it more and more difficult for agriculture, as part of the business community, to remain profitable. Two lobbyists specifically commented that their organizations believed we have more government than we need (10,14).

Lobbyists also commented about the partisan committee structure: “It’s really a sad commentary to our political process....[members have] already made up their mind, so they just go through the [committee hearing] motions....and 90% of the votes in the [name of two legislative committees] are straight partisan votes” (8). These reasons are also why some groups don’t attempt to advance their own proactive legislation: they wouldn’t get a fair hearing or the legislation’s intended purpose would be eliminated.

Lobbyists also noted that the agriculture industry is not being affected solely through the legislative process. The regulatory and judicial processes are just as active arenas for statutes that could impact agriculture. For this reason, many agricultural interest groups are focusing more and more of their resources in these areas.

California agricultural interest groups have been greatly affected by the political environment in California, especially over the past ten years (5,6,7,8,11,13,15). The Democratically controlled legislature has influenced the introduction of many laws and regulations that are burdensome on California farmers and ranchers. Various interviewees stated that this political shift has included: 1) a transition from Republican to Democratic Administration, 2) the introduction of term limits, and 3) a much more active and extreme environmental lobby. Besides impacting whether lobbyists are

defensive or proactive, this political shift has impacted agricultural interest groups in other ways as well.

The political shift has changed and increased the number of issues agricultural interest groups must address. For many organizations, it caused them to change how they lobby. Namely, some have opted to employ a contract lobbyist because they cannot keep up with both the issues and the legislators that need to be lobbied. Term limits, especially, have made establishing relationships even more important for lobbyists. One lobbyist observed,

because of term limits in California we noticed a severe educational problem of legislators, and their ability to have knowledge [about the specific commodity]. [This was due to] term limits and new people in the Capitol, as well as a change from a Republican Administration to a Democratic Administration. The emphasis seemed to shift very quickly then to environmental issues. (5)

Lobbyists must now work harder to keep new legislators educated as they join the legislature. One lobbyist commented that, because of this, “your sources of information are deeper, they’re greater, [and] your workload is twice as much because the education process is so huge now” (5).

One lobbyist explained a situation where legislation was enacted without the research or scientific evidence to support its necessity. The legislation negatively impacted the agriculture industry, and thus an extensive series of negotiations about the issue began. The lobbyist was frustrated and said, “I don’t have information to lobby with, to begin with. So, then I’m kind of doing the catch-up game, and trying to make sure that the information that we do get is fair and accurate, because then it’s going to get turned into implementation” (2).

Similarly, an interviewee discussed how federally based research often will not be accepted in California, because legislators or regulators “want it to be some California-based opinion” (2). Another lobbyist stated,

more often than not, unfortunately, we are defending [issues] instead of asking for new protection. I think that is just the nature of California and where California has been and where we are going. We are not very pro-business, and we are not very pro-agriculture, as a whole. (6)

California’s political environment influenced many of the responses given by lobbyists.

Results for Objective #1 – Purposes for Which Lobbyists Use Information and Who Lobbyists Are Most Trying to Influence

Lobbyists of agricultural interest groups research issues for a variety of reasons. Interviewees were asked for what purposes they were most commonly researching any given issue. Results indicated that lobbying and political purposes were the number one purpose for which lobbyists researched information. In order of frequency, the most commonly-mentioned purposes were: 1) lobbying legislators (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15), 2) responding to members’ requests (3,5,6,8,9,10,12,13,14), 3) lobbying regulators and administrative agencies (1,2,4,5,11,12,13), 4) public education and awareness (3,4,5,8), 5) political purposes-campaigns, elections, appointments, etc. (4,12,15), and 6) to educate themselves and develop their own understanding of an issue (4,7,9).

Other purposes mentioned by more than one interviewee included: 1) gathering supplemental information for a coalition bill, 2) collecting pure scientific or technical information, and 3) lobbying the government and the industry for research funding.

Purposes for researching that were mentioned by only one lobbyist were: regular communication to members, responding to Federal Register postings, “backgrounding” an issue and researching its effects on the organization’s members, lobbying legislative staff, preparing legislation, and litigation.

Lobbyists’ research in response to member requests was typically regarding a regulation or requirement that the member needed to understand or comply with. Two interviewees specifically stated that all of their organization’s efforts began with member requests in some way. As one lobbyist stated, “for us everything should start in response to member requests or concerns” (12).

Public education and awareness included publications, news stories, and action alerts produced by organizations. Similar to being proactive versus reactive on legislative efforts, many lobbyists either did not mention being involved in public education at all or noted that they should be more involved. One lobbyist stated,

we probably spend, as an industry, far too little time on public education and awareness. And maybe that’s because we spend 80% of our time defending ourselves, that we don’t find the time to try and get out and do something more positive. I think there’s a general awareness of the industry that more needs to be done [with public education and awareness], but I doubt more will be done....with limited dollars, you can’t afford to be out promoting something that you may lose in court. (15)

While other lobbyists did not explicitly say this, many of them alluded to the fact that legislative, regulatory, and judicial defense efforts were consuming more and more of their time.

Some lobbyists did not engage in research for certain purposes simply because it was not their role to do so within the organization. Two lobbyists specifically stated that

other people within their organizations handled member education, or public relations work (6,10). One senior lobbyist stated, “I don’t do too much research anymore. And I say that with some humbleness, but we have a pretty good staff that does most of the research” (14). So, while the lobbyist interviewed might not research for a particular purpose, their organization might still be very involved in that area.

Research was explained as an on-going process by some lobbyists, three of whom specifically cited researching to increase their own understanding of issues. Lobbyists described how often times many people and programs are working on different facets of one issue, without knowing what the others are doing. It is important for lobbyists to be able to make those connections and understand the entirety of how an issue is being addressed. One lobbyist also researched to understand the history of an issue. Research is also needed to be aware of changing regulations. As one lobbyist stated, “[research for policy] is an on-going effort...[it is] on-going research [and] trying to keep up with the latest trends in the [issue] area. [Issue area] law is constantly changing, whether it’s at the federal level or state level” (9).

One lobbyist had unique research challenges with an issue. The challenge was that there was little to no science regarding the issue for which regulations had recently been introduced. The science that was available was very dated. So, that lobbyist was “lobbying to get the science and to get that little bit of time before the regulations come...I’m lobbying the agency to give us some reprieve...I lobby the institutions to come up with the science; I have to lobby the industry to help come up with some matching funds” (2). Similarly, another lobbyist discussed how their organization

financed and facilitated scientific research that was needed for a specific issue being regulated: “Unfortunately, the government does not feel a responsibility to go out and pay for the most current research when all of these listing requests, these petitions, come in – so industry has to do it” (12).

One lobbyist did a lot of research on budgetary issues because of California’s budget problems in the past few years. The lobbyist recognized that funding and budget concerns were going to be central to basically every issue in the legislative and regulatory process (7). Therefore, the lobbyist found budget research important for many issues their organization addressed.

Interviewees addressed the question of what purposes they researched for in a variety of ways. Some simply said that “it depended.” Some specifically gave an ordered answer of what they were most commonly researching issues for, while others responded in no particular order. A few interviewees did not directly answer the question. Instead, the question prompted them to discuss a different, yet still relevant, issue. Rather than give specific purposes, a few lobbyists addressed the broader reasons for why they would be researching. For example, one lobbyist stated, “because it has some effect on either a pending administrative or legislative action” (11). Another lobbyist’s job was described as to “gather as much current data available in the shortest time [I] have to make a decision....trying to do what’s right based upon the best information that [I] can get in that period of time” (12).

This question highlighted a primary difference between employee and contract lobbyists. Namely, employee lobbyists discussed more scientific or technical research,

while contract lobbyist discussed more political strategy research. Contract lobbyists depend on their clients to provide the technical and scientific aspects of issues. The relationships between employee lobbyists and their organization's members were similar to that of contract lobbyists and their clients.

Who Lobbyists Are Most Trying to Influence

Toward the end of the interview, lobbyists were asked whom they were most trying to influence. These answers complemented those given for what purposes they were researching issues (discussed in the previous section). In order of frequency, interviewees said they were most trying to influence: 1) legislators (1,2,3,5,6,7,8,9,10,12,13,15); 2) regulators, administrators, or appointed officials (1,4,5,7,8,9,10,12,15); 3) the public, often through the media (1,2,8,9,11,12); 4) whoever the "decision-maker" is (3,5,7,11,14); 5) legislative staff (3,4,5); and 6) the governor (5,9).

Answers given by only one lobbyist regarding whom they were most trying to influence included legal officials through litigation and their own organization's membership.

Again, lobbyists often indicated that whom they were most trying to influence depended on the situation. For example, if it was a piece of legislation moving through the legislature, lobbyists would potentially need to influence the author, the committee it was being heard in, legislative staff, other interest groups, the public, or other stakeholders. On the other hand, if the organization was initiating a proactive piece of

legislation they might need to influence their own membership, other interest groups, the public, and find a legislator to author the bill. One lobbyist stated,

generally it's somebody else who's got to make a decision in my favor, and that's the key part of it: you got to figure out in each situation, who's the decision-maker that's out of your direct control, but is going to make the key decision on this issue. And, then that's who you're trying to get. (4)

Another lobbyist said, "I don't think it's an individual. It's a series of steps. And those steps, I think to me, hold the same significance. And the fact that in our business, every body is making a decision" (5). Many lobbyists simply answered that, in each situation, they would be trying to influence whoever the decision maker was.

Lobbyists operate on several different levels and in several different arenas in the work that they do. One lobbyist noted the differences between various decision-making environments: "You've got to deal with the Administration, you've got to deal with the Assembly, and you've got to deal with the Senate. And, all three are separate little siphons that the issue is fought out in" (7). Lobbyists must understand these different environments in order to effectively influence each of them as needed.

In total, the interviewees most commonly said legislators were whom they were most trying to influence. However, influencing regulators was the second most frequently mentioned. Many lobbyists commented on the evolution of the regulatory process in that lobbyists must now be very aware of both proposed regulations and proposed legislation. As one lobbyist stated, "the reality is much of what occurs is as a result of those who are appointed to different positions in any administration – to get things done for you or against you" (12).

The public was also identified by lobbyists as an important group to influence. One lobbyist said, “we are trying to sway public opinion....because our adversaries are out there constantly maligning us in the press and in the media” (8). Some lobbyists discussed influencing the public through the media and other public awareness campaigns. Others specifically discussed the public as being constituents of legislators, and that they should be influenced accordingly. One lobbyist used research “to influence definitely the legislators, and you hope that that gets played out in press. You are going to be using those examples, and then you hope that that trickles out then to constituents, to the general public” (2).

Many lobbyists again noted they should probably be doing more in terms of public outreach, but that lobbying responsibilities consumed the majority of their time. One lobbyist stated,

now, the industry as a whole, I believe, could benefit from trying to influence the general public more. But, the issues have now become so immense and the landscape in the legislature so difficult, that I think more and more of them are finding that they have to focus their times on government and legal issues, and that’s taken away from their public awareness, their education issues. And, who’s to say that in this state of 30 million people, anyone cares? So, why don’t you focus on the places where you may have some impact – and that’s the legislature and the legal – and just go for it. (15)

So, while some interest groups indicated they were involved in public education, many revealed that the regulatory, legislative, and judicial arenas were where they focused their attention and resources.

Results for Objective #2 – Sources of Information Utilized by Lobbyists

Lobbyists of agricultural interest groups potentially utilize any number of sources for researching and lobbying issues. Lobbyists were asked what sources they used to gain information needed in their research. After providing initial answers, lobbyists were then given a list of possible sources and asked if the list prompted them to think of any additional sources they used. See Appendix B for the list of possible sources provided to interviewees. Table 4 provides a summary of sources of information mentioned by lobbyists pre-list, post-list, and in total.

Sources of Information mentioned Pre-list

The six sources most frequently mentioned by lobbyists prior to seeing the list of possibilities included: regulatory or government agency staff; Internet; University of California or other academia; members of organization or clients; commodity, trade, or other agricultural organizations; and media or public news sources.

Sources of Information Mentioned Post-list

Although lobbyists provided a number of sources of information that they use prior to being given the list of possibilities, the list still prompted many lobbyists to remember other sources they use. The six most frequently mentioned sources of information cited by lobbyists after seeing the list included: activist or opposing groups; colleagues; commodity, trade, and other agricultural organizations; professional or

Table 4

Sources of Information Utilized by Lobbyists

Sources of Information	Pre-List Total	Post-List Total	Total Mentioned
Regulatory, government agency staff	11	3	14
Activist, opposing groups	3	10	13
Internet search	9	3	12
Commodity, trade, other ag organizations	5	7	12
University of California, academia	8	4	12
Members of organization	6	6	12
Colleagues	2	7	9
Internal advisory committees	2	6	8
Private, technical, scientific consultants	3	4	7
Media, public news sources	5	2	7
Professional, scientific journals or digests		7	7
Legislative, committee staff or analyses	3	3	6
People familiar with issue, experts, specialists	4	1	5
Legal consultants		5	5
UC Cooperative Extension - research & staff	1	4	5
Ag industry coalitions	2	2	4
Regulatory agency reports, publications	3		3
Allied industries, organizations, stakeholders	3		3
Industry newspapers, trade publications	1	2	3
Colleagues, staff within own organization	2	1	3
National, sister organizations	3		3
"Everything on list"		3	3
Internal Board of Directors meetings	1	1	2
Books		2	2
General public		2	2
Group's clients	2		2
Federal government	2		2
Laws, codes of regulation	2		2
Internal evaluations, critiques	1		1
articles, published papers	1		1
Legal treatises		1	1
Marketing orders		1	1
Private research	1		1
Elected officials	1		1
Ag commissioners	1		1
State Fund		1	1
Attorney's General's opinions	1		1
Assessor's handbooks and publication	1		1
Land use reference guides	1		1

scientific journals and digests; members of their organization; and internal advisory committees.

Compared Pre-list and Post-list Information Sources

When comparing the pre-list answers to the post-list answers, there are some trends worth noting. More lobbyists mentioned using the Internet before being given the list (9 pre-list vs. 3 post-list). A large group of lobbyists said regulatory and government agency staff was a source of information for them before seeing the list (11 pre-list vs. 3 post-list). One lobbyist stated, “I feel that often times the regulators can be very good, accurate sources of the facts and occasionally background as to who, what, and why they did it this way” (10). Lobbyists made similar comments about legislative staff:

I mentioned utilizing legislative staff as a source of information, and a lot of people don't realize how important legislative staff are to the process....consultants to the committees [are important because they] have long tenure in their position and have the institutional memory of the legislature. They are very important to use as a source of information. (9)

More lobbyists mentioned the University of California or academia as a source before being give the list (8 pre-list vs. 4 post-list). One lobbyist commented,

I always go to the university source – number one. As you spend time in your area, you to tend to find...the scientists. Either you knew them from your background or you learned them as you spent time looking at what research is there and what research is not there, and finding out who's involved with it. (2)

Comparatively, the list of possible sources did help some lobbyists remember sources they used and had not mentioned prior to seeing the list. More lobbyists mentioned opposing or activist groups after being given the list (3 pre-list vs. 10 post-

list). More lobbyists said they used professional or scientific journals and digests after seeing the list (0 pre-list vs. 7 post-list). More lobbyists said they used legal consultants as sources of information after seeing the list (0 pre-list vs. 5 post-list). After reading the list, three lobbyists specifically said they use “everything on the list.”

While the pre/post list frequency count was similar for other commodity and trade organizations (5 pre-list vs. 7 post-list), more lobbyists mentioned colleagues after seeing the list (2 pre-list vs. 7 post-list). This is likely explained by the fact that several lobbyists commented they considered colleagues and other trade organizations to be the same. In addition, some lobbyists discussed coalitions as a separate source of information, while others treated it the same as colleagues and other organizations.

There were some differences amongst interviewees regarding when they mentioned members of their organization and internal advisory committees as sources they used. Most recognized them as important sources of information, especially in regard to how laws and regulations impacted the industry “on the ranch.” For example, one lobbyist stated, “there’s no better spokesperson for the industry other than the farmers themselves, and they’re the ones that can provide us with the direct information about how something’s impacting them” (14). Others specifically noted that the organization’s strategic plan and policy priorities were decided by the membership. However, the pre/post frequency count for members of the organization mentioned as sources was equal (6 pre-list vs. 6 post-list). In comparison, more lobbyists mentioned internal advisory committees as an information source after seeing the list (2 pre-list vs. 6 post-list). Once prompted, most lobbyists discussed the importance of internal

advisory committees for facilitating issue discussion and setting policy for the organization. Similarly, contract lobbyists discussed their clients much like employee lobbyists discussed their members: as important sources of information. One lobbyist said, “I rely on my clients, more than anything, for background information and research....I rely on them to give me the information – the technical information – that’s needed, and I’ll turn that into political information, or I’ll turn that into lobbying information” (15).

After seeing the list of potential sources, some lobbyists said there were sources they did not use. Three lobbyists said they did not use marketing orders (8,11,13) and three lobbyists said they did not use the general public (7,8,13). Two lobbyists claimed they did not use the media or public news sources (12,15), while another rarely used it.

A few lobbyists commented on the quality of various sources of information. Specifically, some lobbyists noted that activist groups or groups “running an agenda” are poor information sources. One lobbyist said, “what I’ve found is that news websites that are dedicated to environmental news are really, really bad. Very spotty coverage; even if they’re not slanted one way or another, you really don’t learn much” (4). Another lobbyist commented, regarding a government program, “they are not my most trusted source because there [are] researchers working in that unit who would couch their information. So, they had a particular agenda” (3).

Total Sources of Information Mentioned

If a lobbyist mentioned a source prior to seeing the list and after seeing the list, the source was identified as having been mentioned before seeing the list. Many lobbyists would repeat sources because they were simply reading the list aloud while contemplating which sources they used. No sources were identified as being mentioned both “pre-list” and “post-list” by any one lobbyist. This allowed for an accurate frequency count of the total sources of information mentioned by all lobbyists. In order of frequency, the top five total information sources mentioned by lobbyists were: regulatory and government agency staff; activist or opposing groups; Internet search; commodity, trade, or other agricultural organizations; University and academia; and members of their organization.

Results for Objective #3 – Reasons Why Lobbyists Utilize Different Information

Sources and Lobbyists’ Information Finding Strategies

Lobbyists research issues and utilize information sources for a variety of purposes. These purposes are revealed by how lobbyists select their information sources, and the reasons they choose them. This strategy of finding needed information was discussed by every lobbyist.

Lobbyists need to find good information, not only to make decisions from, but also because that information will ultimately be part of the information their organization releases. Organizations need to be diligent that the information they release is correct and accurate. This is true whether the information is being disseminated

through the legislative process, the regulatory process, to members, as publications, or by any other means of communication. Many lobbyists stated they would choose their sources based on who would give them accurate and appropriate information. Lobbyists also noted the importance of getting information from more than one source, in order to ensure accuracy and credibility (5,7,10). Lobbyists said sources of information needed to be widely recognized as credible (1,2,5,12).

Lobbyists noted the importance of “doing their homework” to be sure they understand all sides and all aspects of an issue (2,4,5,10,12,13,14). Lobbyists said they wanted the real facts, and would be exhaustive in their research to get those facts. One lobbyist said, “you have to be honest. One of the fundamental parts of being a good lobbyist is knowing your stuff” (7). To find needed information, some lobbyists were more inclined to immediately pick up the phone and call someone, while others started by reading to familiarize themselves with issues.

Some lobbyists said that the process of finding information was really an “issue-based pursuit,” and spoke of the dependency of the issue and situation (1,2,4,14). Given that, many interviewees provided good examples of how they went about finding needed information.

One lobbyist always begins researching an issue by having “a session to define exactly what the problem is” (11). This is done so everyone agrees on what the issue is, how they are going to address it, and, therefore, what information is needed. Similarly, another lobbyist discussed the importance of identifying the purpose of research before beginning. The lobbyist said, “look at the audience, try to determine what their hot

buttons are, and try to ensure that you get research that is appropriate to them” (12). Yet another lobbyist discussed how their organization’s strategic plan dictated much of what issues they addressed and how they addressed them (14).

Scientific/Technical Research vs. Political/Strategic Research

Interviewees differentiated between scientific, or technical, information and political, or strategic, information they were researching for. Examples of scientific or technical information are the actual codes or regulations, the science of an issue (such as biology, physics, environmental science, etc.), or how a specific process or system operates. Examples of political or strategic information are which legislators or regulators support or oppose an issue, which interest groups support or oppose an issue, or what the opposition is saying about an issue. Lobbyists emphasized that it was important to find out both types of information. One lobbyist distinguished the two types of research this way:

In gathering research, in gathering information, you will do research to determine what are the facts surrounding the science of an issue, if that’s appropriate, or what are the facts around the politics of the issue? So you’re talking political science and just hard, basic research data – science. (12)

In addition, many lobbyists discussed using their members as a “reality check” as to how regulations or laws are being enacted in the field. Lobbyists talk to members to understand how regulations impact them, the actual farmers (1,4,5,6,10,14). This helps lobbyists make sure they are headed in the right direction as they work different issues. It also helps lobbyists know how regulations are being implemented at the local level, and if there is consistency across the state. One lobbyist noted the importance of

member testimony: “Being able to tell a story or to put a face on the issue and to really be able to show and prove personal impact of some type is probably the most successful argument” (6).

Most lobbyists do a combination of scientific/technical research and political/strategic research. However, contract lobbyists were more likely to research more political/strategic information than scientific/technical information. They depended on their clients, who were often agricultural interest groups themselves, to provide the scientific/technical research that was needed. Employee lobbyists were more likely to do a combination of both scientific and political research, unless they were in a more administrative position within their organization. In that case, they were more involved in the political/strategic research, while other employees of their organization gathered scientific/technical information.

Scientific/Technical Research

Many lobbyists discussed the need to find and use peer-reviewed, scientific data in their lobbying efforts. Many regulations are based on assumptions about how human activity is impacting various environmental systems. However, scientific or technical research is needed to prove these assumptions. As mentioned previously, 13 of the 15 interviewees specifically mentioned going to universities or cooperative extension research for this scientific or technical information.

Some lobbyists who were involved in highly technical, scientific issues noted that much of their information finding strategy involved trying to get credible research

funded and completed for the issues they were working on. Their concern was regulations were being passed without the scientific research to prove regulations were even appropriate. So, lobbyists spoke of working with industry, government agencies, and research universities to have research conducted on those issues (2,12). In this situation, one lobbyist noted the importance of considering the goal of the research when finding a source of information: “Timing. Who does it? What’s the use of it? [The] ultimate goal? What are you trying to accomplish? Determine those things before you make a decision on who’s going to do your research” (12).

Lobbyists contact scientists, consultants, or other experts in specific areas to understand scientific or technical processes. In many cases, these experts are then retained by interest groups to help provide testimony or other evidence in the regulatory or legislative process.

Political/Strategic Research

A large part of political and strategic research is finding out where and why there is political will behind a particular issue. Specifically, lobbyists need to know which legislators are supporting, opposing, or not being involved in an issue, and why (4,7,10,11,12,13,15). When a bill is introduced, lobbyists need to find out what the intentions of it are (13). As one contract lobbyist stated, “the first thing I’m thinking about is politics. I’m thinking about what committees will the bill go to; do we have leverage in a committee? And, how do we do that? Then I’ll get into the research on developing arguments or writing letters for clients” (15). Based on the partisan make-up

of the California legislature, one lobbyist said, “it’s critically important to be able to get information out of Democrat staff. And, that’s where you learn things like ‘what are the other guys saying?’” (4).

One lobbyist said their organization subscribed to a service that provided detailed demographic information about legislators (11). This information can be helpful in forming political strategy. As this lobbyist suggested,

often times that’s what we’re really trying to research – how is this issue going to be received by an urban legislature; how is it going to be received by Democrats of all stripes, and, more importantly, [by] the Republicans, and then how are the people in the key committees going to respond? (11)

Lobbyists suggested that this kind of political research is often just as important, if not more important, than scientific research.

Many lobbyists discussed understanding the history and current status of an issue, and where, when, and who might bring it up. As one lobbyist said, “part of this job – you have to anticipate where the action is going to be” (7). The same lobbyist said, “sometimes you just have to know how to ask the right questions” (7). The lobbyist’s point was that, in researching, lobbyists spend time identifying what they need, and then how they can best find that information. Another lobbyist tries to get “as clear and as broad a picture of the political lay of the land,” in order to know how to best proceed with an issue (10).

Part of a lobbyist’s strategic research is figuring out what the opposition is saying and knowing how to counter it. As one lobbyist explained,

lobbying is a lot different from being a lawyer in this respect: When you deal with a dispute in court, everybody has to lay their arguments out and you get a

chance to see what the other person is saying and evaluate what their evidence is, and attack it. In the political processes, you rarely have an opportunity to do that. So, there is a lot of investigation that has to go into figuring out what the other folks are saying. (4)

Political and strategic research is important because political decisions are not always based on scientific facts. Lobbyists pointed out that even the best-researched, fact-based, credible argument can lose in the political arena. As one lobbyist said,

[scientific/technical] research plays not the most critical role. It plays an important role. But, still, this is politics. And, the best facts don't always win in politics. The best story doesn't always win in politics. So, again, it comes down to strategy, it comes down to who you know. (15)

Many lobbyists mentioned the frustration associated with politically-based decisions made in legislative and regulatory arenas. One lobbyist quipped,

sometimes you are going to go into a legislative situation where you know you're right but you know you don't have the votes. There is nothing you can do about it. So, you make your argument, thank you very much, then you get whapped. That's just the way it is. (7)

Another lobbyist told an anecdotal story about a legislator who jokingly commented to a testifier during a committee hearing, "this is where you're making your big mistake. You're operating under the delusion that we make decisions in this Capitol based on logic. Nothing could be further from the truth" (14). While this story had been shared for humor sake, and the legislator had said it tongue in cheek, many interviewees provided comments suggesting that it may be true. Because of this, lobbyists noted that they must do their due diligence in researching both scientific/technical information and political/strategic information.

The “I Just Know” Factor

Many lobbyists, especially the more experienced ones, responded that they “just knew” where to go for information (1,2,5,7,8,9,11,12,13,14). As one lobbyist said, “the simple answer and the honest answer in my case, is I’ve been around so long, I know. I just know” (13). Lobbyists know because of previous experience with the issue, with the people or other information sources involved, or with similar situations. Many lobbyists said they would simply “call someone they knew had worked on the issue” (2,5,7,14).

The institutional memory of lobbyists was clearly a factor in their information finding strategy. Lobbyists stated, “you just develop a bank of knowledge that’s very helpful to you – and that just is a function of time and experience” (7), and that “you’re guided by your understanding of the issues as to where to go for information” (1). Lobbyists described an “intuition” of where to go for the information they needed (1,14).

Lobbyists said if they didn’t immediately know whom to ask, they would do an Internet search or start asking people to find out who’s worked on the issue. Many claimed they either knew whom to call or knew someone who could tell them whom to call. From there, lobbyists said they would discover other people to talk to and other documents to read. As one lobbyist said, “then, you kind of keep heading down the path based on the information you get from other people” (3). Lobbyists pointed out that once they began researching an issue, one information source would lead to another.

The Role of Contacts and Personal Relationships

All 15 interviewees said contacts and personal relationships were important to their information finding process. This included personal relationships with other lobbyists, with regulators, legislators, legislative staff, university researchers and extension specialists, and many others. When asked how they went about finding needed information, one lobbyist said, “the easiest thing to do is just call up one of my colleagues, who I know has worked on the issue and I know I can trust him or her” (7). One lobbyist said that if they didn’t know exactly whom to call, they would look up the University department that worked in that area, call it, and find out who worked on the issue (2).

When asked about sources of information used and characteristics of sources used, many lobbyists continued to comment about the role of personal contacts and relationships. “[Where you go for information is] built largely on your knowledge of people and day-to-day contacts” (1). Personal contacts and relationships were clearly vital to the information finding strategies of lobbyists.

Lobbyists discussed the transactional nature of their relationships with people they used as information sources (4,5,9,10,15). One lobbyist said, “[information] is exchanged amongst the people that you trust within the industry. I trust certain people to give me accurate information, or tell me where I can get it. And, in turn, I’m used in the same manner” (5).

Coalitions: California Agricultural Interest Groups Working Together

Coalitions were identified by lobbyists as an effective way to share and receive information with many people in one place. Many lobbyists cited working with coalitions, or groups of other organizations, as an important part of their information finding strategy (1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14). Whether it was specifically an agricultural coalition, or a broad cross-industry coalition, lobbyists commented on their usefulness as a source for information, for contacts, and for combining resources to mount coordinated efforts and campaigns. Coalitions work together “comparing notes, getting input, and then meeting and discussing a common position” (1). When discussing how they found needed information, one lobbyist specifically stated, “if the issue warrants a coalition, then I’ll put together a coalition, depending on what it is we are working on, and bring together all those that have a specialty in that area” (5).

Coalitions provide a broader array of contacts for each interest group involved. Lobbyists may ask someone to join their coalition solely for the contacts they have; because they need those contacts to fill a niche in their strategy. As one lobbyist said, “what I tell my guys is I’m a pretty good starting pitcher, and I can finish most games, but sometimes you need a closer. And it’s because of some special niche” (13). The same lobbyist used this rationale to explain why farmers should be members of a variety of organizations: “It’s important to support...a multitude of groups because people have different expertise, different contacts” (13).

Both the general farm organizations and the commodity-specific organizations discussed how California agricultural interest groups commonly work together on issues.

Commodity-specific organizations will take the lead on issues specific to their commodity, with the general farm organizations supporting them. For example, the California Association of Winegrape Growers would take the lead on an issue affecting winegrape growers, and the other organizations would support where needed. Similarly, the general farm organizations would typically take the lead on issues that affect the entire agriculture industry, regardless of commodity. For example, the California Farm Bureau Federation would take the lead on air quality issues, with commodity organizations providing support specific to their industries where needed. As one lobbyist said, their organization is “frequently talking with [other agricultural groups] about what their position [is], because in ag, as few as we are, we need to work together as much as we can to make sure we aren’t at cross purposes” (12).

However, some lobbyists also commented about situations and reasons where agricultural organizations do not cooperate. Lobbyists pointed to the competitive nature of groups, and the differences between specific commodity organizations and general farm organizations. As one lobbyist said, “lots of these groups are competing for the same dollars, so that sometimes gets in the way of sharing information and working together. Because everybody wants to take credit for that good thing that got done” (13). Another potential area of disagreement amongst agricultural organizations is how they choose to address proposed legislation. In discussing agricultural organizations working collectively on a defensive issue, one lobbyist pointed out that,

groups will split on this – at what point do you say, ‘okay, we are willing to give here?’ This is where ag groups tend to not necessarily always be on the same page. Some will take a harder line than others. (7)

So, while lobbyists mentioned other agricultural organizations and coalitions as important in their information finding strategies, they also noted the diverse nature of these groups occasionally restricts information flow and impedes collective progress.

Results for Objective #4 – Common Characteristics of Information Sources

Utilized by Lobbyists

The information sources a lobbyist chooses to use are based largely on the characteristics of those sources. Lobbyists were asked what characteristics or features of information sources make them easier to contact or gain information from. I grouped the interviewees' responses into categories of characteristics. Table 5 provides a summary of common characteristics of information sources utilized by lobbyists. In order of frequency, the five most common characteristics included: trustworthiness and credibility, lobbyist had a contact or personal relationship with source, accessibility and helpfulness, quality and accuracy, and readability and brevity.

Many lobbyists specifically mentioned time as a factor in their research (4,5,10,12). As one lobbyist said,

you are limited in the amount of time you have to make your decision. So time might dictate, to a certain extent, how much research you can do, how much information you can gather, how much time you have to analyze it. (12)

Therefore, lobbyists used sources that were easily accessible, and that they could find information from quickly. Similarly, lobbyists discussed needing sources that were compact, easy to read, and distilled lots of information down to main points.

Table 5

Common Characteristics of Information Sources Utilized by Lobbyists

Characteristics	Total Mentioned
Trustworthiness, credible, reputable, objective	15
Related to contacts or relationships	12
Easily accessible, helpfulness, timeliness, availability	9
Thorough, quality, accurate, facts, competence	9
Compact info, readability, understandable, brevity	3
Experienced, can tell you how it works	3
Current	2
Scientifically-based	1
Sincerity	1
Pictures, graphics	1

When discussing a specific issue, one lobbyist commented, “I figured out who could provide me with the specific information I needed without having to read those 7,000 pages of documents. Because in this job, you don’t have time to do that” (6). It is important for lobbyists to be able to find accurate information quickly, and to then use that information in their arguments. As one lobbyist pointed out, “you can have too much information too. At some point, you’ve got to make your argument and your argument has got to be fairly simple” (7), and “don’t get too stuck in the minutia of the information where you lose the ability to make a good point” (7).

Lobbyists often must go to different sources for scientific/technical information than for political/strategic information. When asked about characteristics of information sources, some lobbyists mentioned sources that could provide scientific, technical, or statistical information (1,2). Others specifically mentioned looking for “definitive information,” such as statistics (1). In general, lobbyists were looking for sources that

provided information they could use to write position letters, testimony, and other arguments to support their positions on issues.

Trust, or credibility, was a characteristic mentioned by every lobbyist in some way. The role of trust in the selection of information sources is discussed in the next section. Also, when discussing characteristics of sources utilized, many lobbyists made reference to their personal contacts and relationships. While the role of contacts and relationships was discussed earlier, it is important to point out that they were also a characteristic of information sources named by lobbyists.

Results for Objective #5 – The Role of Trust in the Selection of Information Sources

When asked about the characteristics of sources they utilized, lobbyists were also specifically asked if trust was a factor. In answer to that question, 12 of 15 specifically said that, yes, trust was a factor. Lobbyists made statements such as “trust is definitely a factor” (2), “trust is an overriding factor” (5), “absolutely, absolutely. [Trust] is number one” (8), “trust is a huge factor” (10), and “obviously, trust is the most important factor” (12). Those lobbyists who did not comment about trust in response to interview question four all commented on the role of trust at some other point during the interview.

Some lobbyists even discussed the importance of trust before I specifically asked about it (3,7,12). One lobbyist discussed trust of sources four times before being asked specifically about it (3).

Most lobbyists discussed trust and credibility interchangeably, and in regard to both people and documents or other written sources. Many lobbyists also related their

comments about trusting information sources to the integrity of lobbyists. Lobbyists must have integrity if they are to be trusted and be effective in their job. As one lobbyist stated,

the one thing that a lobbyist has, that you cannot risk, is your integrity. Once you lose that, you can hardly get in the door anymore. If you are known as someone that is not going to be truthful, not going to be honest, you're useless. So, its very important to have integrity. (12)

Lobbyists do extensive research in order to thoroughly understand issues, and to accurately represent their organization's position. Many lobbyists noted the importance of knowing all sides of an issue in order to prevent giving misinformation (3,4,5,7,9,12). Lobbyists provided comments such as, "you're striving to get the right answers and to be truthful and honest" (9), and "it's a credibility issue because ultimately I don't make the decision, but I want to be perceived as giving valuable information" (10).

Trust, credibility, and integrity are all characteristics that come with time and experience. It takes time and experience for a source to be viewed as trustworthy, and it takes time and experience for a lobbyist to trust that source. As one lobbyist said, "you build trust on that person's knowledge, their understanding of agricultural issues" (1).

Once again, contacts and personal relationships were discussed in relation to trust and credibility. One lobbyist stated, "trust is a personal thing too. Those people that I have developed those personal relationships with, and [I am] most comfortable with, I think those are the ones that I am more apt to go to first" (6). The trust and integrity associated with personal relationships was a common characteristic mentioned by lobbyists.

The Importance of Research in Lobbyists' Work

In concluding each interview, I asked the lobbyists if they could comment about the importance of research in the work they do. Lobbyists discussed two main themes of research: 1) gathering all the political and technical information needed to thoroughly understand an issue before lobbying on it, and 2) finding the appropriate information to support their organization's policy objectives. One lobbyist said,

research is important to develop the basis for your arguments and to substantiate your arguments. In the legislative process, you want to be able to point to factual information and good sources of information to back up your policy position. (9)

Another lobbyist's response basically summed up the value of this study: "my research...is paramount to my ability to move forward in my public affairs work. It becomes almost the foundation on how I make my decisions on how to engage my plan" (5).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion of Findings

As stated in the methodology, this study was designed as qualitative, exploratory research. As such, the study did not seek to prove or disprove a specific hypothesis. It was important to ask these questions in a research study in order to methodically record and report the findings. The goal was then for these findings to contribute to existing interest group theory.

As exploratory and qualitative research, there was no specific body of literature regarding information sources utilized by lobbyists to compare this study to. Therefore, there are no well-defined comparisons to be made between the literature review and the results of this study. However, the results of this study did correlate to many themes and concepts found in the literature regarding interest group theory.

Findings Compared to Previous Research

Elitism versus Pluralism

Previous research (Browne, 1990; Dahl, 1961; Jordan, 2004; Polsby, 1963; Schattschneider, 1960) only alludes to the importance of information sources in the success of elitism or pluralism. I hypothesized that the information sources interest groups have access to, and the reasons why they choose some sources over others, might impact the success of elitism or pluralism. However, none of the interviewees

mentioned that they did not have access to information sources that they needed in their research, which is a key determining characteristic of elitism. Scientific or technical research was discussed as available to virtually anyone. Political or strategic information was recognized as a rare commodity, that could be more difficult to acquire. Political and strategic information was primarily available only through relationships and contacts, where scientific/technical information was accessible in other ways.

The Iron Triangle Concept

Previous literature discussed the relationship between interest groups, legislative committees, and government regulatory agencies as “iron triangles” (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Browne, 1995, 2004c; Gais et al., 1984; Hamm, 1983; Hardin, 1978; Knott & Miller, 1987; Rourke, 1976; Thomas, 2004). While the actual clout and control of iron triangles is continually debated, this study confirmed that interest groups are in regular contact with legislative staff and government regulatory agencies. Six of 15 interviewees mentioned legislative or committee staff as a source of information, and 14 of 15 interviewees said government regulatory agencies were an information source they used.

Exchange Theory

Exchange theory describes the internal group dynamics of interest groups (Baumgartner & Leech, 2004; Browne, 1988; Salisbury, 1969; Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951). The literature suggests the success of interest groups is highly dependent upon

the exchanges between group leaders and members. Interviewees confirmed that regular communication with their organization's members was important. Many lobbyists discussed their research in light of the policy objectives determined by the organization's membership. Twelve of 15 lobbyists mentioned members as an information source, and eight of 15 mentioned internal advisory committees of members as an information source.

Transactional Theory

The literature described the transactional relationship between interest groups and policymakers (Bauer et al., 1972; Browne, 1988, 1998; Hamm, 1983; Hayes, 1981). Browne (1988) stated, "transactional relationships are based primarily on the exchange of information" (p. 53). Interestingly enough, the data from this study report that only one interviewee mentioned legislators ("elected officials") as an information source. This may be due to the fact that direct access to legislators has become more difficult in today's complex political environment. Also, legislators were not specifically suggested on the list of possible sources shown to interviewees, so that likely impacted responses as well.

Lobbying as a Communication Process

Researchers (Milbrath, 1963; Rogers, 2003; Thomas, 2004) discussed the flow of information and communication in the legislative decision-making process. The review of literature defined the communication process as the dynamic interaction of 1)

information, and 2) relationships between people. The results of this study confirmed that lobbyists' interactions with others are based on relationships and information exchanged within those relationships.

Information

Previous literature (Milbrath, 1963; Rogers, 2003; Truman, 1951) and data from this study explain the importance of information for lobbyists. One interviewee said,

I've gradually started to learn [that] information...is the money, the currency, around the Capitol. 'Have you heard this?' 'Have you heard that?' So, there's a pecking order, a power structure among the lobbying core. People that can feed you information, you owe them stuff. And, if you can develop information sources that nobody else has...then you move up the totem pole amazingly. (4)

The literature agreed. Hansen (1991) stated,

in sum, interest groups are influential because they determine the kinds of information that are available to legislators and the kinds of information that are not. They amplify voices; they articulate demands; they promote issues; they identify common interests. Their stock in trade is information – political intelligence – not pressure. (p. 229)

Interviewees discussed two kinds of information they need: 1) political or strategic information and 2) scientific or technical information. Previous literature (Capell & Thomas, 2004; Truman, 1951) also defined those two distinct types of information important to the communication process. Capell and Thomas (2004) observed that employee lobbyists were more likely to be versed in scientific/technical information about their industry, while contract lobbyists were more likely to be experts in the political process. This dynamic was confirmed by interviewees' responses.

Relationships between People / Contacts

Previous literature (Browne, 1988; Hansen, 1991; Milbrath, 1963; Rogers, 2003; Truman, 1951) recognized the importance of contacts and relationships in the exchange of information and in access to the decision-making process. Data from this study suggest that personal relationships are also essential to obtaining sources of information. All 15 interviewees said contacts were important to their information finding strategy. Many interviewees also mentioned other agricultural organizations (12 of 15), or even specifically coalitions (4 of 15), as information sources. However, interviewees also noted that the diverse nature of these groups occasionally restricts information flow and impedes collective progress. Previous literature has suggested the same. Browne's (1995) research found that legislators criticized interest groups for 1) the conflict between group leaders and their grassroots members, and 2) not cooperating with other groups to reach consensus on issues. Browne (1988, 1990, 1998) discussed how agricultural interest groups don't always work together to achieve uniform policy objectives. The challenges and successes of agricultural interest groups working together continues to be a theme in interest group theory research.

Objective #1 – Purposes for which Lobbyists Use Information

Results indicated lobbying and political purposes were in fact the number one purpose for which lobbyists researched information. Previous research (Browne, 1988, 1995; Capell & Thomas, 2004; Thomas, 2004) also suggests this was true.

Objective #2 – Sources of Information Utilized by Lobbyists

Previous research (Browne, 1990; Salisbury, 1969; Salisbury et al., 1987) only alluded to possible sources of information utilized by interest groups. Those sources included: 1) lobbyists' interaction with their organization's members, and 2) communication between interest groups. Milbrath (1963) specifically found groups' members to be an important information source for lobbyists. While more interviewees in this study mentioned regulatory and government agency staff (14 of 15) and activist or opposing groups (13 of 15) as sources of information, group members (12 of 15) and other agricultural or trade organizations (12 of 15) were two of the next most frequently mentioned sources. Results clearly confirmed both group members and other agricultural organizations as important sources of information for lobbyists.

Milbrath (1963) found that lobbyists used opposing groups as information sources. This was confirmed by the data as 14 of the 15 interviewees mentioned activist or opposing groups as a source of information. Lobbyists discussed the need to understand all sides of an issue in order to better prepare their position. Browne (1988) and Milbrath (1963) also identified coalitions as an important venue for interest groups to share information. The data suggest this is true as 12 of 15 interviewees noted they rely on other organizations for information. Some lobbyists specifically discussed the use of coalitions for information sharing and other purposes.

While regulatory and government agencies were not specifically cited in previous literature as an information source, research (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Browne, 1995, 2004c; Gais et al., 1984; Hamm, 1983; Hardin, 1978; Knott & Miller,

1987; Rourke, 1976; Thomas, 2004) discussed the interactions between government agencies and interest groups. As agriculture becomes a more highly regulated industry, it makes sense that interest groups would communicate extensively with regulatory agencies. Regulatory and government agency staff was the most commonly mentioned source of information by interviewees (14 of 15).

The literature (Browne, 1995; Mibrath, 1963) identified scientific research results as a common source of information utilized by lobbyists. Research also has indicated that legislators considered scientific research an important aspect of any lobbyist's presentation. The data suggest that scientific research (University, academia, cooperative extension, private research, etc.) continues to be an important source of information for lobbyists (mentioned by 12 of 15 interviewees). Many lobbyists indicated the need for political decisions to be based on scientific data, and the frustration that often times these decisions are not.

While no literature was found regarding the Internet as an important information source for agricultural interest groups, I predicted that it would be. The data suggest that to be true; 12 of 15 interviewees mentioned the Internet as a source of information. However, it is important to note that the Internet itself is not a source of information. Rather, it is a communication channel through which lobbyists can find sources. Some interviewees alluded to this by stating that they used the Internet to find government agency websites, specific reports or statistics, websites of organizations, and other actual sources of information.

Objective #3 – Reasons Why Lobbyists Utilize Different Information Sources and Lobbyists' Information Finding Strategies

There has been little previous research on how and why lobbyists select their information sources. Browne (1995) suggested that lobbyists are purposeful in their selection of information sources, and may deliberately choose not to use some sources. Data from this study suggest that lobbyists will go to any source to find the information they need. Lobbyists do not deliberately avoid sources, unless they are not credible or useful to their research. Lobbyists said they wanted the real facts, and would be exhaustive in their information finding strategy to get those facts.

Objective #4 – Common Characteristics of Information Sources Utilized by Lobbyists

Lobbyists reported a variety of useful source characteristics that were helpful in their research. Credibility was the number one characteristic that lobbyists said an information source must have. Beyond that, lobbyists primarily noted the importance of source characteristics such as personal contacts (12 of 15), accessibility (9 of 15), quality and accuracy (9 of 15), brevity and readability (3 of 15), experience (3 of 15), and current information (2 of 15).

Objective #5 – The Role of Trust in the Selection of Information Sources

Previous research (Browne, 1995; Milbrath, 1963; Thomas, 2004) cited trust as a key factor in the selection of information sources. Results of this study confirm that lobbyists consider trust and credibility the most important factors when selecting

information sources. All 15 of the interviewees noted the importance of trust and/or credibility of information sources. Interviewees also discussed the importance of lobbyists' integrity and of providing accurate information.

The Importance of Research in Lobbyists' Work

Lobbyist responses confirmed that research is important in the work they do representing their agricultural organizations. Previous research (Capell & Thomas, 2004; Rogers, 2003; Schlink, 1996; Truman, 1951) confirms the value of seeking accurate and thorough information to use in the legislative decision-making process.

Conclusions

Lobbyists of California agricultural interest groups are primarily researching for lobbying purposes. The purpose of their research and the type of information needed drive how lobbyists research an issue and what information sources they utilize. Lobbyists rely on their previous experiences to determine which sources will provide them with the necessary information. Data from this study suggest four main factors that impact which information sources lobbyists choose to utilize:

- 1) what information is needed
- 2) who their contacts and personal relationships are with
- 3) how much they trust potential sources

- 4) other characteristics of the sources such as accessibility, quality and accuracy, brevity and readability, experience of source, current information, scientifically-based, sincere, and/or a source that provides needed pictures or graphics

Lobbyists acknowledged the importance of research in their lobbying work.

Specifically, two main themes developed from the interviewees' responses: 1) lobbyists gather all the political and technical information needed to thoroughly understand an issue before lobbying on it, and 2) lobbyists find the appropriate information to support their organization's policy objectives.

Lobbyists will exhaust their resources to find the necessary information.

Lobbyists are very resourceful and diligent in their search for information. I was impressed by the integrity of lobbyists, as they all discussed their desire to fully understand issues and promote good public policy decisions.

Implications of Results and Contributions to Interest Group Theory

The communication process used in the legislative decision-making process is shown below:

Sources of Information → Interest Groups → Information (+Constituent Beliefs, etc.) → Legislators → Favored Legislation

This study sought to identify the initial sources of information (in bold italics above) used by lobbyists, and why and how lobbyists choose those sources. The findings from this study provided just that: a breadth of data surrounding sources of information utilized by interest groups.

While this flowchart suggests sources of information are being provided to interest groups, that is typically not true. This study researched how and why lobbyists actively sought out information sources. Depending on the issue they were researching, sometimes lobbyists needed specific information, while other times they began researching with only a general concept of what information was needed.

As modeled in the flowchart, the sources of information used by lobbyists affect the lobbyists' ability to influence legislators and the passage of favorable legislation. The initial sources of information used by lobbyists are key to lobbyists' success in the political decision-making process.

The communication process demonstrated by the flow chart also indicates the importance of constituent beliefs in influencing legislators. In an increasingly complex and busy political environment, more and more legislators focus only on communications from their constituents. Members of interest groups are also constituents of legislators. Lobbyists understand this and therefore employ their group's membership as both information sources and communicators of the group's message. Data from this study confirm that lobbyists depend on their organization's membership as an information source. Interviewees said members could explain how regulations or laws were implemented "on the farm," and how regulations impacted their businesses. Many lobbyists noted the effectiveness of having members "tell their story" to articulate and personalize testimony.

Interest group theory is broad and diverse; there are a number of variables and dynamics involved in the political decision-making process. It is therefore often difficult

to isolate a single variable for study. I believe this study's findings are relevant to the ongoing discussion regarding the role of information sources and interest groups in the political decision-making process.

Limitations of the Study

Many of the potential limitations of this study are inherent to exploratory, qualitative research, and were noted in the methodology. Lobbyists' responses were diverse due to the open-ended nature of the interviews. It was challenging for me to provide prompts where needed without influencing the interviewees' replies. In addition, not every interviewee interpreted each question the same, or as it was intended. I had to occasionally rephrase a question or ask for clarification in order to maintain consistency amongst responses.

During interviews, some lobbyists gave answers to questions before or after that specific question was asked. I then had to adjust questioning accordingly. This made themes more difficult to identify for data analyzing and reporting purposes.

This study asked lobbyists to explain and articulate the process of how and why they choose information sources in their research. For most of the interviewees, this process is intuitive based on their personal judgment of each situation. It was challenging for many of them to articulate their information finding strategy. This factor combined with the open-ended nature of the questions, provided for a potentially unlimited number and variety of responses. However, I believe there is validity to the data because of 1) the similarities amongst interviewee responses, and 2) the fact that these responses were what lobbyists thought of first.

Recommendations for Further Research

Interest groups in the political decision-making process have been studied in a variety of ways. Their interactions with the political process are dynamic and include many potential variables of study. As Baumgartner and Leech (1998) stated,

groups are a difficult set of institutions to study in a systematic way because their activities are so varied and their implications so broad. It is this very breadth, however, that makes it important for political science to pay more attention to groups. Group interests are basic to the practice of politics; interest groups must be basic to the study of politics as well. (p.188)

The data from this research could potentially be used to study other dynamics regarding the role of information sources or how lobbyists influence legislators in the political decision-making process.

Because this was an exploratory study, I recommend that similar studies be conducted to verify the results. As mentioned in the limitations, there are potentially numerous information sources, and many other responses to the questions asked in this study. Future similar studies would help substantiate this research.

There are some specific topics within this field that warrant further research. Both previous research and this study's data reveal the integral role of personal relationships and contacts for lobbyists in the political decision-making process. The interview instrument for this study did not specifically mention "relationships" or "contacts," yet they were discussed by every lobbyist. Further research could be conducted on the various uses and roles of contacts at different stages in the process or for different purposes.

Data from this study noted the use of coalitions as information sources, for networking, and in coordinating efforts or campaigns. Agricultural interest groups clearly participate in and depend on coalitions. Coalition dynamics and purposes merit future research.

Previous research, specifically regarding transactional theory, suggests that lobbyists and legislators exchange information on a regular basis. However, only one interviewee in this study identified elected officials as an information source. As noted in the findings, this could be because legislators are less available now, or because interviewees were not prompted with legislators as a possible source. Further research is needed to determine why legislators were not mentioned as an information source and whether or not they are an information source. Legislators as information sources could also be compared to other information sources in terms of how and when they are utilized.

Finally, these data reflect the impact of California's political environment on interviewee responses. Additional research in other states would provide meaningful studies for comparison across states. How are agricultural interest groups in other states affected by their respective state governments and political climates?

How and why lobbyists influence legislators is a very complex and dynamic process. There are any number of variables that impact the different stages of this communication process. These variables should be continuously studied and compared to previous research in an effort to contribute to interest group theory.

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APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENT - INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What are the principal agricultural issues that your organization addresses? Are you in general defending them or asking for new protection? Please explain.
2. For what purpose(s) are you most commonly researching any given issue? (i.e. for lobbying/political purposes, public education/awareness campaigns, responding to member requests, or ?)
3. What sources do you use to gain information needed in your research? Which sources do you use most often? Why these among all your possible choices? (provide a list of potential sources – such as educational/research institutions, governmental agencies, members of your organization, other interest groups or organizations, etc.)
4. Are there certain characteristics or features of these favored or most utilized individuals or organizations that make them easier to contact or from which to gain information? Is trust a factor? Please explain.
5. If you need information on a given issue, how do you decide whom to contact in order to find it?
6. As a representative of an organization that could be seen as an agricultural interest group, you are primarily presenting one side of most issues, correct? How, if at all, does this affect what information sources you use?
7. Could you summarize by explaining the importance that research plays in your public affairs work – first, in influencing you and, second, in influencing others? Who are you most trying to influence? Why?

APPENDIX B

LIST OF POSSIBLE SOURCES PROVIDED TO INTERVIEWEES

Possible Sources of Information

- government agencies
- academic/research institutions
- the Internet (specific websites? or general search? or?)
- private consultants
- legal consultants
- popular press/media
- extension specialists/farm advisors
- colleagues
- other trade associations, interest groups, or organizations
- professional or scientific journals
- marketing orders
- general public
- members of your organization
- advisory committees (internal? or external? from where?)
- activist groups, opposing groups, or groups introducing claims or legislation that your organization disagrees with
- others?

APPENDIX C

LETTER REQUESTING INTERVIEWEE PARTICIPATION

Dear _____:

I obtained my Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education from the University of California, Davis in June of 2003. I am currently pursuing my Master of Education in Agricultural Policy/Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University. My thesis research is titled “sources of information utilized by selected California agricultural interest groups.” I have selected interest groups that are affiliated with the top 10 commodities grown in California. Please see the attached paper for details regarding the specific purpose, objectives, and background of my thesis project.

In addition, on July 19th I accepted the position of Rural Health and Safety Director for the California Farm Bureau Federation and moved to Sacramento. This has not affected my research, and I will still be obtaining my Masters degree through Texas A&M.

My research will consist of interviewing the primary lobbyist or governmental relations officer with each of the California agricultural interest groups I’ve identified. Would your primary lobbyist be willing to participate in an interview for my thesis research? As a representative of the dairy industry, your organization is an important part of my target sample. The interviews will take place between November and January. I am more than willing to accommodate your schedule so we can identify a time that works best for you. The interview will take about 1 hour, and I have also enclosed a copy of the interview questions and a copy of my Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

Please contact me as to whether or not you will be able to participate in my thesis project. I have enclosed my business contact information, which is now the best way to contact me. Thank you in advance for your time and support.

Respectfully,

Elisa Noble

Enclosures: Thesis Purpose and Objectives
Interview Questions
IRB Approval Memo
Graduate Committee Members

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

I have been asked to participate in a qualitative research study regarding the sources of information utilized by selected California agricultural interest group. This study is a thesis project for Elisa Noble, a graduate assistant in the Agricultural Education Department at Texas A&M University. As the primary lobbyist or representative of one such interest group, I have been asked to participate in this study. A total of 15-20 participants are involved in this study.

If I agree to be in this study, I will be asked to participate in an interview. The interview will be audio taped, unless I request that it not be. I understand that I can request the interview not be audio taped without risk to myself or the integrity of the study. Participation in this study is voluntary, and I may withdraw from the study at any time. I may also refuse to answer any questions that make me uncomfortable. The interview itself will require one to two hours. I will also be asked to review the interview proceedings after they have been typed, in order to confirm my responses to the interview questions. I understand that there are no risks, benefits, or compensation associated with this study.

This study is confidential and all records of this study will be kept private. The researchers will use the same interview guide when interviewing all participants. No personal identification will be placed on the results in order to ensure confidentiality. All results will be coded and only group data will be reported in the findings. Research records, including interview audiotapes and all data, will be stored securely in Scoates Hall 113 on the Texas A&M University campus, and destroyed after two years.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Research Compliance, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 845-8585 or mwbuckley@tamu.edu.

I can contact Elisa Noble ((916) 561-5598 or enoble@aged.tamu.edu) or Dr. Gary Briers ((979)-862-3000 or g-briers@tamu.edu) with any questions regarding this study. I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this consent document for my records. By signing this document, I consent to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Consent to be Taped¹

I voluntarily agree to be audio taped during the experiment being conducted by Elisa Noble. I understand that the tapes will be used only for data analysis by Elisa Noble. These tapes will be identified by codes so as to ensure confidentiality. The tapes will be kept for no more than two years, and they will be stored securely in Scoates 113, Texas A&M University campus. The tapes will be erased after data is collected

Signature of Subject _____ Date: _____

Signature of Subject _____ Date: _____

Refusal to be Taped

I do not agree to be audio taped during this experiment conducted by Elisa Noble. By refusing to be audio taped, I understand that I may continue to participate in the study.

Signature of Subject _____ Date: _____

Signature of Subject _____ Date: _____

¹Consent must be obtained during the debriefing.

VITA

Elisa Lynn Noble received her Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Systems and the Environment, with a minor in Animal Science, from the University of California, Davis in June 2003. She began her graduate school program in the Department of Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University in August 2003. Ms. Noble accepted a position with the California Farm Bureau Federation in July 2004, while continuing work on her graduate degree. She is the Rural Health and Safety Director and Agricultural Crime Prevention Coordinator for this farmer-member agricultural trade association in California. Ms. Noble received her Master of Science in Agricultural Education from Texas A&M University in August 2005. Her educational, research, and professional interests continue to be in the general fields of agricultural education and agricultural policy.

Ms. Noble may be reached at the California Farm Bureau Federation, 2300 River Plaza Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833. Her e-mail address is enoble@cfbf.com.