

St. Catherine University

SOPHIA

Master of Social Work Clinical Research Papers

School of Social Work

3-2014

Livable Wage Legislation: Minnesota Social Workers' Knowledge of and Involvement in the Movement

Maggie Wangen
St. Catherine University

Follow this and additional works at: https://sophia.stkate.edu/msw_papers



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wangen, Maggie. (2014). Livable Wage Legislation: Minnesota Social Workers' Knowledge of and Involvement in the Movement. Retrieved from Sophia, the St. Catherine University repository website: https://sophia.stkate.edu/msw_papers/405

This Clinical research paper is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Work at SOPHIA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Social Work Clinical Research Papers by an authorized administrator of SOPHIA. For more information, please contact amshaw@stkate.edu.

Livable Wage Legislation: Minnesota Social Workers' Knowledge of and Involvement in the
Movement

Maggie Wangen, BSSW, LSW

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Social Work University of St. Thomas and St.
Catherine University St. Paul, Minnesota in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Social Work

Committee Members

Karen Carlson Ph.D., MSSW, LICSW (Chair)

Mary Ann Brenden, MSW

Sharyn DeZelar, MSW, LICSW

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

Abstract

Minnesota's minimum wage provides insufficient income for full-time adult employees to meet their needs and the needs of their dependent children. The social work profession, and individual social workers, should be aware of and involved in the current social justice issue of raising the minimum wage to a more realistic (livable) wage. This research paper examines the potential impacts of raising the minimum wage, current opinions of American society regarding livable wages, and the extent to which Minnesota social workers have knowledge of and are involved in the livable wage movement. Results of a survey taken by Minnesota's licensed social workers reveal a significant portion of social workers have never heard or read about the livable wage movement, and a remarkably low percentage of social workers are not involved in the movement; however, the social workers were generally interested in the issue and most social workers believed it was a very important issue. The data indicates that additional research is needed to investigate the reasons behind the lack of awareness and effort by social workers to remedy this social injustice. The study demonstrates the need for individual social workers to engage themselves in more mezzo and macro practice; organizations that exist to uphold the mission of social work (such as the Minnesota Association of Social Work and the National Association of Social Workers) must implement practices and policies that will enable the profession of social work to fulfill its mission for social justice.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my husband, John, for always (no exaggeration) being supportive of my educational pursuits. He listened intently when I blathered on and on about some research study I had read or essay I was writing, and when I ranted about some social injustice we discussed in class that day. John provided simple yet powerful words of encouragement and reassurance during my moments of panic (and his soothing bear hugs often did the trick). He never questioned or underestimated the amount of heart and energy that I pour into my learning process. John's respect and appreciation for my schooling needs to be formally recognized.

Much of my inspiration for this research topic came from two of my research committee members, Mary Ann and Sharyn. In the beginning of my MSW education in summer 2013 Mary Ann and Sharyn instructed two of my courses: Mary Ann with History and Philosophy of Social Work; Sharyn with Social Policy and Program Development. Their approach to the curriculum and facilitation of meaningful class discussions restored my passion for social justice and integrative social work practice (although, at the time I did not realize there was a term to succinctly describe what I feel the profession is lacking).

Sincere gratitude is also extended to my research committee chair, Karen. She was available to me whenever I needed assistance; but she allowed me the time and space I desired to complete the work at my own pace. Thank you for trusting my judgment and academic competency.

To my entire research committee: I am grateful for your contributions to my research project. You all provided valuable feedback, insight, inspiration, and encouragement!

Table of Contents

Abstract: Page 2

Acknowledgements: Page 3

Overview of the Problem: Pages 5-7

Literature Review: Pages 8

Conceptual Framework: Pages 15-20

Methodology: Pages 20-24

Data Analysis: Pages 24-33

Discussion: Pages 34-40

Conclusion: Pages 40-41

References: Pages 42-47

Appendix A: Pages 48-49

Appendix B: Pages 50-51

Appendix C: Pages 52-54

Overview of the Problem

Problem Identification

Minnesota's current minimum wage does not provide sufficient income for adults employed full time to provide for their own basic needs and the basic needs of their dependent children.

Scope of the Problem

According to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (2012) about 148,000 (almost 10%) of Minnesota hourly workers were at or below the poverty line in 2011. About 28 million workers in Minnesota are currently earning low, inadequate, wages of less than \$9.80 per hour (EPI, 2011). Approximately 78% of Minnesota workers impacted by low wages in 2011 were at least 20 years old, 56% were women, 81% of non-Hispanic white workers, 24% of Asian and black workers, 43% Hispanic workers, about 22% parented at least one child, 37% were full time workers, and 27% had some amount of college education. Around 11% of low-wage workers hold an associates or bachelor's degree; these individuals are considered to be underemployed. Data collected from the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey showed out of all states Minnesota ranks number eight with 24% of working families being 200% below the poverty line (The Working Poor Families Project [WFPF], 2012).

Impact of the Problem

According to cost of living research conducted by JOBS NOW Coalition (2009) the cost of basic needs in Minnesota in 2009 required an hourly wage of \$11.82 (\$23,640 annually) for a single adult with no children, and 29% of Minnesota jobs pay less than that. For a couple with two children an hourly wage of \$14.03 (\$56,120 combined annually) per adult is required to meet basic needs, and 39% of Minnesota jobs pay less than that. If one of two parents in a family

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

with two children is not employed, such as families with a stay-at-home parent, the individual who is employed would need to make \$17.52 per hour (\$35,040 annually). Only 48% of Minnesota jobs offer at least that. In the seven county metro area of Minnesota 15% of jobs pay less than \$9.95 per hour, compared to an average of 24% in greater Minnesota regions (Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development [DEED], 2009).

The definition of poverty depends on the household size; an individual household of one needs to earn \$11,490 or less annually to be considered in poverty and a family household of three needs to earn \$19,530 to be at the poverty line (United States Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2013). To qualify for assistance programs through the state, such as food support, a family household can only earn up to 115% of the federal poverty guidelines (Minnesota House of Representatives, 2013). If a family of three earns less than \$22,460 they may qualify for financial assistance. According to research conducted by the Minnesota House of Representatives 40,521 families with children received government assistance during the year 2013. However, many parents are making too much money to qualify for assistance yet may not be able to provide for their own and/or their children's basic needs (WPFPP, 2013). In year 2007 nearly 21% of working Minnesota families were low-income, meaning they earned less than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, meaning they do not qualify for any assistance to meet basic needs but depending on their situation they may not be providing their children with adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, etc. (WPFPP, 2009). In year 2011 about 33% of Minnesota's children were from low-income households (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2011).

Although one must be mindful that a correlation differs from causation, poverty is linked to increased risks of developing mental health disorders, reduced access to resources, experiencing violence and other traumatic events (Santiago, Kaltman, & Miranda, 2012). Family

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

poverty has been the most correlated factor with child abuse and neglect (First Focus, 2008).

Research shows that a strong protective factor to prevent child maltreatment is a parent's ability to access basic resources (Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau, 2006). Studies have also revealed a significant decrease in educational achievement for children who are experiencing household food insecurity (Feeding America, 2009). These findings indicate the negative impacts children experience when their basic needs are not being met, such as the case when their parents are not earning sufficient income.

Relevance of the Problem to Social Work Practice

The mission of social work is to engage in various roles and tasks in order to ensure everyone, specifically vulnerable and at-risk populations, achieves their full potential as human beings (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2012). Individuals and families who live in poverty experience many interrelated problems that prevent or reduce their ability to reach their full potential. One approach to reduce the prevalence of poverty is to increase the minimum wage to a livable wage; income to allow full time workers to more realistically provide for their own and their family's basic needs independently from any outside assistance.

Effective social work practice includes advocating for public policy changes that support social and economic justice. Researching surrounding livable wage legislation could allow the social work profession to more effectively serve vulnerable and at-risk populations through systemic change. Additionally, the social workers have a duty to uphold the mission of the profession, which includes attention to social justice issues. This study investigates one proposed remedy to a major social injustice and social workers' awareness of and involvement in the issue. The livable wage movement is used as one example of the many social justice issues social workers should be involved in and/or concerned about.

Literature Review

Limitations of Existing Livable Wage Research

Upon review of existing research literature regarding livable wage legislation in the United States, many contradictions appeared amongst research findings from various studies. Differences in research findings likely stem from pre-existing trends in the labor market that are not accounted for, other uncontrolled variables, selection of sample size and origins, and publication bias (Card & Krueger, 1995). Another issue is the time frames in which the researchers choose to conduct their studies. For example, to produce most reliable and valid results regarding how minimum wage increases impact employment a researcher should have a baseline to compare the findings. Many researchers with findings indicating some degree of adverse effect of minimum wage increases often do not account for natural fluctuations in the labor market. Additionally, many of these research studies are not longitudinal and are too specific in nature to generalize to the national economy.

A predominant economic theory in regards to minimum wages in capitalistic America is that if the minimum wage is increased employers will respond by modifying their employment practices in order to maintain or continue to increase profits. Because of this common belief research findings that challenge the status quo in the economic world may not be as widely published. Also, researcher bias may play a role in the stark difference of findings; the researcher can select or choose not to select variables and control groups that may produce certain results. A final consideration is that of empirical designs versus theory-only predicted or estimated data.

Impacts of Minimum Wage Increases

Employment. Some research studies regarding minimum wages have provided some degree of statistically significant evidence that increasing the minimum wage causes a slight

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

reduction of employment for low-skilled workers and workers making at or below the minimum wage. Neumark, Schweitzer, & Wascher (2002) state Abowd et al. in 1999 studied employment rates after minimum wage increases in France and the United States, finding higher unemployment rates in both countries for minimum wage earners after an increase. Similarly, Neumark, Schweitzer, and Wascher demonstrated vague unemployment effects on minimum wage earners and those making up to 1.3 times the minimum wage in the first year after an increase, but in the second year a much weaker and smaller impact on those making 1.2 to 1.3 times the minimum wage. Rohlin (2011) studied the impact of minimum wage increases in Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin. The research question was in regards to the likelihood of new business establishment as well as the impact on already established businesses in affected areas by comparing data from non-affected geographically bordering areas. Rohlin found a significant (7%-31%, depending on the industry) decrease in establishment of businesses generally requiring staff of low education attainment, although such business comprised only 4% of Rohlin's sample size. Rohlin, however, found no impact on the functioning of existing businesses in affected areas when minimum wage is increased.

Other research findings have revealed virtually no impact on employment of bordering counties to counties with higher minimum wages (Dube, Lester, and Reich, 2010). In 1991 Katz and Krueger (1992) studied the impact of minimum wage increases on Texas fast food chain restaurants. Katz and Krueger found higher increases in employment within the affected businesses as compared to non-affected businesses. Similarly, Card and Krueger (1994) examined employment effects of 1992 minimum wage increases in New Jersey on the fast food businesses located in New Jersey, using neighboring Pennsylvania as a control group because

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

their minimum wage remained constant. When comparing to data in Pennsylvania, Card and Krueger discovered no reduction in employment data amongst New Jersey's fast food chain restaurants in response to minimum wage increasing. Thompson (2008) also found no negative impacts on employment practices in Indiana, Illinois, and surrounding Midwestern states after minimum wage increases.

Work hours and Incomes. Some studies have demonstrated a reduced amount of hours for low-skilled workers and workers making at or below the minimum wage when the minimum wage is increased. Within the first year of an increase in minimum wage, one study observed working hours of minimum wage earners and those making just above the minimum remaining the same but being reduced in the second year (Neumark, Schweitzer, & Wascher, 2002). However, some workers may benefit while others experience negative consequences correlated with minimum wage increases. In the same study workers making 1.2 to 1.5 times the minimum wage experienced a moderate increase in working hours.

Although increasing the minimum wage increases the hourly pay of workers the overall earnings of low-skilled workers and workers at or below the minimum wage often decrease after a minimum wage increase. A reduction in overall income of under-skilled and low-wage workers is likely caused by amount of hours for these workers being reduced (Dube, Lester, & Reich, 2010). One study revealed that within two years of a minimum wage increase minimum wage earners experienced a 6% decline in total income (Neumark, Schweitzer, & Wascher, 2002).

Workers earning above minimum wage. The minimum wage may be perceived as a more effective wage floor, raising overall incomes, rather than a tool to increase the incomes of minimum wage workers. Many research findings indicate that an increase in the minimum wage actually increases the incomes of workers who are employed above the minimum wage.

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Specifically, when the minimum wage in the United States was increased in 2007 the median income of middle-class workers went up by \$1.92 per hour, from \$22.12 per hour to \$24.04 per hour (Waldman-Levin, 2009). In New York during that same year the median income went up from \$28.85 to \$30.29, which is a similar increase of \$1.44 per hour. The minimum wage may also be a more effective means of reducing the large gaps between income brackets in the US (income inequality). In New York income inequality was reduced by nearly 21% after three series of minimum wage increases between 2004 and 2007. Nationally, when the minimum wage increased between 2006 and 2007 the ratio of the highest fifth to lowest fifth income brackets was decreased by 14%. Comparatively, when minimum wage remained stagnant between 2003 and 2006 income inequality between those two income brackets rose by 10.5%.

Opinions about Minimum Wage Increases

Employers. One survey of 85 employers in Tuscon, Arizona, showed many employers observed positive effects in their business when paying qualifying employees the city's livable wage of \$8 per hour (Grant & Trautner, 2004). Since the 1999 livable wage ordinance was enacted, 39% of the employers reported increased morale in their business, 33% experienced a reduction in turnover, 11% observed reduced employee theft, 6% experienced decrease in overtime hours, possibly as result of increased productivity that was reported by 22% of the employers. These findings suggest that businesses may profit from higher minimum wages, or at least dissolve the additional cost of increased wages.

In 2013 the Minnesota Restaurant Association (MRA) conducted a survey of 115 restaurant managers and owners regarding Minnesota's failed proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$9.50 per hour (Minnesota Public Radio, 2013). MRA released results of the survey to media sources, with a statement against a minimum wage increase without accounting for tips in

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

the hourly wages of full-service restaurant employees. MRA's president stated the group supports a minimum wage of \$7.25, as they believe the average hourly wage of a full-service restaurant worker to be about \$18 per hour. When drafting bills and creating city ordinances regarding minimum wages, policy makers should consider the position of MRA and other stakeholders who may have credible reasons to oppose particular minimum wage bills. In doing so, tips may be included in calculating wages of restaurant workers.

Comparing the previous findings with international findings, one survey of 1,290 employers in New Zealand determined employers generally did not see significant changes in their hiring practices in response to an additional 25 cents per hour minimum wage in 2011 (New Zealand Labour and Immigration Research Centre, 2012). About 31% of employers raised the wage of workers already earning above the minimum wage according to the merit of each employee.

However, in response to a proposed \$1 increase in the minimum wage the employers reported they were much more likely to cut hours, reduce hiring and staff size, enact higher productivity standards, and hire more skilled workers (New Zealand Labour and Immigration Research Centre, 2012). Employers reported they would also be more likely to increase cost of services and products in response to a \$1 increase in the minimum wage. As another possible response to a \$1 increase in minimum wage, 70% of the surveyed New Zealand employers would enact trial periods for new employees to assess their value and potential.

Qualitative interviews also discovered a response trend that demonstrated employers would be much more selective about the type of person they would hire (New Zealand Labour and Immigration Research Centre, 2012). Employers would likely seek out a positive attitude, strong work ethic, and communication and teamwork skills in potential hires. This large-scale

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

survey of New Zealand's businesses indicates moderate increases in the minimum wage over a period of time would likely have the least negative impact on employment practices.

The general public: United States. In 1994 a *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* survey showed 75% of Americans support an increase in the minimum wage (United States Department of Labor [DOL], 1996). This opinion was reaffirmed in a 1995 *Los Angeles Times* survey of 73% of respondents supporting an increase in the minimum wage. A 2005 Gallup poll of Americans showed 83% support for increasing the federal minimum wage (Gallup, 2006). A 2011 survey of Americans revealed another similar statistic of about 67% approving a minimum wage increase to \$10 per hour (Public Religion Research Institute, 2011).

In 2013 the Pew Research Center and *USA Today* conducted their own survey of over 1,500 American adults, and found 71% support for an increase of the minimum wage to \$9 per hour (Pew Research, 2013). Hart Research Associates conducted their own national survey in 2013 (Hart Research Associates, 2013). Hart's poll collected opinions of over 1,000 adult Americans, finding that 80% supported a minimum wage of up to \$10.10 per hour. Around 75% of those respondents believe the inadequate minimum wage should be resolved by Congress within the next year. A survey in 2013 conducted for *NBC News/Wall Street Journal* posed the question of whether minimum wage should be increased to \$9 per hour because it would help remove working families from poverty and improve the economy or if it should not be increased because it would hurt small businesses and reduce employment for low wage workers (*Wall Street Journal*, 2013). Of the 1,000 American adults surveyed 58% supported a \$9 minimum wage versus 38% who feared it would hurt small businesses. A 2013 Gallup poll showed 71% support for increasing the federal minimum wage to \$9 per hour (Gallup, 2013). Amongst all the

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

national surveys the majority of Americans consistently support increasing the federal minimum wage, and in 2013 to at least \$9 per hour.

The General Public: Minnesota. At the Minnesota State Fair in 2013 the House of Representatives conducted a poll of 7,000 fair-goers regarding a number of current and upcoming policy issues, including the minimum wage (Minnesota House of Representatives, 2013). The poll revealed a 65% support for a minimum wage to increase to \$8.50 per hour for businesses earning under \$500,000 a year, and \$9.50 for the larger businesses. The Minnesota House of Representatives does not provide any demographic data regarding their survey population sample. The Minnesota Senate also conducted a survey at the Minnesota State Fair poll, this one with 4,380 respondents, with less than one percent residing outside of Minnesota, about 40% between ages of 50-64 years and about 22% being over the age of 64 (Minnesota State Senate, 2013). The Senate poll found 38.12% of participants support a minimum wage increase to somewhere between \$8.25 and \$9.25 per hour. In March of 2013 the *Star Tribune* also conducted a survey of Minnesotan's perspectives on the minimum wage (*Star Tribune*, 2013). Of the 800 respondents, 69% supported an increase in the minimum wage; 28% wanted to see a \$7.50 minimum wage, 41% wanted a \$9.50 minimum wage, while 31% wanted no change or were unsure.

Most Recent Attempts to Pass Livable Wage Legislation

The state of New Jersey recently attempted to pass livable wage legislation. In 2013 New Jersey's legislature proposed an increase of the state minimum wage to \$8.25 per hour, with an annual adjustment to account for cost of living inflation (Rutgers-Eagleton, 2013). A 2013 Rutgers-Eagleton poll of active New Jersey voters (most likely to actually vote) shows 76% of respondents support New Jersey's proposed minimum wage increase. A 2013 poll conducted by

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Monmouth University surveyed New Jersey's registered voters, who may or may not actually go out to vote. Of these registered voters in New Jersey, 65% would vote for the increase; 12% would vote against it; and 22% were unsure or did not plan to make a vote (Monmouth University, 2013).

New Jersey's Republican Governor, Chris Christie, made a public statement on January 28, 2013 against a bill proposal to increase the state's minimum wage to \$8.25, even though polls show that at least 65% of his constituents support the proposal, over half of the supporters being Republican (Monmouth University, 2013; Rutgers-Eagleton, 2013; State of New Jersey, 2013). Minnesota's Democratic Governor, Mark Dayton, made a public statement on March 6, 2013 supporting a minimum wage of up to \$9.50 per hour, which is more reflective of his constituents views (Minnesota Public Radio, 2013). Historically, Republican legislators overwhelmingly vote against minimum wage increases (DOL, 1996). O'Roark & Wood (2008) studied the tendencies of legislators to vote for or against minimum wage increases in Congress.

Research Question

To what extent are Minnesota's licensed social workers aware of and involved in the livable wage movement?

Conceptual Framework

It is beneficial to recognize and discuss the lenses through which poverty and other significant social problems are viewed. The process of identifying social problems and their causes and solutions, and the way a researcher interprets data differs researcher-to-researcher depending on personal, educational, and professional backgrounds. A variety of experiences influence the way researchers perceive and examine social problems. The conceptual framework of my perspective on the issue of livable wages will guide my research and critical analyses.

Theoretical Perspectives

Conflict theory. Traditional conflict theory views social problems in the context of conflict between two or more groups of people (Rogers, 2006). In the situation of inadequate hourly wages the conflict exists between wealthy corporate business executives and investors and their disadvantaged employees. Karl Marx's theory proposes conflict between socioeconomic classes is the root of social problems (Popple & Leighninger, 2008). Marx believed the conflict between classes was inherent to a capitalistic society (Rogers, 2006). Marx hypothesized that the "have-nots" eventually realize the great inequality, the great abundance of resources (money) of the "haves", and the struggles over distribution of resources are inevitable. According to Marx, the status quo eventually changes as the masses of have-nots increase well beyond the population of haves. From a Marx's conflict perspective corporate America will take an oppositional stance to public policies that would support socioeconomic justice in the form of livable wages because they want to maintain their current high status above the workers.

Systems theory. Those who perceive the world within a systems theory context believe that there are various systems, or institutions, in every person's life that shape their reality (Rogers, 2006). Within a system there are subsystems, which are the individual parts that combine to create the whole system. Each subsystem functions within certain boundaries and each has a specific role to fulfill. Each subsystem influences the system as a whole. In the situation studied in this research proposal, the subsystem requiring change is the government and its boundaries are within public policy regarding minimum wages. According to Rogers (2006), systems prefer to maintain their present status and do not readily accept significant change that could disrupt the current functioning of the system. This theory helps to explain opposition to livable wages that would benefit many individuals and families.

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Social and economic justice. Social and economic justice occurs if all individuals are provided with equal access to adequate opportunities and resources to attain their full potential (Rogers, 2006). “Full potential”, as defined in the proposed research is seen as the height of one’s capacity to achieve wellbeing and self-sufficiency. A utilitarian approach would ensure public policy (such as minimum wage policy) benefit the majority of individuals in its reach (Rogers, 2006). Public policy that ensures a minimum wage is a realistic, livable minimum wage, would benefit the majority. Workers vastly outnumber corporate executives and investors that could lose a certain amount of profit in comparison to previous years if they do not pass the costs on to consumers.

Social Work Values and Ethical Principles

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2008) created and enforces a Code of Ethics that includes social work values and ethical principles that guides social work practice in all settings. The University of St. Thomas and the College of St. Catherine’s School of Social Work combines NASW social work values with the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to create Social Work for Social Justice: Ten Principles for Social Justice (University of St. Thomas, 2006). Of the Ten Principles for Social Justice, the principles that influence my perspectives of livable wage legislation are human dignity, community and the common good, priority for the poor and vulnerable, and governance/subsidiary. The social work principle of common good supports the following statement: for social justice to occur, the nation must be more concerned about the welfare of the nation’s people versus the welfare of private corporations.

The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) supports the belief that adults who work full time should be provided with wages from the employer that allows for the preservation of personal

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

dignity and independence of the employee. Those individuals who are employed full time but are on some form of public assistance to fill in the gap between minimum wage income and an income required to provide for their own basic needs as well as their children's likely lose their sense of dignity. Since large corporations in the United States have failed to reveal their desire to provide just wages to their employees, the government must step in, as it has in the past, to ensure all employers are not exploiting their workers. Livable wage legislation could not only benefit the workers and their families, but also the employer and society in general, as demonstrated in the literature review presented in this paper.

Theoretically, if able-bodied adults employed full time are earning enough income to survive without assistance from government programs welfare caseloads may be reduced; if welfare caseloads are reduced taxes could be reduced or the revenue redirected to other public sectors in great need of funding, such as early childhood education. Also, employees who are provided a fair wage could feel valued by their employer and may experience less stress; high morale and low stress could generate an increase in worker productivity, thus profits would increase.

Personal Experiences and Perspectives

In my social work education, both undergraduate and graduate curriculums have emphasized social and economic justice (attention to macro social work practice). A portion of my class time and coursework has been spent focusing on such issues and utilizing critical thinking regarding the identification, causes, and possible remedies within the context of larger society. However, social work as a profession has drifted far from its roots in addressing social and economic injustices through political activism and advocacy (Hill, Ferguson, & Erickson, 2010). Rather than attending to the systemic causes of our clients' problems, it appears that most

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

social workers would rather address the symptoms of the systemic problems that hover on the surface (Andrews & Brenden, 1993). A large portion of social workers have committed their skills to psychotherapeutic practice (Specht & Courtney, 1994). The existing, but very limited, research is consistent with my experience in the field, and since I began thinking of my career path I have envisioned myself involved in macro social matters as well as direct clinical practice with individuals and families.

Many of my professional experiences have been in the micro arena, working with individuals and families one-on-one rather than working to change the larger systems that impact client wellbeing. As a pre-professional I worked with intellectually challenged young adults and with young children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral disturbances. For two years I was employed as a licensed social worker in a county social services agency, in child protection. Throughout those pre-professional and professional experiences I was exposed to numerous situations of school truancy, food insecurity, child maltreatment, chronic medical problems, homelessness, malnutrition, lack of resources, criminal behavior, substance abuse and addiction, and behavioral and mental health issues amongst all ages.

In most of the situations described above the two most common factors were poverty and limited or unavailable resources. My experiences and observations in the field influence the perception I have and approach I take on addressing surface issues I perceive as caused by and/or interrelated with larger socio-economic issues. From my education and employment in social work and related fields, I have felt determined to help address what I believe to be root causes of social problems rather than singly focusing on temporary measures of amelioration (such as case management and individual therapy).

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

I chose to examine the social problem of unacceptable minimum wages because poverty is often an underlying cause of significant challenges towards attainment of one's full potential. I have a special interest in macro and mezzo social work practice through political intervention and community restoration to enable every individual to reach their full potential. One political intervention to help support universal well-being and self-sufficiency is the development of legislation for livable wages for all adult workers employed at 40 hours per week accumulatively. This research study could help create the awareness needed to help motivate and mobilize communities as well as social workers and other professionals with a duty to advocate for social justice.

Methodology

Research Design

A combined qualitative and quantitative research design will be used to obtain information regarding current knowledge bases and perspectives of increasing the minimum wage to a livable wage, as well as demographic and background information, of social workers. A survey, containing 18 questions to obtain a combination of quantitative and qualitative data (see appendix C), will be emailed to 150 individuals who hold an active license to practice social work in the state of Minnesota. The survey defines "minimum wage" and "livable wage" prior to any survey questions. The survey is designed to reveal possible correlations between participants' perspectives on the minimum wage versus a livable wage, the degree to which they are informed about the issue, their degree of involvement and interest in the movement for livable wages, and other variables such as age, type of employment in the field of social work, and education background.

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Sample

A non-probability convenience sample will be obtained from the Minnesota Board of Social Work (BSW). The BSW will provide 150 random email addresses of Minnesota's licensed social workers with bachelor's degrees as well as master's degrees in social work. This sample varied in regards to age, degree(s) of education and where they received their education, type of employment, and socio-economic status and background. Examining social worker's perspectives and involvement in regards to minimum wage and the livable wage movement is directly relevant to the study's conceptual framework; the social work profession has shifted from engagement in social and political activism and advocacy, and the issue has rarely been explored. The rationale behind using the BSW for sample selection is ease of obtainment and ability to access the participants, and the guarantee that all participants met the requirements to legally practice social work due to their licensure status.

Protection of Human Subjects

To help ensure protection of the human subjects this study will be reviewed and approved by a research committee of three licensed social workers and by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at St. Thomas University prior data collection. Each participant will be provided with informed consent in the email containing an electronic link to the survey. The consent form explains the purpose of the study and the survey itself, and methods of data analysis and dissemination were provided. The researcher's contact information as well as the IRB's contact information is provided, and participants are offered the opportunity to ask any questions or express concerns regarding the survey or the study.

In the consent form participants are informed that their survey data will be submitted anonymously and combined with the other participant's data prior to analysis or dissemination,

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

and the researcher does not have access to their individual survey results. Participants are also informed that at any time while completing the survey they may choose to opt-out by closing their browser window and their incomplete data will not be submitted nor contribute to the study. The consent form clarifies that participants have the option not to answer certain survey questions of their choosing. Participants are informed there are no conceivable risks or benefits that could impact them. The consent form clarifies that the study and survey results will be disseminated in a public presentation at St Thomas University in May of 2014, and electronic data and reports will be destructed on or before August 1, 2014.

Data Collection Instrument and Process

To collect data, an 18-question survey was developed as a response to research questions raised by literature review and concepts from the study's conceptual framework. Three fellow research seminar students completed the survey in its draft form, and afterwards provided constructive feedback regarding possible modification of questions or survey format. The research chair and a committee member also reviewed the survey and provided feedback to help ensure relevance to the study and ease of use for participants. The survey questions will also be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to data collection.

The survey was developed by utilizing the internet-based Opus College of Business Qualtrics Survey Software. The internet survey was created, completed by participants, and collected electronically by Qualtrics. Upon anonymous electronic submission of each individual survey, the data is contributed to the other results in Qualtrics Survey Software. The results are electronically submitted, collected, and stored within the study's password-protected Qualtrics. The surveys are combined with data from previously submitted surveys within the study.

Data Analysis Plan

Quantitative results will be analyzed by using tables and correlative statistics provided by Qualtrics. Qualitative results will be analyzed by using open coding to identify themes among the participant's responses. Results will be synthesized with and compared to existing literature included in the study and concepts within the study's conceptual framework. Findings that appear most relevant to social work practice will be discussed within the conceptual framework of this research. Suggestions for additional research and implications on social work practice will be explored.

Strengths and Limitations of the Design

Limitations of the research design include possible technical difficulties for the participants and errors in data collection, analysis, and storage. Since the survey is distributed and submitted through the use of the internet, it will be tempting and easy for respondents to use the internet as a research tool, to look up information so they answer questions "correctly". In doing that, those respondents skew the results so the collected data is no longer a snapshot in time of the general social work population. In regards to limitations of the sample size and population, the sample is relatively small and the results are restricted to generalization amongst social workers practicing within the state of Minnesota.

A primary strength of this research design is that data may be a reflection of social worker's adherence to social work's original mission of ameliorating social problems by addressing their systemic causes. At this time, there are extremely few up-to-date (in the last five years) empirical data regarding the extent to which Minnesota's social workers are aware of and involved with the issue of inadequate wages or macro social justice issues in general. The survey intentionally omits any definitions of minimum wage, livable wage, and any other vocabulary

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

used in the survey. The survey requests that respondents pull from their present knowledge base specifically; in hopes to deter respondents from searching the internet for definitions and information that would skew the results. This research design also allows for ease of use and ensures anonymity on behalf of the participants because it is internet-based.

Data Analysis

Rate of Response

Four hundred ninety nine surveys were emailed to social workers licensed to practice in Minnesota; 75 social workers participated in the study (making the total response rate about 15%). Forty seven percent (35) of the 75 participants were licensed at the bachelor level (LSW) and 52% (39) were licensed at the clinical masters level (LICSW). Twelve percent of the 300 LSWs who received the survey request participated in the survey. The LICSWs had a greater participation rate of 19% (39 out of 199 LICSW survey recipients).

Participant Demographics

None of the participants who indicated their social work position (based on primary job responsibilities) had a job related to “activism” or “policy development”; one respondent identified as a general “advocate”; and another one as a “community developer”. The five most common social work positions were: “case management” (24%; 32 of the respondents); “therapy” and “counseling” (21%; 16 respondents); “school social work” (15%; 11 respondents); “other” (nine percent; seven respondents); “supervisor” (eight percent; six respondents). The age distribution of the sample population is uneven; 24 participants (32%) were between the ages of 49 and 59 years; 20 (27%) between 38 and 48 years of age; 18 (24%) between 27 and 37 years; eight (11%) older than 59 years; and three (four percent) younger than 27. “Rural/Country”-practicing social workers made up a quarter of the participant population; leaving three quarters

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

practicing in what the respondents would describe as “urban” or “suburban” geographical locations.

Knowledge and Involvement

There is a strong statistically significant relationship (p -value = 0.01) between social workers' knowledge of (“heard or read about”) and involvement in (“taking actions to advocate for livable wages”) the LWM (see Table One; A and B). A minority (12%; nine social workers), of the sample population felt they were involved in the LWM. A majority of the total sample population (61%; 46 social workers), indicated they have knowledge of the LWM; however, of those social workers 80% (37 participants) were not involved in the LWM. A minority of participants (39%; 28 social workers) indicated they had no knowledge of the LWM; none of those social workers were involved in the LWM.

Table One; A and B: Social Workers' Knowledge of and Involvement in the LWM

		Involved in LWM?		Total number of participants
		No	Yes	
A	Knowledge of LWM?	No	Yes	
		28	0	28
		37	9	46
	Total number of participants	65	9	74
B		Involved in LWM?		
Knowledge of LWM?	Chi Square	6.24		
	Degrees of Freedom	1		
	p-value	0.01		

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Knowledge and Importance

According to the results of this study, there is a moderate statistically significant relationship (p -value = 0.03) between social workers' knowledge and perceived importance of the LWM (see Table Two; A and B). A majority (67%; 50 social workers), of the sample population believed the LWM is a "very important" issue; about 25% (19) participants believe it is a "somewhat important" issue. Most social workers (72%; 33 individuals) who had knowledge of the LWM also believed it to be a "very important" issue; 26% (12) believe it is "somewhat important", and 2% (1) believe it is "not important at all".

Table Two; A and B: Social Workers' Knowledge and Belief in the Importance of LWM

		Importance of LWM				Total number of participants	
		Not important at all	Somewhat important	Very important	I do not know what the livable wage is		
A	Knowledge of LWM?	No	0	7	17	5	29
		Yes	1	12	33	0	46
		Total number of participants	1	19	50	5	75

		Importance of LWM	
B	Knowledge of LWM?	Chi Square	9.05
		Degrees of Freedom	3
		p-value	0.03

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Knowledge and Interest

The data from this study show there is a strong statistical significance (p -value = 0.0) in the relationship between social workers' knowledge of and interest in the LWM (see Table Three; A and B). Ninety percent (19) of the social workers who were very interested in the LWM already knew of the LWM; a small minority of social workers (10%; two out of 21) who were "very interested" in the movement did not have knowledge of it. Within the sample population 96% (72 social workers) were at least "somewhat interested" in the LWM.

Table Three; A and B: Social Workers' Knowledge of and Interest in the LWM

A		Degree of Interest in LWM			Total number of participants
		Not interested whatsoever	Somewhat interested	Very interested	
Knowledge of LWM?	No	1	26	2	29
	Yes	2	25	19	46
Total number of participants		3	51	21	75

B		Degree of Interest in LWM
Knowledge of LWM?	Chi Square	10.82
	Degrees of Freedom	2
	p-value	0.00

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Knowledge and Age

According to results of this study, there is not a statistically significant relationship (p -value = 0.06) between social workers' age range and their knowledge of the LWM (see Table Four; A and B). About 88% (seven out of eight) participants in the 60 or older age bracket indicated they had knowledge ("heard or read about") the LWM; 75% (15 out of 20) of the participants in the age bracket of 38 to 40 years; 63% (15 out of 24) of participants age 49 to 59; about 42% (eight out of 19) of 27 to 37 year-olds; and 25% (one out of four) participants younger than 27 years of age.

Table Four; A and B: Social Workers' Knowledge of the LWM and Age

		Age Range					Total number of participants	
		Younger than 27	27-37	38-48	49-59	60 or older		
A	Knowledge of LWM?	No	3	11	5	9	1	29
		Yes	1	8	15	15	7	46
		Total number of participants	4	19	20	24	8	75
B							Age Range	
Knowledge of LWM?		Chi Square					9.09	
		Degrees of Freedom					4	
		p-value					0.06	

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Knowledge and Social Work License Type.

The survey data fails to demonstrate a statistically significant relationship (p-value = 0.89) between social workers' knowledge of the LWM and their type of social work license (see Table Five; A and B). When comparing the rate of social workers (based on license type), who have knowledge of the LWM, there was a two percent difference (three respondents) between LSWs and LICSWs. Sixty percent (21 of 35) of LSWs versus 62% (24 of 39) of LICSWs have knowledge of the LWM.

Table Five; A and B: Social Workers' Knowledge of the LWM and Type of Licensure

A

		SW License		Total number of participants
		LSW	LICSW	
Knowledge of LWM?	No	14	15	29
	Yes	21	24	45
Total number of participants		35	39	74

B

		SW License
Knowledge of LWM?	Chi Square	0.02
	Degrees of Freedom	1
	p-value	0.89

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Involvement and Importance

The results of this study (p-value = 0.16) indicate that a social workers' belief in the importance of the LWM is not necessarily related to whether or not they are involved in the LWM (see Table Six; A and B). However, all of the nine participants who indicated they were involved in advocating for the LWM (12% of the total sample population) also believed it was a "very important" issue. A majority (62%; 40 of 65) of social workers who were not involved in the LWM believed the LWM was "very important"; 29% (19) believed it was "somewhat important".

Table Six; A and B: Social Workers' Involvement in and Belief of Importance of LWM

		Importance of the LWM				Total number of participants
		Not important at all	Somewhat important	Very important	I do not know what the livable wage is	
Involved the LWM?	No	1	19	40	5	65
	Yes	0	0	9	0	9
Total number of participants		1	19	49	5	74

		Importance of the LWM
Involved in the LWM?	Chi Square	5.23
	Degrees of Freedom	3
	p-value	0.16

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Involvement and Interest

This study did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship ($p\text{-value} = 0.16$) between social workers' involvement in the LWM and their interest in the LWM (see Table Seven; A and B). Most participants (96%; 71 social workers) were at least somewhat interested in the LWM, yet a majority (88%; 65 social workers) were not involved with the LWM. In fact, 95% (62) of the social workers at least somewhat interested in the LWM were not involved in the LWM. As was expected, 100% of the individuals who were involved in the LWM were at least somewhat interested; split approximately in half between participants who were "somewhat interested" and "very interested".

Table Seven; A and B: Social Workers' Involvement and Degree of Interest in the LWM

		Degree of Interest in LWM			Total number of participants
		Not interested whatsoever	Somewhat interested	Very interested	
Involved in the LWM?	NO	3	46	16	65
	Yes	0	4	5	9
Total number of participants		3	50	21	74

B

		Degree of interest in LWM
Involved in the LWM?	Chi Square	3.89
	Degrees of Freedom	2
	p-value	0.14

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Involvement and Age

The results of this study indicate there is no relationship between the age of social workers and their involvement in the LWM (see Table Eight; A and B). The majority (32%; 24 respondents) of social workers were between ages 49 and 59 years of age; 25% (19) of the social workers were between 38 and 59 years; another 25% (19) were between ages 27 and 37; 11% (eight) were 60 or older; and 5% (4) were under the age of 27. Of all the social workers who indicated they were involved in the LWM, those ages 38 to 59 years of age (split 33% and 33% amongst respondents 38-48 and 49-49 years) were most likely to be involved in the LWM. However, those in the 38 to 59 years age range had an overall 89% (34 of 38 social workers) rate of non-involvement in the LWM.

Table Eight; A and B: Social Workers' Involvement in the LWM and Age

A

		Age Range					Total number of participants
		Younger than 27	27-37	38-48	49-59	60 or older	
Involved in the LWM?	No	3	18	16	21	7	65
	Yes	1	1	3	3	1	9
Total number of participants		4	19	19	24	8	74

B

		Age range
Involved in the LWM?	Chi Square	1.70
	Degrees of Freedom	4
	p-value	0.79

Involvement and Social Work Licensure Type

The study failed to demonstrate a statistically significant relationship ($p\text{-value} = 0.56$) between social workers' involvement in the LWM and their type of social work license (see Table Nine; A and B). There were 64 participants (85% of the total sample population) who indicated they were not involved in advocating for livable wages, and there was a six-participant increase from LSWs to LICSWs in regards to their involvement (29 LSWs versus 35 of LICSWs indicated they were not involved in the LWM). About 90% of the LICSW participants were not involved in the LWM, and about 85% of LSW participants were not involved. As for participants who indicated they were involved in the LWM, there was one additional participant in the LICSW category (five) over the LSW category (four). The group of social workers involved in the LWM consisted of 13% of the participants licensed as an LICSW and 12% of participants licensed as an LSW.

Table Nine; A and B: Social Workers' Involvement in the LWM and License Type

A

		SW License		Total number of participants
		LSW	LICSW	
Involved in the LWM?	No	29	35	64
	Yes	5	4	9
Total number of participants		34	39	73

B

		SW License?
Involved in the LWM?	Chi Square	0.33
	Degrees of Freedom	1
	p-value	0.56

Discussion

Summary of Findings

Most social workers were employed as a case manager or a therapist/counselor. None of the participants identified their social work employment to be activism or policy development; only one person defined their social work role as “community development” and another as an “advocate”. Three quarters of the sample population were employed in geographical areas they would describe as “suburban” or “urban”. The distribution of age amongst the sample population was uneven, a majority of respondents falling in the 38 to 48 and 49 to 59 year range (leaving much smaller groups of social workers younger than 27 years, 27 to 37, and 60 and older). However, the distribution of LSWs and LICSW in the sample population was quite even. Social work license type did not impact knowledge of or involvement in the LWM; nor did the social workers' age. There were no relationships between social workers' involvement in the LWM and any other variable, other than knowledge.

Although a majority of social workers had heard or read about the LWM, nearly 40% of the sample population had not, and most were not involved in the LWM. Additionally, only nine social workers (12% of the sample population) were involved in the LWM. The study demonstrated a strong relationship between social workers' knowledge of and involvement in the LWM; likely because all of the social workers involved in the LWM had knowledge of it. The study demonstrated a strong relationship between social workers' knowledge of and interest in the LWM. Most of the social workers who were “very interested” in the LWM had knowledge of it. Few social workers who were “very interested” in the LWM had no knowledge of it. Within the sample population nearly all of the social workers were at least “somewhat interested” in the LWM. There is also a relationship between social workers' knowledge and perceived importance

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

of the LWM. Most social workers believed the LWM is a “very important” issue. Most social workers who had knowledge of the LWM also believed it to be a “very important” issue.

Strengths of the Study

There are few research studies investigating just how relative macro social work is to the profession in contemporary society. Few research studies examine how much of the profession's attention, in real-world practice, is focused on resolving issues pertaining to social justice. This study takes one of the first small steps in investigating macro social work practice and the profession's attention to social justice issues.

The fact that the study had a sample population of 75 social workers (split near equal between LSWs and LICSWs) is worth noting as a strength. The size of the sample makes the results generalizable to Minnesota's general population of LSWs and LICSWs. However, one should be careful not to generalize the results of this study to all social workers, as the distribution of characteristics amongst the sample population may not have been representative of the general social work population in the United States. Additionally, the anonymity of the survey generates more valid results than if the survey were not anonymous. A participant's answers could be influenced if he/she was aware their identity was known by the researcher, the research committee, and/or the public. For example, a social worker may be more inclined to provide an inaccurate response to a survey question regarding their involvement in the issue for fear they would be judged as a “bad” social worker.

The study revealed a number of statistically significant relationships regarding social workers' knowledge of the LWM and a few other variables. The findings also indicated a few additional common characteristics of Minnesota's social workers; for example, showcasing the lack of social workers in macro and mezzo arenas; most of the social workers were employed to

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

serve on the micro/individual level of practice. The results of this study can aid future researchers, educators, and professional regulatory agencies in determining: a) whether or not, to what degree, and in what settings social workers attend to social justice issues; b) what needs to be done to ensure the profession strays no further from its mission to advocate for social justice; and c) should the NASW Code of Ethics and mission statement be revisited and modified to fit the profession's actual approach to practice and impact on today's society versus professed practice and impact?

Limitations of the Study

This study was intended to gather information about Minnesota's social work population in regards to their awareness of the LWM and their involvement in supporting the LWM and/or advocating for livable wages. The title of the study emphasizes "knowledge" versus "awareness"; For the purpose of consistency this report continued to use the term "knowledge" although the study was aimed more at obtaining information about may or may not influence a social worker's likelihood of being aware that the LWM exists. Utilizing "knowledge" in the title of study may have been misleading for some readers and/or participants.

The wording of some questions and response choices may have been confusing for some participants, and/or some participants may have interpreted the question differently from its intended purpose. The different interpretations and/or confusion have potential to skew or invalidated certain findings. The question "What best describes the type of geographical location where you are employed or were most recently employed" had the following possible response choices: "Urban/Metropolitan"; "Suburban/Outer-lying (At least 10 miles from a metropolitan city)"; and "Rural/Country". There was a definition for "Suburban/Outer-lying", however, there was no definition provided for "Suburban/Metropolitan" nor or "Rural/Country". When

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

inquiring about the participants' employment position, they have "counselor" and "therapist" to choose from; there is no definition provided for the two. "Other" is an option provided, but the responses could have been more valuable had there been an option for the participants to manually enter what they would label their employment position (12% of participants selected "Other"). The aforementioned issue also applies to the inquiry about the primary concern participants are employed to help their clients with. Additionally, when inquiring about participants' belief in the issue's importance, the question gave an option that stated "I do not know what the LWM is (about 7% of participants selected this option). This factor could invalidate the results from that item, as in an earlier question about 39% of participants indicated they had not heard or read about the LWM. The two sets of results contradict one another.

Implications for Future Research

Although there were no statistical findings to correlate a social workers' age with their knowledge and/or involvement in the LWM, the study indicated that participants between ages 38 to 48 and 49 to 59 years comprised the majority of participants who were involved in the LWM (67% combined; six out of nine social workers); participants from those two age brackets also comprised the majority of the participants who knew about the LWM (65% combined; 30 out of 46 social workers). These two age brackets were split evenly in regards to the number of participants who knew about the LWM and participants who were involved in the LWM. Further research could investigate if there are statistically significant relationships between social workers' age and macro social work practice and/or social justice issues.

This study found relationships between participants' knowledge and other variables. Additional research could be conducted to investigate further. Most participants were at least somewhat interested in the LWM, yet most were not involved. A majority of social workers had

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

knowledge of the issue yet most were not involved. Why are these participants not involved although they are aware and interested, and what variables correlate to their interest in this issue and other social justice issues?

Further research could examine what variables may be influencing social workers' involvement in and information regarding social justice issues on the mezzo and macro levels. Data could be gathered to help determine why social workers in Minnesota are aware of and active in pressing social justice concerns to such varying degrees. Because this study did not reveal significant relationships between participants' involvement in the LWM and other variables, additional research could be useful in determining what does influence social workers' involvement in social justice issues (such as livable wages). Additional research could be used to further investigate the statistically significant findings and the other interesting survey results (such as the lack of social workers employed in rural Minnesota). The results of this study leave many questions unanswered and create more questions to investigate.

Implications for the Social Work Profession

If this were a test of social workers' loyalty to the profession's mission, the sample population would have failed; only 12% of the participants were involved in this very current social just issue. The Integrative Framework of Generalist Practice (IFGP), as proposed by Mary Ann Brenden and Barbara Shank (2012), is an example of how the social work profession could uphold its mission. The IFGP provides a model for social workers to engage in practice that is more true to the profession's original calling; social work within a system that includes micro, mezzo, and macro interventions.

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics' preamble (NASW, 2009) states the following:

“The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living. Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice. These activities may be in the form of direct practice, community organizing, supervision, consultation administration, advocacy, social and political action, policy development and implementation, education, and research and evaluation. Social workers also seek to promote the responsiveness of organizations, communities, and other social institutions to individuals' needs and social problems.” (p. 1)

In order to fulfill the mission of the social work profession the NASW, the social work regulatory boards (Association of Social Work Boards [ASWB], Minnesota Board of Social Work [BSW], the Council of Social Work Education [CSWE]) must encourage and engage social workers in the social justice aspect of the profession, through new policy provision if necessary. All of these organizations need to work together to revitalize macro social work, with the integrative practice model. Agencies intending to support the mission of social work should be informing social workers about social justice advocacy and the newest trends in sociopolitical movements, and taking steps to assess the degree to which social workers are engaging in actions

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

to educate themselves and engage in some form of social justice advocacy. Social work students could build their sense of mastery in macro and mezzo social work practice while earning credits and/or practicum hours. Some students may be highly interested in issues of social justice (as in results of this study) yet many may be intimidated by macro social work practice. They may not know how to obtain accurate information about current social justice issues and/or how to go about promoting larger-scale change.

The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), Counsel of Social Work Education (CSWE), and schools of social work could require students to complete short-term social justice practicums and/or integrate additional social justice components to provide students with real-life experience in advocating for social justice. Social work regulatory boards, institutions, and schools could offer scholarships and grants to social work professionals and pre-professionals who wish to learn more about mezzo and macro social work and/or engage in social justice research or practice. On a routine basis, regulatory boards and institutions could also provide social workers with information about trending social justice issues and advisement on how to become involved. One more suggestion is for the ASWB to require continued education regarding social justice programs specifically, as they do for culturally competency, ethics, and supervision requirements for licensure compliance.

Conclusion

The ultimate question is this: How many social workers are frantically emptying buckets of water out of the sinking boat, and how many are developing a plan and taking action to repair the hole in the boat? Society needs social workers to focus on an effective long-term solution (social and political reform) while other social workers continue to focus on the interim solution (ensuring basic human needs are fulfilled). Each role requires dedication and hard work, both

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

roles are valuable, but society requires equal effort from both if the social work profession intends to make a lasting impact. If too many social workers are focusing on one role exclusively the boat will ultimately sink; social workers will eventually exhaust themselves and will not be able to maintain productivity.

References

- Abela, A. (2009). Subsidiarity and the just wage: Implications of Catholic social teaching for the minimum wage debate. *Journal of Markets and Morality*, 12(1).
- Andrews, J & Brenden, M.A. (1993) Leading from the left: Female social workers of the second generation. *Arete*, 18 (1), 20-36.
- Brenden, M. & Shank, B. (2012) Social Work for social justice: Strengthening Social Work education through the integration of Catholic Social Teaching. *Social Work and Christianity: An International Journal*, 39(2).
- Card, D. & Krueger, A.B. (1994). Minimum wages and employment: A case study of the fast-food industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. *The American Economic Review*, 84(4).
- Card, D. & Krueger, A.B. (1995). Time-series minimum-wage studies: A meta-analysis. *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, 85(2).
- Chandler, S.K. (2009). Working hard, living poor: Social work and the movement for livable wages. *Journal of Community Practice*, 17.
- Cordero, R.A. (2000). Morality and the minimum wage. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 31(2).
- Dube, A.D., Lester, T.W., & Reich, M. (2010). Minimum wage effects across state borders: Estimates using contiguous counties. *The Review of Economics Statistics*, 92(4).
- Economic Policy Institute. (2013). *Characteristics of workers who would be affected by increasing the federal minimum wage to \$9.80 by July 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.epi.org/files/2012/minimumwagestateimpact.pdf>
- Economic Policy Institute. (2013). *Raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 would give working families, and the overall economy, a much-needed boost*. Retrieved from <http://www.epi.org/publication/bp357-federal-minimum-wage-increase/>

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

- Eisaa, N. & Hoynes, H. (2011). Redistribution and tax expenditures: the earned income tax credit. *National Tax Journal*, 64(2).
- Feeding America. (2009). *Child food insecurity: The economic impact on our nation*. Retrieved from <http://feedingamerica.org/SiteFiles/child-economy-study.pdf>
- First Focus. *Addressing the needs of vulnerable families during an economic crisis*. Retrieved from http://www.firstfocus.net/sites/default/files/r.2008-12.17.ff_.pdf
- Gallup. (2006). *Public solidly supports increase in minimum wage*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/20710/public-solidly-supports-increase-minimum-wage.aspx>
- Gallup. (2013). *In U.S., 71% back raising minimum wage*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/160913/back-raising-minimum-wage.aspx>
- Gallup. (2013). *In U.S., 71% back raising minimum wage: Most democrats and independents, and half of Republicans, favor increase to \$9*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/160913/back-raising-minimum-wage.aspx>
- Grant, D., & Trautner, M.N. (2004). Employer opinions on living wage initiatives. *The Journal of Labor and Society*, 8.
- Hart Research Associates. (2013). *Public Support For Raising The Minimum Wage [Research Brief]*. Retrieved from <http://www.nelp.org/page/-/rtmw/uploads/Memo-Public-Support-Raising-Minimum-Wage.pdf?nocdn=1>
- Hill, K., Ferguson, S., & Erickson, C. (2010). Sustaining and strengthening a macro identity: The Association of Macro Practice Social Work. *Journal of Community Practice*, 18.
- Jansson, B. (2014). *Becoming an effective policy advocate: From policy practice to social justice*. (7th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

JOBS NOW Coalition. (2009). *The cost of living in Minnesota*. Retrieved from

<http://www.jobsnowcoalition.org/reports/2010/cost-of-living2010.pdf>

Katz, L.F. & Krueger, A.B. (1992). The effect of the minimum wage on the fast-food industry.

Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 46(1).

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. (2012). *Minnesota minimum-wage report, 2011*.

Retrieved from <http://www.dli.mn.gov/RS/PDF/11minwage.pdf>

Minnesota House of Representatives. (2013). *2013 State Fair Poll Results*. Retrieved from

http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hinfo/leginfo/13poll_results.pdf

Minnesota House of Representatives. (2013). *Minnesota family investment program (House*

research: Short subjects). Retrieved from <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/pubs/ss/ssmfip.pdf>

Minnesota Public Radio. (2013). *Dayton says \$9 minimum wage 'good target'*. Retrieved from

<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2013/03/06/politics/dayton-minimum-wage>

Minnesota Public Radio. (2013). *Restaurant group pushes back on minimum wage bill*.

Retrieved from http://blogs.mprnews.org/capitol-view/2013/03/restaurant_grou/

Minnesota Start Tribune. (2013). *Minnesota Poll results: Minimum wage*. Retrieved from

<http://www.startribune.com/politics/194353981.html>

Minnesota State Senate. (2013). *2013 State fair opinion poll: Minnesota state senate survey*

results. Retrieved from http://www.senate.mn/departments/secretary/info/statefair/2013/fair_survey.pdf

Monmouth University. (2013). *New Jersey voters support minimum wage hike*. Retrieved from

<http://www.monmouth.edu/assets/0/32212254770/32212254991/32212254992/32212254994/32212254995/30064771087/4f6f76c8-2189-459e-b175-40380edbc7c.pdf> National

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

- Association of Social Workers. (2012). *Building on progressive priorities: Sustaining our nation's safety net (National Association of Social Workers 2012 document to the Obama Administration)*. Retrieved from <http://www.naswdc.org/advocacy/2012%20NASW%20Obama%20Document.pdf>
- National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Code of ethics*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>
- National Center for Children in Poverty. (2011). *Minnesota demographics of low-income children*. Retrieved from http://www.nccp.org/profiles/MN_profile_6.html
- Neumark, D., Schweitzer, M., & Wascher, W. (2002). Minimum wage effects throughout the wage distribution. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 39(2).
- New Zealand Labour and Immigration Research Centre. (2012). *Employers' perspectives - Part two: The minimum wage system*. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/research/employers-perspectives-part2-minimum-wage/employers-perspectives-part2-minimum-wage.pdf>
- Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau. (2006). *Child neglect: A guide for prevention, assessment and intervention*. Retrieved from <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/neglect/chapterfour.cfm>
- Pew Research. (2013). *If no deal is struck, four-in-ten say let the sequester happen*. Retrieved from <http://www.people-press.org/2013/02/21/if-no-deal-is-struck-four-in-ten-say-let-the-sequester-happen/#minimum-wage>
- Popple & Leighninger. (2008). *The policy-based profession: An introduction to social welfare policy analysis for social workers*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

- Public Religion Research Institute. (2011). *2011 American values survey: The Mormon question, economic inequality, and the 2012 presidential campaign*. Retrieved from <http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/PRRI-2011-American-Values-Survey-Web.pdf>
- Rogers, A. (2006). *Human behavior in the social environment*. New York, NR: McGraw Hill.
- Rohlin, S.M. (2011). State minimum wages and business location: Evidence from a refined border approach. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 69.
- Rutgers-Eagleton. (2013). *Support for minimum wage: Different numbers, different meanings*. Retrieved from <http://eagletonpollblog.wordpress.com/2013/09/24/support-for-minimum-wage-different-numbers-different-meanings/>
- Santiago, C., Kaltman, S., & Miranda, J. (2012). Poverty and mental health: How do low-income adults and children fare in psychotherapy? *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 69(2).
- Specht, H. & Courtney, M.E. (1994). *Unfaithful angels: How social work has abandoned its mission*. New York: Free Press.
- State of New Jersey. (2013). *Governor Christie calls for minimum wage increase with responsible phase-in, while helping struggling families with EITC increase*. Retrieved from <http://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/552013/approved/20130128a.html>
- The Working Poor Families Project. (2013). *Indicators and data*. Retrieved from <http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/indicators/#>
- The Working Poor Families Project. (2013). *Low-income working families: The growing economic gap (Policy brief: Winter 2012-2013)*. Retrieved from http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Winter-2012_2013-WPFP-Data-Brief.pdf

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

- The Working Poor Families Project. (2012). *Overlooked and underpaid: Number of low-income working families increases to 10.2 million (Policy brief: Winter 2011-2012)*. Retrieved from http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/pdfs/Overlooked_Dec2011.pdf
- Thompson, M.F. (2008). Minimum wage impacts on employment: a look at Indiana, Illinois, and surrounding Midwestern states. *Indiana Business Review*, 83(3).
- Waldman-Levin, O. (2008). Characteristics of cities that pass livable wage ordinances: Are certain conditions more conducive than others? *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 37.
- Waldman-Levin, O. (2009). The broad reach of the minimum wage. *Challenge*, 52(5).
- Wall Street Journal*. (2013). *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey*. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/wsjnbcpoll-02262013.pdf>
- United States Department of Labor. (1996). *Making work pay: The case for raising the minimum wage*. Retrieved <http://www.dol.gov/dol/aboutdol/history/reich/reports/pay.htm>
- University of St. Thomas and the College of St. Catherine's School of Social Work. (2006). *Social work for social justice: Ten principles*. Retrieved from <http://www.stthomas.edu/socialwork/socialjustice/principles/socialJusticePrinciples.html>

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**Institutional Review Board**

Institutional Review Board - University of St. Thomas
 2115 Summit Ave. - Mail #AQU319
 St. Paul, MN 55105-1078
 Phone: 651-962-5341 - Email: irb@stthomas.edu

Rectangular Snip

DATE: January 7, 2014

TO: Margaret Wangen, BSSW
 FROM: University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [514341-1] Livable Wage Legislation: Minnesota Social Workers' Knowledge of and Involvement in the Movement

REFERENCE #:
 SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
 APPROVAL DATE: January 7, 2014
 EXPIRATION DATE: January 7, 2015
 REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # [enter category, or delete line]

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of January 7, 2015.

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Eleni Roulis at 651-962-5341 or e9roulis@stthomas.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Best wishes as you begin your research.

Thank you for your work.

Eleni Roulis, Ph.D.
AVP Academic Affairs/IRB Administrator

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix B: Letter of Informed Consent

Consent Form University of St. Thomas

Livable Wage Legislation: Minnesota Social Workers' Knowledge of and Involvement in the Movement [514341-1]

Background Information:

The purpose of this research is to investigate Minnesota social workers' knowledge of the livable wage movement and the degree of involvement in the advocacy and/or activism regarding the creation of legislation to increase Minnesota minimum wage to a livable wage. The research may identify variables that are correlated with Minnesota social workers' knowledge and degree of involvement in the issue.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to complete an internet-based 17-question survey. **The survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete.**

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no conceivable potential risks or benefits to you by participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

Your internet survey will be submitted anonymously to my secure password protected Qualtrics' account. Qualtrics is an internet-based software company offering tools to create and distribute surveys, and collect and analyze data from surveys. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way, as I will not have access to such information. The types of records I will create include password-secured computer files on my personal computer and survey data on my Qualtrics' password-secured account. I will publicly present the findings of this study at St Thomas University in May 2014. All original data from the study will be erased from my personal computer and the Qualtrics' database on or before June 1, 2014.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time until you electronically submit your survey. To withdraw, simply close your internet browser window. If you already answered some of the questions your responses will not be submitted to my Qualtrics' account. You are also free to skip any survey questions you do not wish to answer.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Maggie Wangen. Please email me if you have any questions or concerns prior to

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

completing or submitting this survey. My email is wang0014@stthomas.edu. You may also contact Karen Carlson with the University of St Thomas and St Catherine at (651) 962-5867 *or* the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

Please ask yourself the following questions. If you are unable to answer these questions, or if you have additional questions or concerns please contact Maggie Wangen, Karen Carlson, and/or the Institutional Review Board (see contact information above).

Question 1: How would you explain the purpose of this study?

Question 2: How would you explain what voluntary participation means?

Question 3: Who would you contact if you have any questions or concerns about this study?

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age.

By selecting the hyperlink included in the bottom of this email you are confirming your informed consent to voluntarily participate in this study.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maggie Wangen, LSW

Graduate Student of Social Work at St. Thomas/St Catherine Universities

Email: wang0014@stthomas.edu

Private cell: 320-510-0028

Appendix C: Research Survey

1

What is your age range?

- Younger than 27
- 27-37
- 38-48
- 49-59
- 60 or older

2

Are you presently employed in a social work position?

- Yes
- No

3

What best describes the type of geographical location where you are employed or were most recently employed?

- Urban/Metropolitan
- Suburban/Outer-lying (At least 10 miles from a metropolitan city)
- Rural/Country

4

What kind of education have you completed for a degree or certificate? *(Select all that apply)*

- High School/GED
- Certificate (specify type of certificate)
- Associate's degree (specify type of degree)
- Bachelor's degree (specify type of degree)
- Master's degree (specify type of degree)
- Doctorate (specify type of degree)

5

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

What type of social work licensure do you hold?

6

What category **best** describes the type of social work position in which you are currently employed or were most recently employed? (If you fulfill multiple roles in your position, or have multiple jobs, select the category in which you work the most hours)

7

What populations have you primarily served throughout your social work practice? (Select all that apply)

- All ages
- Adolescents
- Adults
- Children
- Couples
- Elderly
- Families
- Young adults

8

Please finish the following statement: "**Most** of my clients require my social work skills to assist them in dealing with issues relating to...."

9

From your present knowledge, what is your understanding of why minimum wage legislation was originally implemented in the United States?

10

From your present knowledge, what is the dollar amount you believe minimum wage to be in Minnesota for most employers? (If you are unsure, please provide an estimate/guess)

11

Have you heard or read about the livable wage movement?

- No

LIVABLE WAGE LEGISLATION: AND MINNESOTA'S SOCIAL WORKERS

- Yes

12

If you answered yes to the above question, what do you know about the livable wage movement? (From your present knowledge base please)

13

Are you presently taking actions to advocate for livable wages in Minnesota?

- No
- Yes

14

If you answered yes to the above question, is your advocacy part of required job duties?

- No
- Yes

15

On a scale of 0-9 please rate your degree of involvement in the livable wage movement in the past 24 months.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Degree of involvement										

16

How much personal or professional interest do you have in this issue?

- Not interested whatsoever
- Somewhat interested
- Very interested

17

How important of a social issue do you believe this topic to be?

- Not important at all
- Somewhat important
- Very important
- I do not know what the livable wage movement is