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# The Government Funding of Non-Profits: The Non-Profit Employee's View of the Practice

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The Government Funding of Non-Profits:  
The Non-Profit Employee's View of the Practice

Submitted by Michael C. Raguet  
May, 2012

MSW Clinical Research Paper

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 their findings. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

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### **Abstract**

Government funds are an essential funding source for many non-profits. The purpose of this project was to explore the views that non-profit employees have of the government funding of non-profits. Using a quantitative design, 86 employees at one Twin Cities area human services non-profit were surveyed about their views of the government funding of non-profits.

Data were analyzed using frequency tables. The findings indicated that over 80% of those surveyed agreed with the practice of government funding of non-profits.

## **Acknowledgements**

First off, I would like to thank my committee my members and my chair for helping me with this project. Without your hard work, dedication, and flexibility, this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the University of St. Thomas and St. Catharine University for allowing research on this specific topic.

I would also like to thank friends and family for supporting me through this process. Your friendship and memories of good times helped keep motivated during some long nights. I would also like to thanks My Mom and Dad for the endless love support. I would also like to recognize my partner Marissa, whom was and still is always there for me.

Lastly, I dedicate this project to Philip Fortin. Your faith in me gave me the courage to continue my education after so many years. Without your internal optimism and unrelenting support, this project would not have been possible. Hawk, you are the greatest.

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In recent years, funding for non-profits has been in jeopardy. In 2008, the financial crisis that sent the United States into the most significant recession since the Great Depression significantly hurt the funding sources of many non-profits (Fessler, 2008). In 2009, The Amherst Wilder Foundation of Minnesota laid off 200 employees, which was over a third of its staff. Like so many other foundations and non-profits, Wilder made the decision due to a decrease in revenue from the devalued endowment and a decrease in donations (Mador, 2009). Situations like this have become common in recent years.

Private donations to non-profits have been decreasing every year for the past three years (NFF, 2009). Thus, government support for non-profits has never been so critical. Although government funding is typically less than 10% of most non-profits' annual budgets (NFF, 2009), it is still a vital funding stream. Government funding for non-profits is also in jeopardy. In 2011, only three states were operating without budget deficits (Welna, 2011). With these large deficits, most states are looking to cut their budgets in order to make up for reduced tax revenue. Both in 2009 and 2011, Minnesota cut funding to non-profits as a means of balancing the state budget (Mador, 2008).

One of the many forces driving these cuts is the recent political climate. In the last three years, a movement in the Republican Party known as "the Tea Party movement" has become very popular. Aimed at reducing taxes and limiting the size of government (Collins, 2010), the Tea Party greatly influenced the 2010 mid-term elections. In 2010, the federal government as well as many states saw their governments switch control to Republican Tea Party loyalists (Nelson, 2010). The Republican Party gained majorities in both houses of congress in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Virginia, and many other states during the 2010 mid-term elections (Nelson, 2010).



In this tight economic climate, it is more important than ever that employees of nonprofit organizations believe in the mission of their agency. With so many people now voting for candidates who want to cut programs, there is a concern some of the people working for non-profits might have voted for candidates who wish to limit funding to non-profits. It is ever more important that employees of non-profits understand how their voting decisions can affect the funding of agencies they work for. Money helps organizations serve their clients. Without funding, non-profit organizations would not be able to fulfill their obligations to their clients. In 2011, the CEO of National Public Radio was fired because of an incident where she was recorded saying that NPR did not need government funding to survive (Folkenflick, 2011). This incident was used by lawmakers to attempt to eliminate federal funding for NPR (Folkenflick, 2011).

This is one strong example of how non-profit staff members' beliefs about government funding affect the existence of the non-profits they work for. These beliefs can also affect the well-being of clients nationwide who are reliant on the services that non-profits provide. It is not only important that non-profit workers believe that government funding is vital for the survival of non-profits, it is also important that non-profit workers believe that the government should provide funding for the work that non-profits do. Yet basic research is still needed on this topic. Perhaps most non-profit workers have positive beliefs about government funding of non-profits or perhaps less than half do. Additional research is needed to uncover these percentages.

This study will seek to explore non-profit employees' beliefs related to government funding of non-profit organizations. If this study finds that a substantial percentage of non-profit staff have negative views of government funding of non-profits, this could indicate a need for funding to be a topic covered in new employee training and covered in college courses related to

human services fields. The organizations that social workers are employed at are in need of strong governmental support via funding, thus it's so important to ensure that all non-profit staff members are on board with the belief that the government should provide a consistent and strong level of funding to these organizations.

This study will describe in depth the existence of government funding of non-profits and the history that has led the U.S to its current political climate. Previous research concerning the connection of government funding to religious and political ideology will be explored. Then this proposal will examine the percentages of governmental funding that non-profits have in their budgets. Finally, this proposal will state the research and theoretical basis that supports this study.

### **Literature Review**

Opinions of the practice of government funding for non-profits are influenced by many factors. While political affiliation and religion are two factors that can play a large role, there are many institutions, belief systems, and theories of government that have influenced individuals over the course of history to view government funding for non-profits in different ways. The goal of this literature review is to explore the history of non-profit funding from the religious and political perspective as well as discuss how the issue is affecting the profession now.

#### **A History of the ideology of public funding**

##### **Federalism**

The ideology of federalism has had an impact on social service funding since the founding of the United States because of the parameters it sets for how government should function. Federalism is defined as "A system of rules for the division of public policy

responsibilities among a number of autonomous governmental agencies. These rules define the scope of authority available to the autonomous agencies and they provide a framework to govern relationships between and among agencies” (Aton, 1989, p. 3.). In summary, federalism is a concept that reverts government responsibility from the federal government to regional government such as provinces or states (Linhorst, 2002). Although the idea of federalism was not created in the United States, its ideology influenced the writing of the U.S Constitution (Linhorst, 2002). Federalism allowed the thirteen colonies to be linked by a limited federal government while remaining separate, autonomous states (Aton, 1989). Guided by the wish that the original colonies be given the power to be autonomous, the Constitution made creating and paying for social programs the responsibility of state government (Linhorst, 2002).

### **The founders’ beliefs about government funding**

At the time this country was founded, the funding of charitable endeavors and social causes largely came from churches and wealthy individuals. Driven by federalist ideology, the Constitution originally did not recognize or give basic human rights to individual citizens (Aton, 1989). Due to pressure from the electorate, the Constitution was ratified two years after it was written to include a Bill of Rights (Laslovich, 1993). Until this time, it had been the position of most politicians that government had little obligation to its citizens. Although most politicians listened to the voice of the American electorate and supported the passing of the Bill of Rights, some politicians disagreed with the Bill’s intent. In 1787, the anonymous *Federalist Papers* were published (Rawls, 1971). *The Federalist Papers* argued that the Bill of Rights was contrary to the Federalist values that the Constitution embodied. The writers of the Papers believed that citizens were not “entitled to anything”, because they feared that recognition of individual rights by the federal government would eventually lead to a larger, stronger federal

government than some authors of the Constitution had envisioned (Laslovich, 1993). Much of this fear of strong government originated from people's fears of becoming like England, whom the United States had just liberated itself from due to an over-imposing government (Laslovich, 1993). Although the Bill of Rights has been used to argue for the public funding of social programs, the Bill of Rights was actually conceived with the intent to limit governmental control over people's lives.

### **How the view of public funding has changed over time**

The history of public funding in the United States coincided with the evolution of American federalism and the increasing size of the federal government. According to Aton (1989), federalism has taken on three forms since the drafting of the Bill of Rights. The first phase of federalism, the period after the passage of the Bill of Rights until the beginning of the Great Depression, is known as dual federalism. According to Linhorst (2002), dual federalism was a period when there were clear distinctions between the state and federal governments. During this time, the states had more power than the federal government as well as more of the burden to address social problems. During this period, social problems were dealt with mainly by charities and churches. Federal and state government largely did not pay for or implement any social welfare programs during the first period of federalism (Linhorst, 2002). Churches and charities paid for these largely through donations from individuals.

The second phase of federalism, called cooperative federalism, started around the beginning of the Great Depression. Brought on by the economic problems of the time, cooperative federalism saw the federal government increasing its power over state government. President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs were federally funded social programs that aimed to decrease unemployment by creating jobs in the public sector. Much of these programs,

though principally funded through the federal government, were actually carried out by state and local government. The New Deal's public works programs of the 1930's were carried out by local and state government.

More change came after WWII when the federal government began contracting to non-profits to do the science, medical and defense related research (*A short history of the non-profit sector*, 2008). This was the first time in the country's history that public money went to non-profits. By 1960, the non-profit sector had become 3% of the U.S. economy (*A short history of the non-profit sector*, 2008). During the 1960's, president Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society poverty reforms expanded government founding to charitable and socially conscious non-profits, as well non-profits associated with the arts. Up until 1940, government funds were not a part of most non-profit's operating budgets. By the end of the 1960's, government funding was responsible for over 50% of the total operating budgets for most U.S. non-profits (*A short history of the non-profit sector*, 2008).

The third phase of Federalism, new federalism, began in the early 1970's during the Nixon administration (Linhorst, 2002). The principle idea of new federalism was that federal government had become too big and too costly (Ressler, 2003). Proponents of new federalism believed that the federal government should be downsized by cutting programs, specifically social service programs. New federalism coincided with the slow dismantling of the New Deal legislation and Great Society legislation. Starting during the early 1970's and continuing until this day, politicians have been winning elections by promising to reduce the size of the federal government and to cut government spending (Linhorst, 2002).

While originally they were called "New Federalists", politicians and private citizens who believe in reducing the size of the federal government by cutting spending were by the 1980's

being called Conservative Republicans (Aton, 1989). During the 1980's, federal assistance for state and local government was cut by 60% (Dreier, 2004). Federal assistance is the money that most state governments use to fund social service program such as homeless shelters and afterschool programs. With continued decreases in federal funding, state and local government has had to either attempt to pay for services themselves or cut programs (Anton, 1989). The state-funded model proved to be unsustainable, and today all but three states in the union have budget deficits in part due to this reduction in federal funding. With state budget deficits growing and a struggling economy, the future of government subsidies for the work of non-profits looks dim.

### **Religious influences**

#### **Social Workers and their religious views**

The social work model has its roots in Christian charity. Throughout the twentieth century, social work has been linked to Christianity through religiously affiliated non-profits and academic institutions (Fell, 2002). However, studies have suggested that today social work students are commonly raised without religion or within a church that was politically "liberal" (Smith, 2002). While social work's roots came from ideas of Christian charity, social work students today less commonly affiliate themselves with Christianity. While Christianity has today become commonly affiliated with Conservative views on government support for non-profit work, social work students today who do identify with Christianity more commonly grew up in churches that were politically liberal in their views on government funding of non-profit work.

#### **Research on religious view and political funding**

No research has been published on the connection between government funding and religious ideology. Yet the ideology of government funding of non-profits has its roots in the concept of charity, and the concept of charity is rooted in the Christian tradition (Religion and Charity go together, 2006). The entire concept of social services and giving was historically created out of the Christian charity model (Religion and Charity go together, 2006).

Although there is no research about religious ideologies being used to advocate for the government funding of non-profits, there is a significant amount of research on the origins of philanthropy itself. Not only does charity have its roots in the Christian tradition, but philanthropy does as well. Catholic Churches in the New England colonies started giving to causes that they saw worthy in the early 1700's (Mills, 2000). The Catholic Church was the first to encourage its parishioners to give money to the church to support social causes like homeless outreach (Mills, 2000), rather than only encouraging them to support the Church's administration.

### **Religion and the anti-government movement**

Historically, Christian churches throughout the United States were big proponents of social programs and the government funding of social programs. This is worthy to note because it has changed drastically in the past forty years. Beginning in the early 1980's, Christians started to vote for more conservative politicians (Rudin, 2011). This trend started during the 1980 presidential election when the Reverend Jerry Falwell endorsed Ronald Reagan for President. This was the first time the head of any church had endorsed a candidate for president (Rudin, 2011). Starting around the same time, conservative Republicans began to link their political beliefs with their Christianity. Today the Republican Party continues to explain and

link their views supporting a small federal government to their Christianity. The trend of politicians openly embracing Christianity contrasts with a national trend that suggests the nation's citizenry is over time becoming less affiliated with Christianity (Hyde, 2003).

### **Social workers and their religious ideology in relation to their practice**

Considering that many of the conservative politicians who are trying to cut government funding of non-profits cite their religion as the source of their political views, one might wonder if a similar relationship could exist with social workers: that Christian social workers would also have similar views of government spending. Although there is little research on this specific topic, there has been research on how the religious views of social workers can affect their practice. Smith-Osborne and Rosenwald (2009) found that social workers who had strong religious beliefs were significantly more likely to have negative views of LGBT rights and abortion rights than those social workers who did not have strong religious views. In 2011, Catholic Social Services in Illinois stopped their foster care and adoption programs because the agency did not want to comply with a state law requiring them to permit gay and lesbian couples to foster and adopt children (Goodstein, 2011). This organization was willing to deny services to all clients in order to avoid providing services to the LGBT population. This is an example of how religious beliefs can directly impact the services available to clients. Although this research does suggest that religion can influence social workers' biases, there is no research on the number of social workers who are religious.

### **Social worker and their religious ideology in relation to their political ideology**

There is some research on the political ideologies of social workers in relation to their religious views. Smith-Osborne and Rosenwald (2009) also found that social workers with



strong religious beliefs are more likely to be “politically conservative” than social workers who do not have strong religious beliefs. What is missing from this study and most of the research in general is a specific definition of what being conservative means. Smith-Osborne and Rosenwald’s (2009) survey asked participants to identify the political party they identified with but they didn’t ask participants to identify specific conservative beliefs. There is a need for research concerning social workers’ religious beliefs and their views on the funding of the profession.

### **Political ideologies and public funding of non-profits and other social programs**

Traditionally, the Republican Party favors a smaller government with fewer social programs and as little public money spent as possible. The National Republican Party’s website states that “the party believes in self sufficiency of people rather than the redistribution of wealth” (Republican National Committee, 2011). Although there is no direct reference to the public funding of non-profits on the GOP website or in the 2011 Republican presidential debates, it is generally assumed that those who believe in reducing the size of government also don’t agree with the practice of funding the work of non-profits.

### **Recent Struggles**

Although there has never been a move by either party to eliminate funding for non-profits altogether, there have been recent moves to eliminate funding to certain non-profits sectors. Most sectors or organizations that have been targeted in recent years have a purpose or mission that has been in question. Starting in February of 2011, there was a move to eliminate federal funding of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which is the organization that distributes federal money to the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and National Public Radio

(NPR). On February 23, 2011, the House of Representatives passed a measure that would eliminate all federal money for the CPB by 2013 (Jensen, 2011). Although the cuts were eventually left out of the final budget, the fact that the cuts were even suggested shows the extreme decline in federal support for such programs.

Other funding streams have been targeted in 2011 by both federal and state governments include money that goes to health care services and family planning. In 2011, four states passed legislation limiting or eliminating public funding for Planned Parenthood (Rovner, 2011).

### **Public views of the function of government**

There is little recent research on the public's view of the function of government and of specific government programs. Research has suggested that the general public differs in opinion from the two main political parties on the role and function of government. Overall, research shows the general public currently does not have a positive image of government. An NPR poll (2011) found that only 17% of Americans have a positive view of the federal government (Liasson, 2011). However, a limitation was that the survey did not ask participants to mention specific functions of government that they were unhappy with. In November 2010, the American public overwhelmingly elected a Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives as well as in state governments across the country. This new class of Republican politicians largely campaigned on the promise to shrink the size of government.

### **Importance of non-profit workers' beliefs concerning government funding of non-profits**

Social workers are in a profession that relies heavily on public and private donations. As a result, social workers have historically supported candidates that champion public funding of non-profits. Historically, social workers have supported candidates from the Democratic Party.

Hyde (2006) found that 78% of social workers considered their political ideology to be “liberal”. Hyde also found the social workers who considered themselves “liberal” were more likely to draw from their political ideologies in their social work practice than those social workers who considered themselves “conservative”. Although Hyde’s (2006) study did show that most social workers support political candidates who also support their profession, the study did not specifically ask social workers for their views on the size of government and the funding of non-profits. Furthermore, this research only studied the views of social workers and rather than non-profit workers in general. This is important because a large percentage of people working in non-profits are not social workers.

### **The Distribution of Public Funding**

A lot of attention has been paid in recent months to government spending. Yet non-profit funding can mean many different things; there are several types of non-profits receiving public money. These non-profits do everything from provide mental health services to the poor to help fund art museums.

#### **How much state and federal money goes to non-profits?**

The amount of public funding used varies from organization to organization. The NFF survey (2009) found that 24% of the organizations that receive public money are arts-related non-profits. The largest category of non-profits receiving public money was social services-related (NFF survey, 2009). Contrary to popular belief, most non-profits that receive public funding only receive 20% or less of their funding from public sources such as state and the federal government (NFF survey, 2009). Although government money is vital to the health of most non-profits, it is not most organizations’ only source of funding. The NFF survey (2009)

suggests that 34% of non-profits receive only 5% or less of their funding from government sources. According to the NFF survey (2009), only 7% of non-profits receive 50% or more of their funding from government sources. There is a common miss-perception that non-profit organizations are dependent on government funds for the majority of their budget, but these percentages prove otherwise. These percentages don't imply that non-profits can exist without government support, however. Twenty percent of funding is still a substantial amount of funding which non-profits rely on receiving from government. Additionally, many non-profits agencies having budgets in the millions and tens of millions, (Liasson. 2011), so even as little as 5% is still a substantial amount of money.

### **Where non-profits believe they will be getting their funding**

Although most non-profits receive less than 20% of their operating budgets from government sources, that small chunk is a vital funding stream for most non-profits. In the next three years, most non-profits fear they will either go into debt or have to cut services as a result of a reduction in government funding (Gardner, 2009). With so many state governments cutting budgets, non-profits are looking more to alternative funding sources. Gardner (2009) suggests that 70% of non-profits believe that they will have to increase fundraising in the next two years.

### **Non-profit staff and their beliefs concerning public funding of non-profits**

It can't be assumed that those working in non-profits are typically sympathetic of the mission of the organizations they work for. Due to government funding cuts, the importance of the people working in the field believing in the mission of the organization they work for has never been more important. Yet there is little research about social workers' or non-profit workers' beliefs concerning public funding of non-profits. This study seeks to explore the

beliefs that non-profit workers have on the government funding that is given to non-profit organizations.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Past research**

There is little research on non-profits workers' beliefs about government funding. Several studies looked at the question from the standpoint of political views. Hyde (2006) surveyed the political views of social workers and whether their views influenced their work. The strength of this study was that it asked participants if their political views influenced their practice. The weakness of this study is that it did not ask its participants about their views on specific issues or topics, instead it just asked the participants to identify a political party that they identify with.

Other research has focused on political ideology and its relationship to possible biases that human service workers might have. Smith and Osborn (2008) interviewed 294 social workers and found that social workers who consider themselves conservative are more likely to be against abortion and gay rights while social workers who consider themselves liberal were more likely to be pro choice and for gay rights. A limitation of this study was that it did not and what this study hopes to do is to explore the beliefs of non-profit workers in general regarding government funding of non-profits.

### **Theoretical basis: Explaining employees' counterintuitive beliefs about government funding**

Lakoff (2004) describes his theory concerning conservative and liberal political discourses. Lakoff (2004) asserts that an individual's political beliefs will often be influenced more by the way a proposed policy is framed than by the rationality of the political message or

by the actual affect of the policy on the individual's own life and work. This theory provides evidence that conservative politicians have largely been able to convince individuals to support conservative policies because these politicians are very good at using framing that connects with larger societal values (Lakoff, 2004). Liberal politicians, on the other hand, have relied on rational arguments to try to gain support for liberal policies. Lakoff (2004) asserts that liberal politicians need to learn how to frame their messages rather than rely on rational arguments, because framing is what wins votes. If his theory is applied to the issue of non-profit workers' views on government funding of non-profit organizations, it can provide some explanation of why non-profit staff would hold unsupportive beliefs about government funding of non-profits. Lakoff's theory would suggest that these people have perhaps been won over by conservative frames and have been unconvinced by liberal rational arguments. Rather than concluding that these non-profit workers are irrational, Lakoff's theory suggests that liberal policies concerning government funding of non-profits need to involve framing (Lakoff, 2004). This theory goes a long way in explaining why there might be counterintuitive beliefs about government funding amongst non-profit staff members.

### **Theoretical basis: Importance of the research question**

Ecosystems theory takes a broad look at the myriad of causes and solutions to clients' problems (Miley, 2011). Based on this theory, a social worker or a non-profit worker must not simply look at the problem at hand, but what is contributing to the problem (Miley, 2010). Considering this perspective, it is very important that social workers as well as non-profit workers seek to understand how policy and the funding of the profession influence their work.

### **Code of Ethics**

As a profession, social workers are mandated to do what is best for their clients in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics. The NASW code of ethics clear states that “it is the responsibility of Social workers (to) advocate for change to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources and opportunities required to meet basic needs and develop fully”, (NASW Code of ethics, 2011). The code of ethics encourages social worker to promote ideas and policies that will promote community, overall good, and participation. The aim of this study is to see if that is still happening in this political climate specifically in relation to beliefs concerning government funding of non-profit work.

### **This study**

The focus of this study was to explore the beliefs of non-profit workers in general regarding government funding of non-profits. This study explored the beliefs of all non-profit staff rather than only staff who are social workers, because the number of social workers at the study site is so small. This study examined the beliefs of all staff members at one local non-profit concerning government funding. The strength of this approach is that the study was able to focus on one population of non-profit employees who work together at one organization. The weakness is that the study only surveyed employees of one particular non-profit, thus the results are not necessarily applicable to non-profits in general. If feasible, a study that would look at employees of several types of non-profits would paint a more detailed picture of the topic.

## **Methods**

### **Design**

This study has three research questions. The primary research question that this study will address is- “what are non-profit staff members’ beliefs concerning government funding of human services non-profits?” The second research question is how do these beliefs differ based

on gender, educational degree level, social science degree attainment, and religious identity? The hypothesis is that at least 70% of non-profit workers will have a high agreement with government funding of human services non-profits.

The design of the study is cross-sectional, as participants were asked about their current attitudes concerning government funding. The study's research questions lend themselves well to quantitative analysis. All questions were quantitative and delivered via multiple-choice questions. This is so that results would be easily comparable based on educational degree type, religious identity, etc.

This study is an exploratory study rather than a predictive study because no previous research has been conducted on this specific aspect of the topic. The hypothesis is based on the assumption that non-profit workers will have a positive belief of funding sources that benefit their own type of non-profit. Although there are other categories of non-profits, the survey studied the funding only of human services non-profits because the participants work at a human service non-profit.

## **Sample**

The sample was taken from a non-profit near the city of Minneapolis. For the purpose of this survey, the agency has chosen to remain anonymous, and survey participants were not asked to describe their role at the organization in order to ensure this anonymity is maintained. This non-profit has approximately 200 staff who engages in daily clinical work with clients. Few of these staff members are social workers by education. This sample was chosen because it reflects the reality that currently many of the professionals who are working at human services non-profits do not academically identify as social workers.



The researcher works at the organization and obtained permission from leadership to administer the survey at the organization. An email was sent to all employees of the organization asking if they would be willing to take a short survey. Participation in the survey will be voluntary. The survey was short in order to encourage participation and participants will be told that the survey will benefit the educational pursuit of their fellow co-worker. Participants were also told that the author will send a summary of the survey results to them when the research is complete. In terms of inclusion and exclusion criteria, all staff of the organization will be asked to participate. This study is concerned with the overall views of people who work at non-profit so there is no need to exclude anyone.

### **Protection of participants**

In order to protect the privacy of participants, no identifying information was collected and the survey was collected anonymously via Survey Monkey. The author is the only person who has access to the survey results. The data will be destroyed after the author has completed the study. The consent process involved a consent form that was attached to the survey. Participants were asked to read the consent form before filling out the survey. The consent form included the following: the procedures of what the participant was asked to do, how their confidentiality would be maintained, the voluntary nature of the study, any benefits to them by participating in the study, and contact information for the author and his research advisor should a participant have any questions.

### **Measurement**

The questions were measured using a self-report survey. The survey itself was conducted through the website- Survey Monkey. Participants will be sent an email requesting their

participation in the survey. The email request also included a link to the survey on Survey Monkey. Participants were given two weeks to fill out the survey. Five reminder emails were sent out during the two weeks.

The survey questions were close-ended, with participants choosing from a selection of question answers. One question asked about educational attainment level: high school/GED, technical/associate's degree, bachelor's degree, graduate/masters degree, or PhD/doctorate. The next question asked if those with a bachelor's degree or higher received their degree in a social science-related field via yes/no/don't know response categories. The next question gauged religious identity by asking whether or not they identify with an organized religion. The questions that intended to gauge beliefs about government funding of human service non-profits had Likert-scale responses. For example, one question asked, "Do you believe in cutting government funding of non-profits as a means of balancing the government budget?" Responses were "strongly support", "moderately support", "neutral", "moderately oppose", and "strongly oppose."

Descriptive statistics were gathered to get a picture of staff members' beliefs concerning government funding of human services non-profits. These statistics were used to reject or fail to reject the hypothesis. The type of analysis used will be chi-square. This test was used to compare beliefs based on gender, based on educational attainment level, based on whether or not their degree is in social sciences or not, and based on religious identity.

## **Results**

### **Participants**

The survey was conducted over a two-week period. Eighty-six employees from one Twin Cities non-profit participated in the survey. The number of participants equals roughly a third of the total number of people employed at this particular non-profit. Ninety-one percent of the participants were female. Although the organization did not provide the researcher with the actual gender demographics for the organization, the organization did explain that the actual percentage of female employees is higher than the percentage of female participants in the survey. Thus, the survey oversampled males.

Table 1

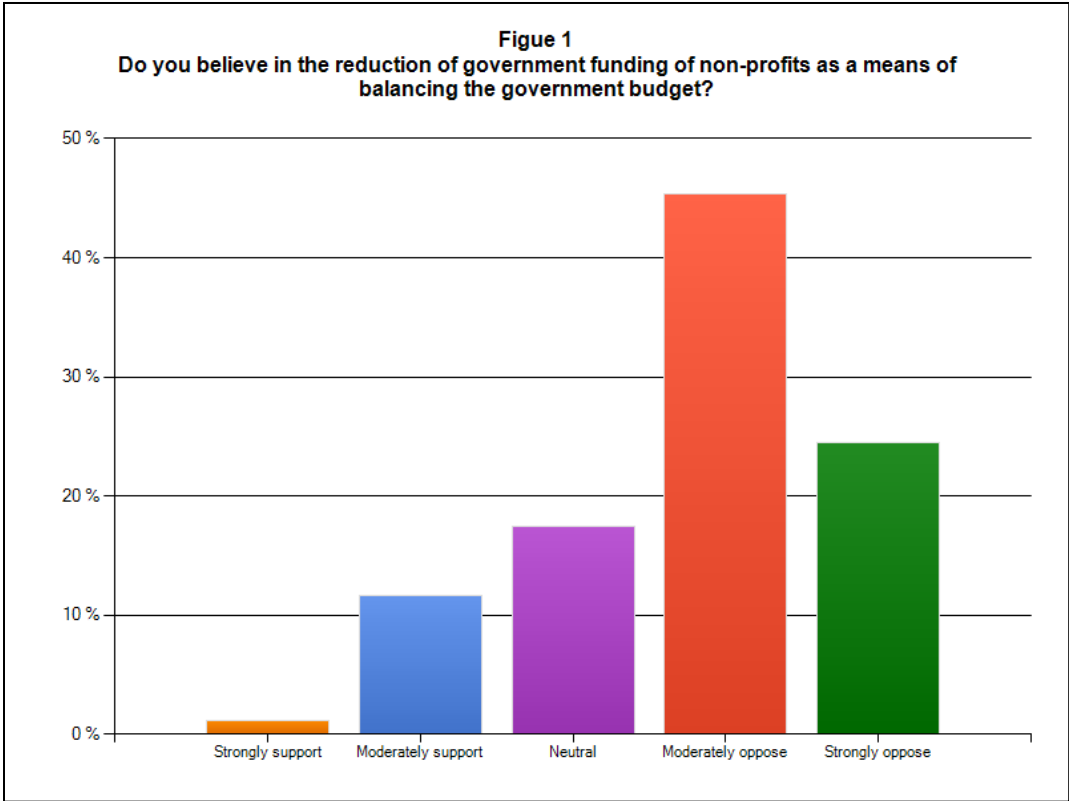
Frequency Distribution of Employee Demographic Characteristics			
Category		Percent	Frequency
Gender			
Man		8.1%	7
Woman		91.9%	79
Education			
Less than high school degree		0.0%	0
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)		2.3%	2
Some college but no degree		3.5%	3
Associate degree		7.0%	6
Bachelor degree		57.0%	49
Graduate degree		27.9%	24
Doctorate		2.3%	2
Identification with an Organized Religion			
Yes		74.4%	64
No		25.6%	22

Not Sure	0.0%	0
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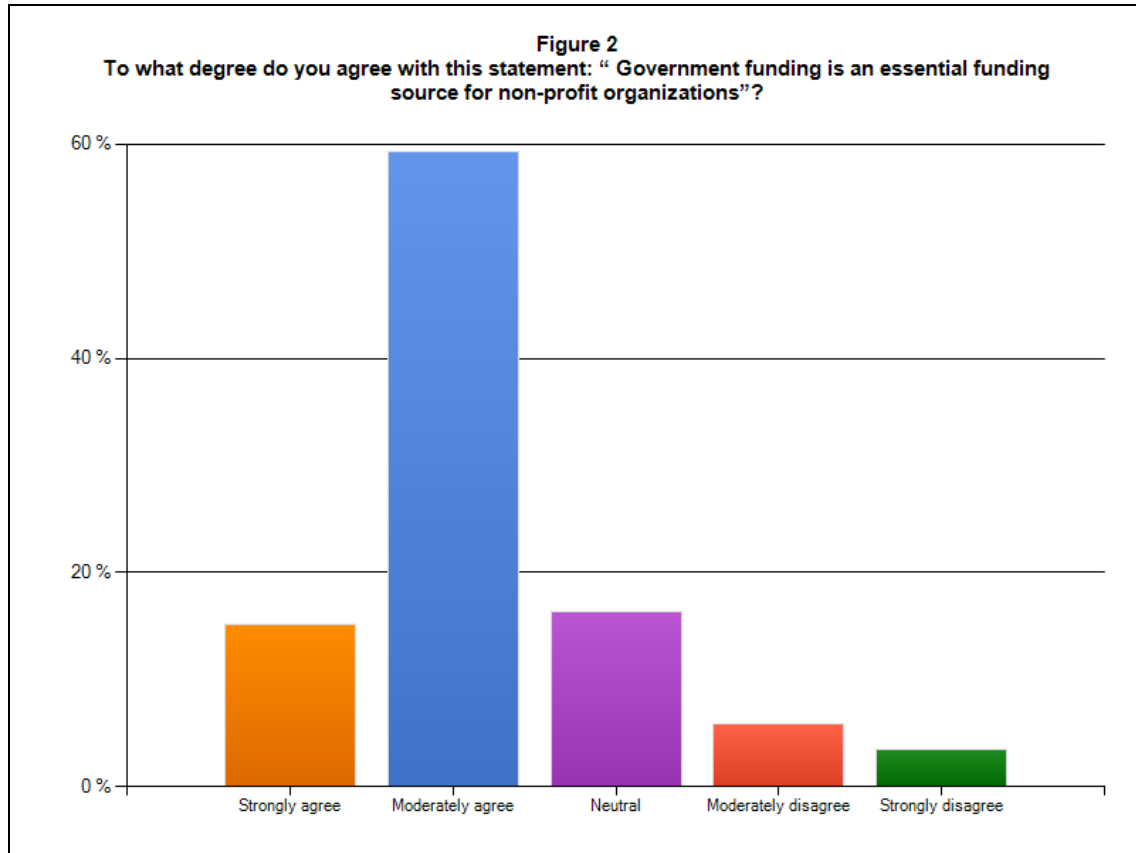
Eighty-seven percent of the employees surveyed had a bachelors degree or higher. Eight-four percent had a degree in one of the social sciences and 30% of the respondents' highest level of education was a masters' degree or higher. There were two participants with a doctorate level degree and there was one licensed social worker. Seventy-four percent of the participants identified with an organized religion. Table 1 details these demographics of the sample.

## **Findings**

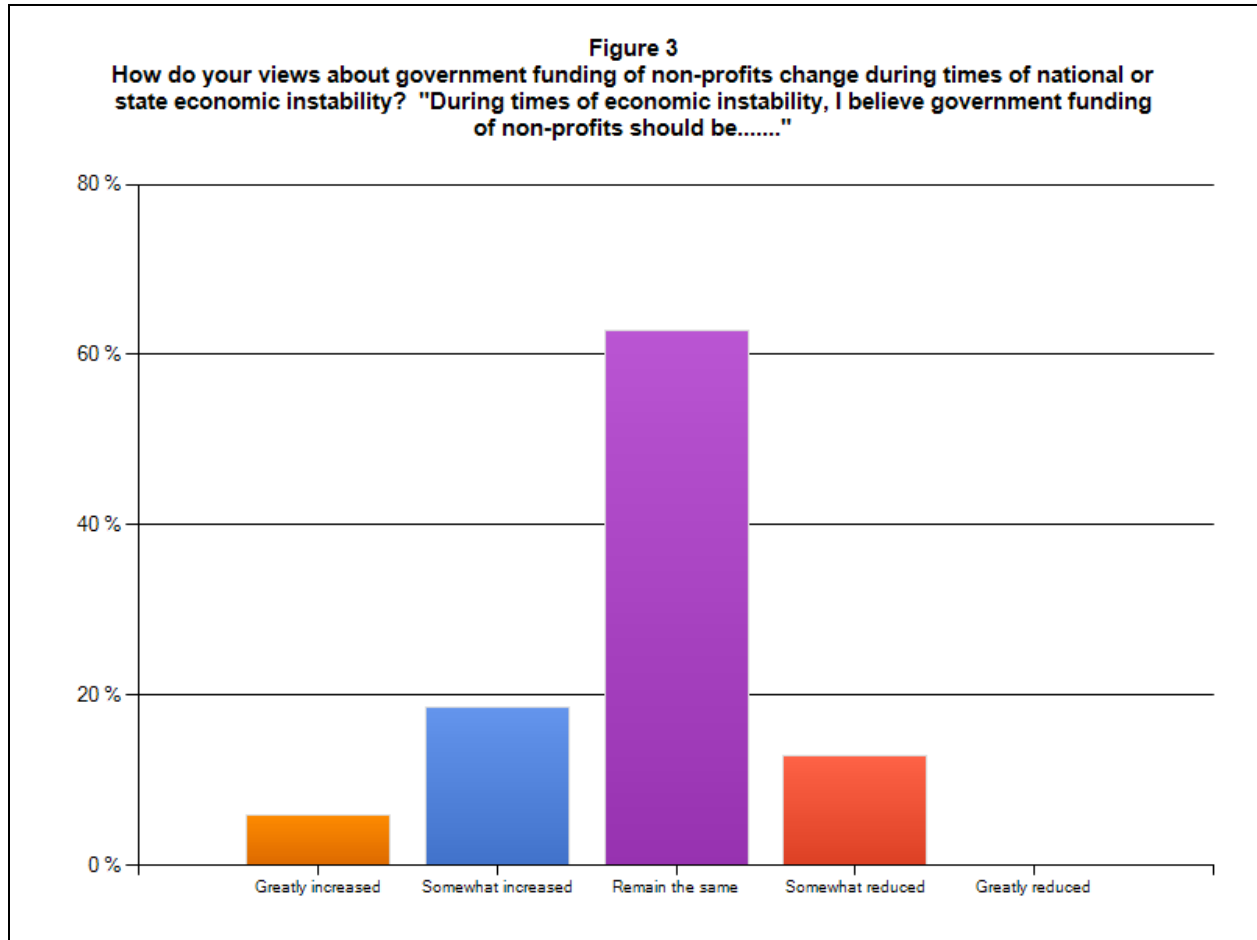
The survey asked participants three questions pertaining to their views on the government funding of non-profits. For the question "Do you believe in the reduction of government funding of non-profits as a means of balancing the government budget?" (Figure 1), 70% of participants either moderately or strongly opposed the reduction of government funding of non-profits as a means of balancing the government's budget, 17.5% were neutral, and 12.8% either moderately or strongly agreed with the practice.



For the question asking if government funding is an essential funding source for non-profits, 74% either moderately or strongly believed that government funding is an essential funding source, 16.3% were neutral, and 9.3% either moderately or strongly believed it was not an essential funding source for non-profits (See Figure 2).



For the question asking participants to complete the statement, "During times of economic instability, I believe government funding of non-profits should be...", 62.8% of participants believed that it should remain the same, 24% believed that funding should somewhat or greatly increased, and 12% believe it should be somewhat reduced (See Figure 3).



### Discussion

The findings for this survey confirmed many of the hypotheses made by the researcher. Over 70% of the participants believed that government funding of non-profits was an essential funding source for non-profits. The survey overwhelmingly supported the idea that most employees of non-profits believe in the validity of public funding sources for the organizations that they work for.

There were several unexpected findings of the survey. The amount of higher education in the sample study was high. It was surprising to find such a high number of participants with graduate degrees considering that the organization surveyed currently has only two positions that

require an advanced degree. This finding might be due to a poor job market where those with advanced degrees have to accept jobs that do not require their degree. Another reason for this finding is that those with advanced degrees were more likely to take the survey than those without advanced degrees. Although it was assumed that some of the participants would be religious, it was not expected that seventy five percent of the employees would identify with an organized religion. From data gathered for the literature review, this is significantly higher than most non-profit workers and with most social workers. Although a low number of social workers were expected, it was surprising that a survey of a third of the employees of a mental health oriented non-profit would only have one licensed social worker. Because of the smaller than expected number of male employees, those who do not participate in religion, and number of employees with less than a bachelor's degree, an analysis on the relationship between these variables and the views on government funding could not be conducted. A larger sample size would be needed to conduct this analysis.

### **Advantages**

The advantages of the study design are numerous. One advantage is that the questions will provide simple and specific results that will be easily accessible and applicable to a non-profit setting. Another advantage is that Survey Monkey is a friendly online interface that many people have experience with, making it quicker for participants to complete the survey. The online delivery of the survey will hopefully create a larger sample size, as staff will be able to complete the survey anytime during the timeframe provided and at their leisure when they have a spare moment. An advantage of the study setting is that the non-profit is much larger than the average non-profit size, which will hopefully lead to a large sample size. A final advantage of the



study is that participants will be anonymous, which will increase their comfort to fill out the survey knowing their responses cannot be traced back to them.

### **Limitations**

The study has several limitations. One limitation is that the study is not able to survey several non-profits, which would increase generalizability and sample size. This limitation is due to several organizations not wanting to be a part of the study. Another limitation is that the study is only surveying people who work at one type of non-profit, i.e. human services. Surveying other types of non-profits would provide comparability between the types of non-profits. One design limitation is that the targeted population is not being incentivized to complete the survey due to ethical challenges that would occur in trying to provide incentives. This could lead to a decrease in sample size. Another limitation is that the simplicity of the quantitative design lacks the ability to give a more complex picture of the participants' views of government funding. Another limitation is that participants might be hesitant to answer questions about religious identity and beliefs about government funding, as these are sensitive topics due to the current political climate. Finally, because the survey sample is not limited to social workers, it will not be reflective of the beliefs of licensed social workers but rather non-profit staff in general.

### **Possible uses**

The results of this data shows that, at least at this particular non-profit, the majority of their employee's agree with the validity of their funding sources. This type of survey could be useful for other non-profits as a way of measuring their employees' views on their mission and goals. If this survey were to be done at several non profits of various types and sizes, it might

broaden the scope of this survey. Including more organizations would increase the internal validity of the study. Opening the survey up to other organizations might allow for comparison research to be done on how the employees at different types of non-profits view the government funding of non-profits differently.

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**Appendix A**

- 1) Please indicate your gender : man / woman
- 2) Please indicate your highest level of education completed:
  - a. high school/GED
  - b. technical/associate's degree
  - c. bachelor's degree
  - d. graduate/masters degree
  - e. PhD/doctorate
- \* If you have a bachelor's degree or higher, was it in a social science related field?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
- 3) Are you a licensed Social worker? If so, what level is your license?
- 4) Do you identify with an organized religion?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
- 5) Do you believe in the reduction of government funding of non-profits as a means of balancing the government budget? Strongly support, Moderately support, Neutral, Moderately oppose, Strongly oppose
- 6) To what degree do you agree with this statement: " Government funding is an essential funding source for non-profit organizations"?
  - Strongly agree,
  - Moderately agree,
  - Neutral,
  - Moderately disagree,
  - Strongly disagree
- 7) How do your views about government funding of non-profits change during times of national or state economic instability? I believe government funding of non-profits should be greatly reduced, somewhat reduced, remain the same, should be somewhat increased, or should be greatly increased.
- 8) Was your last job in the non-profits sector? Yes/No

**Appendix B****Informed Consent**

You are invited to participate in a survey on government funding of non-profit organizations. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an employee at a nonprofit. Please read this form and ask any questions you might have before agreeing to be involved in the research.

This study is being conducted by Michael Raguet, Graduate student in the School of Social Work at the University of St Thomas.

**Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following: participate in a survey. The survey will be completed on the web site Survey Monkey. The survey should take five minutes to complete. Questions will be the government funding of non-profits.

**Confidentiality:**

No identifying information will be collected. Michael is the only person who will have access to the data collected. At the end of the project, you will be invited to view the results of the research.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of St. Thomas or the organization you work for. If you decide to participate, you may decline to answer any question.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Michael Raguet. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later you are encouraged to contact Michael.

If you consent to participating in this survey, please press "next" to complete the survey.

**APPENDIX C**

Michael Raguet  
School of Social Work  
2115 Summit Ave. Mail SCB 201  
University of St. Thomas  
St. Paul, MN 55105

1/25/2012

Dear Mr. Raguet,

I am writing to confirm that (Blank) strongly supports the Non-profits workers views on Government funding survey. It is my understanding that this project will entail anonymously surveying employees of this organization to gain knowledge on non-profit workers opinions of government founding of non-profit organizations.

It is also my understanding that the no identifiable information will be gathered from employees. It is also my understanding that this organization will not be identified in this study.

I look forward to working with you on this project

Sincerely,