BU profs examine food co-op phenomenon

By Charlotte Cooper

Food co-ops aren't a new concept. They've existed in this country many times before their most recent emergence involving suburbanites and blue-collar workers as well as students. Two BU College of Business Administration professors, interested in examining this pattern developing across economic classes, are carrying out a study from both a marketing and a sociological point of view. They encourage MIT students involved in co-ops to participate in their project, which requires no more than a questionnaire and an interview.

Ed Wertheim, who teaches human behavior and organizational theory, and Ron Cuthen, a professor of marketing, organized a panel of co-op leaders last September to discover how various groups operated. Armed with an $1100 grant from the Boston University Fund, they also developed a questionnaire distributed during the past month to 15 of each of the 20 participating groups. Says Wertheim: "Cuthen is interested in discovering the co-op member's attitudes toward consumer behavior, to see if the type of voluntary organization is established, how it's run, why people leave."

Permanent or transient, the food coop is now flourishing in the Boston area. One Cambridge group has divided its 500 members into three subareas. The group boasts a membership of 800, and most groups follow a similar food-buying pattern. A list of the week's produce prices is distributed during the past month to 20 participating groups; they designate two people. You must apply immediate rules that you need

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In our Friday, Dec. 16 issue, Dan McKinney was identified as the co-respondent for Science. Mr. Greenberg was identified as the co-respondent for Science, Government Reports.

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