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Arguments for a Living Wage in the United States: Prospects for Persuasion and Expansion

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ARGUMENTS FOR A LIVING WAGE
IN THE UNITED STATES:
PROSPECTS FOR PERSUASION AND
EXPANSION

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Management 478

Honors Thesis

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Thesis advisor: Prof. Maureen Scully

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I. Introduction

This thesis explores the living wage, and in particular the varied arguments that support the adoption and spread of the living wage. A “living wage” is a decent wage. “It affords the earner and her or his family the most basic costs of living without need for government support or poverty programs,” and takes into account a, “complete consideration of the cost of living (Living Wage Action Coalition, 2011; page 1).” The topic is timely, as the economy in the United States remains in decline, and now more than ever the American workforce is struggling to stay afloat, along with businesses across the country.

I want to explore the best arguments available for why the living wage is beneficial to businesses, in order to understand what factors a business leader might consider regarding whether or not to pay a living wage. Many of the easy and obvious arguments seem to go against the living wage: it is expensive, it will make a business uncompetitive, and it might drive up unemployment. Therefore, the arguments for why a living wage is good for business need to be strongly and clearly put. My thesis investigates the most prominent of these strong arguments for the living wage, including where they can be widely and publicly found, what arguments and topics they cover, and who advances these arguments.

II. What is a Living Wage?

Summary

Small businesses have been more progressive in the trend of living wages than big businesses have. Even though activists, such as those of Occupy Wall Street, are focusing on big business, that is not where their message is being heard (Scully, 2008). In the case of small business owners, many do it because it makes them feel good and they can. It’s just an added

bonus that it ends up being profitable (Klinger, 2000). However, big businesses are apprehensive to consider a concept such as living wages because it contradicts many capitalistic principles, and seems counterintuitive to the main goal of business; to make a profit (Scully, 2008).

Yet, the adopters of living wage argue that it is a good policy for business, and results in higher profits. Proponents argue that granting living wages makes workers happier. Happy workers provide better service to customers, creating a loyal customer base and resulting in more sales (Klinger, 2000). Satisfied employees also are less likely to quit. It is economical for many businesses to pay workers more on this premise because it saves them the higher costs of training new employees due to constant turnover (Klinger, 2000). Furthermore, content workers also work harder and are better employees (i.e. show up to work on time and take less sick days). They have more pride in their work and respect for the company (Klinger, 2000). Beyond business, enacting living wage policies across the nation would solve political dilemmas such as poverty and unemployment (Parijs, 2000), as well as boost the economy (Collins, 2010).

Paying living wages is arguably the ethical thing to do. Real wages (after inflation) have not increased in the U.S. since the 1980s. It is hard for families to get by on minimum wage, even when the breadwinners are working full time (Klinger, 2000; graphs). Like many businesses are discovering today (as with the Go Green trend), what is ethical also tends to be the best long term business strategy. This is because customers trust and respect the company more, which results in loyalty (Velasquez, 2006).

There is an organization called United for a Fair Economy, which has created a petition for businesses to sign that states their commitment to living wages. Thus far, the list is populated predominantly by small businesses (Collins, 2010).

Analysis

From the readings, it became clear that this is an issue that is just beginning to take substantial political root in the United States. As such, there is a lot of debate about the benefits and drawbacks of granting employees a living wage. What has struck me is the lack of organization surrounding the thoughts and actions of the proponents of a living wage. In its infancy, the movement for living wages is quite all over the place.

Managerial questions

From a managerial stand point, several concerns have been raised in my mind. It is a fact that large businesses have been slower in the uptake of the living wages practice. I think that this may have something to do with a lack of understanding regarding the reasons such an endeavor would be worthwhile. It may also be because large businesses are more likely to be publicly held and to be accountable in the short run to shareholders, who want to cut costs and maximize profits so that the share price rises. In contrast, small business owners can often make independent decisions about paying the higher living wage and reaping its longer term benefits.

Moving forward, I think my contribution can be to sift through the arguments for living wage and come out with some concrete main points that are worth noting. What arguments are the loudest/hold the most weight? Which make the most (business) sense?

Furthermore, the smaller businesses that are adopting living wage policies and meeting success can provide valuable insight for larger companies afraid to make the jump. For my next step, I read to find out more about what the activists fighting for living wage are pushing and what (and why) it's sticking with many small businesses. Clarification might help business owners to decide whether living wages are right for their company, and the decisions could be

based on more knowledge. Clarification could provide insight into this complicated politico-economic business issue.

III. Who is Advocating for Living Wages?

Summary

From the articles, in general, I have gathered more of an understanding of living wages as a political and social movement, and of the roots that it is establishing within the business community. Thus far, I can conclude that this is an issue that is not being talked about often in academic circles, and less so in business circles. Where the messages of living wages seem to be heard are predominantly within small business ventures, non-profit organizations, and municipalities. The question in my mind has become, what messages are getting through to these small business owners, and what do their journeys and successes have to teach the corporate world at large?

The Living Wage Movement

The minimum wage in the United States today is inadequate. The minimum wage is not sufficient to support a part time worker. It will not cover the average costs required for basic necessities, such as food, shelter, and clothing, especially in most medium to large cities. Therefore, it is unrealistic to keep minimum wage at its current level. People need to be granted the means to live in exchange for their labor (Abdulahad, Faraj, & Guirguis, 2003).

The minimum wage is not just low, it is in decline in real terms. Since the mid-1980s, real wages (wages after inflation) have not increased. The decline in the buying power of average wages coincides with the income gap and the concentration of wealth that has developed in

America (Pollin & Luce, 1998). This leads me to link the issue specifically to current grass roots groups such as Occupy Boston and Occupy Wall Street.

Due to economic trends since the 1960s, unemployment rates have gone up and minimum wage has gone down. Enacting living wage policies would help our economy and government, as declines in income translates into a comparable decline in state income and sales taxes (Pollin & Luce, 1998). Living wage adjustments would also help low-income families by increasing their incomes, increasing their spending power, giving them access to better health care, entitling them to enjoy more paid days off, and allowing them to rely less on government subsidies (Pollin & Luce, 1998).

The living wage movement started with a church in Baltimore (Pollin & Luce, 1998). Since then, “the living wage movement has become one of the most interesting (and under-reported) grass roots enterprises to emerge since the civil rights movement (Pollin & Luce, 1998; page 1). Activists have discovered that living wage policies would be most beneficial in cities, where poverty rates are higher. This is a major reason why activists mainly focus on lobbying at the community level (Pollin & Luce, 1998). Therefore, the effort to establish a living wage requires community mobilization (Pollin & Luce, 1998). Conveniently, activists have found more support lobbying on cities rather than on states or the nation as a whole (Pollin & Luce, 1998). Social change regarding living wage has taken place via the interaction of national progressive networks with local actors (this was proven both quantitatively and qualitatively (Martin, 2001)).

Activists have come to realize that message is important. Social change is dependent on how successfully messages are chosen and disseminated. A successful message is one that breaks

through the deeply held preconceived notions of a person or society that make it difficult for contradictory information to be considered (Mooney, 2003).

The framing of an issue often makes all the difference in the world. For instance, changing the name of an issue can change its connotations and sway the masses in favor of the movement. An example of this would be when the U.S. government moved to put a tax on certain items of a person's estate after they pass on. The proposal of the tax remained relatively uncontested until a countering advocacy group renamed the tax, "The Death Tax." The harsh name caught people's attention, and their concern. For that reason enough support was garnered to successfully oppose the proposal. It is a testament to the fact that when it comes to social advocacy, framing is key (Mooney, 2003). Activists chose to frame this issue by using the term, "living wage." Who is against a "living wage?" It is simply a more powerful term than "minimum wage," and suggestive that the minimum wage is insufficient and must necessarily be raised.

Despite movement efforts, there are opponents to the living wage. Conservatives have countered the movement with concerns such as: it will cause entire industries to move overseas, higher taxes, thousands of job losses, soaring prices, destruction of small business, higher rates of people on welfare; essentially an economic meltdown (Pollin & Luce, 1998). Also, workers have lost power due to union busting, the creation of contingent positions, and outsourcing (Pollin & Luce, 1998).

Although the movement faces an uphill battle, it stands to generate much good. Businesses will benefit from living wages with: decreased turnover, better quality of work, better cooperation with management, more flexibility, and higher employee morale (Pollin & Luce, 1998). Furthermore, (Pollin & Luce use company averages to prove that) new costs due to the

living wage are small in proportion to total production costs (Pollin & Luce, 1998). One business is not enough to instill lasting change in a community. However, it does not need to be the entirety of business in the area either. Rather, a cluster of businesses participating in living wage can create and foster lasting change (Pollin & Luce, 1998).

Honing the Research Question

The material from this literature review gave me further insight into what I can contribute to the area of living wages. Through the reading my assertion that there is still a lot of grey area in addressing this issue (amongst companies in particular) has been solidified. Furthermore, I see the rising pressure for businesses to adopt living wage policies and therefore, rising potential for companies to instill changes that positively affect not only their prospective companies, but the entire face of corporate America.

It is with this conviction that I have chosen to set forth and dedicate myself to the questions surrounding living wage. Specifically, how is the movement being administered and what messages are reaching the public? To do this, I first embarked on exploratory research; looking over the articles relevant (and in some cases, those most accessible as well) to business owners, managers and the public, to learn how the messages are being disseminated. Such articles come from the top hits of a Google search (as many people nowadays might look up “living wages” on Google to get information on it if they were concerned). From there, I have coded the arguments that come up the most, and then have used that coding to figure out what kind of messages (from all angles) are out there for the majority to discover.

Then I took a deeper look into this messaging, by interviewing with activists and other proponents of living wage. I wanted to hear for myself the messages that activists thought were most important. I also wanted to speak with a small business owner as well, because many small

businesses are indeed the ones who chose to adopt living wage policies. I wanted to know what their reasons were for choosing to grant living wages, as well as the benefits they are experiencing from their decision in business terms.

I anticipated that this would lead me to bigger conclusions, such as why it would be beneficial for large corporations to adopt such policies as well. If nothing else, I felt this work would shed more light on this business issue in terms of how it is being represented and accepted within the business community, and also highlight the facets that make this issue so complicated.

IV. Hypotheses

Due to the nature of the research, I did not go into this with a highly formulated hypothesis. However, I did have certain expectations. First of all, I expected to find arguments for living wage throughout the political spectrum. I also expected to find a lot of sentiment among small business owners as their main motivators, as well as arguments that living wage can be profitable. My conclusion, I predicted, would be something along the lines of, “most arguments address how the living wage has supported small businesses, but a rising voice is suggesting that it can benefit big businesses as well” The following are my hypotheses of the types of arguments I would find:

Hypothesis 1 - Small businesses will talk about adopting living wages in ethical (humanitarian) terms more so than in terms of benefits to business (that is not to say that they will not address profitability).

Hypothesis 2 - Business professionals will be predominantly concerned with profitability, consumer perceptions, and employee performance (benefits to business).

Hypothesis 3 - Movement leaders will have the most radical arguments to make. Their arguments will show the most passion, with arguments more based off of ethics.

Hypothesis 4 - Educators will run the largest gamut of arguments for living wage; from ethics to economics, profit to performance. I expect the widest range of ideas to be found here.

Hypothesis 5 - Government officials will address living wage in terms of sustainability, economics, and ethics.

In order to test my hypotheses, I then need to define these groups of spokespersons and search for their arguments to determine the terms in which each speaks of the living wage.

V. Methodology Section

Nature of the Research

Where my research is qualitative, I had to go about it quite dynamically, with a commitment to let the data I find tell the story. Therefore, some of the more technical specifics of my methodology were not set in stone in the beginning. Rather, the literature analysis has guided my methodology. As I dissected the articles the finer points of my methodology, such as specific codes and argument categories, took shape. My plan was to look for strong arguments (i.e., those based on facts) and frequently made arguments and take notes so that my code was able to form as I started to see patterns.

Primary Method: Literature Analysis

My initial methodology is literature analysis. I conducted this research by collecting written pieces. I collected fifty articles in total, dividing them into seven groups. The purpose of this was to gain an all-encompassing plethora of materials regarding where and how the issue of living wage is being addressed. The seven categories of interest are as follows:

The General Public - To find out what people in general are thinking about where living wage is concerned, I am going to turn to individual blogs and opinion pieces in newspapers and magazines.

Business Professionals - This category includes pieces written by business owners, managers, and executives. Also in this category exists works by experts and business consulting firms.

Movement Leaders - There are several prominent groups that fight for the living wage and in the process, have created literature on their websites, through campaigns, brochures, and other media outlets. Groups of interest include The Living Wage Action Coalition and Wider Opportunities for Women. I also looked at work done by union activists.

Educators - Educators (in business fields) have knowledge and opinions on the subject. There is literature on the topic from many colleges across the United States. These works come from college professors and from organizations within schools such as here at UMASS Boston, where we house the Labor Studies Center.

Government Officials - There are politicians who have taken pro-living wage stances and others who do not, but nonetheless see some inherent value. Such works can be found in the form of speech transcripts and official written documents stating political platform and issue stances.

Journalists - There are many journalists who write in business columns and have a big picture view of the issues surrounding living wage. At the same time, they tend to pull from most of the other categories to write their articles.

Definitional Resources - The last category is mainly important for the role it plays in the basic education of the six previous groups as to what living wage is, what it means, and its

history. These definitional sources were pulled from a top hit list of the popular search engine, Google. The reasoning behind this is that people looking up living wage would be more likely to encounter those exact sources as using sites like Google has become a mainstream practice.

The set of articles I choose is meant to range across the spectrum on pro-living wage thought. These articles are used in my coding because they are representative of the kinds of messages being disseminated by different thought leaders. The focus of my secondary method was to gather richer information on why those messages are being pushed, and how it's affecting real business; what messages are really sinking in, and to whom.

I read through these pieces, tallying all the arguments, and at the same time, developing categories for them, or coding them. When coding, I looked mainly for key phrases, arguments, and events/locations. The results of the coded body of living wage information serve as a basis for analysis of how and why businesses are accepting (and rejecting) living wage practices.

Amendments to the Methodology

As previously stated, the nature of the research was such that my findings often dictated the direction of my methodology. This process yielded interesting results. The first set of changes took place when I realized that there are certain unexpected silences on the internet forum, as well as louder voices that I did not foresee.

Originally I had intended on incorporating ten articles per article category. However, I discovered that some categories were less prevalent than others. In particular, the voice of everyday people is notably absent. Voices are indeed out there, but not to the same magnitude. As a result, I felt that digging deep into databases, company logs, and personal blogs where one might find materials did not match the intentions of my code, which is to find the arguments that are on the forefront. As a result, I narrowed this category down to only five articles instead of

ten. I feel this is a more accurate representation of the presence that the everyday person commands on the internet forum.

Another set of voices I found to be quiet were those of government officials. While I did find some very compelling vocalized political figures, overall the amount of articles I found for this category was underwhelming compared some of the other categories. Therefore, this category was also reduced to five articles instead of ten. Finally, definitional articles were surprisingly hard to come by after the most common sources of dictionaries and encyclopedias. This category was thus reduced to five articles.

However, my code also found the welcome addition of the journalist category, which I had not initially anticipated. At first I hesitated to add articles that were not by author of the original six categories. Yet the more articles I read by journalists, the more I began to see the special contribution they were making as big picture thinkers. Furthermore, I could not deny that the prevalence of articles by journalists on the surface of my internet searches was overwhelming. As a result, I picked five of the most insightful articles I found by journalists and included it in the code. In total I ended up with fifty articles from seven different categories. The most relevant categories each have ten articles while the less relevant categories each have five articles.

Coding

The procedure of coding was a dynamic mixture of premeditated devices and devices developed as the literature was evaluated. The premeditated devices include rules by which I found and then analyzed the literature. In terms of finding the literature, I created subsets of rules for each category of thought leader. It is appropriate to do this because each category has its own ways of creating thought leadership. The rules themselves are being based on two main factors:

where the best set of data lies and justifiable reasoning for using that set of data. The rules I created for each category are as follows:

The General Public - The literature from the general public may come from top relevant Google searches, ending in .com. The reasoning behind this is to find the louder opinions of individual people. These opinions may come from sources such as blogs.

Business Professionals - Here I chose to split my sub-category down even further, into business experts and business owners. I wanted to make sure I included a good mix of both of these authors so that the literature is representative of many different types of business thought leaders.

Movement Leaders - I chose pieces that are representative to top movement groups, and other interwoven groups such as feminists and union activists.

Government Figures - For this category, I chose to take speech transcripts that contain considerable material addressing the living wage and articles that were written by political leaders themselves.

Educators - Here I took literature from professors of different colleges, such as Harvard, and the University of Massachusetts Boston. I also looked for professors from community colleges and from colleges out of state.

Definitional Resources - I wanted this section of literature to be representative of what people from all categories are likely to discover when looking up the living wage. Therefore, I used the top hits of a Google search on “living wage” that are purely definitional, and do not take a biased stance one way or the other. I used Wikipedia as one source, as this is a likely place where someone might start an investigation into what living wage is about.

Relevancy

There are certain relevancy measures that were used across subcategories. These overarching rules create continuity amongst the data sets and reinforce the validity of my analysis. The concept that drove these rules was that I wanted my code to be representative of prevalent arguments for living wage that are being disseminated via the internet. Therefore, I chose to incorporate only articles that were in the top ten hit pages of my Google searches. The justification is that the article on page sixty of the Google hit page is not seen by as many people (and therefore does not influence as many people) as the articles on the first few hit pages.

As far as search key words, I always had the words, “living wage” in the search box. However, Google interprets “living wage” to be synonymous with “minimum wage.” This ultimately changed the shape of my code. Through this research it has become clear to me that the term “living wage” is not universally used. So many articles instead talk about “raising the minimum wage.” Although there is a problem in the distinctions here, insofar as a living wage may be interpreted to be much higher than a raised minimum wage, in the end I chose to incorporate the sentiment. One reason was that “raising the minimum wage” is just as popular as sentiment as “providing a living wage.” Another reason is that while simply raising the minimum wage may not be enough in the eyes of many activists, I consider it a step in the right direction. As Susan Moir, the Vice-President of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, pointed out in my interview with her, “the decline in the real wages of American workers is bad workers and bad for the whole society, so any policy initiative, whether its living wage, increase minimum wage, universal healthcare; any policy that sustains healthy communities of workers is a good thing.”

Other keywords were specific to each category. Table G of Appendix A lists the specific keywords I used. From these searches I only used articles that appeared in the top ten pages of

the Google search hit. Qualifying articles were authored by someone within that category, at least one page width long, and made compelling arguments about the benefits of a living wage.

Creating the Code

The Code was going to be generated by tallying the number of different arguments that appeared in each article. I included all arguments made in the articles that were compelling and appeared multiple times. However, there are more than a few cases where compelling arguments were made that were not duplicated often. I chose to include them as they may be representative of arguments that are coming from the margins and may eventually find their way to the center as the fight for living wages continues. A comprehensive list of the article chosen for the code can be found in table F of Appendix A.

After all the articles were found and coded, I was able to look at all the arguments and group them into four distinct categories. The categories of living wage arguments are as follows:

Benefits to business - these are the specific arguments that state the benefits of living wage to businesses and business operations. They do not overlap economic arguments because they include only business-specific arguments.

Economic - These arguments are generally broader than the specific benefits to business arguments. They also include government dependency arguments that are of relevance to taxpayers.

Momentum - These arguments are specific examples of how far the living wage movement has come and how many support it. These are different from humanitarian arguments because it only includes specific examples of momentum and support.

Humanitarian - These arguments are specifically saying that granting a living wage is the right thing to do without drawing from the other three categories. These arguments also tend to strike more of an emotional chord.

A comprehensive list of all arguments in their respective categories can be found in table E of Appendix A. It is also interesting to note that the four categories contain both empirically driven arguments (benefits to business and economic arguments) and normative arguments (momentum and humanitarian arguments). Most articles used a mix of empirical and normative arguments, creating a compelling web that typified both practicality and sincerity.

Secondary Method: Interviews

In the next stage, I brought a richer depth to the analysis with relatively structured interviews. I wanted to interview one person from three of the main categories:

Movement Leaders - As the movers and shakers, I thought these people would have the best ideas of what arguments are the strongest and need to be pushed more.

Educators - I felt educators also have their ear to the ground on this topic and have sophisticated information that would shape their ideas in interesting ways.

Business Professionals - Finally, I wanted to interview a small business owner to hear firsthand how a living wage can benefit business.

Altogether, my goal was to have at least three interviews (one in each category). I did acquire three interviews; however the cleavages between educator, movement leader, and business owner were actually crossed in all of interviewees. This brought an interesting point to the forefront; one person can belong to more than one category. This means that an individual's interests and motivation for supporting a living wage can be both complicated and multifaceted.

Overall, this richer site of data collection gives some reality to the arguments brought out in the primary stage, and give to them both emotional and practical connotations.

VI. Findings

To facilitate my literature coding I built an Excel database in which each argument I found was categorized into several layers, including author category (along with author age, gender, state of residence, and the year of publication) and argument category. The completed database allowed me to use basic *sum* and *count* functions in Excel, along with pivot tables, to reveal several important correlations within the code that I created (see tables A through D of Appendix A for the code).

Which Argument Category has the Most Arguments within it?

Argument Category	Number of Arguments	Percentage of Total Arguments
<i>Benefits to Business</i>	9	17.7%
<i>Economic</i>	15	29.4%
<i>Humanitarian</i>	16	31.4%
<i>Momentum</i>	11	21.6%
Total Number of Arguments	51	100%

* The total number of arguments within each argument category are shown in this table (for the full list of these arguments, see Appendix E).

The category with the most arguments within it is humanitarian, followed closely by economic. Momentum has considerably less arguments, while benefits to business have the least total arguments. This is an interesting dichotomy. It seems that most of the arguments are on the face of the issue, meaning that most arguments are saying “grant living wages because it is the right thing to do.” Unfortunately, this is the least compelling argument for a business person. Business people are the ones in power and as such have the power to change the status quo. I think it is important for more arguments to be made that outline the benefits to business that a

living wage would create if movement leaders ever hope to gain widespread support within that community.

However, the situation might be less skewed if one groups the articles by practical (benefits to business and economic) versus idealistic (momentum and humanitarian) arguments.

Argument Category	Number of Arguments	Percentage of Total Arguments
<i>Practical</i>	24	47%
<i>Idealistic</i>	27	53%
Total Number of Arguments	51	100%

As this table shows, there is still a gap, with idealistic arguments in the lead. However it is less of a gap then when looking at the four categories separately. I think it can safely be assumed that business people are more compelled by practical arguments. This table shows that while practical arguments do exist, there is also room for more to grow.

Which Argument Category is the Most Popular?

Argument Categories	Number of Arguments Made	Percentage of Arguments Made
<i>Economic</i>	146	40.56%
<i>Humanitarian</i>	128	35.56%
<i>Benefits to Business</i>	48	13.33%
<i>Momentum</i>	38	10.56%
Total Arguments Made	360	100%

This table shows how many times arguments from each category were made throughout the articles. From this table it is clear that economic arguments are by far the most popular, followed by humanitarian arguments. Arguments under the benefits to business and momentum categories lag far behind. This correlates with the findings of which argument categories had the most individual arguments. Furthermore, it highlights the problem that the number of individual arguments per category alluded to.

It seems that practical thinkers tend to come at the subject of living wage from an economic standpoint but are underestimating benefits to business. On the other hand, normative thinkers are approaching the subject with humanitarian arguments, but are somewhat failing to use momentum arguments.

Which Arguments are Most Important to the Different Categories of Articles?

		Categories of Articles			
		<i>Benefits to Business</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Humanitarian</i>	<i>Momentum</i>
Categories of Articles	<i>Activists</i>	10%	34.3%	47.1%	8.6%
	<i>Business Professionals</i>	20.2%	39.4%	23.4%	6.4%
	<i>Definitional</i>	0%	29.0%	51.6%	19.4%
	<i>Journalists</i>	23.1%	38.5%	33.3%	5.1%
	<i>Educators</i>	16.7%	44.4%	23.6%	15.3%
	<i>Everyday People</i>	0%	41.7%	54.2%	4.2%
	<i>Government Officials</i>	2.5%	47.5%	35%	15%

Activists - Activists primary arguments are humanitarian and their secondary arguments are economic. This proves my third hypothesis that activists will be mostly ethically driven. It is surprising that they do not draw more heavily on momentum arguments as activists are the primary driving force of living wage campaigns and successes. I also feel that an opportunity is missed when activists avoid talking about the benefits of living wage to businesses. They are not conveying their messages in a way that is going to garner large support from the business community.

Business professionals - Business professionals primarily focus on economic issues followed by humanitarian. Surprisingly, benefits to business is the third most popular category (validating hypothesis 1 and disproving hypothesis 2). This implies to me that advocates for living wage within the business community believe in the movement on a more personal level. They support it mostly because they believe it is right, with the fact that it produces profits as an

added bonus. This is interesting and does suggest that the arguments propelled by activists are somewhat effective in this community. However, it is important to remember from the literature review who is actually walking the talk. While small businesses are more accepting of the idea of living wage, the vast majority of big businesses have yet to adopt such policies. It is my inclination that big business needs arguments predominantly in the benefits to business category. Without this, they cannot justify to their stockholders the profitability of granting higher wages to their employees.

Definitional - Definitional sources by and large cite humanitarian arguments, followed by economic arguments. It should also be noted that definitional arguments highlight momentum arguments the most of any category. This is due to definitional standards of providing a historical context of the living wage battle. Notably absent from definitional articles are benefits to business arguments.

Journalists - Journalists focus on benefits to business arguments more than any other category of articles. This does not surprise me because I see that many journalists are actually big picture thinkers and take information from a wide variety of sources to make their points. Like all of the other article categories, economic arguments are the most popular, followed by humanitarian arguments.

Educators - Educators have the most even distribution of arguments. This validates my fourth hypothesis. I am not surprised as educators are privy to the most in-depth quantity of living wage information.

Everyday people - Everyday people are concerned almost exclusively with humanitarian and economic arguments. They are the biggest proponents of humanitarian arguments. This is to

be expected. These people “live” minimum wage, and so they have developed more passion and emotion for the subject than other categories of authors.

Government officials - Government officials focus primarily economic issues, which makes sense because as politicians, they have a stake in how the economy is managed. The second most popular argument category is humanitarian (These findings prove hypothesis 5). Unfortunately, government officials focus little on benefits to business, which would garner them support (and campaign funds) from businesses. Finally, government officials focus more than most groups on momentum arguments as they have knowledge of history and an understanding of how important the past is in shaping our future.

What are the Most Popular Specific Arguments?

Most Popular Arguments	Argument Category	Percentage of Authors who used Argument
<i>Federal government underestimates the cost of living. Minimum wage should go up to account for rising cost of living so people can support themselves.</i>	Economic	62%
<i>Millions of full time workers in the US are struggling to make ends meet (and should not have to be).</i>	Humanitarian	46%
<i>Federal minimum wage does not take inflation into account, which leads to workers having a lower purchasing power.</i>	Economic	42%
<i>Living wages would allow workers to avoid poverty (and government dependency).</i>	Humanitarian	40%
<i>Paying higher wages (means more money that is going to be staying in the state and) is going to help the local economy as workers consumer spending goes up.</i>	Economic	40%

The most popular arguments all fall into economic and humanitarian argument categories. The most popular argument by far is about how the minimum wages that government does not account for the true cost of living. Out of fifty authors, thirty-one of them used this point. The next most popular arguments addresses the human results of a wage that does not cover cost of living; the struggle of minimum wage workers. The other two economic arguments

act as supplement to the cost of living argument; making the points that minimum wages are so low because government is not taking inflation into account when wage rates are set, and that if minimum wage workers were given more purchasing power it would boost the local economy. The other humanitarian argument again addresses the human consequences of such economic mistakes; poverty. In sum, these arguments can be taken to conclude that a majority of authors are saying that the system is inherently flawed and it is the minimum wage workers who suffer greatest as a result.

What Arguments are Most Popular to Male Authors Versus Female Authors?

Gender	Benefits to Business	Economic	Humanitarian	Momentum
<i>Males</i>	13.7%	41.6%	30.0%	10.3%
<i>Females</i>	15.1%	41%	36.6%	7.5%

Overall the findings here were quite similar. The issues that women and men care about seem to be almost exact. The table shows that women focus on humanitarian arguments just a little bit more than men do. It is important to note however, that one of the findings of my code is that the voice of women is less prevalent than the voice of men in the online forum. In my data there are 31 male authors compared to just 13 female authors.

What State is the Most Vocal and What Issues do They Care About?

	Percentage of Articles Coming from NY	Benefits to Business	Economic	Humanitarian	Momentum
<i>New York</i>	18%	14.5%	40.5%	40.5%	4.3%

The amount of articles coming from New York more than doubles that of any other state. New York is by far the strongest advocate of a living wage. Interestingly, New York authors make economic and humanitarian arguments at the exact same rate. They also have a higher average when it comes to benefits to business arguments.

Is There a Correlation Between Age and Category of Argument Interest?

Age Range	Benefits to Business	Economic	Humanitarian	Momentum
20-50	12.5%	41.7%	33.3%	12.5%
51-82	19%	42.0%	30.7%	8.0%

The main difference seems to be that older people are more in tune with benefits to business arguments. It is also the case that older author's voices are louder on the online forum. My code contains twice as many authors over fifty than authors under fifty. This is interesting enough, as the internet is generally perceived to be the domain of younger people.

Is There a Correlation Between Year of Publication and Category of Argument Interest?

Year Range	Benefits to Business	Economic	Humanitarian	Momentum
1999- 2006	10.3%	32.2%	43.7%	13.8%
2007-2012	14%	43.2%	33.0%	9.5%

It is interesting to see that the importance of arguments has been reversed over time. In 2006 and earlier humanitarian arguments were the most highlighted, followed by economic arguments. In today economic recession it is not surprising that the primary focus is now on economic arguments, with humanitarian arguments coming after. Benefit to business arguments also have become more important.

VII. Interviews

From the start I knew I wanted to interview activists and academics on their stances in regards to living wage. What I did not anticipate is that this distinction is not always present. I was afforded the opportunity to interview two powerful women who are living wage activists with strong roots in the world of academia.

Interview with Susan Moir

My first interview was with Susan Moir, who is the Director of the Labor Resource Center here at the University of Massachusetts and the Vice President of the Massachusetts chapter of the AFL-CIO. It was interesting to see her point of view as a union activist and leader who strongly supports the idea of a living wage.

Moir describes living wage as, “a wage that workers can support their families on and have decent living conditions.” The primary reason why she supports the living wage is because she fears the growing income inequality that is developing in America. She notes that, “since the 1970s, wages for skilled workers are stagnant, and wages for unskilled workers has gone down.”

According to Moir, there are two main obstacles facing the living wage movement; opposition from the business community and lack of political support. As Moir puts it, “there are three primary partners that come together in a social contract to build a society, and that’s business, workers, and government. In our society the balance has been tilted dramatically towards business...but business has one agenda, and that is ‘profit.’ While profit is an unfettered agenda, we cannot get passed the kinds of social standards that we should have to promote equality in democracy. You can’t have a healthy society when one or another of these three partners is the top dog, and the other two are on the bottom. We need to have a system of working together.” She also cites the lack of enforcement of existing living wage ordinances as a major problem.

When it comes to initiating change, Moir asserts that the source will not be unions or the business community. Instead, she thinks the greatest potential leaders for the movement are politicians showing their support and the people who are a part of business cooperatives. She says of business cooperatives, “that would be a force in society that would support government

participation and leadership. Even though they're business people, they're business people whose first allegiance is to the larger society and not to their own profits.”

When asked about how her role in unions shapes her views on living wage, Moir said, “the goal of workers organizing in any industrial society is to improve the lot of those who produce all wealth, and that is the people who build the science center out there, clean the waste baskets, service the Xerox machines, mop the floors; who build what is here. That is, the people who work for an hourly wage. The decline in the real wages of American workers is bad for workers and bad for the whole society, so any policy initiative, whether its living wage, increase minimum wage, universal healthcare; any policy that sustains healthy communities of workers is a good thing...policies which improve the conditions of the majority of people in any country are good for everybody.”

Interview with Jeanette Wicks-Lim

The next interview I conducted was with Jeanette Wicks Lim, a researcher at the PERI Institute at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and one of the leading voices I came across in my search of the popular internet forum for my literature code.

Wicks-Lim defines the concept of living wage as, “trying to tie a wage range to some idea of what would be a decent living standard.” She thinks that the biggest benefit of the living wage movement is that, “it pushes us to think about how much higher we could pay workers and how much higher the wage floor could go.”

The biggest obstacle currently facing the movement, in her opinion is the fact that living wages ordinances right now, “cover such a small number of workers...in the end [they are having] a pretty limited impact.” Wicks-Lim thinks the biggest misconception when it comes to living wages is that such policies result in reduced employment. Therefore, she thinks the most

important message to communicate is that recent research shows that that correlation does not exist.

Wicks-Lim attributes her perspective on living wages to her profession as a researcher in the field. Says Wicks-Lim, “I think I see a lot more because I’m constantly researching the nitty gritty behind these [living wage] laws; how many workers are affected, what kinds of raises would they get, how does that change living standards, and how does it affect businesses and work costs...I look at what has happened when we have had these laws so that we can shape our policy based on what has actually happened, not just on what people are worried might happen.”

Interview with Lisa Di Pietro

Originally I had planned on interviewing more businesses that implement living wage policy, only to later find that the interviewee pool is not that populated as the vast majority of businesses have no such policies. I have conducted one interview with a small business owner which I feel sheds some light on why small businesses in particular can benefit from living wage policies.

Lisa Di Pietro is the owner of The Pet Cabaret, a successful small business in Roslindale, Massachusetts. She is also an alumnus of the University of Massachusetts Boston. When asked about why she supports living wage, Di Pietro said, “it seems to me that people should be able to make a living without having to have doctor’s degrees and things; that work that supports day to day life should be valued as well as work that require advanced education.”

Di Pietro implements a living wage policy in her business and proudly states that no worker of hers is started off at minimum wage. She also sees the benefits of a living wage for her business. Di Pietro says, “I’m a business person and so I wouldn’t do something that I thought wasn’t helping my business. For my business, it’s a quality issue I think. My business is sort of a

specialized retail business, so it's important for employees to be aware and knowledgeable about our product...also, if we don't keep our trained employees it's a problem for us. I would say that one of the main reasons we do pay more than the average retail business is in a desperate attempt to keep people in place in a business where the turnover rate is notoriously high."

Di Pietro also comments that she does not understand why other business people cannot see the benefits of living wages. She jokes, "sometimes I feel like I got dropped down from another tree." She thinks that business people need to receive the message that, "it's better to prevent problems like employee turnover, employee dissatisfaction, and employee shrinkage than it is to wait for them to happen and then try to react...look at it as a bird-in-the-hand type of situation. It's better to try to keep people happy and try to acknowledge their worthiness rather than tell them they're good kids on the way out the door."

For Di Pietro, her stance on living wage comes primarily from a more personal place. She says, "my father raised a family as a janitor and that doesn't seem unreasonable to me. I don't know why you should have to be some kind of PhD candidate just to be able to raise a family. It makes me feel really good doing what I think is right instead of what people from Harvard business school think I should do."

VIII. Implications

Women need to be More Vocal on the Forefront of the World Wide Web

My research found that men dominate the popular internet forum. As my interviews show, there are indeed many female proponents in the fight for living wages. These females may want to consider disseminating their messages through the internet more frequently

It was a consistent finding in my research that authors were not only predominantly men, but in particular Caucasian white collar men. It occurs to me that this movement for living wages might be popular for humanitarians in this demographic. While women and minority groups make up the largest advocates of women and civil rights, the area of wages might be somewhere that rich white men feel more comfortable. Their extensive knowledge of economics and the level of proficiency in writing may also make this issue more appealing than others to affluent white men.

Everyday People Need to Be More Vocal on the Forefront of the World Wide Web

My research also determined that the voices of everyday people are not prominent on the forefront of the internet. It is interesting to note the juxtaposition of how saturated the internet is with the voices of everyday people in other areas of political interests, such as abortion. Ironically, such hot button topics affect the lives of no less people than low wages do. I would categorize this as a misplacement of public interest, where certain issues are focused on and blamed for all or most social ills, such as the War on Drugs. Such scapegoating oversimplifies the problems in our society and discourages people from thinking more deeply.

A Thought Leader has a Large Positive Impact on the Community

As shown in the case of New York, one thought leader can make a world of difference. In New York, Mayor Bloomberg supports the concept of a living wage and has even worked with New York Assembly Speaker, Sheldon Silver, to create an article highlighting the importance of living wages. I don't think it is a coincidence that my literature code shows twice as many articles from New York than any other state. It shows that the work of Mayor Bloomberg has had a large positive effect, and that he has been able to garner the support of many New Yorkers who are in turn propagating the issue of living wage.

There is also a lesson that can be taken from successful governmental thought leaders such as Mayor Bloomberg about the effectiveness of a primary focus on economics, bolstered by humanitarian arguments. In addition, momentum arguments are used more frequently to show historical context and guidance. Interestingly though, my code shows that government leaders tend to be one of the smallest proponents of benefits to business. I believe this is a mistake! Politicians should be emphasizing benefits to business in order to increase businesses support of the movement and more generally, of their candidacy.

Educators as Thought Leaders

Educators seem to have the most in-depth and well-rounded understanding of the living wage movement and arguments for it. As such, they have the potential to make powerful thought leaders. Thankfully, as my interviews show, these cleavages do often intermix and great academics are taking the lead in the battle for living wage.

Small Businesses Primary Reason for Adopting Living Wage Policies is Not Profitability

The literature analysis along with my interview with Lisa Di Pietro sheds light on the reality of the motivations that small business has in implementing living wage policies. The main reason small businesses support a living wage is because the owners feel on a personal level that it is the right thing to do. The fact that it benefits their businesses profitably is a bonus, albeit a necessary one. Even within the business articles, benefits to business arguments was only the third most popular category. This shows why so many large businesses are slow to adopt living wages. The notion that “it’s the right thing to do” unfortunately must be secondary to “it’s the profitable thing to do.” Businesses that are disenchanted by the interests of the movement have little incentive to dig deeper to support it. The benefits of a living wage for businesses need to be

pushed up big time by all proponents, because as Di Pietro attests, they actually do exist! History dictates that a change in the outlook of the business community at large is not impossible. There are practices that are now considered to be good for business that did not always hold such distinctions (such as recycling). Perceptions within the business world do stand to be changed in light of valid and compelling arguments that demand their attention.

IX. Limitations

As with any method, there are limitations to literature coding analysis. One limitation is the scope of the research. The scope was prevalent online voices. It did not take into account voices on the web that do exist, buried deep in the blogosphere or other forums. It also did not account for other arenas where voices from different demographics may be louder. Such arenas might include protests and rallies, where I think the voice of everyday people might be much louder.

Another limitation was the inability to search solely for “living wage” articles. As it turns out, the concept of “raising the minimum wage” is inextricably tied to the concept of “living wage,” even though the two ideas have slightly different connotations. My takeaway from this is that the concept of raising the wage floor is a step in the right direction, and an indication that any positive changes to come about in the future will be as a result of such small steps.

X. Appendix A

Literature Code

A. Arguments: Benefits to Business

Arguments: Benefits to Business										
Source Type	Source Name	MW increase across the board would be relative.	Customer loyalty	Businesses save on advertising fees.	Higher MW helps businesses compete with multinational corporations.	A LW would not result in layoffs.	LW are ethical, and making ethical decisions leads to long-term profit.	Paying a LW results in less turnover.	Risk of business failure does not increase when the MW does.	Workers granted a LW take more pride in their work.
Activists	Edwards									
	"JUFJ ..."									
	"Living Wage Activists ..."									
	Collins		X				X	X	X	X
	Oliva									
	Tejeda	X								
	"Start Sweating"									
	"Universal Living Wage..."									
	"Campus Living Wage..."									X
	"The Self-Sufficiency Standard"									
Business professionals	Chapman									
	Hammel					X				
	Sorano		X					X		X
	Ross	X	X			X		X		X
	Hall									
	Prince		X		X			X		
	Shepley							X		X
	Morris							X		X
Definitional	Newman									
	Curry		X					X		X
	"Extended Definition..."									
	"The Advantages..."									
Journalists	Smith									
	Guina									
	"Living Wage"									
	Ruiz									
	Goldberg			X			X	X		X
Educators	Debusmann									
	Delaney									
	Rampell	X	X				X	X		X
	Folbre							X		
	Johnny Williams							X		X
	Jay									
	Michl					X		X		X

		Arguments: Benefits to Business								
Source Type	Source Name	MW increase across the board would be relative.	Customer loyalty	Businesses save on advertising fees.	Higher MW helps businesses compete with multinational corporations.	A LW would not result in layoffs.	LW are ethical, and making ethical decisions leads to long-term profit.	Paying a LW results in less turnover.	Risk of business failure does not increase when the MW does.	Workers granted a LW take more pride in their work.
	Appelbaum									
	Appleby	X						X		
	Haussamen								X	X
	Joseph Williams									
	Stoehr				X					
	"The Harvard Living Wage..."					X				
	Reed									
Everyday people	Wolf									
	Belew									
	Parker									
	Hartmann									
Government officials	Dimock									
	Bloomberg									X
	Oliver									
	Diaz									
	Doggett									

B. Arguments: Economics

		Arguments: Economics														
Source Type	Source Name	CEOs should not make so much more than the average worker.	Federal gov't. under-estimates the COL. MW should go up to account for rising COL.	Federal MW does not take inflation into account.	Increasing the MW does not lead to job loss.	LW results in more spending, which acts as an economy stimulus.	LW would create a more stable economy.	Many people working for MW must work more than one job to get by.	Most families can no longer survive on one income.	MW paid workers cost taxpayers more money because they rely on programs such as Medicare and Food Stamps.	Paying higher wages is going to help the local economy as workers consumer spending goes up.	Raising MW does not result in business relocation.	States that increase their MW have stronger job growth.	Subsidizing health care positively impacts COL.	The federal poverty line does not take into account varying family size and composition.	Those who fall below are worse off than those who did 30 years ago.
Activists	Edwards	X	X	X												
	"JUFJ ..."		X	X	X						X					
	"Living Wage Activists ..."															
	Collins					X	X									
	Oliva		X	X												
	Tejeda					X					X	X				
	"Start Sweating"															
	"Universal Living Wage..."		X			X				X	X					
Business professionals	"Campus Living Wage..."		X	X											X	X
	"The Self-Sufficiency Standard"													X	X	
	Chapman		X	X	X	X	X				X					
	Hammel										X					
	Sorano			X	X	X					X					
	Ross		X			X				X	X					
	Hall		X	X	X	X					X					
	Prince									X	X					
Definitional	Shepley		X	X	X	X	X			X	X					
	Morris		X								X		X			
	Newman	X														
	Curry		X			X					X		X			
Journalists	"Extended Definition..."															
	"The Advantages..."		X				X				X					
	Smith	X	X	X						X						
Educators	Guina		X							X						
	"Living Wage"															
	Ruiz		X	X		X					X		X			
	Goldberg	X														
Journalists	Debusmann		X	X					X					X		X
	Delaney			X		X										
	Rampell						X			X						
Educators	Folbre			X	X											

		Arguments: Economics																	
	Johnny Williams		X		X	X			X		X								X
	Jay		X		X														
	Michl			X	X								X						
	Appelbaum		X	X	X	X					X								
	Appleby		X	X															
	Haussamen		X						X	X		X	X						
	Joseph Williams		X			X													
	Stoehr			X	X						X								
	"The Harvard Living Wage..."		X					X											
Everyday people	Reed	X	X																
	Wolf		X	X															
	Belew		X															X	
	Parker							X											
	Hartmann		X	X							X								
Government officials	Dimock																		
	Bloomberg		X			X		X	X	X									
	Oliver		X	X		X		X		X		X							
	Diaz		X	X	X			X		X		X							
	Doggett	X	X																

C.Arguments: Humanitarian

Arguments: Humanitarian																	
Source Type	Source Name	Businesses have a responsibility to pay a decent wage.	Businesses should not be allowed to exploit the poor for a profit.	The definition of a LW: a wage that affords the basic necessities to have a good quality of life.	Gov't. officials should care about to LW and advocate for it.	LW adds dignity labor.	LW helps (poor) families.	LW would allow workers to avoid poverty.	LW would result in a fairer distribution of wealth.	Making a LW is part of the American Dream.	Mill-ions of FT workers in the US are struggling to make ends meet.	MW workers can increase their standard of living from LW earnings.	Not Paying a LW is unjust. slums.	Paying a LW helps prevent thing to do.	Paying a LW is "the right thing to do." Workers "deserve" it.	People facing poverty deal with frequent emotions of fear, anger, and hopelessness.	The majority of low paid workers are minorities.
Activists	Edwards					X		X	X	X	X						
	"JUFJ ..."	X	X					X					X				
	"Living Wage Activists ..."							X			X						
	Collins								X	X			X		X		
	Oliva																X
	Tejeda							X			X				X		
	"Start Sweating"																
	"Universal Living Wage..."									X	X		X				
	"Campus Living Wage..."			X		X		X	X		X	X					
	"The Self-Sufficiency Standard"			X	X		X	X			X						
Business professionals	Chapman							X									X
	Hammel	X						X			X						
	Sorano							X							X		
	Ross	X				X		X					X				
	Hall							X	X		X	X					
	Prince																
	Shepley																
	Morris							X									
	Newman				X				X		X		X				
	Curry		X										X				
Definitional	"Extended Definition..."		X	X													
	"The Advantages..."		X	X							X		X				
	Smith			X				X	X		X						
	Guina			X							X						
	"Living Wage"		X	X				X			X						
Journalists	Ruiz										X				X		
	Goldberg														X		
	Debusmann				X			X	X								
	Delaney										X						
	Rampell	X	X								X	X	X		X		
Educators	Folbre																
	Johnny Williams																

		Arguments: Humanitarian																			
	Jay				X																
	Michl																			X	
	Appelbaum												X								
	Appleby									X			X		X						
	Haussamen						X	X	X	X										X	
	Joseph Williams Stoehr		X								X				X						
	"The Harvard Living Wage..."			X									X							X	
Everyday people	Reed												X								
	Wolf		X				X		X				X								
	Belew						X						X						X		
	Parker				X								X								
	Hartmann										X	X	X								
Government officials	Dimock																			X	
	Bloomberg								X					X							
	Oliver					X		X	X			X									
	Diaz	X							X	X	X		X	X							
	Doggett									X											

D.Arguments: Momentum

		Arguments: Momentum										
Source Type	Source Name	Business owners support raising MW.	Cites the beginning of the living wage movement in the U.S.	Efforts to eviscerate labor laws are going on around the country (by lobbyists and other actions taken by big business).	Mention of a Famous Historical figure who supported living wages (Pope Leo, MLK, Adam Smith, FDR, William Cobbett).	Mention that there are many LW ordinances (140).	Mention that there are a lot of (over 100) living wage campaigns going on around the U.S.	More than 2/3 of Americans favor raising minimum wage to at least \$10/hr.	Other industrialized nations such as Canada, the UK, Australia, and France all have higher minimum wages than the U.S.	Raising the minimum wage is supported by people from all political parties.	Raising the MW is supported by people of all different demographics (age and location).	The disadvantages of living wages have been exaggerated or are not true.
Activists	Edwards			X								
	"JUFJ ..."											
	"Living Wage Activists ..."											
	Collins											X
	Oliva											
	Tejeda					X						
	"Start Sweating"			X								
	"Universal Living Wage..."										X	
	"Campus Living Wage..."						X					
Business professionals	"The Self-Sufficiency Standard" Chapman											
	Hammel	X										
	Sorano	X										
	Ross											
	Hall											
	Prince								X	X		
	Shepley											
	Morris	X										
Definitional	Newman											
	Curry	X										
	"Extended Definition..."				X	X						
	"The Advantages..."											
Journalists	Smith											
	Guina											
	"Living Wage"		X		X	X	X					
	Ruiz											
	Goldberg											
Educators	Debusmann											
	Delaney							X	X			
	Rampell											
Educators	Folbre											
	Johnny Williams								X			X
	Jay					X						X
	Michl				X							

		Arguments: Momentum									
	Appelbaum										
	Appleby			X	X						
	Haussamen										X
	Joseph Williams										
	Stoehr			X				X			X
	"The Harvard Living Wage..."										
Everyday people	Reed										
	Wolf										
	Belew							X			
	Parker										
	Hartmann										
Government officials	Dimock							X		X	X
	Bloomberg										
	Oliver							X		X	
	Diaz										
	Doggett				X						

E.Arguments Tables

Arguments: Benefits to Business
A minimum wage increase across the board would be relative for competing businesses.
Customers are loyal to businesses when they know the (long-term) employees who work there.
Employees that are treated well will do word-of-mouth advertising for their employers, which means businesses save on advertising fees.
Higher minimum wage helps (small and large) businesses compete with gigantic national and multinational corporations.
In many cases a living wage would not result in layoffs because the reality is that corporations can afford to pay living wages.
Living wages are ethical and making ethical decisions in business leads to long-term profit.
Paying a living wage allows businesses to have well trained, long-term employees. There is less turnover, which allows businesses to save in recruitment and training costs.
Risk of business failure does not increase when the minimum wage does.
Workers granted a living wage take more pride in their work and have greater incentive to work hard, which leads to increased motivation, loyalty, productivity, and lowered absenteeism.

Arguments: Economic
CEOs should not make an average of 262x than the average worker. There is little trickle-down.
Federal government underestimates the cost of living. Minimum wage should go up to account for rising cost of living so people can support themselves.
Federal minimum wage does not take inflation into account, which leads to workers having a lower purchasing power.
Increasing the minimum wage does not lead to job loss. Studies show employment goes up after minimum wage goes up.
Living wages results in more spending, which acts as an economy stimulus. It is a boost to the economy, not a hindrance.
Living wage would create a more stable and sustainable economy.
Many people working for minimum wage must work more than one job to get by.
Most families can no longer survive on one income (both parents must work).
Minimum wage paid workers cost taxpayers more money because they rely on programs such as Medicare and Food Stamps.
Paying higher wages (means more money that is going to be staying in the state and) is going to help the local economy as workers consumer spending goes up.
Raising minimum wage does not result in business relocation; money is kept in the local economy.
States that increase their minimum wage have stronger job growth.
Subsidizing health care positively impacts the cost of living.
The federal poverty line does not take into account varying family size and composition.
The federal poverty line is outdated and unreliable. Therefore, those who fall below are worse off than those who did 30 years ago.

Arguments: Humanitarian

Businesses have a responsibility to pay a decent wage. Since they are getting money from the community it is only fair.

Businesses should not be allowed to exploit the poor for a profit.

The definition of a living wage is a wage that affords the basic necessities to have a good quality of life.

Government officials should care about living wage and advocate for it.

Living wages adds meaning and dignity to labor.

Living wages helps (poor) families.

Living wages would allow workers to avoid poverty (and government dependency).

Living wages would result in a fairer distribution of wealth and lessen inequalities.

Making a living wage is part of the American Dream.

Millions of full time workers in the US are struggling to make ends meet (and should not have to be).

Minimum wage workers can increase their standards of living from living wage earnings, and instead of debt, can have savings.

Not Paying a living wage is unjust/unfair treatment. Paying living wage is the decent/moral thing to do.

Paying living wage helps prevent slums (and also theft, violent crime, and rape).

Paying a living wage is "the right thing to do." Workers "deserve" it.

People facing poverty deal with frequent emotions of fear, anger, and hopelessness.

The majority of low paid workers are minorities (mainly African American and Latino).

Minorities are disproportionately affected by minimum wages.

Arguments: Momentum

Business owners' support raising the minimum wage.

Cites the beginning of the living wage movement in the U.S. (1994 Baltimore event where city service contractors fought for LW with help from union and religious activists).

Efforts to eviscerate labor laws are going on around the country (by lobbyists and other actions taken by big business).

Mention of a Famous Historical figure who supported living wages (Pope Leo, MLK, Adam Smith, FDR, William Cobbett).

Mention that there are many LW ordinances (140).

Mention that there are a lot of (over 100) living wage campaigns going on around the U.S.

More than 2/3 of Americans favor raising minimum wage to at least \$10/hr.

Other industrialized nations such as Canada, the UK, Australia, and France all have higher minimum wages than the U.S.

Raising the minimum wage is supported by people from all political parties.

Raising the MW is supported by people of all different demographics (age and location).

The disadvantages of living wages have been exaggerated or are not true.

F. Article Classes

Activists	
Article Title	Author
<i>As CEO Salaries Rage, \$5.15 stays the Minimum Wage</i>	Ezekiel Edwards
<i>JUFJ Organizes DC Residents in Support of Living Wage</i>	JUFU
<i>Living Wage Activists Celebrate Legacy of Dr. King, Call for Passage of Bill (1/14/11)</i>	RWDSU
<i>Minimum Wage Increase is Good for Business</i>	Chuck Collins
<i>On Restaurant's Busiest Day of the Year, Some Workers Not Earning a Living Wage</i>	Jose Oliva
<i>Religious Leaders, Labor Activists Urge [Illinois] Minimum Wage Hike</i>	Gregory Tejada
<i>Start Sweating</i>	LJR
<i>Universal Living Wage - Minimum Wage</i>	ULW
<i>Campus Living Wage Resources: What's a Living Wage?</i>	LWAC
<i>The Self-Sufficiency Standard</i>	WOW

Business People	
Article Title	Author
<i>A Long-Overdue Increase in the Minimum Wage is Needed to Restore Lost Ground</i>	Jeff Chapman
<i>Business Owner Support Living Wage</i>	Laury Hammel
<i>Businesses Back Wage Raise; State Should, Too</i>	Lya Sorano
<i>Fair Wages Help Small Business</i>	Kent Ross
<i>Increasing the Minimum Wage is Smart for Families and the Economy</i>	Doug Hall
<i>Keep Your Hands Off Our Wages</i>	Lew Prince
<i>Raising Minimum Wage Makes Business Sense</i>	John Shepley
<i>The Pro-Business Argument for a Living Wage</i>	Dan Morris
<i>Why Shouldn't Housekeepers Make \$60,000 Per Year?</i>	Nathan Newman
<i>You Get What You Pay For</i>	Kerry Curry

Definitional	
Article Title	Author
<i>Extended Definition of Living Wage</i>	Webster's Online Dictionary
<i>The Advantages of Minimum Wage</i>	Ehow
<i>The Minimum Wage: Does it Matter?</i>	Lisa Smith
<i>What is a Living Wage and Does it Exist in the US?</i>	Ryan Guina
<i>Living Wage</i>	Wikipedia

Journalists	
Article Title	Author
<i>A Boost in the Minimum Wage Would be a Boost for All: Report</i>	Albor Ruiz
<i>Costco CEO Finds Pro-Worker Means Profitability</i>	Alan B. Goldman and Bill Ritter
<i>In Rich America, Third World Inequality</i>	Bernd Debusmann
<i>Two-Thirds of Americans Support Raising the Minimum Wage: Poll</i>	Arthur Delany
<i>Why Some Employers Support a Minimum Wage Increase</i>	Catherine Rampell

Educators	
Article Title	Author
<i>Along the Minimum Wage Battle Front</i>	Nancy Folbre
<i>Higher Minimum Wage Good for Workers, Economy</i>	Johnny E. Williams
<i>Living Wage Debate in NY</i>	Paul Jay
<i>Low-Wage Workers Deserve Pay Raise</i>	Thomas R. Michl
<i>Minimum Wage Boost Produces Bang for Buck</i>	Eileen Appelbaum and Tsedeye Gebreselassie
<i>Paying Workers a Living Wage an Answer to Poverty</i>	Joyce Appleby
<i>The Benefits of Raising Minimum Wage</i>	Brock Haussamen
<i>Why I'm Hunger Striking at UVA</i>	Joseph Williams
<i>Bare Minimum Wage</i>	John Stoehr
<i>The Harvard Living Wage Fact Sheet</i>	HLWC

Everyday People	
Article Title	Author
<i>A Living Wage: Making a Difference for Caregivers</i>	Michele Reed
<i>Despite Gaffes About the Poor, Mitt Romney is Right on Minimum Wage</i>	Calvin Wolf
<i>Recession Rant: Daily Frustrations</i>	Valerie Belew
<i>Spence Doesn't Believe in the Minimum Wage</i>	Bob Parker
<i>The Minimum Wage is not a Living Wage</i>	Louise Hartmann

Government Officials	
Article Title	Author
<i>Maximum Support for Raising the Minimum</i>	Michael Dimock
<i>New York Must Finally Raise the Minimum Wage</i>	Michael Bloomberg and Sheldon Silver
<i>Raising Minimum Wage a Priority for New York., New Jersey, and Connecticut Lawmakers</i>	Sheila Oliver, Sheldon Silver, and Chris Donovan
<i>Why New York Needs a Living Wage Law</i>	Rueben Diaz Jr.
<i>Minimum Wage Floor Speech</i>	Lloyd Doggett

G. Google Search Keywords

Category	Google Search Words
Activists	“living wage activist” “living wage campaign”
Business Professionals	“living wage business” “living wage small business”
Definitional	“living wage definition” “what is a living wage?”
Journalists	“living wage” “living wage journalist”
Educators	“living wage college” “living wage professors”
Everyday People	“living wage” “worker for a living wage”
Government Officials	“living wage politician” “living wage government”

XI. Appendix B

Interview Transcripts

Lisa Di Pietro

Business owner: The Pet Cabaret (Roslindale, MA) and alumni of the University of Massachusetts Boston

Conducted via phone on April 20, 2012

What would you define a living wage? Why do you support it?

I support it because if you only have a limited number of jobs where people can make can make a living then that's not a good thing. It seems to me that people should be able to make a living without having to have doctor's degrees and things; that work that supports day to day life should be valued as well as work that requires more advanced education. The trades and physical labor should be able to sustain people in their lives, because it's necessary. It's not as if this work is not necessary, I mean, we all need our trash emptied, we all need things cleaned. It really saddens me, and it actually pisses me off, that that kind of work is not honored anymore. I mean, maybe it's because I'm the daughter of a janitor, you know, that could have something to do with it.

Does your business have some sort of living wage policy?

Yes, I always hire people above minimum wage. I also try to be really fair about how often I raise people's salaries. We also try to work off merit pay and provide bonuses and things like.

Is the policy having positive affects for your business?

I think so. I'm a business person and so I wouldn't do something that I thought wasn't helping the business. For my business, it's a quality issue I think. My business is sort of a specialized retail business, so it's important for employees to be aware and knowledgeable our product. A lot

of time is invested in training employees, and if they are not up to speed then it doesn't help running the business. Also, if we don't keep our trained employees it's a problem for us. So yea, I would say that one of the reasons we do pay more than the average retail business is in a desperate attempt to keep people in place in a business where the turnover rate is notoriously high.

What do you think are the biggest obstacles to getting the business community to support living wage policies?

You know, I've been on a lot of business committees and stuff like that and I tend not to do great at it because I don't understand why the other business people can't see that it would be good for their business to do certain things. Sometimes I feel like I got dropped down from another tree.

What do you think are the most important messages to get out to the business community to gain support for living wage policies?

My attitude on this is kind of two-fold: A. Its seems to me that there is less to go around generally, and B. It's better to prevent problems like employee turnover, employee dissatisfaction, and employee shrinkage than it is to wait for them to happen and then try to react to them. I kinda look at it as a bird-in-the-hand type of situation. Its better try to keep people happy and try to acknowledge their worthiness rather than tell them they're good kids on the way out the door.

How do you think your values and your position as a small business owner has shaped your ideas about wages?

You know it's an interesting thing. I'm going to say something really weird that is interesting to me: I have movies from the 30's and the 40's and I love them like crazy. It fascinates me that

when I watch those movies that when you look at the people who were employed as waiters, and clerks, and cab drivers: they made a living. It seems to me that it's not an unreasonable thing that people should still be able to make a living employed in professions like that. My father raised a family as a janitor and that doesn't seem unreasonable to me. I don't know why you should have to be some kind of PhD candidate just to be able to raise a family. It makes me feel really good doing what I think is right instead of what people from Harvard business school think I should do.

Susan Moir

Director of UMASS Boston's Labor Resource Center and Vice President of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO

Conducted via phone on March 5, 2012 at 10:30 am

How would you define a living wage?

I'm going to begin by not talking about living wage ordinances and those policies that are passed by municipalities around living wage. What living wage means to me is a wage that workers can support their families and have decent living conditions; the standard we use for a good job and I think a living wage should give a worker a good job. The standard we use for a good job is: workers can support their families, buy a home, and send their children to college. There's a difference from the standards that are used by municipal ordinances. The self-sufficiency standard was developed by the Wider Opportunities for Women union here in Boston and it's been used around the country. It's a different way of calculating what is needed; it's done by geographic areas. It determines not just wages but also income supports in order to be a healthy family and a healthy community.

What do you think are the greatest benefits of a living wage? What are the main reasons why you support it?

I think the primary reason that I support it is because we have growing wage inequality in this country and with the movement to deregulate wages and businesses, wages have gone down. Since the 1970s wages for skilled workers are stagnant, wages for unskilled workers have gone down. So it's a way to develop a social policy that will sustain wages when the business community won't. That's good for everybody because growing income inequality, as everyone with their head on straight knows, is a danger to everyone in society.

What do you feel are the biggest obstacles facing living wage movements?

The first obstacle is the business community. The second obstacle I would describe as political will. In any society there are three primary partners that come together in a social contract to build a society; and that's 'business,' 'workers,' and 'government.' In our society the balance has been tilted dramatically towards business. They have a disproportionate amount of power which is proven to be economically dangerous and is also dangerous to democracy. Our system of government has been corrupted by money and control, and government is essentially owned by business or afraid of business. Our entire system is decaying with this inequality, and violence in our communities, but business has one agenda and that is 'profit.' The more profit is an unfettered agenda; we cannot get passed the kinds of social standards that we should have to promote equality in democracy. Another problem is that we have a living wage ordinance in Massachusetts, it means nothing, it is not enforced. There are living wage ordinances across the country and most of them are not enforced.

What kind of messages do you think are the most important to get out to the public to gain support?

Business is not monolithic and I would blame the chamber of commerce and some of the Washington think tank and lobbying groups who have portrayed American business as completely for deregulation and against taxes. I don't think business is monolithic; I think a lot of the small business community is just so busy just trying to survive in a very cannibalistic economic system. The unions obviously are weak and also there is not universal support for a living wage or the self-sufficiency standard in unions because there is an old fashioned idea in unions that the best way to affect the wages is through negotiations. Without the political will, without some powerful force in society campaigning for it. It's not going to be the business community and the unions right now have enough to do just trying to fight the back door fights. I don't know where we would go with this. I'm sorry to say we have a huge social problem in this country where people think this is the way it's supposed to be and don't see alternatives. Blaming government is blaming ourselves, we are government, we are shooting ourselves in the head. There is one very small glimmer of hope; there is an increasing movement for worker cooperatives. The goal is for workers to own their own businesses as cooperatives. That would be a force in society that would support government participation and leadership. Even though they're business people, they're business people whose first allegiance is to the larger society and not to their own profits. That force exists in other places in the Western world, throughout Europe and certainly in Scandinavia. although if you speak to European's they're shaking in their boots because the American way is coming there too; the superiority of business. You can't have a healthy society when one or another of these three partners is the top dog, and the other two are on the bottom. We need to have a system of working together.

How do you think your academic and career background shapes your perspective about living wage? What do see that is not on the surface that a lot of the public is maybe missing?

The goal of workers organizing in any industrial society is to improve the lot of those who produce all wealth, and that is the people who build the science center out there, clean the waste baskets, service the Xerox machines, mop the floors; who build what is here. That is, the people who work for an hourly wage. The decline in the real wages of American workers is bad workers and bad for the whole society, so any policy initiative, whether its living wage, increase minimum wage, universal healthcare; any policy that sustains healthy communities of workers is a good thing. I put the living wage in that category. Policies which improve the conditions of the majority of people in any country are good for everybody, even those Cadillac driving, gated community, profit centered, empty headed capitalists.

**Jeanette Wicks-Lim
Member of PERI Institute at UMASS Amherst
Conducted via phone on March 14, 2012 at 11:00 am**

How would you define a living wage?

The basic concept behind a living wage is to tie a wage rate to some idea to what would be a decent living standard. The problem is that what exists with living wage ordinances, you know, what is already on the books, varies a lot in terms of the poverty level versus some other measure of living standards. Living wage has been equated to the wage rate that would support a family at the official poverty line or something above that. The basic idea is that you're getting the living wage rate from some idea of what the minimal standard of living that a person should be able to obtain by working. That's sort of the basic concept and what standard of living measure you

should use is what varies a lot depending on the ordinance, you know, and who's been organizing behind it.

What do you think are the greatest benefits of a living wage? What are the main reasons why you support it?

The biggest benefit of living wage is the idea of trying to tie how much workers should earn to some measure of what people think is fair for workers to earn. I think the whole movement of a living wage really highlights the idea that working should support some minimal level of living standards. It's just that basic connection between what workers earn to a decent living standard is the most important thing about the living wage movement, generally. I think it also pushes us to think about how much higher we could pay workers and how much higher the wage floor could go. Right now the minimum wage laws that we have at the state level and the federal level are historically pretty low. So raising the whole idea of a living wage really makes you think about how much higher should the wage floor be instead of constantly, you know, tinkering around the edges about what the minimum wage is. It makes you think about what would actually be a fair wage, and the living wage ordinances have really pushed much higher wage rates than what states and the federal government has offered in terms of minimum wage.

What do you feel are the biggest obstacles facing living wage movements? What kind of messages do you think are the most important to get out to the public to gain support?

I think the biggest obstacles, if we're talking about living wage specifically, I think right now is the way living wage ordinances have been negotiated. They cover such a small number of workers. A lot of times these are tied to workers who are employed by a city contractor or

businesses that receive some sort of subsidy from the municipal government. When the ordinances are defined that way, and the vast majority of them are, they really limit the scope of the coverage of living wage ordinances. In the end it's a pretty limited impact. Of course for the workers who get a living wage that's a benefit, but in terms of trying to have a broader impact the living wage ordinances have been pretty limited. More broadly, when you're talking about wage floors in general, and that includes minimum wages and living wages, I think that the most important message to get across is that the argument that the argument that these kinds of laws reduce employment, you know, that's what we hear all the time in opposition to these kinds of laws, has been shown the economic research, particularly in more recent economic research, that that relationship between employment and these laws is not there. You don't see this big job loss from these kinds of minimum wage laws and living wage ordinances. So really, to think more about what could we do with these ordinances or laws that could promote these living standards amongst workers because so far what we've seen is that minimum wage rates and living wage rates do not have a negative impact on employment. I think that the most important message to try to get out there now is that economic research shows that we can do better than what we've got on the books today.

How do you think your academic and career background shapes your perspective about living wage? What do see that is not on the surface that a lot of the public is maybe missing?

I think I see a lot more because I'm constantly researching the nitty gritty behind these laws; you know how many workers are affected, what kind of raises would they get, how does that change living standards, and how does it affect businesses and work costs. One of the most important things I've been learning over the years is 'what is the actual cost that businesses face when

there's a minimum wage increase or a living wage ordinance is passed.' Really going through the government data and trying to figure out what that number is, I have a really good handle on what's actually happening when these laws are passed. That's the thing that's really formed the way I've thought about these laws and the positions I've taken and how I communicate this stuff to the public more broadly. I look at what has happened when we have had these laws so that we can shape our policy based on what has actually happened, not just on what people are worried might happen.

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