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# A Living Wage for All Manitobans?: Perspectives from the Private Sector

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A LIVING WAGE FOR ALL MANITOBANS?: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Université de Saint-Boniface, 2005

THESIS

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### Abstract

In response to the growing problem of working poverty around the world, a grassroots movement has emerged and spread internationally in the last two decades. This movement proposes the adoption of living wage policies and practice as part of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in the context of the neoliberal retrenchment of social safety nets. While successful at the local government level in the USA and the U. K., the movement has struggled to make inroads into the private sector, which is where the bulk of sub-living-wage jobs are situated. Using a qualitative methodology informed by critical theory, this study endeavours to uncover the underexplored perspective of private sector employers in a jurisdiction where living wage legislation is still absent. On the eve of the launch of Manitoba's living wage campaign, it seeks to understand the perspectives of Manitoban employers in key industries with large numbers of sub-living wage workers. It contributes valuable insight into the factors that must be considered when attempting to engage the elusive private sector in voluntary adoption of living wage practices.

*Keywords:* compensation, corporate social responsibility, liveable wage, wage regulation, wage setting, working poverty

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### A Living Wage for All Manitobans?: Perspectives from the Private Sector

While definitions of poverty vary, it is widely accepted that poverty is well established in Manitoba. According to 2007 data from Statistics Canada, one in ten Manitobans lived in poverty, and the capital city of Winnipeg led the country in urban poverty at 15% (as cited in Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2009).

However, poverty is not a reality that is exclusive to the unemployed. There are many working poor in Manitoba, and Winnipeg Harvest<sup>1</sup> (n.d.) reported that one in three of their 64,000 monthly clients came from dual-wage earning families. The phenomenon of living in poverty despite full-time employment is known as low-wage poverty, or working poverty, and is often attributed to levels of remuneration that are insufficient for meeting a family's basic needs (Living Wage for Families Campaign, n.d.b).

Recognizing that the legislated minimum wage in many jurisdictions is below the rate needed to support those needs (as described below), an international movement has emerged which encourages employers to adopt a higher standard of remuneration, known as a 'living wage,' as a means of reducing poverty. This movement has been gaining momentum and, as of 2011, approximately 150 municipal governments in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada had adopted living wage policies (Columbia Institute, 2011).

The living wage movement focuses primarily on engaging private and public sector employers in paying wages that reflect what earners in a family really need to earn, based on the actual costs of living in their respective communities, in order to provide the basics to their families (Living Wage Canada, 2013). For example, the Manitoba office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculated the 2013 hourly living wage for a two-parent, two-child family to be \$14.07 in Winnipeg and \$13.41 in

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<sup>1</sup> Winnipeg Harvest is a non-profit, community-based organization that distributes food to people living in poverty in Manitoba through food banks and through neighbourhood agencies, such as day care centres and soup kitchens.



Brandon (Jarosiewicz, 2013), whereas the minimum wage is currently \$10.70 an hour in Manitoba (Employment Standards Manitoba, 2014, October 2). Proponents believe that this grassroots approach to getting employers to commit to adopting living wage practices is an effective leverage point for stimulating a larger system change. The end goal is for living wages to replace the minimum wage at the systems level as the standard measure of the acceptable minimum in each community, thereby contributing to the empowerment of the working poor to lift themselves out of poverty (Pike & Mayo, 2011).

Unfortunately, to date, not a single municipality in the province and only one Manitoban private sector employer have publicly and formally adopted a living wage policy (Canadian Community Economic Development Network – Manitoba, 2013). Membership of the Manitoba branch of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet-MB) indicated that fostering the implementation of living wages in the province was to be one of the organization's policy priorities for the 2014 year and a committee was struck to begin the process of organizing the campaign locally, co-chaired by CCEDNet-MB and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. When asked if there were any knowledge gaps relating to the implementation of living wage practices which might be filled through primary research, the Living Wage Committee expressed that campaign stakeholders felt underinformed about the perspective of private sector employers concerning the adoption of living wage practices. A preliminary scan of the extant literature suggested that this was indeed a gap that had not been explored in-depth in other jurisdictions, either.

The primary goal of this research project was to identify private sector employer perceptions of living wage practice implementation in order to enable Manitoba's living wage campaign organizers to be strategic in addressing them. The present paper begins with a theoretical framework, informed by critical social theory, for understanding the working poverty problem and how living wage practices fit into a poverty reduction strategy. It presents a rapid structured systematic review of the limited

research exploring voluntary private sector adoption of living wage practices. It then describes how this subject was explored in the Manitoban context by interviewing employers in key industries with large concentrations of sub-living wage workers and conducting an analysis of the qualitative data collected. The key findings and discussion that follow will enable the province's upcoming living wage campaign to identify intervention strategies for fostering the implementation of living wage practices that are informed by an understanding of the perceptions and ideas held by members of the target population in the province.

### Theoretical Framework

As a native of Winnipeg, I was interested in becoming involved in poverty reduction in my hometown; however, as a community psychology graduate student, I needed to be able to rationalize dedicating my thesis research to the cause through a critical analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of such a campaign. The first step in this process was to establish a framework for understanding the poverty problem. Poverty is a “wicked problem” (Rittel & Webber, 1973) that has been around for aeons, and has been framed in many different ways. However, the way in which we define a problem frames the ensuing problem-solving process and, therefore, has the capacity to shape our understanding of appropriate strategies for addressing it; so, the importance of this definition process must not be underappreciated (O’Neill, 2005).

### Measuring Poverty

Attempts to define poverty are complicated by the prospect of establishing a standardized means for measuring it. Holistic measures view poverty as a multi-faceted issue encompassing factors such as assets, resources, social inclusion, and access to opportunities and activities. For example, the sustainable livelihoods approach used by Opportunities Waterloo Region (n.d.) identifies five types of capital that must be developed in order to keep people out of poverty: human, personal, physical, financial and social. Such holistic approaches are necessary for understanding the complex relationship between poverty and well-being, however they come with major challenges in terms of applying them to measure poverty on any but the individual level of analysis (Eckerle Curwood, 2012).

Most common measurements, and the only ones for which Statistics Canada regularly collects data, are based on income, and can generally be sorted into two categories. Absolute measures seek to gauge the extent to which people are able to meet their basic needs by determining the cost of providing a specific basket of goods and services designated necessary for survival (Iceland, 2005). For example, the Market Basket Measure estimates the cost of a specific basket of goods and services for a

family of four for a given year. Any household with an income lower than the cost of the basket is considered to be in a low-income situation. Costs are figured for 19 specific urban areas and another 29 communities of varying sizes across Canada (Eckerle Curwood, 2012).

Besides the obvious difficulty inherent in determining which goods and services constitute those which are necessary for survival, such absolute measures of poverty have also been challenged for ignoring the exclusionary effects of material and social deprivation (Raphael, 2007). Relative measures of poverty, on the other hand, are essentially measures of income inequality, or the degree to which people are poor relative to others in their community. By this definition, being free from poverty is not achieved through physical survival alone but rather through having “the resources to acquire the goods and services, and participate in the activities, that are common in one’s society” (Eckerle Curwood, 2012, p. 15).

Conservative economists have criticized use of such relative measures in the context of poverty because they reflect income inequality and not poverty per se (Sarlo, 2013, November 14). However, the negative health and developmental effects of poverty flow not only from an insufficiency of material goods but also from social comparisons in situations of inequality (Campaign 2000, 2012). To this point, a number of studies have found the effects of relative poverty to resemble those of absolute poverty (Backlund et al., 2007). In other words, absolute poverty measures alone cannot provide a holistic understanding of the negative impacts of poverty on health and wellbeing because they fail to capture the elements of socioeconomic marginalization that are inherent in situations of relative inequality. The importance of this holistic understanding in the Manitoban context is reflected in the government’s poverty reduction strategy, where the objectives include to “reduce poverty and increase social inclusion,” and “establish or adopt poverty and social inclusion indicators to be used in measuring the progress of the strategy” (“Poverty Reduction Strategy Act,” 2011).

Regardless of the measurement tool used, many demographics are disproportionately affected by poverty. It is well established that factors such as gender, ethnicity, and disability are key determinants of poverty in North America (Elmelech & Lu, 2004, p. 159; Starrels, Bould & Nicholas, 1994, p. 591), and failing to acknowledge that fact would minimize important structures of inequality. Thus, consider the following differentials among Canadians living in poverty, according to Statistics Canada data based on the Low-Income Cut-Off, Before Tax (LICO-BT): in 1995, 43% of Canada's Aboriginal peoples (including persons identifying as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) lived in poverty, compared to 19% for non-Aboriginals; in the same year, the poverty rate for persons with disabilities was 31%, compared to 18% for other Canadians; in 1997, 41% of single women under the age of 65 experienced poverty, compared to 35% of their male counterparts, while lone mothers were the family type most likely to experience poverty, at 56% (Shillington, 2005). And these data illustrate the effects of but a few of the more widely documented factors. Furthermore, the intersection of these and other key determinants often have interactive, additive, or even multiplicative effects that are typically not captured in such data analyses (Cole, 2009).

### **Poverty in Manitoba**

There are two measures of poverty in Manitoba for which we have readily-available and comprehensive data, and which consider the effects of socioeconomic marginalization. The Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT) determines that people are living in poverty when their net income is less than half of the median Canadian income for an equivalent-sized household. Using this measure, child poverty in Manitoba was found to be at 20.9% in 2011. This was the second-highest rate among the ten provinces in the country and well above the 14.5% national average, and has been relatively steady over the last 20 years. This continuity implies that poverty in Manitoba is more than certain individuals receiving social assistance payments; it reflects persistent, systemic socioeconomic barriers for a large segment of society across generations (Campaign 2000, 2012).

The other measure of interest is the LICO-BT. An individual who spends at least 20% more of their gross income on food, shelter and clothing than the average citizen is deemed to be below the LICO-BT. It is calculated using 35 measures based on household size and community, considering contextual factors such as whether the community is in an urban or rural setting (Eckerle Curwood, 2012). With 17% of Manitobans under the LICO-BT in 2010, this measure of poverty placed the provincial rate 3% higher than the Canadian average and 1.5% ahead of the province with the next highest rate (Campaign 2000, 2010). Together, the LIM and the LICO effectively illustrate the importance of addressing poverty in Manitoba.

While these numbers may give one an idea of the prevalence of Manitoba's poverty problem, it is important to understand the complexity of the issue. The solution is definitely not as simple as job creation. In addition to the many barriers to existing job opportunities experienced disproportionately by people living in poverty, the prevalence of low-wage poverty in Manitoba shows that even securing employment will not lift a family out of it if that employment doesn't pay a living wage: in 2009, 48.8% of children living in poverty had an adult working the equivalent of at least one full-year full-time job (Campaign 2000, 2011). This paper focuses on addressing the needs of these working poor, to the exclusion of other groups living in poverty, as will be discussed later.

### **Personal standpoint**

Of course, the frustrating prevalence and persistence of poverty in Manitoba does not spur everyone into action. However, despite no direct experience of living in poverty, my motivation to convert this frustration into action is threefold. First, as a native Manitoban, this is my home. Largely through experiences as a minimum-wage labourer and as a student in Winnipeg, and as a volunteer with a refugee settlement organization and with the United Way of Winnipeg, my social network has come to include a variety of people trapped in poverty in different ways; these are my friends and neighbours that we are talking about. Second, as a community psychologist, my core motivation is to pursue social

justice and to support others' achievement of the capability to pursue their own wellness. And third, as a citizen, I see it as my duty to address unfair, systemic inequalities from which I have benefited. My theory of social justice is based on John Rawls' (as cited in Hallam & Lasley, n.d.) principle of redress whereby undeserved inequalities, "the accidents of natural endowment and the contingencies of social circumstance" (p. 4), must be compensated for in order to provide equality of opportunity. As a White, middle-class, English-speaking, straight, cis, able-bodied male who has spent most of his life in Canada, I have benefited tremendously from systemic and historical oppression, and I feel obliged to contribute to dismantling the socioeconomic inequities from which I have derived this unearned privilege.

### **Critical Theoretical Analysis**

Having established a need to address poverty in Manitoba, a robust understanding of the problem must include a theory of causation. Such theories can be mapped onto a continuum where one end of spectrum emphasizes the responsibility of individual-level factors (i.e. poor work ethic, heredity, race, etc.) and the other recognizes social, economic, historical, geographic, and political factors. The following discussion provides a theoretical basis for understanding the weaknesses in individual-level causal explanations of poverty by exposing their failure to consider the relevance of social class in understanding human behaviour.

From a basis of historical materialism, a perspective recognizing that human beings are intrinsically linked to the society in which they live, Klaus Holtzkamp and his colleagues' critique of traditional psychology explains that any understanding of human behaviour must consider the sociohistorical implications of social class and class antagonisms. These have the effect of objectively restricting certain individuals' personal action potency, or their ability to pursue the satisfaction of their needs, in their relationship with their environments; meanwhile, their subjective situations are their personal assessments of their needs and action possibilities in these environments (Tolman, 1994). In a context where restrictive action potency is a reality, such as is the case in capitalist societies, which tend

to foster socioeconomic segregation, an intervention must aim to increase the personal action potency and improve the subjective situation of its target population.

Coburn (2004) builds on this theoretical framework in his call for going beyond an income inequality framing of poverty to a broader consideration of the social determinants of health that views the dialectical relationship between wellbeing and class as the bigger picture. To use Galabuzi's (2008) words, "poverty is a key case and product of social exclusion" (p. 252), and the experience of exclusion and discrimination is associated with psychosocial stress, which contributes to hypertension and mental health problems, and shapes behavioural pathways.

In consideration of the various negative outcomes associated with the social exclusion of lower socioeconomic classes, moving from poverty to a holistic situation of wellness can be seen as an achievement that entails the simultaneous fulfillment of three categories of needs: personal needs (i.e.: health, self-determination, and opportunities for growth); collective needs (i.e. welfare policies, economic equality); and relational needs such as respect for diversity. Prilleltensky (2008) further warns that a focus on any single level of needs may prove detrimental to satisfaction of the other levels. An effective poverty reduction strategy that would empower people to pursue wellness, then, must work to change the system of restrictive action potency and socioeconomic exclusion on multiple levels. What is needed is what Foster-Fishman, Nowell and Yang (2007) refer to as systems change: "an intentional process designed to alter the status quo by shifting and realigning the form and function of a targeted system" (p. 197).

**The sociopolitical context: neoliberalism.** The sociopolitical context in which this system change would need to occur is that of neoliberalism, which has become increasingly entrenched in North America since the Reagan and Mulroney regimes of the 1980's (Coburn, 2004; Howlett & Ramesh, 1993). While, in essence, merely an economic theory whereby societal control is transferred from the state to the market, neoliberalism is associated with social policies fostering market deregulation,



governmental minimization, service privatization, tax reduction and globalization. It also carries sociopolitical assumptions of individuals as competitive, self-interested consumers and the free market as the best means by which to distribute resources and, as such, the neoliberal agenda typically includes an erosion of the supports intended to manage or prevent social issues such as poverty (Coburn, 2004). Indeed, neoliberal policies have been observed to increase poverty and inequality in Canada (Habibov & Fan, 2008).

One phenomenon that has emerged under these conditions is the rise of 'contingent' or 'nonstandard work' (temporary, subcontracting, day labour) in North America whereby individual workers are subject to triangular work arrangements with both a legal and a de facto employer. While subject to the demands of the latter, they are likely to experience inferior job security, career advancement opportunities, rates of pay, and insurance benefits when compared to standard workers (Kalleberg, Reskin & Hudson, 2000; Long, 2006). This phenomenon has contributed greatly to the prevalence of working poverty on the continent.

Neoliberal market deregulation and globalization have contributed to the growth of a second phenomenon, known as labour arbitrage, whereby production and services are offshored from jurisdictions where labour is more expensive to others where it is cheaper (Hansen, 2005). This phenomenon led to the loss of thousands of low-level production jobs in Manitoba since the 1990s, including the near elimination of a once burgeoning garment industry (Mossman, 2006).

Though geographically located at the centre of an undisputedly neoliberal North America, Manitoba's political situation is also noteworthy. For the bulk of the last 50 years and for the last 15, consecutively, Manitoba's provincial government has been led by the New Democratic Party (NDP), which is notably supportive of labour issues. It was under such an NDP government that the Manitoba Income Maintenance Experiment was launched, aimed at testing the concept of a guaranteed income, whereby participating families received a negative income tax ensuring that no family took home less

than 60% of the LICO-BT (Forget, 2011).<sup>2</sup> This apparent anomaly notwithstanding, the province has increasingly voted in favour of Conservative candidates, representing a political party whose priorities are notably aligned with a neoliberal ideology, in federal elections over the last two decades.

Given this context, what should a poverty reduction strategy look like? Due to the complexity of the poverty problem, poverty “solutions” must be equally complex. A comprehensive poverty reduction strategy must make use of diverse, interlocking interventions that address the diverse, interconnected factors that cause people to be affected by it (Loewen, 2009). Eckerle Curwood (2012) provides a matrix for mapping out different approaches to poverty reduction and prevention (Appendix A) where one axis considers the ecological level of analysis impacted by the strategies while the other speaks to the nature of the approach (i.e. Is its focus poverty management, reduction or prevention?). One of the glaring gaps in Manitoba’s poverty reduction strategy (Manitoba Family Services and Housing, 2012) is a high-impact, systemic poverty reduction intervention, which brings us to the idea of a living wage.

**The living wage approach.** A living wage is a theoretical hourly rate of pay at which the earner can meet the basic needs of their household. In calculating a living wage, one must take into account eligibility for government transfers, such as the Universal Child Care Benefit, and the availability of other social provisions, such as public health care, transportation, and child care. While there is no single way of calculating the living wage rate, calculations also vary in accordance with political boundaries and economic policies, yet are consistently higher than the minimum wage in each jurisdiction.<sup>3</sup> While still based on a conservative budget, the rate is intended to be sufficient to allow families to lift themselves out of poverty through paid employment (Living Wage Canada, n.d.).

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<sup>2</sup> Dubbed MINCOME, the social experiment ran from 1974 until 1979, by which time both Manitoba and Canada had recently elected conservative governments, and the experiment was concluded before program staff could process the data collected. For more information on the health and social outcomes that emerged, see Forget, 2011 and 2013.

<sup>3</sup> In Manitoba’s capital city of Winnipeg, the gap between the minimum wage and the living wage for a two-parent, two-child family was calculated by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives to be \$3.62 per hour in 2013 (Fernandez, 2013).

Making this move from a situation of poverty to earning a living wage increases action potency by heightening workers' ability to fulfill their personal needs; it also reduces social costs by decreasing reliance on publicly-funded elements of the safety net. It is particularly effective in addressing the plight of nonstandard workers described earlier (Grant & Trautner, 2004). Proponents argue that it narrows the income inequalities between socioeconomic classes which contribute to social exclusion, fulfilling collective needs of a measure of income equality, and that the resultant increase in spending has ripple effects for the economy (Bernstein, 2000).

The living wage approach boasts two additional strengths in light of the sociopolitical context described earlier. In addressing poverty under a neoliberal regime, it strikes a compromise between a conception of social justice built on needs and rights, which tends to appeal to the political left, and a meritocratic one (as the benefit is greater the more hours one works, and as benefit is not extended to those who do not work), which is inherent in the neoliberal, individualistic tenet of market participation, thereby increasing the likelihood of broad political support. When faced with sluggish political action, however, a living wage approach provides the opportunity to engage the private sector directly without necessarily having to wait on social policy changes.

In comparison with more restrictive funding programs such as RentAid, a benefit that must be applied to recipients' monthly cost of renting accommodations, a living wage approach is more empowering insofar as it leaves recipients the capacity to apply the income in the ways that they think would be most effective in meeting their needs. It also builds on existing income supplements, many of which work to keep people in poverty; for example, social assistance payments are reduced or eliminated once a family's income reaches a threshold which is still less than that which represents a living wage. In addition, people receiving income assistance who find work may lose up to 100% of their social assistance payments, in addition to losing access to dental, vision, and prescription drug programs provided to social assistance recipients, resulting in a net loss of income after finding work (Jarosiewicz,

2013). In this sense, the living wage approach is consistent with Foster-Fishman, Nowell and Yang's (2007) systems change framework inasmuch as it focuses on moving the poverty reduction system's emphasis away from narrow and often disjointed funding initiatives designed to address specific needs toward broader economic policy.

These strengths notwithstanding, the living wage approach is not without its weaknesses, and the most glaring of these becomes clear when attempting to put the concept into practice. As a rate of pay, the living wage must be applied universally because it would be unfeasible and illegal for an employer to attempt to adjust individuals' rates of pay based on their personal living circumstances, such as marital status and number of dependents. Thus, a living wage can be no more attentive to variations in cost of living among individual workers than a minimum wage and is subject to the same criticisms, including that workers with low costs of living, such as teenagers still living with their parents, would be primary beneficiaries of wage increases (Globe and Mail, January 31, 2014; Sherk, February 28, 2013).

An additional reason why this is problematic is that poverty is known to affect various demographics disproportionately in Canada, as discussed earlier. Because living wage calculations are typically only tailored to the local cost of living for a particular living arrangement, they fail to acknowledge the intersectionality of their target populations, which translates into variation in terms of (a) the level of resources needed to achieve comparable levels of capability to pursue wellness; and (b) differing abilities to convert resources into actual functioning (Nussbaum, 2003).

As implied by the matrix of poverty reduction strategies in Appendix A, perhaps the single most important element of an effective poverty reduction strategy is the incorporation of a variety of interventions that alleviate, reduce and prevent poverty and affect multiple levels of analysis. Indeed, the nature of human society is such that we will never end up with 'the' solution to complex societal problems, and we ought to embrace a diversity of solutions (Rappaport, 1981). This framework provides

a theoretical rationale for considering a living wage campaign as a complement to a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for Manitoba.

### Literature Review

So what does a living wage campaign look like? Though the concept of defining a wage rate that would provide an 'acceptable' standard of living has been around for centuries (e.g. Shelburne, 1999), many attribute the recent revival of the international living wage movement to Baltimore, Maryland, USA, in 1994 (e.g. Levi, Olson & Steinman, 2003). As a direct result of grassroots organizing, the municipality adopted a living wage ordinance "requiring all businesses [having] a fiscal relationship with a local government entity to pay their employees at or above a designated living wage floor" (Cummings, 2001, p. 467).

Since then, the municipal government-led movement has enjoyed undeniable success in the USA, with over 125 municipalities having followed suit (Cabal Garces, 2011). However, as Lawton and Pennycook (2013) point out, a weakness of the American movement is its near-exclusive focus on public sector employers, while the majority of low-paid workers are employed by the private sector, and U.S. campaigns have struggled to make inroads into the latter. In the U.K., the London Citizens coalition launched a campaign in 2001 to have the Greater London Authority adopt a living wage policy. Since then, 11 local authorities, four hospitals, one central government department, 14 universities, all members of the Greater London Authority family and the London Olympics have all signed on. In addition, over 140 private sector employers (Hirsch & Moore, 2011) and the Scottish government (Commander et al., 2014) have joined in.

Importantly, the living wage movement has enjoyed support and recognition across the political spectrum, with subsequent mayors of London and even the former U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron openly endorsing the campaign (Lawton & Pennycook, 2013). In Canada, where the movement has struggled to gain momentum, the level of political support at the municipal level is notably inferior (Aubry, 2010) and only two municipalities, both in British Columbia, have signed living wage ordinances (Johnstone & Cooper, 2013, May 1).

### **The Business Case for a Living Wage**

Given this political climate, the Canadian living wage campaign has begun exploring alternative levers in the system, including the private sector. It has already generated a business case targeting employers that demonstrates the benefits of voluntary private sector adoption of living wage practices (Living Wage for Families Campaign, n.d.a). Kraut, Klinger and Collins (2000) claim that “studies and surveys of businesses that pay decent wages [...] describe real business advantages as a result of higher wages” (p. 6) that fall into two categories. First, higher base pay and benefits attract more qualified employees, and those employees have higher morale, are more productive, and require less supervision. Second, higher wages reduce employee turnover and absenteeism, leading to lower costs in the recruitment and training of new employees and improvements in the quality of products and services delivered to customers.

Addressing the obvious concern of the potential increase in cost to the employer of paying higher wages, Bernstein’s (2000) research found that employers in the USA typically have little difficulty in absorbing pay increases mandated by living wage ordinances due to efficiency gains: specifically, lower rates of turnover, increased employment stability, and improved worker morale and productivity have been associated with wage increases (Akerlof & Yellen, 1990). Representing an additional incentive, economists have extended the benefits of increasing wages for the working poor to the broader economy by way of increased consumer spending (Goldman Sachs, 2009, and Aaronson et al., 2008, as cited in Living Wage Canada, n.d.).

Indeed, some opinion polls have found that many employers buy into this business case. For example, one conducted on behalf of the American Sustainable Business Council and Business for a Fair Minimum Wage (2014) found that a majority of American small business owners believed that a higher minimum wage would benefit their businesses through lower employee turnover and increased productivity and customer satisfaction. Yet, while hundreds of employers have officially adopted living

wage practices on a voluntary basis, including such big names as HSBC UK and U.S.-based Costco, they continue to represent a small minority.

In an attempt to better understand how the business community views low-wage compensation, I turned to the materials used to educate the recent and upcoming graduates from the province's premier business school: the University of Manitoba's Asper School of Business. According to the textbook on which its Human Resource Management course is based, there are two primary methods for determining the appropriate level of compensation for a position: (a) conducting wage or salary surveys in order to see how similar positions are remunerated in the labour market; and (b) applying a job evaluation technique to determine the relative value of jobs internally, then calibrating to the market as needed. In either case, employers must consider prevailing market rates (and choose to lead, match, or lag), applicable legislation (such as minimum wage laws), internal policy (such as automatic cost-of-living adjustments), and possible union influence. The authors suggest that, "[t]o determine a fair rate of compensation, most firms rely on wage and salary surveys" (Schwind, Das, & Wagar, 2007, p. 376).

To clarify the use of the word 'fair' in that sentence, consideration is not given in this textbook to the potential socioeconomic limitations of wages that, while low, meet legal requirements and attract job applicants. Indeed, it is stated that "[i]n industrial societies, the absolute level of pay usually is high enough to meet [workers'] basic needs, at least minimally" (p. 369). The reader is invited to consider criticisms that have been made of minimum wage legislation: the inflationary effect of minimum wage increases on the cost of production is presented, along with a quote from the Fraser Institute<sup>4</sup> suggesting that they may lead to unemployment for low-skilled and young workers. However, despite the accompanying caveat that there is "no conclusive evidence on the matter one way or the other at

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<sup>4</sup> The Vancouver-based Fraser Institute is Canada's highest-funded Conservative think tank (McLevey, 2014) and is recognized as an advocate for a neoliberal approach to social policy, including market deregulation (Chegwidden & Katz, 1983; Harmes, 2007).



this time” (p. 383), the authors’ presentation of a classic neoliberal, market-driven approach to wage setting, and subsequent failure to elicit any of the potential benefits that might be derived from minimum wage regulation, prime readers to view such policy merely as a governmental constraint to employer freedom of choice in matters of compensation management.

On the other hand, the manual for the Asper School’s Compensation course appears to withhold normative judgement of such regulation. It specifically addresses low wage employment, and explains that there are conditions under which a business might find it most cost-effective to maintain a minimally skilled and remunerated workforce. This practice is consistent with the classical managerial strategy, dominant in the U.S. in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is based upon the assumption that “people are inherently lazy, dislike work, and would prefer to get as much as they possibly can from a work relationship while giving as little as possible” (Long, 2006, p. 27). Operating under this assumption, the classical managerial strategy aims to tightly control employees so that they behave as the organization wants them to, as well as to minimize costs related to compensation and turnover. This is achieved by: departmentalizing and fragmenting work into narrow jobs with few basic elements so as to facilitate supervising and replacing workers; formalizing a strict hierarchy emphasizing accountability; and imposing an external control system defined by supervision, rules, punishment, and minimal extrinsic economic rewards related to individual behaviour (pp. 28-29).

Expanding on his strategic framework for compensation, which identifies five contextual variables that determine the most appropriate managerial strategy, Long (2006) suggests that the classical is the most appropriate of the three main managerial strategies when the following conditions are present:

1. The firm’s environment or domain is stable (product or service life cycles are long, demand and customer needs are unchanging, and competition and regulation are constant).

2. The firm's corporate strategy focuses on dominating a standard, narrow product or service market (by being a consistent low-cost or price-quality leader).
3. The firm uses technology that divides work into small, routine steps and applies it to producing large amounts of a single product in a standardized way.
4. Although no firm size is prohibitive, the classical managerial strategy is more likely to be most appropriate in larger firms.
5. The firm's local labour market is marked by poor socioeconomic circumstances, a low standard of living, relatively low skills, and high unemployment. (pp. 38-43)

Long (2006) goes on to assert that conditions have generally become much less favourable for the classical managerial strategy in recent years and that the circumstances under which it remains viable in Canada are increasingly scarce (p. 56). However, its rise to dominance in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the way his strategic framework for compensation illustrates how certain conditions led to that rise, help to understand how low-wage employment practices might continue to be viewed by many employers not only as acceptable but as their most appropriate and cost-effective option.

Furthermore, both textbooks avoid discussion of the socioeconomic impact of compensation practices on staff as on society, which might understandably contribute to a lack of understanding or even apathy on the part of readers toward the plight of working poverty. Given the continued prevalence of the materialist-individualist values that underpin mainstream business management and the entrenchment of low-wage employment in the status quo of mainstream business practices in contemporary North America, exposing business students to alternative approaches that promote the pursuit of multiple forms of well-being for a broad range of stakeholders, including employees and community members, makes them less likely to view those practices as effective (Dyck et al., 2011). And, while the Asper School of Business is already taking steps to foster social responsibility among its

students,<sup>5</sup> it may be warranted to introduce a mechanism into the education of these students by which they might become more aware of the socioeconomic impacts of low-wage employment.

### **The Rapid Structured Systematic Review (RSSR)**

So, what *do* Manitoban employers think of the concept of a living wage? In fact, extensive reactive research has been conducted on the events and reactions that followed legislated changes to minimum wage rates (Houghton, 2012), and municipal government-led living wage implementation (i.e. Gunderson, 2007) in several countries around the world. But what about employers in a setting like Manitoba where living wage practices are adopted rarely, and on a strictly voluntary basis?

In an attempt to conduct a comprehensive scan of research on private sector employer perceptions of living wage practice implementation, a rapid structured systematic review (Armitage & Keeble-Ramsey, 2009) was conducted. As preliminary scans revealed substantial grey literature on the subject of living wage, the review was conducted using Google's search function; in an additional attempt to include scholarly working papers and unpublished dissertations, the systematic search was repeated using the Social Science Research Network database. Search terms used included: "living wage," "private sector," "employer(s)," "attitudes," "beliefs," "motivation," "opinions," "perceptions," and "perspective(s)." The primary challenge in using Google's database for a comprehensive literature review, of course, is the sheer volume of search results generated. In response to this challenge, the search terms combined these keywords into a series of phrases, as illustrated in Appendix B, thereby greatly reducing the number of initial results. Results predating 1994, often cited as the beginning of the modern living wage movement in North America, were screened out. In addition, only reports of research that explored employer attitudes or perspectives towards living wage practices were retained.

A brief quantitative summary of the results of the search and screening processes is presented in

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<sup>5</sup> For example, the mandatory Business and Society course invites students to think critically about the relationship between business practices and socioeconomic outcomes (University of Manitoba, 2015), as does the work of faculty on the intersection of business and socioeconomic inequality (e.g. Mir, Mir, & Bapuji, 2007) and on multi-stream management (e.g. Dyck et al., 2011).

Appendix C; as indicated, the systematic review returned only four results, presented here in chronological order, a single one of which had the exploration of employer attitudes or perspectives as the primary focus.

**Results.** Grant and Trautner (2004) stated that “most of what is known about employers’ position on and experiences with paying living wages is inferred from [...] the testimonies of private employers who voluntarily pay their workers living wages (Kraut, Klinger, & Collins, 2000)” (p. 73); yet the reason not all employers supported these measures, in spite of strong financial and ethical cases for them, remained to be explored. The paper reported on the results of a quantitative survey of employers in Tucson, Arizona, following the passing of a living wage ordinance (LWO) in that community. The authors analyzed four suspected reasons for continued private sector employer opposition to the LWO post-implementation: (a) that it imposes administrative burdens due to changes in how payroll is reported; (b) that it leads to wage compression whereby employees doing similar work but not covered by the LWO may demand wage increases; (c) that the LWO imposes a disproportionate financial burden on employers with smaller operating budgets; and (d) that employer resistance is directed at government-mandated pay levels rather than living wages per se. The authors determined that only the fourth argument appeared to be supported by survey results and, therefore, had the potential to be empirically supported in a post-LWO-implementation context.

In the next paper encountered, Martin (2006) updated his own 2001 quantitative study of living wage policy passage in the USA, which he stated was the only published article on the subject. He found a counterintuitively positive correlation between the number of business associations per capita and the likelihood of successful living wage policy passage. He indicated that this was consistent with Grant and Trautner’s (2004) finding that there was less unilateral business opposition to such policies than they expected and hypothesized that this might be because an organized business community “creates an opportunity for labor [sic.] and its allies to bargain over wage policy, where an atomized business

community is less able to come to any agreement that would take wages partly out of competition” (Martin, 2006, p. 715).

In a policy brief identified in the review, Luce (2011) chronicles the living wage debate in the USA through scan of reports and editorials in the media. She provides the following lists of arguments put forth in support of living wage policies:

- Minimum wage has not been responsive to inflation
- 31% of the U.S. workforce earned poverty-level wages (Economic Policy Institute, 2008)
- LWOs are feasible in that they do not affect large segments of the workforce
- Public funds should be spent in ways that decrease levels of poverty and reliance on social supports
- People should not work and still be poor
- Paying low wages then subsidizing social programs is economically inefficient
- Employers can benefit from reduced turnover and increased productivity as a result

The author also cites the following arguments against living wage, stating that they have been primarily put forth by business groups and business-funded think tanks:

- Predictions of job loss and costs to cities due to increased wages
- If employers have to raise wages, they will cut jobs; other businesses might move out, or simply not move in.
- Businesses might stop bidding for public contracts requiring living wages, or pass on the costs to city, resulting in service loss and/or higher taxes
- Increased wages will hurt small businesses, particularly those owned by women and minorities
- Increased wages will hurt those they try to help as the low-skilled workforce will be eliminated as potential employees

- Increased wages will encourage youth to drop out of school and apply for jobs which would otherwise be filled by unskilled adults
- Increased payroll costs will hurt youth as employers will be forced to reduce internships, part-time and co-op jobs and other job training opportunities
- The living wage idea seems like socialism, or represents too much government interference with markets

Luce (2011) also cites studies whose findings, she states, are remarkably consistent in contradicting most of the claims made by opposition to living wages (p. 4).

In a review of the outcomes of a minimum wage hike, Whakatutuki (2013) reported that Business New Zealand openly opposed the increase for the following reasons:

- Most employees on the youth minimum wage were not in a vulnerable position and did not rely on the minimum wage as a long term source of income
- Many of those receiving the youth minimum wage rate were “after-school” workers who were generally employed from a goodwill or social standpoint
- Increases in minimum wage rates reduced job and training opportunities for youth, as did the extension of the youth minimum wage to employees on training agreements
- Continued increases and extensions of coverage to the minimum wage rate might have sent a signal to younger people that further education and training was not warranted
- Increases to the minimum wage created unnecessary artificial inflationary pressures

**Notable exclusions.** While they did not turn up in the RSSR, four additional findings are of interest to Manitoba’s living wage campaign.

Petersen (2009) conducted a literature review on behalf of Opportunities Waterloo Region on the living wage and made no mention of reports on the employer’s perspective in his summaries.

Auckland Council (2013), regarding municipal LWOs, averred that “there [was] little information

available on the reasoning behind the decision to pay a living wage” (p. 23). These statements are consistent with the meagre findings of the RSSR. The Auckland Council (2013) report did identify the following arguments used by notable living wage employers around the world to explain their voluntary adoption of living wage practices:

- A means to attract higher quality staff or address low service quality;
- A means to retain higher quality staff or minimize employee turnover;
- A means to address safety concerns and low security standards;
- Ethical or reputational grounds; and
- One employer added the possibility of improving the public perception of retailing, increasing team management, improving sales and raising productivity.

**Other research.** Of note, an introduction to the living wage concept and its relationship to corporate social responsibility, together with a survey, were sent to more than two hundred people, primarily Canadians, who were members of the ISO 26000 Canadian stakeholder group; only ten people responded, and none of these had heard of a living wage (White, 2012). This experience of limited participation and familiarity with the core concept seems to suggest that engaging Canadian private sector employers in meaningful discussion about living wage practices is greatly needed but may be very challenging.

According to a LinkedIn profile (Thompson, 2014), the Auckland University of Technology’s Faculty of Business and Law is currently conducting related research using critical discourse analysis to capture and critique the discourse of mainstream media and key stakeholders with regards to New Zealand’s living wage campaign and movement. The research seeks to ascertain the ongoing influence of the media on the concept and results are expected to be helpful in informing further research examining employers’ attitudes towards living wage practices.

### Transition

To summarize the developments thus far, we began by building a strong theoretical argument for supporting the inclusion of living wage implementation as part of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. An initial review of the literature revealed a burgeoning international living wage movement but highlighted the limitations of success in engaging the private sector. A rationale was built for prioritizing fostering the adoption of living wage practices by Manitoba's employers given the prevalence of poverty in Manitoba, the concentration of working poor in the private sector, and the lack of government support for living wage policy.

As mentioned earlier, the assembly of community stakeholders at CCEDNet-MB's 2013 annual general meeting issued a call for the launch of a living wage campaign in the province (Canadian Community Economic Development Network – Manitoba, 2013). This study was conceived in partnership with the organization for the purpose of supporting the launch of such a campaign by filling gaps in knowledge that would help in making the campaign more effective, while also meeting the requirements of a master's thesis in Wilfrid Laurier University's community psychology program. A thesis committee has been formed to ensure those academic standards are met, however partnership with CCEDNet-MB and the Living Wage Committee helped to ensure that the academic project was tailored to support their objectives as well.

In response to the latter's request for insight into employer perceptions and attitudes towards such voluntary involvement, a comprehensive search for extant literature was conducted that revealed the paucity of available data. Though the literature review provided some idea of what future inquiry might uncover, it also illustrated a clear need for in-depth primary research in order to inform a living wage campaign that would attempt to penetrate the elusive private sector in Manitoba. In fact, the dearth of extant literature on the topic seems to suggest that such a study would have the potential to contribute knowledge of use to the international living wage movement.



Thus, the main objective of this applied research is to identify private sector employer perceptions of living wage practice implementation in Manitoba, with the end goal of informing a local campaign that would be effective in incentivizing and/or facilitating large-scale adoption of living wage practices. More specifically, the study aimed to provide insight in regards to the following research questions, developed in collaboration with the Living Wage Committee:

1. What do sub-living wage employers in Manitoba's private sector perceive to be the:
  - a. advantages to them as employers in adopting living wage practices?
  - b. disadvantages to them?
2. Which social, systemic, or market-related factors do they perceive to be:
  - a. barriers or challenges?
  - b. facilitators or supports?
3. On what do they think Manitoba's living wage campaign should focus its time and energy in order to incentivize and/or facilitate large-scale adoption of living wage practices in the province?

### Methodology

Pursuing research objectives and questions such as these entails the responsibility to choose an appropriate methodology. It is impossible to escape the implications of adopting a specific scientific method because this decision affects what is recorded and what is treated as data (Kingrey-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990). In particular, as the methodological framework is either explicitly or implicitly based on a research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), making the latter explicit is crucial to community psychology's commitment to transparency in research. Indeed, the implications of the paradigm extend the very framing of the research questions identified earlier (Maxwell, 2005).

### Paradigm

The assumptions that underlie this study are rooted in an ontology that frames the nature of reality as virtual and subjective. This is consistent with critical theory, which views knowledge as grounded in sociohistorical phenomena. One's perception dictates one's reality, and that perception is mediated by one's values in relation to their social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Perry, Riege & Brown, 1999). Reality is a consequence of the context in which the action occurs and is shaped by the cultural, historical, political, and social norms that operate within that context and time (Berger & Luckman, 1991).

Flowing from this critical understanding of the influence of the sociopolitical environment on reality, the axiology of the critical theory approach is characterized by (a) a purposeful critique of the structures and institutions that contribute to social oppression and injustice inherent in this reality and (b) its commitment to acting to change them (Thompson & Perry, 2004). This transformative concern of critical theory is consistent with community psychology's psychopolitical validity (Davidson et al., 2006; Nelson & Evans, 2014), a term coined by Prilleltensky (2003), to represent 'the extent to which studies and interventions in the community integrate knowledge with respect to the multidisciplinary and multilevel sources, experiences, and consequences of oppression and effective strategies for promoting

psychopolitical liberation in the personal, relational, and collective domains' (p. 199). Of course, true transformative change of this nature is beyond the scope of this research project. However, the intent is to contribute to working towards this end by supporting the living wage campaign in its goal of poverty reduction and social inclusion.

A logical extension of this view of reality is the epistemological position that 'reality' can be different for each of us based on our unique understandings of the world and our experience of it (Berger & Luckman, 1991). Critical theory shares this transactional or subjectivist view of knowing with social constructivism, but diverges from the latter in deemphasizing the co-created nature of knowledge in favour of the importance of values in mediating research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). And if reality is socially constructed and we each have a different experience of it, then there is value in determining what those subjective experiences are in order to understand a phenomenon.

### **Method**

This emphasis on pluralism (the appreciation of different ways of knowing) rather than relativism (knowledge and perspectives have only subjective and relative value, but neither truth nor validity) calls for a dialectical research method that views the perspectives of people as data and that engages with these people in order to collect it (Groenewald, 2004). This method must be sensitive to the unique perspectives of individuals, yet allow for similarities to emerge, and the ability of quantitative research methods to capture the required level of detail is limited.

In fact, Darlaston-Jones (2007) argued that the very adherence to a social constructionist philosophy prescribes the use of qualitative methods. She postulated that, by accepting that reality is shaped by the sociocultural and historical time-space in which it occurs and by the people involved in creating and perceiving it, it becomes necessary to use a naturalistic methodology and qualitative methods that "provide the means to seek a deeper understanding and to explore the nuances of experiences not available through quantification" (p. 25).

In addition, as discussed earlier, a systematic literature review revealed very little information about employers' perspectives on voluntary living wage practices. This gap in the knowledge of living wage campaign organizers was echoed by the local Living Wage Committee, who expressed greater interest in gaining a deeper understanding of how employers feel about living wage practices and why, rather than an estimate of how many take a certain viewpoint or to what extent (personal communication, February 24, 2014). As such, this collection of the perspectives of the population of interest must focus more on depth than breadth.

For the reasons enumerated above, qualitative interviewing is a logical choice of method that fits well with the study's paradigm and research question as its strength lies in allowing a deeper exploration of what private sector employers in Winnipeg think about implementing living wage practices in their respective workplaces. Furthermore, given that the phenomenon of interest is relatively specific, some bracketing of the discussion held during interviews is also appropriate, a condition favouring semi-structured over unstructured interviews.

### **Reflexivity**

Flowing from the earlier discussion, the paradigm within which this research is situated recognizes that the process is dialectical and that the researcher has an undeniable influence on data and analysis. The result of data collection and analysis are, in fact, meanings constructed between researcher and participant; the researcher is also a participant insofar as elements such as their lived experience may influence the data that are collected and the way they are interpreted (Finlay, 2002). In fact, critical theory suggests that it is neither possible to be objective and remain removed from the process, nor desirable to remove values from it. Hence, a means to be transparent about the influence of the researcher is both necessary and advantageous; and one such tool frequently used in research in the critical social sciences, such as community psychology, is reflexivity.

Defined as thoughtful, conscious self-awareness, reflexivity is a tool for increasing the integrity and trustworthiness of research by evaluating how intersubjective elements influence data collection and analysis (Finlay, 2002). It can be used to tease out preconceptions and other elements of the researcher's "presence" by explicitly identifying those preconceptions and acknowledges them as a part of the research process (Pringle, Hendry & McLafferty, 2011). The reflexivity process includes explicit description of one's standpoint, as was addressed earlier in this paper, which explains the relationship of the researcher with the topic of focus (Darlaston-Jones, 2007).

Another key element of the process is a discussion of my positionality. One aspect thereof, as the researcher in this study, can be expressed using the insider-outsider continuum, which has become a common topic of discussion in qualitative circles (Breen, 2007). Having no lived experience as an employer, it is fair to say that I approached research participants as an outsider in that respect.

I was not, however, devoid of relevant personal experience. I had worked closely with a small business owner and with a not-for-profit organization leader for a total of three years as an employee, and I had three years of experience collaborating with small and mid-sized business owners as a payroll accounts officer in the public service. While not an insider, the knowledge and experience acquired in these capacities provided me nonetheless with the ability to empathize with and understand the perspectives of employers on certain payroll and labour-related issues.

Importantly, I was not unfamiliar with the context in which Winnipeg employers operate. Having grown up in the city, I had also spent the larger part of the previous 15 years as a part of the local workforce. Neither was I uninformed about the pressures of the socio-politico-economic context of neoliberalism on businesses and not-for-profit organizations; this understanding was further strengthened through the review of business school textbooks discussed earlier. Finally, I feel that my deep-rooted connection with the community, my deep-seated passion for this area of research, and my commitment to working with community partners to apply the results of this research absolved me, at

the very least, of the title of 'seagull' researcher, one who "flies into a community; craps all over everything then leaves the community to tidy up the mess" (Drew, 2006, p. 40).

Importantly, reflexivity is an ongoing process of purposeful self-awareness. It continued throughout the phases of the research project through reflecting on the data collection and analysis process to try to recognize the influence of my subjective experience on how I was interpreting the data collected during interviews (Wertz, 1984). I took care to remain wary of my judgement and interpretations in light of this potential bias throughout the study.

My sense is that this outsider leaning precluded me from enjoying the advantages identified by Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) that insiders share with participants, such as a superior understanding of the group's culture or a relational intimacy with them. I expected that the importance of this would have been diminished because I was interviewing people whom I expected to feel superior rather than inferior, in terms of power differentials. In hindsight, this was not always the case.

This outsidership not only affected my interpretation of the testimonies of the participants, but also which information participants chose to share with me (Finlay, 2002). In an attempt to narrow the perceived gap between participants and myself and encourage candid participation in interviews, I endeavoured to present an image of myself as an understanding peer by dressing and behaving professionally, by informing myself of employers and their organizations ahead of time, and by using verbal and non-verbal language that conveyed understanding, nonjudgementalism, and preparedness.

The greatest weakness in my approach, I believe, was to assume that participants would view me as unthreatening, because they were professionals and I was a mere student, and feel comfortable responding to my questions. I neglected to consider that, as a Master's student, my level of formal education exceeded that of many of my interviewees. I also underestimated the anxiety it would cause some of them to open up about and deconstruct the psychological and philosophical underpinnings of their decision-making as employers. While many participants appeared confident and relaxed, others

exhibited signs of anxiety and discomfort in their speech and body language. Thus, I believe that the data I collected reflect my inattention to these matters.

There were also signs that made me think that most participants did not feel at ease speaking candidly to the questions asked in the interview, including a proclivity for challenging the premises of a living wage at every opportunity, even if it meant not answering the specific question I had just asked. I interpreted this as defensiveness and, in hindsight, I suspect that this was a reflection of the way I designed the materials I used to recruit participants and to interview them. I recognize that the modest socioeconomic status I experienced growing up and the indirect encounters with poverty I mentioned when describing my personal standpoint have made me more likely to empathize with employees than employers in matters relating to compensation. By extension, my very definition of social justice as laid out in an earlier section of this paper inclines toward a more equal distribution of resources in society from those in power, such as employers, towards those with less power, such as employees. Looking back, I was not sufficiently wary of the wording of my recruitment materials and interview guide, which reflected this leaning and worked against my attempts to gain acceptance as an understanding peer, affecting how participants responded.

Fortunately, my outsidership did provide one advantage. Pitman (2002) warned of the pitfalls of the illusion of sameness whereby researchers may be more inclined to assume that they share thoughts and feelings with participants and to fill in gaps in data based on their own experience. Despite my tendency to search for common ground with those with whom I converse and to empathize with their experience, I think my outsider status provided a buffer that allowed me to minimize the risks Pitman referred to.

## Sampling

As indicated in the research objectives and questions, the population of interest was that of private sector employers in Manitoba. As is typically the case with qualitative studies, the focus here was on an in-depth analysis of a relatively small and purposefully-selected sample.

In particular, a stratified purposeful sampling strategy was used because it would allow for the generation of two additional kinds of findings that were of interest. Due to purposefully selecting participants that differed from one another along certain dimensions of interest, the resulting data contained highly detailed descriptions of unique cases that reflected major variations in the perspectives of a varied target population; they illustrated characteristics of particular subgroups of interest, which facilitated comparison. Also, stratified sampling allowed for the emergence of commonalities that cut across the strata from which the sample was pulled, which derived their significance from having emerged from this designed heterogeneity (Patton, 2002).

Two dimensions of interest were used in constructing the strata that guided sampling. First, Wills and Linneker (2012) found that the challenges associated with implementing living wage policies in private sector workplaces in London varied in relation to the sector of employment within which affected employees worked (e.g. office cleaning); however, there are many ways to stratify labour sectors. A Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey that had organized its data based on the National Occupational Classification for Statistics (NOC-S) revealed that an estimated 61.8% of the more than 3.9 million employees in Canada who earned less than \$500 weekly<sup>6</sup> in 2013 fit into no more than four of the 25 most precise employment occupational classifications for which such data were available (Statistics Canada, 2014). Accordingly, recruitment was targeted such that the sample included representation of each of those four occupational groups: two interviewees operated businesses in

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<sup>6</sup> Based on a 37.5-hour work week, this represents all hourly wages of less than \$13.34, or below the two-parent, two-child living wages calculated for three of Manitoba's largest cities for the same period (Jarosiewicz, 2013).



travel, accommodations and other sales and service occupations (a NOC-S occupational classification including sub-classes G7 and G9); three had large retail sales or cashier workforces (sub-classes G2 and G3); three interviewees employed primarily clerical workers (B4 and B5); and three others operated in food and beverage preparation, sales, and service (G4 and G5).

Second, Gunderson (2007) posited that there would be a differential impact of increases to minimum wage in Ontario based on the size of affected firms. While he found that firms of all sizes in the province had relatively similar proportions of workers who would be affected by minimum wage increases, he suggested that smaller firms may struggle more to adapt because of smaller profit margins. The implication was that the perspectives of employers regarding adopting living wage practices might vary in accordance with workforce size, as well. Accordingly, the sample included three small business owners (fewer than 40 staff), five mid-sized business representatives (40 to 400 workers), and two large business representatives (over 400 staff).

Though it was not planned, interviews revealed that the sample included diverse representation of variations along a third dimension of interest. In interviews, only six of the participants identified as sub-living wage employers. One claimed to have only “professionals” on staff, who earned well above the living wage by nature of standard market compensation rates for their level of training, yet confirmed that they contracted out to sub-living wage employers in their day-to-day operations. Unexpectedly, two participants believed themselves to already be living wage employers based on a combination of higher-than-average wages and generous employee benefits, despite never having formally identified as such, and a third pointed out that the unique and extensive benefits alone offered to staff at their business might qualify them for a living wage designation. Thankfully, the divergence of perspectives that correlated with this dimension of interest provided rich contributions to the data, as will be presented later.

Importantly, the sampling strategy did not plan for any demographic analysis, such as on the basis of gender identity, ethnicity, or native language, as the literature review uncovered no evidence that any of these was an important factor in determining employer perspectives regarding living wage practices.

### **Recruitment**

The data collection materials developed with, and eventually approved by, Wilfrid Laurier University's Research Ethics Board included a recruitment letter (Appendix D) to be addressed to potential interviewees, a script (Appendix E) for following up by phone with those contacted to book interviews, a consent form (Appendix F), and an interview guide (Appendix G).

Recruitment of business owners and high-level executives to participate voluntarily in interviews led by a student relating to how the private sector could do more to alleviate poverty was expected to be challenging. Then, due to delays and challenges that eventually led to changes to the originally proposed method, sample, and analysis for this study, recruitment was finally pushed back to the month of December, 2014. By that point, the likelihood of getting members of the target population to consent to interviews seemed very low.

These challenges were eventually overcome, partly due to a number of intentional strategies designed to encourage participation. First, when contacting the individuals identified through this process, invitations to participate in the study included a commitment to protecting privacy and confidentiality as well as guaranteeing anonymity in any written documents resulting from the study. Commander et al. (2014) suggested that this approach enabled access to hard-to-reach respondents of interest, and encouraged candidness relating to labour issues. Second, potential participants were promised that interviews would take fewer than 30 minutes of their time in an attempt to facilitate their engagement. Third, participants were promised to be entered into a draw for a \$100 gift certificate.

Fourth, in an attempt to increase the likelihood of being able to conduct in-person interviews with the high-ranking executives targeted by this study, recruitment focused on businesses that not only operated in Manitoba but were also headquartered there. This is an important consideration, given the degree to which the province has been affected by the international wave of cross-border mergers and acquisitions (Evenett, 2004). The omnipresence of businesses operating in Manitoba but headquartered elsewhere meant that the decision to exclude them greatly reduced the pool of potential participants; a consideration of the impact of this limitation on the findings is presented in the Discussion section.

Fifth, personal connections were used to identify potential interviewees wherever possible. Partly because efforts were made to ensure those contacted did not feel coerced into participation, only three of the five individuals contacted in this way were successfully recruited.

The other 24 businesses contacted were identified by going through the sections of the *Winnipeg and Area* (2013) business telephone directory that corresponded to the labour market sectors identified in the sampling strategy and identifying businesses believed to be locally owned. Local ownership of the businesses and contact information for potential participants were confirmed through a combination of verifying companies' websites and contacting the businesses by phone, by email, or by visiting them in person.

Given how little of my target population was made up of locally-owned businesses, I had to be very persistent in following up with those who didn't return my calls, and far more than I would have liked. In total, I corresponded with the 29 businesses over 100 times by phone, by email, and by mailing and hand-delivering letters over a two-month period before successfully booking the ten interviews.

Unfortunately, not every interview was booked with the ideal representative of the targeted business. The objective was to interview the individual responsible for setting the wages of staff at the firm however, on two occasions, I was directed to speak with the manager of human resources rather than the owner or the president. While these individuals also had influence over staff's wages, they did

not have the final word on compensation strategy, and one participant once answered my question with: “That would be more of a president’s question.”

Representation of certain business sectors by participants was also less than ideal. Employers whose staff were concentrated in retail or clerical occupations were particularly hard to reach, and I successfully recruited only 20% of those contacted. Although the sampling strategy was not designed for statistical inference, the result was that there was likely a systematic difference between the businesses represented by my sample and the target population. For example, no fewer than two or three of the ten participants suggested that they may already be living wage employers, and a fourth employer even offered to support the implementation of a local campaign; whereas the results of the literature review presented earlier prompt one to be sceptical that the overall rate of support among private sector employers in low-wage industries would be nearly that high.

The table in Appendix H provides a basic profile of the individuals who participated in the interviews. In order to protect the identity of participants, only basic information is provided, such as perceived gender, business size, and industry, and aliases are used.

### **Procedure**

Although the goal was originally to conduct all interviews in person, illness, travel, and a remote work location led to three interviews being conducted over the phone. All interviews were structured according to the interview guide (Appendix G), however the wording of the questions was adapted in some interviews to be sensitive to what I perceived to be the level of formality of the conversation, the interviewee’s level of comfort, their understanding of the living wage concept, and their communication style and preferences.

Based on recommendations from Dilley (2000), interviews were structured to begin the conversation with easily-answered, general questions for the purpose of establishing a convivial

atmosphere, putting the respondents at ease, and breaking the ice. In hindsight, this was insufficient, as mentioned earlier.

I also quickly learned that my recruitment materials had not provided interviewees with sufficient background information on the living wage concept for them to be able to answer my questions appropriately, so I began providing more information both prior to beginning recording or during interviews on an as-needed basis. For example, one participant revealed that they thought the living wage campaign was attempting to raise the legislated minimum wage. All background information that I provided to clarify such matters was consistent with the explanation provided in an earlier section of this paper.

I further learned that greater flexibility was required on my part in order for the interviews to run smoothly. Inexperienced as I was with the role of the interviewer, I attempted to follow the order and wording of questions closely in the earlier sessions. However, interviewees often responded to future questions early on, and this inflexibility on my part led some respondents to repeat themselves. Also, I noticed that the language used in some of my questions, which included less common words such as “conducive” and “feasibility”. By the end of the data collection period, I became more adept at adapting the interview process to use more appropriate language and flexibility in my questioning.

All interviews were digitally audio recorded, and audio files were imported into NVivo, where they were then manually transcribed; transcriptions were stripped of the names of businesses and individuals. The use of NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software facilitated both data management and analysis. This process was also designed to facilitate future independent inspection, which is an important consideration in ensuring the credibility of the data and the analysis.

### **Analysis**

Given the exploratory nature of the semi-structured interviews, data analysis was largely a sense-making endeavour. Many qualitative researchers consider coding – the assigning of interpretive

labels to raw data for the purpose of reducing and simplifying them – to be an integral part of this process when analyzing interview data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2011).

According to Corbin and Strauss' (2008) seminal model, there are two major levels or phases of coding. In the first, the goal is to break apart the raw data into smaller units; codes are created through exploration of the ideas and meaning in order to represent categories or themes encountered. This open coding process involves lumping and splitting text at the level that produces the most meaning, whether that be by line, by sentence, by paragraph or by any other delineation (MacQueen et al., 2008).

Analysis began by breaking the interview transcripts down into open codes in NVivo. When using NVivo to code data, each new code creates a node. This first phase of analysis resulted in the generation of 218 nodes, making a total of 402 references to the original data.

Following the reduction of data through open coding, the next stage of analysis in Corbin and Strauss' (2008) model is axial coding. Here, rather than focusing on the raw data, researchers analyze the codes identified in the first phase for connections between concepts, which may lead to rethinking or reconceptualizing theoretical associations (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This axial coding phase of analysis began by identifying many common themes and ideas among existing open codes, and their respective nodes were often merged into new nodes representing one such theme. As a result, the 218 nodes created in open coding were reduced to 166 during axial coding.

I then organized the data by looking for further logical connections between the remaining nodes. Thirty-four new nodes were created to act as categories for the existing axial and open codes. All nodes that had been generated by the end of this stage of analysis were then structured into four network diagrams (Appendices I through L) which, together, provide a visual representation of the data collected in this study. Each circle represents an idea that was communicated by respondents. The size of the circle and of the text within it is proportional to the number of respondents who expressed the

idea (i.e. the smallest circles show ideas expressed by a single respondent, while the largest were echoed by the majority of respondents); the rectangles contain the categories that were created after data collection to help organize the data.

These network diagrams were structured and organized primarily on the basis of the frequency with which each idea was expressed. More precisely, categorization was designed in such a way as to prioritize grouping the ideas expressed by the greatest number of respondents into the fewest categories and the simplest overall structure while also ensuring that no comments shared that were relevant to the research questions were omitted. The network diagrams represent, of course, only one of many ways of organizing the data collected in this study, but do so in a way that is concise while still illustrating the breadth and diversity of ideas and perspectives collected in this study. In the next major section of this paper, meanwhile, data are presented in a more detailed way that is more attentive to their original context.<sup>7</sup>

In a third phase of analysis, I reviewed the nodes generated in earlier phases using the strata identified in the sampling strategy as an interpretive framework. While the previous phase of analysis identified emergent patterns in the nodes that transcended those strata, the goal of this phase was to identify characteristics that were unique to each of the dimensions of interest. However, though the purposeful sampling strategy was effective in ensuring representation among those interviewed from various populations of interest, the number of participants falling into each of those strata was quite small. Likely due primarily to this to the small sample size, very few such patterns emerged; these are presented in the Key Findings section below. Furthermore, very few employers fit into any single

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the network diagrams in the appendices reflect only the results of this second phase of analysis, whereas the Key Findings section reflects a more refined level of analysis. As such, there are some discrepancies between the two presentations of findings; they are also structurally different. The Key Findings section is to be considered the more valid presentation of the data because of the care taken to ensure accurate representation of the original context in which they were collected, including the identity of the speaker, and the train of thought from which each quote was taken; the network diagrams, however, are a little more comprehensive.

category along these strata, so the patterns that did emerge from this stage of analysis should be interpreted with caution.

As Long (2006) suggested that a firm's managerial strategy is the most important single determinant of its most appropriate compensation strategy, a fourth and final stage of analysis was designed to consider the data collected from each interviewee in light of where their business was situated in relation to his strategic framework for compensation, as it was presented in the Literature Review section. In this phase, I attempted to assess each business' location in terms of the five contextual variables Long identified as determinants of the most appropriate managerial strategy. However, as the idea for this analysis strategy arose after the interview guide had been approved by the Research Ethics Board, insufficient data were collected to accurately locate each businesses in relation to some of these variables. As a result, only a single tentative pattern emerged from this phase of analysis, and is presented in the Discussion section below.

### **Knowledge Translation Plan**

As this study was conceived in partnership with CCEDNet-MB and the Living Wage Committee, this partnership was central to the knowledge translation plan for the study. Their expectations were to obtain a picture of Manitoba's private sector employers' perceptions of, and attitudes concerning, the voluntary implementation of living wage practices in their workplaces, with the end goal of informing a Manitoban campaign to reduce poverty by fostering this implementation on a large scale. As such, I have committed to producing a report and presenting it to the Living Wage Committee following my thesis defence. As I write this, I am currently working with the Committee in order to ensure that the research will be presented in a way that will provide maximum benefit to them.

As discussed earlier, however, there is evidence to suggest that this study may also be of use to other jurisdictions in informing their respective living wage campaigns. I intend to work with CCEDNet-MB to determine whether it would be appropriate to share a summary of the results of this study under



the CCEDNet label with key stakeholders in the international living wage movement, such as Vibrant Communities Canada and the Living Wage Foundation. In this case, we would collaborate on identifying appropriate media for this sharing and going about translating the knowledge accordingly. Finally, I will also be working on publication in a peer-reviewed open access journal to ensure that non-academic stakeholders such as campaign organizers would also have easy access to a more detailed and scientific account of this study.

### Key Findings

In this section, the key findings concerning Manitoba's private sector's perspective on living wage practices are presented. The section is organized in a way that is consistent with the study's research questions, which were developed in partnership with CCEDNet-MB and the Living Wage Committee, with the intention of facilitating the application of these findings to the strategic planning of Manitoba's living wage campaign.

We begin by reviewing what the employers interviewed had to say about the practical advantages and disadvantages for their businesses that they associated with the adoption of living wage practices. In the second subsection, I consider some of the outcomes that participants thought might manifest at a broader societal level as a result of the widespread implementation of such practices. In the third, I move to a more abstract level and review the perspectives shared about the concept of a living wage that tied more directly into moral positions and beliefs than into implementation matters. The fourth subsection presents the ideas shared by participants that they thought would help make a living wage campaign more effective in engaging the private sector.

As the title of this section suggests, these are only the key findings. While still a nearly exhaustive list of what was shared in interviews, some ideas expressed by only a single participant have been excluded if they were not considered relevant to the research questions or to living wage campaign organizers.<sup>8</sup>

#### **The Living Wage in Practice: Pros and Cons for Employers in Low-Paying Industries**

The employers consulted spent the majority of their time in interviews speaking to how they thought a voluntary wage floor increase would play out for them in practice (or had already played out,

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<sup>8</sup> For example, one employer mentioned in passing that communism might support a LW campaign in the achievement of its objectives. As fundamentally reshaping the nature of the national economy is likely beyond the realm of possibilities for most living wage campaign organizers, and as this comment was made in passing and did not appear to be particularly important to the speaker, this finding was not presented here.

in the case of the two participants who believed themselves to be living wage employers). Presented first are the advantages they said that they might (or did) enjoy as a result; these are followed by the challenges and disadvantages that these employers associated with the adoption of living wage practices.

**Advantages for employers.** When prompted, most interviewees were able to identify at least one way in which an employer would benefit from implementing a living wage floor in their workplace. When cross-referencing the strata from the sampling strategy, it became clear that the participants representing larger businesses had less difficulty doing so than those representing smaller and mid-sized businesses. The benefits identified typically related to one of two categories of competitive advantages in terms of the labour market; participants referred to these as attraction and retention.

By attraction, participants referred to the ability of a business to attract qualified applicants to work with them. The analysis based on sampling strata revealed that this was a particularly large concern for the participants representing businesses in the retail sector, who were also the most likely to identify as working in a low-paying industry. Giniw was one such participant and he had this complaint about the difficulties he thought retailers faced in attracting qualified applicants:

“I think that the retail industry in general has fought a perception of it not being an industry where you can build a career. I think that's a misinformed opinion or perception because I think there are excellent careers that you can have within the retail industry but you need to attract people into the industry to begin with. And, I think, unfortunately, retail has an image of being a very low-paying industry. So, I think, to the extent that a living wage might, you know, increase overall wages, it might also increase the perceived attraction of working within the industry.”

But the issue of attraction was not exclusively a matter of attracting greater numbers of applicants. K'ai expected that a living wage employer would: “attract a higher calibre of individual. And

[...] when I attract a higher calibre of individual, for new hires, that helps me because they have a higher education level, and they're able to be trained easier, and also able to fulfill their job duties better.”

Migizi, who considered his business to already be a living wage employer, connected this practice with a slightly more indirect benefit relating to attraction. He spoke of how he thought it reduced their recruitment costs: “[I]f you have good employees, they know they're being paid well, and we need another employee, we... It's easier to get staff.”

Yágoli complained of big business competitors from other markets who were expanding operations by establishing themselves in Manitoba. She proposed a fourth way that the greater ability to attract qualified applicants from the labour market as a result of a higher wage floor might benefit her business, suggesting that it would also help them “hold off the competition” that these big business competitors represented.

The other major category of advantages stemming from living wage practices also related to competitive advantages in the labour market, although this time in the form of the retention of existing staff. The majority of respondents connected living wages with decreased staff turnover, including S'is'oka: “[F]or us, that's the big one: where you're keeping good people.”

This advantage was expressed in different ways, including: keeping staff longer; spending less time training new staff; greater staff loyalty; lower turnover; and retaining knowledge (referring to the staff for whom a business had already invested time and resources for training purposes). Giniw explained his perspective on how a living wage would help increase staff retention:

“[W]e do everything that we possibly can to ensure that stability, to ensure that people are engaged and want [...] to stay working with us. Compensation is a huge part of that. Research studies show, in both Canada and the U.S., that compensation is often [...] near or at the top of the list in terms of the reason why people leave.”

Importantly, when asked about the advantages an employer might see, four participants did not explicitly connect the adoption of a living wage policy with any practical benefit to the employer. Two respondents spoke only of how it would increase the quality of life of their staff. For example, Mōswa ended with: “They'd be in better shape, would be the only advantage I could think of.” A third participant, Mahēhkān, asked: “[W]hat's the incentive besides feeling good for an employer? I'm not sure, I mean... I don't know what the answer is to that.”

**Challenges and disadvantages for employers.** Overall, participants spent far more of their time in interviews focused on what they perceived to be the barriers and challenges associated with the implementation of living wage practices than on the advantages. It was pointed out that labour costs were already considered to be one of the greatest expenses, if not the greatest, facing a business. For that reason, Yágoli said:

“[U]nfortunately, the first thing that is usually targeted... If there's... There are issues, there's no raises, you know. If there's issues, and a lot less profitability, that's where they're going for it, right? That's the easiest, low-hanging fruit, is to clip wage and not give increase.”

She added that, as hers was a seasonal business, they had staff on payroll year-round, and that controlling labour costs was of particular concern for them during their off-season.

Of course, controlling labour costs is a challenge faced by any business in a market economy. However, two participants considered that any wage floor increases would pose an additional problem in the form of wage compression, whereby an increase in the wages of the lowest-paid positions in a business might require increases to the compensation of higher-paid staff as well. As Mahēhkān explained it:

“So, for example, you get a minimum wage increase, the least experienced - and maybe the least talented or the least skilled - of your employees all get about, let's say, a 2.5-

3% wage increase. Then you have your skilled employees that are looking for that same increase. You're closing the gap between them.”

As one would expect, some participants connected the adoption of a living wage policy with a reduction in profits. Mahēhkān was one of these: “[T]hat's the whole business model. You receive income and you pay out your staff and what's left over is profit. So, when you receive less income and pay your staff more, obviously, less profit or no profit.”

Interestingly, only four participants overtly linked living wage policy to a reduction in profits. In contrast, every participant contributed to a discussion about the ways that they might, as a business owner, attempt to recover the increase in labour costs from other sources. The ideas on cost recovery strategies that emerged follow.

***Ways businesses can recover the costs.*** The first four ideas presented here are changes that employers said they might consider making within their respective businesses in order to adjust for the increase in labour costs associated with implementing living wage practices. Rather than being presented as solutions, however, these were presented as trade-offs, each with its own challenges and consequences. These four strategies, and the practical implications for employers of each, are presented first.

Three participants shared their thoughts on covering the cost of wage increases by reducing the number of workers earning those wages. Rather than a solution, this was presented more as an outcome that they would be forced into in order for their businesses to survive. The disadvantages that participants associated with this strategy were threefold. Giniw invited consideration of whether this would defeat the purpose of a living wage: “I think that a lot of people will view it as a trade-off between increased wages and jobs. And so, in which way is the economy better off: fewer people making more? More people making less?”

Mahēhkān also pointed out that a reduction in the number of staff, in many industries, would have a direct impact on the quality of the product or service provided: “[I]f I tell my managers that they need to stay within a certain labour percentage and the only way they can do that is to cut shifts, I'm spending the same labour dollar with less people in my building, so the quality of service suffers at that point.”

A third participant, Amik, was responsible for maintaining control of an alcohol-serving facility. He pointed out that there is a minimum number of staff that he has on hand at any given time in order to ensure the safety of his staff and patrons. He worried that his competitors in the beverage service industry might resort to reducing staff in order to recover the costs associated with living wages, as this would also represent a safety concern.

Many participants made comments on the connection between the wage they chose to pay each staff member and the value they thought that member brought to their business. As S'is'oka said: “[T]he people you're hiring have to be able to work for that amount of money.” She went on to suggest that an employer could potentially recover the costs of a higher wage floor by shifting their recruitment strategy in such a way as to end up with workers from whom they could extract greater value to their business.

Mōswa, however, cautioned that taking this route to cover increases in wages would not always be so simple. In his business, there were wage limits for certain positions based on the amount of money he could extract from customers for the goods and services provided by those positions. For example: “They get to a certain plateau, and that's all I can pay a driver driving a van. I can't pay any more than \$15 an hour to drive a van because I'm not getting more than that from my customer.”

A third potential cost recovery strategy was proposed by three participants who made reference to: “lowering your expenses to increase your bottom line.” Giniw, who represented a large employer, said: “I think there are always opportunities for every employer to look at their business practices, how

productive they're being, you know, opportunities for efficiencies [...].” The other two, however, acknowledged that this might work for some businesses but that they had already minimized their operating expenses and couldn't see themselves being able to finance a living wage policy in that way. As Migizi put it: “[w]e run pretty thin as is, we run a pretty efficient company.”

The fourth strategy identified was that an employer could raise the prices of its goods and services in order to recover the cost of a living wage policy. In fact, this was one of only two ideas that resurfaced in every interview. As Amik said: “[The] costs of our goods are going to have to go up to our consumers to cover any increase in wages.”

But the frequency with which this response was echoed by no means indicated that respondents thought it would be easy. The other comment that arose in every interview was that raising prices in a market-driven economy would have the immediate consequence of a reduction in sales. As Mōswa complained, he felt that their clients would show no loyalty if they raised their prices in relation to competitors:

“[W]ith the type of industry I'm in, it seems that, for years and years, my kind of business is [...] whoever is the cheapest gets the work. [...] [It] is so dog-eat-dog, the business, that it doesn't matter if you've been doing business with a customer for five years, six years. If somebody comes along and says: 'I'll [beat that price],' they'll get the business.”

Based on the response from S'is'oka, serving a niche market would not exempt a business from this outcome, either: “[S]ure, we're a niche market, we're unique, but at the same time, people are only going to pay so much. So you can only raise your prices so much [...] We're always comparing and saying, you know, we have to compete.”

Although most seemed to imply that raising prices would fail to recover costs as a result of driving clients away, Minōsis thought of a possible alternative outcome: “We're kind of like a



neighbourhood kind of go-to place, so if we start raising our prices, we're kind of competing with [a higher-end restaurant and lounge]." She suggested that their business might survive an increase in wages by entering this pricier market and appealing to a higher-end clientele.

While the four strategies presented above were 'internal' strategies – internal in the sense that they involved employers making different decisions within their own businesses in order to recover the costs of the implementation of living wage practices – participants were also invited to consider existing external sources of support that they might invoke for that same purpose.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of responses echoed Minōsis when she said: "Nope, I'm not aware of any." The other three participants responded by mentioning targeted wage subsidies provided by government to encourage businesses to provide employment to specific groups.<sup>9</sup> These included grants for new hires; programs to encourage job creation for youth entering the workforce; wage subsidies for hiring bilingual youth interns from French Canadian communities; and wage subsidies for persons with disabilities.

### **The Bigger Picture: Societal Consequences of Living Wages**

In addition to considering the pros and cons that they associated with the adoption of living wage practices in their own businesses, several participants expressed thoughts and concerns about broader social and economic impacts that they thought might result if a living wage were adopted on a larger scale. The first two of these potential impacts presented here were seen to be positive. The other four were expressed as negative unintended consequences.

Two participants associated the widespread adoption of living wage practices with an economic benefit that was consistent with the business case for a living wage presented earlier. In their view, putting more money in the hands of workers would contribute to economic growth through increased spending, particularly in the case of low-paid workers. Migizi

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<sup>9</sup> A more comprehensive list of federally-funded targeted wage subsidies is available on the Canada Business Network's website at <http://www.canadabusiness.ca/eng/page/2739/sgc-46/>.

explained it in this way: “[Y]ou give them more money, they're going to spend more money. In this industry, you're not going to find people who have huge bank accounts. No-one's hoarding the money for their grandchildren. They're living day-to-day, they're living week-to-week, and paycheque-to-paycheque, so...”

Giniw considered a second benefit that might manifest at a broader level, particularly if a living wage were to be mandated through public policy. He suggested that the prospect of higher wages might attract a greater pool of qualified labour from other locations to one that was known to pay living wages. To use his words: “it may attract people to move into this jurisdiction because they're aware that they would be provided with a living wage whereas a, you know, a region or a jurisdiction that didn't have this would be less attractive to that kind of worker.”

The conversations that occurred during interviews also brought to light some concerns relating to potential unintended negative consequences of living wage practices. For example, as previously noted, participants commonly stated that they would react to the increase in labour costs by attempting to recover those costs from their clients through a pricing adjustment. However, as Giniw asked: “[Y]ou ask your customers to pay more, they take your business somewhere else, you lose jobs. Who ends up winning there?” While this reduction in sales could be suffered by a single living wage employer in relation to low-wage competitors within the same jurisdiction, the same phenomenon could occur on a collective level. In other words, if a living wage were to be implemented across an entire industry in a jurisdiction, that jurisdiction may see that industry move its operations and jobs to other jurisdictions with lower minimum wages. To this point, Yágoli warned: “I think, if you're going to try and implement [a living wage policy], it has to be across the board. Manufacturing, you know, would be difficult based on our competitiveness with other countries. That could be a huge detriment to a manufacturing organization.”

One participant, who represented a business that had operations in remote communities, shared a concern about the social impact that might occur if their business were to raise prices in order to finance living wage practices. They worried that a pricing increase might have detrimental effects in remote and isolated communities where consumers have fewer alternatives and are more dependent on each service provider. They warned that, if there were to be an increase in an industry-wide wage floor or to the legislated minimum wage, steps would need to be taken to mitigate the impact of pricing increases for essential goods and services in remote communities, such as the rural municipalities and First Nations reserves in northern Manitoba.

A third concern also stemmed from the discussion of cost recovery strategies. If, in order to bankroll an increase to labour costs, a number of businesses within a community were to adapt their human resources strategies to focus on maximizing the productivity of each staff member, what would be the impact on the employment rate of the lower-skilled end of the labour market? The interviews conducted here suggested that the majority of low-wage positions in Manitoba corresponding to the sectors known to employ the majority of low-wage earners in Canada are indeed low-skilled positions. As Mahēhkān stated: “I would guess [we are] probably the largest sector employing first-time employees, right? We're turning out, hopefully, contributing members of society at some point, but they're getting their first job [here] where their job knowledge base is zero.” If this move away from the hiring of low-skilled labour were to occur on any sort of scale, a strategy for addressing the impact on unemployment rates within this particular demographic might become necessary.

Finally, two participants expressed concern with the effect that large-scale implementation of living wage policies might have on inflation. As Amik put it: “any time wages go up on one side, the revenue's got to come from somewhere else to pay for it so it's going to have to come from increased costs for the products we sell. And the consumers, again, end up paying it that way, which then increases the poverty level. So, it's just this chicken-egg sort of thing going on and you can't get around

it.” Operating under the assumption that inflation would increase to match increases in the wage floor, these two participants questioned whether a successful living wage campaign would even be effective at reducing poverty in a sustainable way.

### **The Living Wage in Concept: Theoretical and Moral Perspectives from the Private Sector**

In addition to the above thoughts on the practical implications of living wage adoption, participants also shared thoughts on a more abstract level. These perspectives did not have to do with how it would fit with their business model or impact the economy but rather how it aligned with their beliefs and morals.

After collecting basic information about their business, the first question asked of each participant related to how they perceived the concept of a living wage on a theoretical level. Though all began by saying they were supportive of it in theory, the apparent reality that emerged through the remainder of each interview was often inconsistent with this affirmation. Only two expressed unconditional support, while all other participants communicated very mixed feelings, as follows. First, we take a look at the reasons given for supporting the concept, and then we review those given for resisting it.

#### **Support for a living wage: Wage floors as social justice.**

Among the participants in this study, unconditional support for the living wage concept correlated with only one of the strata used in the sampling strategy: the two participants who believed themselves to already be living wage employers were the only ones who supported the concept unconditionally. When asked how the concept of a living wage policy fit with his idea of fairness or responsibility, Migizi replied: “I agree with it 100%.” To the same question, K’ai answered that it fit “very well” with her idea of fairness and responsibility as an employer and that it “equals my conscience.”

Although these participants spent more time explaining this position on a practical level than on an abstract one, a couple of comments they made did provide a brief glimpse into the moral motivations

underlying their decisions to pay a living wage. Migizi explained: “I've always tried to create an environment that employees want to come to work. [...] You spend one-third of your life at work and, to me, it should be a place that you want to come to.” K'ai added: “I pay more than minimum wage [...] because it makes me feel good about what I do.”

Each of the other participants claimed to support the living wage either only in theory or only if certain conditions were to be met. Only two of these even mentioned an abstract-level motivating factor. Waagosh, the contractor who had no sub-living wage employees but frequently contracted out to low-wage employers, was generally sympathetic to the idea of a living wage. When asked if he could think of an advantage an employer might receive for paying a living wage, he replied: “I don't know if it's an advantage: the sort of the moral question, I think, it's a fairness question.” When asked what might encourage an employer to adopt a living wage policy, Mahēhkān replied: “[W]hat's the incentive besides feeling good for an employer? I'm not sure, I mean... I don't know what the answer is to that.”

**Resistance to a living wage: Wage standardization as unfairness.**

In contrast, many other participants shared feelings on why they thought a living wage was at least imperfect on a theoretical level, or even a downright terrible idea. The small and mid-sized low-wage employers focused on the theme of fairness, expressing opinions about who deserved a living wage and, in consequence, concerns with wage floors.

Many participants indicated that the idea of adopting a wage floor that would be above the current minimum wage was inconsistent with their feelings about fairness. For one thing, some participants related the rate of pay that an employee deserves to the financial value they bring to the business. As S'is'oka put it: “That's what he's worth. Because that's what we've always made it, it's about the person. So, yeah, each person is paid differently depending on what they bring to the business.” Mōswa echoed this view: “If a guy's worth it, I make sure you're paid what you deserve”.

In this way, the concept of a wage floor was seen as competing with an employer's flexibility in determining rates of pay, and impeding their agency in applying their own definition of fairness.

Understandably, this led employers with this meritocratic definition of fairness to view the living wage concept as unfair. As Mahēhkān expressed it: "for ethical reasons [...] a low-skilled position is not something that you're going to look at paying a living wage for."

Three employers addressed the theme of fairness by identifying groups who would benefit from a living wage floor yet, in their view, either did not need it or did not deserve it. The focus, primarily, was on their youngest workers: "the people that are just getting their first job," and "sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds." For example, S'is'oka challenged whether the youth getting their first job at her business even deserved the current minimum wage in Manitoba. When considering paying even more in the form of a living wage, she said: "It would make no sense for us to be babysitting - because that's what we're doing with 16-, 17-year-olds - and to be paying that kind of wage."

The other two expressed the feeling that a living wage was unfair because young workers do not need more than the current minimum wage due to a relatively low cost of living, in their view. As Amik put it: "I'm not sure how you relate that minimum wage as a living wage for someone who's living at home, you know, going to high school. Their expenses are... It's not in order for them to survive, it's for future college, it's for future, you know, cell phone bills or whatever else they spend their money on." The consensus among these three participants appeared to be that young workers "aren't people that I would consider being in your, you know, living-wage-applicable category." And, though only three participants shared this feeling, few feelings were expressed as strongly as this in data collection.

On a similar note, Mahēhkān, an employer in the food and beverage service industry, expressed strong opposition to the idea of applying a living wage floor to his industry due to the fact that his workers took home a significant portion of their income in the form of tips. North American cultural norms dictate that patrons provide tips to their food and beverage servers in addition to, and entirely

separate from, the wages they earn from their employers. These tips represent a potentially complex anomaly, as they are unevenly distributed and largely outside of the control of employers. They are also often restricted to servers, whereas other low-wage earners working in the same workplace (e.g., kitchen staff) may or may not receive a share.

In addition to those who viewed a living wage as unfair because of the populations to whom it would be applied, two participants revealed dissatisfaction with wage regulation in general, saying that minimum wage adjustments are particularly hard on smaller firms. As Amik commented: “it's so hard to, from a small business point of view, to justify a wage increase just because the government says it has to be. Sometimes, is really hard to look at. Yes, we do it because we have to [...]”

Finally, two employers also expressed dislike for external ‘fair’ wage calculations by questioning the method used by the current Manitoba government to establish minimum wage rates. As Mahēhkān pointed out: “inflation in Manitoba since 2000 has been something like 35% or so, and the minimum wage has gone up by closer to 75% or 80% over that same time period, so... They don't stay in line.”

### **Strengthening Manitoba’s Campaign: Employers’ Thoughts on How to Be Effective**

The last group of questions asked of interviewees was designed specifically to collect insight on how to plan and lead a living wage campaign that would be effective in engaging employers like them. The ideas that were shared could be grouped into two broad categories: who the campaign should appeal to, and how.

**Who the campaign should target.** When asked if they had any suggestions regarding who a campaign should target first, two respondents simply said not to focus on them. They thought that there were too many challenges specifically facing their respective industries relating to the adoption of living wage practices for a campaign to be successful in those industries. One of these respondents, Mōswa, represented the mail and message distribution sector; the other, Mahēhkān, had this to say: “How can you focus on a tipping industry or an industry that is predominantly made up of people that a living

wage wouldn't be an applicable term to, right? Between tips, or between underage or people that aren't supporting themselves, that's a large percentage of your restaurant industry.”

Four respondents said that a living wage campaign ought to start with big business. K'ai explained in detail who she thought should be approached first: “government-funded or government-owned entities, or public entities, [...] or publicly-traded entities.” For S'is'oka: “the big businesses, you know, are hiring everybody at minimum wage [...] That's where the problem lays.” For the other two, however, the idea was specifically to focus on businesses bigger than their own, and seemed to be based on the aforementioned view that wage floor increases are harder on small businesses than on larger ones. Interestingly, Yágoli, whose own business could be considered a large business, boasting several hundred staff, was one of those who shared this perspective.

Three other respondents recommended an alternative approach: a focus on raising public awareness, especially among consumers, rather than appealing to employers. S'is'oka said: “get the message out there. Prise de conscience [...] Just get everybody talking about it.” Waagosh took the time to make specific suggestions regarding a communication strategy that would follow this approach:

“If you were doing a campaign, you would want to impress people about the gulf between what many people are making and what it really costs to live. Like, I think you would want to humanize those stories in such a way that people really do get the social injustice of somebody working full time and not being able to provide for themselves and their family. [...] On the one hand, you would want to go to the people who employ large numbers of these people who are falling below what we would call a living wage and appeal directly to them. But, I somehow think that a more effective approach might be to appeal to the general population and explain to these people how they are benefitting, really, from people who are being sort of underpaid.”



**How the campaign could best foster living wage practice adoption.** Recognizing the increased cost associated with adopting living wage practices, interviewees were asked to consider what incentives, if any, might encourage businesses in their respective industries to do so. Almost all replies echoed Mahēhkān's response: "I'm not sure what kind of incentive could replace financial." More specifically, respondents identified the following forms that this financial support could take: employment insurance premium matching; offsetting the cost of the business' use of public utilities such as electricity; a tax cut or rebate for the business; or a wage subsidy.

One of the biggest concerns raised about the concept was that voluntary adoption of living wage practices by individual employers would put them at a competitive disadvantage relative to other low-wage employers in the same industry. Six participants suggested that, in order for a campaign to be successful in low-wage industries, any wage floor increases would have to be adopted across the entire industry. As Amik put it:

"It would have to be an across-the-board type practice. The industry is competitive, so if we were to adopt it and our competitors don't, it would make a big difference to us. Even with incentives. Well, if the incentives support it, that's fine, but if they don't and it's coming out of our profits and our pockets then... [...] Industry-wide adoption would be mainly the key for it, and/or government forcing it."

Giniw also explained why he thought that public policy might be the way to get around the competition issue: "I would imagine that there's a significant part of this discussion that involves government and public policymaking. [...] One of the barriers, perhaps, to unilaterally deciding to implement a minimum - or a liveable - wage is that you might be out of step with the rest of the competition. If it was more a matter of public policy, then everybody would have to deal with it in the same way." He went on to warn that, if this were to be addressed by the public sector: "a huge amount of consultation with

industry would be important. You'd want to do this work, you know, looking at [the private sector] as partners rather than adversaries.”

Of course, a public policy approach to wage regulation was not an approach favoured by all participants, as the aforementioned resistance to centralized wage regulation indicated. However, Giniw continued by explaining why he saw centralized wage regulation a little differently than some:

“[T]here have, for example, been significant increases to the minimum wage over the last few years. A number of retailers have been quite vocal about those increases in terms of how they feel that they're going to hurt their business. But, the one thing that increases to minimum wages do do, however, is they put everybody on a level playing field. [...] So, while I'm not normally in favour of sort of a ‘big brother’ approach to, you know, to these kinds of issues, [...] it might be an issue that's better addressed through government initiatives in consultation with business rather than expecting individual businesses to step out and, you know, on their own, introduce a living wage.”<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, two participants warned of a major limitation of implementing any sort of provincial-level living wage policy. According to Waagosh: “[A]ssuming there were such a thing and it was mandated or legislated, you'd still be left with the problem that there will be other jurisdictions, most jurisdictions, who wouldn't be having this thing.” These participants were concerned that, due to globalization, certain industries, such as call centres and manufacturing, would suffer competitive disadvantages that transcended geographical borders.

In addition to these more strategy-oriented ideas, three participants shared valuable insights regarding what message a living campaign should communicate in order to be successful. Yágoli posited:

“I think, as we move into the next 10-20 years, when the majority of our labour force is going to be

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<sup>10</sup> The thoughts presented in this quote relating to competition will be revisited in a later section.

retiring, to retain your staff will be critical. Not having to recruit, not having to turnover,” therefore, may become an increasingly large concern for Manitoban employers. At the same time, it may become an equally effective incentive to adopt living wage practices.

Giniw considered whether playing a role in addressing social issues might act as an incentive: “I suppose, if you wanted to think about it like a story, it certainly would be compelling and a great story to tell if you could somehow play a greater role in alleviating some of the poverty and social concerns that exist in [some of the communities we serve].” But, he questioned: “Is it more conducive to doing something that other employers wouldn’t? I don't know.”

Finally, Mahēhkān cautioned that the very language of ‘living wage’ may lead employers to immediately think in terms of the impact on the bottom line. In his view: “I think [employers] think more of it as a higher wage, not necessarily as how that relates to how people live outside of work. [...] Regardless of the value of paying a living wage, I think what people are going to hear is: ‘You're taking money out of my pocket.’”

### **How the Data Relate to the Research Questions: A Brief Summary of Findings**

A little over a year ago, I began working on the design of a qualitative research study that aimed to identify private sector employer perceptions of living wage practice implementation in Manitoba. With the end goal of informing campaigns so that they could be more effective in incentivizing and/or facilitating large-scale adoption of living wage practices, I conducted interviews with employers in low-wage sectors to uncover insight in regards to a specific set of research questions. One way of determining whether I attained my original objective would be to review the findings that relate to each of those questions, as follows.

**Advantages and disadvantages for living wage employers.** Most participants connected the adoption of living wage practices to employer benefits in the form of greater attraction and retention of labour. Some also connected it with feeling good about themselves or moral reasons.

Others revealed that they had difficulty seeing how paying employees better could provide a return on investment. Some questioned the fairness of the living wage concept, given wide variations in workers' living costs, and expressed a preference for the freedom to set their workers' wages based on their perceived need or value to the business. Nearly all, including Migizi, who believed himself to be a living wage employer, expressed that they thought living wage practices had a negative impact on a business' profit margin.

**Challenges to be addressed and resources for doing so.** All participants contributed to a discussion of challenges they associated with paying a living wage in low-wage industries. These included wage compression and being put at a competitive disadvantage with low-wage competitors. Many also shared their thoughts on ways employers might try to recover the increase in labour costs, such as raising prices or reducing staff, and the challenges associated with each. Participants revealed that they were unaware of any existing tools or resources designed specifically to support them in the implementation of living wage practices. They also expressed that the most effective intervention would likely be financial incentives for living wage employers.

**Thoughts on an effective living wage campaign.** Most participants shared thoughts on what campaign messages would be effective, and opinions on the individuals and industries to whom they should be delivered. They also warned of implementation issues that living wage campaign organizers may wish to consider, such as regarding tipping in the food and beverage service sector.

**Conclusion.** The data collected in this study relate directly to the original research questions but, in addition to that, other insights were also collected. For example, a number of potential long-term consequences of wide-scale living wage practice adoption were identified. Overall, the study was successful in achieving its objective.

### Discussion

So, what is to be learned from all this? If anything, the message that resounded the most loudly was that encouraging Manitoban businesses in low-paying industries to adopt living wage practices will be challenging. On a theoretical level, instituting a living wage implies a wage floor, which conflicts with an employer's agency in determining compensation strategies that they believe are fair. On a practical level, making the switch to a living wage policy in a low-paying industry represents a significant increase in labour costs. Many of the employers interviewed did not appear to even consider paying for these costs out of their own pockets, and each of the alternative cost recovery strategies they mentioned was fraught with challenges.

Much of the apparent difficulty that interviewees associated with the implementation of living wage practices, as well as more normative opposition to the concept, can be traced back to neoliberalism. Indeed, the responses collected in interviews, and even the language used in those responses, reflect sociopolitical assumptions associated with this dominant ideology. For example, some participants indicated a preference for wages to be set by market rates rather than centrally, and for minimal governmental intervention, which is consistent with the neoliberal ideal of a purely market-driven economy. Those who purported that raising wage floors would fail to reduce poverty because they would increase inflation belied a neoliberal materialist-individualist understanding of poverty as measured absolutely, to the exclusion of a more holistic, income-inequality understanding of the issue. In particular, the narrative of deserving and being worth certain wages based on productivity was consistent with the meritocratic and materialistic sociopolitical assumption that punishing and rewarding worker productivity with wage adjustments is the most appropriate way to manage human resources.

The influence of the culture of neoliberalism on participants' responses led to certain contradictions and ironies, as well. For example, when proponents of minimal government were asked

how to encourage employers to pay a living wage, they said that employers already wanted to but that government wage subsidies might be the key to successful implementation.

In light of these challenges, however, it is important to consider the cases of Migizi and K'ai, who self-identified as living wage employers in their interviews. Given the number of reasons provided by low-wage employers to show how challenging it would be to pay a living wage in their industries, and that the sampling strategy used in this study in no way intended to locate living wage employers, it is significant that at least two of the 29 businesses in low-paying industries that were contacted may already have been paying living wages despite the odds.

The analysis based on sampling strata revealed that these two employers were the only ones who supported a living wage unconditionally, however one of them also made significant contributions to the discussion on the factors that make it challenging to pay a living wage in those industries. In other words, the underlying theoretical positions held by participants did not fundamentally affect whether employers associated the aforementioned challenges with paying a living wage, but rather only affected how big or insurmountable these challenges were perceived or portrayed in interviews. It would appear, then, the challenges identified should not be considered insurmountable barriers but rather challenges that a strategic living wage campaign could help employers address successfully.

This perspective was further supported by the fourth phase of analysis identified in the Methodology section that looked for patterns among the data that corresponded with Long's strategic framework for compensation. In fact, only a single pattern emerged: among the employers interviewed, the two who identified as living wage employers were those whose industries seemed to fit best with the criteria Long (2006) identified as the most appropriate for a low-wage managerial strategy. Again, given the small sample size, this is not a finding that ought to be generalized. Nonetheless, it does provide additional support for the notion that making the decision to become a living wage employer is not impossible and that many of the challenges associated with making this transition that were

identified in interviews can be overcome. The bottom line for campaign organizers, then, would appear to be that, although they have their work cut out for them, they will be able to recruit a small number of living wage employers in low-paying industries solely on the basis of the moral conviction that it is the right thing to do, yet that they may have more widespread success if they are attentive to and work to strategically address the concerns raised in these interviews.

### **Recommendations for campaign organizers**

Building on this core message, the findings presented in the previous section provide three basic types of key lessons that may be of use to current and future living wage campaign organizers: what they should know (research to be done early on, preferably prior to going public with the campaign), what they should do (strategies to consider when planning the campaign), and what they should say (information and messages to disseminate during the campaign).

First, a review of the considerations that were cause for hesitation or concern for participants as they contemplated the adoption of living wage practices allow us to anticipate some of the resistance and criticism that Manitoba's campaign organizers can expect in future. By getting to know existing data and research relating to these considerations early on, they can be prepared to respond quickly and effectively. For example, based on participants' concerns about potential negative outcomes that might manifest on a broader economic scale as a result of widespread adoption of living wage practices, I would recommend that organizers familiarize themselves with the research documenting the impacts that minimum wage increases and LWOs have had on job creation and employment rates<sup>11</sup>, specifically on low-skilled sectors of the labour market, in jurisdictions similar to theirs. In addition, in light of the uncertainty expressed about whether a living wage campaign would be effective as a poverty reduction strategy, organizers should also make themselves aware of how minimum wage increases and LWOs have affected inflation, as well as poverty levels using both absolute and relative measures. Their

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<sup>11</sup> For examples relevant to Canadian jurisdictions, see Brennan and Stanford (2014), and Green (2015).

arguments might be further bolstered by presenting evidence connecting increased wage floors with health and health care system outcomes, such as Forget's (2013) findings showing statistically significant reductions in hospitalization rates that coincided with the introduction of a guaranteed annual income in Dauphin, Manitoba in the 1970s and persisted afterwards.

The next recommendation stems directly from the comments of the three participants who voiced these concerns about groups who should not benefit from an increased wage floor, namely young workers and tipped workers. One employer, whose operations extended to the neighbouring province of Ontario, offered: "[I]n Ontario they actually have a two-structured - two-tiered system for servers, and restaurant servers and bar servers are paid one wage whereas everybody else is paid a different minimum wage." Another, S'is'oka, shared: "What I would like to see is a minimum wage for 16-18-year-olds or 16 to, you know, whatever would make sense, and then another living wage for adults - adults with experience - any adults." Mahēhkān revealed: "One of the things that we've discussed amongst my peers in the restaurant business is the possibility of a lower wage for tipped employees." No further details were offered in terms of how exactly to implement a two-tiered living wage floor. However, the sheer amount of resistance to the idea of a living wage that appeared to flow from discord with the prospect of applying a higher wage floor to these groups alone justifies further investigation. I would recommend that campaign organizers assess the feasibility, the pros, and the cons of allowing for a two-tiered living wage campaign that would allow for a lower wage for certain groups of workers.

The next major concern that ought to be addressed by a living wage campaign is the threat of low-wage industry competitors. The prospect of having to increase labour costs while continuing to compete in a market-driven economy appeared to be the single largest deterrent to supporting the concept of adopting living wage practices for those interviewed. Despite some expressing resistance to centralized wage regulation, many suggested that private sector employers in their industries would be



more open to adopting living wage practices if they were implemented across the entire industry. I would recommend that organizers seriously consider a campaign strategy that involves negotiation with industry leaders on a collective level to see whether this might be an option in their jurisdiction. However, it should be noted that, for certain industries, this would require working with industry leaders across provincial or even national borders due to the increasing globalization of markets.

A modified approach might even include elements of both governmental legislation and organizational policy. This could consist of centralized regulation, such as requiring all businesses to incorporate cost-of-living adjustments in their compensation strategies, while still leaving the details of implementation up to individual employers. This hybrid approach might effectively find more politically palatable middle ground by simultaneously mitigating concerns about the competitive disadvantages of individual-level implementation and about compromising employer agency through centralized decision-making.

A fourth recommendation for strategies organizers should consider actually comes from the literature review. The results of the earlier review of the curricula and course materials for the Asper School of Business' courses relating to compensation suggest an additional potential leverage point for a living wage campaign. They suggest that the academic training of Manitoba's business graduates may not include giving consideration to the relationship between the compensation strategies they will choose as employers and the socioeconomic consequences for their future staff, such as the possibility of sustaining a situation of working poverty. The potential may exist for campaign organizers to put these issues on the radar for the next generations of business leaders by intervening in the academic sphere. I would recommend that Manitoba's campaign organizers consider working with faculty and administration in the Asper School of Business to integrate raising awareness of the phenomenon of working poverty and how employer decision-making can impact the situation into its curricula. This may involve communicating with the publishers of the textbooks used in the Human Resource Management

and Compensation courses. Such a systemic intervention could have a significant and sustainable impact, if primarily a long-term one, on the prevalence of low-wage employment in the province.

Finally, there are three lessons for organizers that relate to a campaign's communications strategy. Many of the things that were communicated in interviews, including the vocabulary, the presumptions, and the underlying moral stances of participants, provide insight into the messages and delivery strategies that might be more effective in opening employers in low-paying industries up to the idea of adopting living wage practices.

First, consider the comments shared by participants that revealed misconceptions regarding low-wage employment and the living wage. Amik recommended that a living wage campaign focus on small businesses because he thought bigger businesses paid better: "I can't see how large business, large corporations, public corporations have to worry about a living wage policy, I think they're more above it already with their [staff]." Another concerning perspective lies in the aforementioned apparent difficulty that four of the participants interviewed had in identifying any way that an employer might benefit from the adoption of living wage practices. These comments appear to suggest that there are key gaps in the knowledge of the population that would be targeted by a living wage campaign's communications plan, and that addressing these gaps might have a positive impact on support for the campaign. I would recommend that organizers specifically consider disseminating information on: (a) the prevalence of working poverty and low wage employment locally, including the distribution of those jobs among different industries and business sizes; and (b) the benefits to employers laid out in the well-documented business case for living wage practices.

Second, the key findings presented earlier that related to interviewees' theoretical and moral perspectives provide insight into how employers might react to certain language. Some words took on different meanings for different groups: for example, the concept of a living wage was labeled as unfair by some participants, while Waagosh indicated support for it as "a fairness question." Others seemed to

put certain people on the defensive: Mahēhkān suggested that the phrase “living wage” would immediately lead many employers to think “money out of my pocket.” As some of these discoveries were counterintuitive to me, I would recommend that organizers review the findings uncovered in this study in planning their campaign’s communications strategy and to consider using focus groups to vet their ideas to ensure that they will achieve the desired effect before going public with them.

Third, the analysis phase that reviewed the data using the strata from the sampling strategy revealed that participants from different business sizes and industries had different perceptions and responded differently to questions. In particular, interviewees representing smaller businesses seemed less likely to be aware of the advantages that living wage employers enjoy that make up the business case for the living wage. Meanwhile, participants with significant retail sales and cashier staff appeared to view the increased ability to attract qualified labour as a more compelling incentive to pay a living wage than their counterparts from other industries. The implication is that different messages are not equally effective for all employers, so I would recommend that campaign organizers invoke a communications strategy that allows them the flexibility to address different subpopulations of interest differently. Unfortunately, however, uncovering insight into which messages would be most effective for each business size and industry was largely beyond the scope of this study, apart from the two observations noted here.

### **Implications**

Having collected, analyzed, and presented these data, this study has contributed to filling the gap in the literature identified by Kraut, Klinger and Collins (2000) relating to non-living wage employers’ position on living wage practices. Armed with this new knowledge, existing and future campaign organizers in Manitoba and elsewhere could adapt their campaigns to be more successful in two ways.

First, this understanding could be applied to improving the effectiveness of campaign communications by meeting employers where they are. The data provide a window into the language

and arguments that speak to the experience of the private sector, as well as into their misconceptions. A communications strategy designed to incorporate these considerations may appear more appealing and less adversarial to employers, which may make the campaign more effective at persuading them to support or join the movement.

Second, this knowledge could be applied to making a living wage campaign more resilient by preparing for future challenges in advance. For example, the implementation challenges foreseen by interviewees may have proven damaging to the momentum of a campaign that was not prepared to address them. Similarly, participants identified concerns they had that, if not addressed by a campaign, would provide a reason enough for them to withdraw their support. By providing organizers with advance notice of these potential hurdles, they could prepare for them and help their campaigns remain resilient in the face of multiple challenges.

The findings are, of course, most relevant to Manitoba, where they contribute valuable insight that could help support the launch of a local living wage campaign, which would become an important part of the province's comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. However, while the objective was not to enable statistical inference, the findings may also be of use for the greater international living wage movement, as no evidence of this sort of study was found by the rapid structured systematic review conducted during background research.

### **Summary of Limitations**

Still, the findings must be interpreted within the context of this study's limitations. The small sample size, first of all, is cause for caution. Though statistical generalization of findings was never an objective, it is important to remember that the data collected from such a small sample may not be an accurate indicator of the prevalence of the perceptions and perspectives of the population from which participants were drawn. In other words, the opinions reflected by comments uttered consistently among this sample may not be as widely held as it would seem whereas, on the other hand, comments

shared only by a single participant may actually represent common perceptions among Manitoban employers. Also, as there were many such ideas that were expressed only by a single participant, this diversity of perspectives within the sample suggests that a larger sample would have uncovered an even greater diversity, and that many ideas and perspectives were likely missed.

In addition, it is important to remember the characteristics of the specific population from which the sample was drawn. Only businesses headquartered in Manitoba were contacted, excluding corporate entities headquartered elsewhere as well as associate companies and subsidiaries headquartered in Manitoba but for whom the parent company is headquartered elsewhere. This is a particularly important limitation given that these likely account for a large number of low-wage positions in the province. Coincidentally, the sample was largely constituted by employers whose operations were restricted to Manitoba, so only two participants were able to comment from the perspective of businesses operating in other jurisdictions, although one of these did represent a multinational corporation. As a result, the exclusion of many large, multinational corporations such as “big box” retailers, many of whom have been criticized in the media for their predatory low-wage practices, may have led to an underrepresentation of perspectives that pertain to a large proportion of low-wage jobs in the province.

### **Strengths**

These limitations notwithstanding, the study is not without strengths. It was grounded in a strong critical theoretical analysis, and accompanied by a practical and meaningful knowledge translation plan. It applied a purposeful sampling strategy that was successful in collecting data from participants representing the very lowest-wage sectors of Canada’s labour market.

The overall study was also designed to achieve standards of systematicity and rigour, informed by the following six criteria for guiding and evaluating the quality of community psychology research, proposed by Barker and Pistrang (2005).

**Quality assurance.** Beginning with a discussion of quality criteria that the aforementioned authors posited were applicable to all research, both the context and the purpose of the study were clearly articulated in the early sections of this proposal so that the reader might understand the impetus for the study and appraise its procedures and my interpretations using this lens. A critical theoretical analysis was presented as justification for further investment of time and resources in conducting the study.

Second, the research design was question-driven rather than method-driven: through the explication of the research paradigm and the review of relevant theory and empirical data presented in the earlier part of the proposal, researcher decision-making regarding design and methods of data collection and analysis were justified. Third, the application of these methods was clearly described to ensure transparency regarding how the study was conducted, informing readers in their appraisal of its conclusions.

While these three criteria are arguably applicable to all scientific research, other criteria in Barker and Pistrang's (2005) model focus specifically on ensuring the trustworthiness of methods and findings in qualitative studies such as this one. For example, the fourth criterion considered was the disclosure of my perspective. Recognizing the influence of my personal background on my actions and interpretations as a researcher, I have applied the tool of reflexivity to ensure that the reader can better evaluate the conclusions drawn in this study. This resulted in a series of memos generated during data collection and analysis which contributed to the Discussion section and the various thoughts on limitations presented earlier.

Fifth, while the results of any qualitative study are subject to the interpretation of the researcher, I endeavoured to ground the presentation of my interpretation solidly in the data. Thus, the reader might make their own judgments about the fit between the data and my interpretations or, in having the opportunity to see raw data in the report, even consider other interpretations.

Sixth, and finally, an interpretive framework was constructed following the axial coding phase, as described in the Analysis section, to help the reader fathom the scope of the data collected and understand them in context.

### Final Thoughts

This qualitative study uncovered the perspectives, preconceptions, and positions held by ten individuals responsible for setting the wages of Manitobans in low-paying industries vis-à-vis the living wage concept, both in theory and in practice. The findings presented earlier fill a gap in the literature because they relate to the voluntary adoption of living wage practices by the private sector, whereas similar studies conducted in the past have either followed living wage ordinances or focused on minimum wage hikes. They will also be of great use to the two local not-for-profit community organizations that are leading the planning of a Manitoban living wage campaign.

The study also contributed immensely to my learning as a researcher and a graduate student. On a practical level, it afforded me the opportunity to hone my research skills. I was able to work on improving my efficiency and effectiveness with purposeful literature reviews, and also try my hand at a more systematic one. I got the chance to design and execute a purposeful sampling strategy built on existing research. Whereas my honours thesis involved a very structured data collection strategy using existing documents, here I was able to try out semi-structured interviews with real, warm bodies; I was exposed to the challenges associated with trying to maintain a certain degree of systematicity and rigour while collecting and analyzing data from conversations with participants.

A lot of what I learned, however, was less tangible. I began this endeavour with a strong vision, purpose, and conviction: I believed that a living wage was a great way to reduce poverty and wanted to understand how best to persuade the low-wage private sector to make the switch. However, the more I learned from the materials I read in the background research and the interviews I conducted, the more I came to appreciate the true complexity of the phenomenon I was studying. I watched as my ideals were challenged, and as my view of them became increasingly critical. Ultimately, I still feel that a living wage campaign can do much to alleviate poverty, but this view is now accompanied with a series of caveats and cautions that I did not fully grasp at the outset. I still am, and think I always will be, a researcher



who is driven by the cause of distributive and procedural justice (Prilleltensky, 2012), however I am thankful for the opportunity that this thesis has given me to remind me to remain critical of my own thought process, however informed I might think it is. I think that one of the most important lessons I have learned from this experience is that, though I might graduate from my program, I must remember that I will always be a student.

This has been an incredibly challenging journey, yet also very fulfilling. I hope you have enjoyed reading about it.

## Appendix A

Levels and Types of Intervention Strategies (adapted from Eckerle Curwood, 2012, p. 31)

	Effect Amelioration	Low-Impact Poverty Reduction	High-Impact Poverty Reduction	Poverty Prevention
Individual / Family	<b>1A</b> Strategies providing people with a better standard of living, but without reducing the depth of their poverty (i.e. emergency assistance programs, rent banks).	<b>1B</b> Strategies reducing the depth of people's poverty, but not enough to remove them from poverty, such as reduced-cost goods or services (i.e. rental assistance programs, reduced-fare transit passes).	<b>1C</b> Strategies that help people to exit poverty (i.e. job training and placement, home ownership programs).	<b>1D</b> Strategies designed to ensure that people do not fall into poverty (i.e. early intervention programs for at-risk youth).
Community	<b>2A</b> Strategies seeking to ensure that the community has resources to sustain the existence of members living in poverty (i.e. food reclamation programs, community involvement programs).	<b>2B</b> Strategies increasing community resources in ways that allow for the reduction of the depth of people's poverty, but not for their removal from poverty (i.e. creation of minimum-wage jobs, increasing and strengthening organizational alliances to provide wrap-around services).	<b>2C</b> Strategies changing the community in ways that make it possible for more members to exit poverty (i.e. microenterprise development, community loan funds).	<b>2D</b> Strategies increasing community capacity in ways designed to ensure that local residents are prevented from entering poverty (i.e. community economic development, local hiring protocols)
System	<b>3A</b> Policies and practices addressing the symptoms of poverty, rather than poverty itself (i.e. low-income home energy assistance programs, provision of supplementary health benefits to the working poor).	<b>3B</b> Policies and practices providing a level of support for individuals in poverty, but not enabling them to exit poverty (earned income tax credits, reductions in the tax burden for low-income people).	<b>3C</b> Policies and practices that enable people to move out of poverty (i.e. living wage policies, educational grant or bursary programs).	<b>3D</b> Policies and practices endeavouring to affect a society without poverty (i.e. universal benefit programs such as nationalized health care).

## Appendix B

## Rapid structured systematic review search keyword phrases

A	living wage					
B	private sector			employer(s)		
C	attitudes	beliefs	motivation	opinions	perceptions	perspective(s)

Every search was conducted using a phrase in the following format: “A” “B+C.” That is, the search term “living wage” was included in every search. In addition, both row B keywords were arranged in phrases in every possible combination with each of the keywords in row C (i.e. “private sector attitudes,” “private sector beliefs,” [...] “employer attitudes,” and so on).

## Appendix C

## Quantitative summary of the results of the rapid structured systematic review

Database	Population keyword*	Descriptor keyword	Total results	Results screened in	List
Social Sciences Research Network	private sector	attitudes	0	0	
		beliefs	0	0	
		motivation	0	0	
		opinions	0	0	
		perceptions	1	0	
		perspective	1	0	
	employer(s)	attitudes	0	0	
		beliefs	0	0	
		motivation	1	0	
		opinions	0	0	
		perceptions	0	0	
		perspective	0	0	
Google	private sector	attitudes	14	0	
		beliefs	3	0	
		motivation	6	0	
		opinions	7	0	
		perceptions	8	0	
		perspective	42	0	
	employer(s)	attitudes	100+	1	Whakatutuki (2013)
		beliefs	30	0	
		motivation	47	0	
		opinions	60	3	Grant & Trautner (2004) Martin (2006) Luce (2011)
		perceptions	100+	0	
		perspective	100+	0	

\* Every search also included the topical keyword phrase “living wage”

## Appendix D

## Recruitment Letter

Paul Sheridan  
Researcher – Community Psychology  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
204-599-8159  
sher0552@mylaurier.ca

Month /Day /Year

[Name of potential participant]  
[Title]  
[Company]  
[Address]  
[City, Province, Postal Code]

Dear [Salutation and Last Name],

I am a Master's student at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, conducting a study on the topic of *A Living Wage for All Manitobans?: The Private Sector's Perspective* (REB approval #4077). The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions of employers in Manitoba's private sector with regards to the implementation of "living wage" practices.

**You are receiving this invitation as an individual responsible for the compensation of Manitoban [labour sector] workers.** You are among ten to 12 individuals who have been selected to participate in a confidential one-on-one interview in order to share your perspective on the challenges associated with applying such practices in your industry.

**The interview would take about 30 minutes to complete and would be entirely private and confidential.** As a token of appreciation for your participation in the study, you would be entered into a draw for a gift card in the amount of \$100.

Your participation, as an individual, is being requested because **your perspective is particularly important to this study for a number of reasons**, including the industry in which you operate, and the size of your workforce. Your feedback would help ensure that the pros and cons of paying a living wage from *your* perspective are understood. This may lead to decision-making in Manitoba that would better meet the needs and wishes of employers like **[Company]**.

**I will call you during business hours during the week of Month /Day /Year** in order to confirm your willingness to participate, to answer any questions you might have, and to set up a time and place for the interview that would be convenient for you.

Thanking you sincerely in advance for your time and consideration,

Paul Sheridan  
Principal Investigator

Dr. Ketan Shankardass  
Assistant Professor & Academic Supervisor

Appendix E  
Follow-Up Script

- This is Paul Sheridan calling.
  - I am following up on a letter I sent you last week regarding a research project I am working on on the topic of a living wage.
  - Is now a good time to talk to you about that?
    - Yes – continue
    - No – When would be a better time for me to call back?
- Just to refresh your memory :
  - The study is about understanding the perspective of Manitoba’s private sector on the idea of paying a living wage.
  - I hope to interview ten to 12 employers, and by that I mean individuals responsible for determining their staff’s rate of pay. In the case of [your organization] would that be you?
    - Yes – continue
    - No – Okay, with whom should I be getting in touch, instead?
- Great! So I would like to book a ½-hour face-to-face interview at a time and place that would be convenient for you.
  - Your participation would be entirely private and confidential because it’s important that you be able to speak openly and honestly about the issue without fear of any risks or consequences for you or your business.
- Do you have any questions about the study or the invitation you received?
- Could I count on your participation?
  - Yes – continue
  - No – Is there something you are concerned about that I might be able to change so that you would be willing to participate?
    - No – Okay, thank you for your time.
- Excellent!
  - My schedule is flexible. When would be a good time for you?
  - Where would be the best place for us to meet?
- Perfect! I look forward to meeting you!

## Appendix F

## Consent Form

Wilfrid Laurier University – Department of Psychology  
**INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT**

*A Living Wage for All Manitobans: The Private Sector's Perspective*

Paul Sheridan, M. A. Candidate, Wilfrid Laurier University (Principal Investigator)  
Dr. Ketan Shankardass, Associate Professor, Wilfrid Laurier University (Academic Supervisor)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview for the study *A Living Wage for All Manitobans: The Private Sector's Perspective*. The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions of employers in Manitoba's private sector with regards to the implementation of living wage practices.

**INFORMATION**

Under the assumption that the legislated minimum wage in Manitoba is below the rate needed to support certain families' basic needs, the living wage movement proposes that a higher standard rate of pay would be an effective way of addressing working poverty. The Manitoba office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculated the 2013 hourly living wage for a two-parent, two-child family to be \$14.07 in Winnipeg, while Manitoba's minimum wage in most industries is currently \$10.70 an hour.

You are among ten to 12 Winnipeg-based employers who are being asked to participate in one-on-one interviews in order to share your perspectives on adopting living wage practices in your workplaces. The interview should take about 30 minutes to complete; it will be audio-recorded and transcribed in order to facilitate analysis. Your participation will be anonymous, in accordance with the measures laid out in the Privacy and Confidentiality section below. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.

**RISKS**

You may be asked to disclose information of a sensitive nature that could potentially pose a small risk to you or to your business if it were traced back to you. For this reason, measures will be taken to ensure that any personal information you share during the interview will be kept confidential in accordance with the measures laid out in the Privacy and Confidentiality section below.

Although there are no anticipated emotional risks resulting from your participation in this research, there is a slight chance that you may feel self-conscious, embarrassed, or guilty when participating in the interview. These feelings would likely be temporary. It is important to note that the purpose of the research is not to assess or evaluate your wage practices, but rather to understand your perspective relating to paying a living wage in your workplace.

Of course, your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. Please note that you are free to skip any question you choose or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you experience any lasting negative feelings as a result of participating in this study, please contact one of the researchers (see below for contact information).

**BENEFITS**

By participating in this research study, you will be contributing valuable insight to the research on voluntary wage setting as a low-income poverty reduction strategy. Your feedback would help ensure

that the advantages and the challenges associated with paying a living wage from your perspective are understood. This may lead to decision-making in Manitoba that would better meet the needs and wishes of employers like you.

#### **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that the information that you share during the interview is kept secure and confidential. First, your name and contact information, in addition to this form, will be kept separate from any data resulting from your participation; the audio recording of the interview, as well as the transcription of that recording, will be coded and stored in a separate database.

Second, the aforementioned data will be stored securely, and only the researchers identified at the top of this form will have access to them. Your signed confidentiality form will be stored in the principal investigator's locked home office; your name and contact information will be kept in a password-protected data file; and records of your interview will be stored in a separate password-protected database. All tracking data, including your consent form and contact information, will be destroyed on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 by Paul Sheridan and/or Dr. Ketan Shankardass. The de-identified records of the interview will be kept indefinitely to enable potential independent verification.

Finally, at the end of this form, you will be asked to provide permission to use your direct quotes in reports, publications, or presentations that may be developed as a result of this study. If your quotes were to be published or distributed in any way, all information that might allow the audience to identify you would be removed so that they could not be linked to you or your business. If you wish, you may also review any of your quotes before they are distributed; please inform the principal investigator if you would like the opportunity to review your quotes.

#### **COMPENSATION**

As a token of appreciation for sharing your time and insight for this study, you will be entered into a draw for a gift card in the amount of \$100. The draw will take place on February 1, 2015. The odds of winning will be 1/10 and 1/12, depending on the number of participants interviewed. The winner will be notified using the contact information provided at the end of this form and have the choice of receiving the gift card for either Green Bean Coffee Imports or Diversity Catering.

#### **CONTACT**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the principal investigator, Paul Sheridan, at [sher0552@mylaurier.ca](mailto:sher0552@mylaurier.ca), or his academic supervisor, Dr. Ketan Shankardass, at [kshankardass@wlu.ca](mailto:kshankardass@wlu.ca).

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board (REB #4077). However, if you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a research participant have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Robert Basso, Chair of the University Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University at 519-884-1970, extension 4994, or at [rbasso@wlu.ca](mailto:rbasso@wlu.ca).

#### **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you have the right to omit any question(s) or procedure(s) you choose, and you may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study, your data will be removed from the study and destroyed.

#### **FEEDBACK AND PUBLICATION**



The results of this study will be included in the Master's thesis of the principal investigator. They may be disseminated in the form of presentations, electronic transfers, reports, and academic journal articles. These will be shared with project partners, including the Manitoba office of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network and its Living Wage Committee, and may also be shared at conferences, as well as with other individuals and organizations. If you would be interested in being informed of the results of this study, contact the principal investigator on or before April 30, 2015, and a feedback summary will be made available to you upon the study's conclusion.

**CONSENT**

I give permission to use my de-identified direct quotes in publications and other dissemination of the results of this study, subject to the conditions above.

YES NO 

If I win the gift card draw, or have asked to review my direct quotes prior to publication or other dissemination, I prefer to be contacted by (check and provide all that apply):

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix G  
Interview Guide

1. Can you briefly explain what it is that your organization does?
  - a. Mission/goals?
2. What does your workforce look like?
  - a. How many employees?
  - b. Which services are contracted out?
3. Theoretically speaking, what do you think about the idea of adopting a living wage policy?
  - a. How does the idea of a living wage policy fit with your idea of fairness or responsibility?
  - b. What disadvantages do you see for yourself as an employer?
    - i. For example, some employers have said they think they would have to cut jobs to afford paying a living wage.
  - c. What advantages?
    - i. For example, some living wage employers talk about lower employee turnover.
4. On a more practical level, which barriers or challenges do you face that affect the feasibility of adopting a living wage policy?
  - a. Why would it be challenging to pay a living wage in your workplace?
  - b. Which outside pressures would make it difficult for your organization to pay a living wage?
5. On a practical level, again, which factors do you see as being supportive or helpful in making it feasible for you to adopt a living wage policy?
  - a. What about your workplace would be conducive to that?
    - i. For example, perhaps most of your workers already earn a living wage.

- b. What outside supports are you aware of that you think would be helpful?
6. What could be done to encourage you to adopt living wage practices at your organization?
  - a. Which incentives could realistically be provided that would motivate you?
  - b. What needs to change to make this feasible for you?
  - c. On what should a living wage campaign focus its energy in order to be successful in Manitoba?

Appendix H  
Participant Profiles

Name	Gender <sup>12</sup>	Labour Sector(s)	Workforce Size	Living Wage Employer <sup>13</sup>
Amik	Male	Food and beverage preparation, sales, and service occupations	<40	No
Giniw	Male	Retail salespersons and cashiers	400+	Unsure
K'ai	Female	Clerical occupations	40-400	Yes
Mahēhkān	Male	Food and beverage preparation, sales, and service occupations	40-400	No
Migizi	Male	Travel, accommodations, and other sales and service occupations	40-400	Yes
Minōsis	Female	Food and beverage preparation, sales, and service occupations	40-400	No
Mōswa	Male	Travel, accommodations, and other sales and service occupations	40-400	No
S'is'oka	Female	Clerical occupations; Travel, accommodations, and other sales and service occupations	<40	No
Waagosh	Male	Clerical occupations	<40	n/a <sup>14</sup>
Yágoli	Female	Retail salespersons and cashiers	400+	No

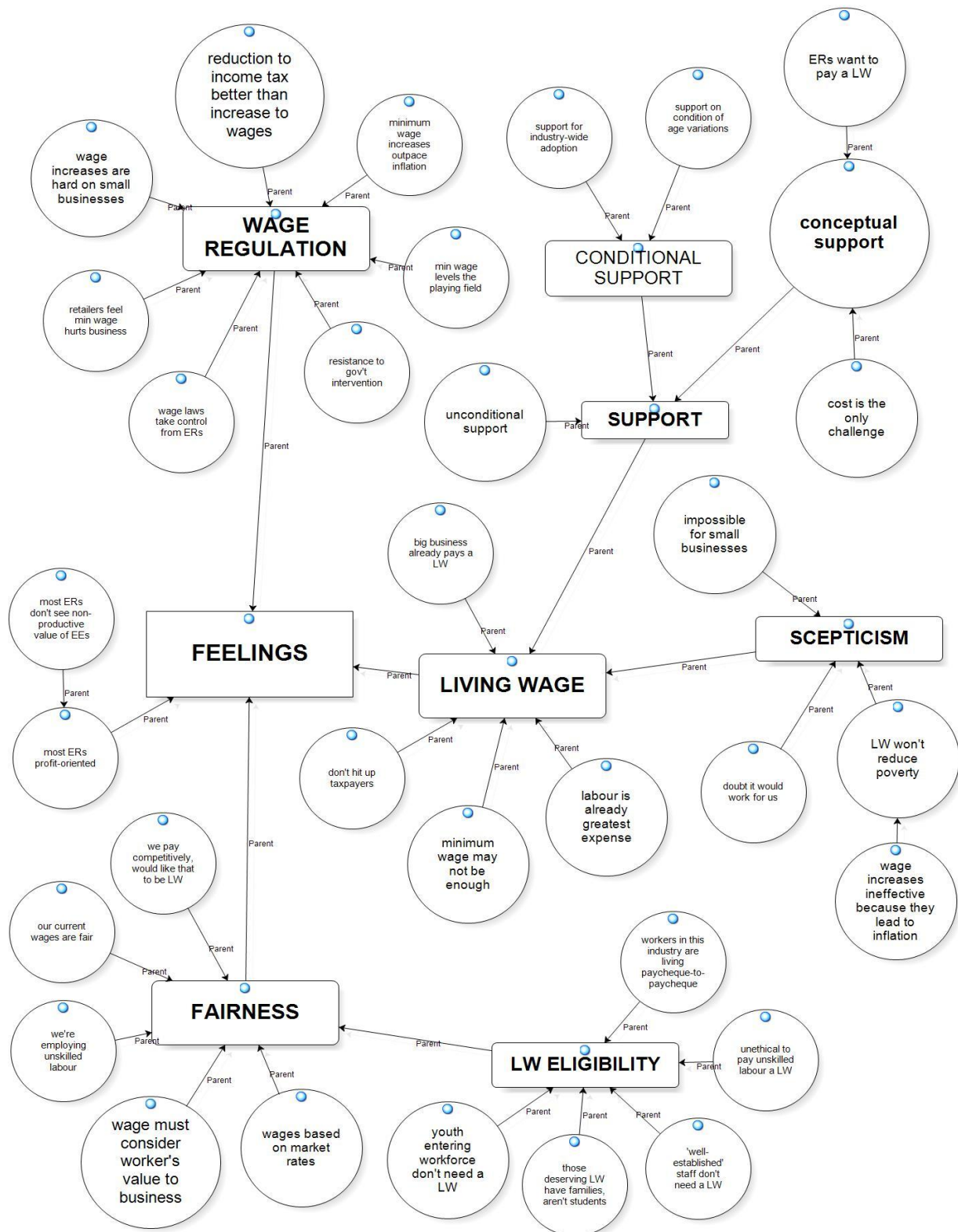
<sup>12</sup> Participants were not asked to declare their gender identity. The gender indicated in this table is merely a humble assumption based on my observations and may not necessarily be accurate.

<sup>13</sup> None of the businesses represented by participants were recognized as living wage employers in any official capacity. The status indicated here is based on voluntary self-identification that occurred during interviews.

<sup>14</sup> This participant represented a business that did not have any low-wage positions internally but that contracted services out to low-wage employers as part of its daily operations.

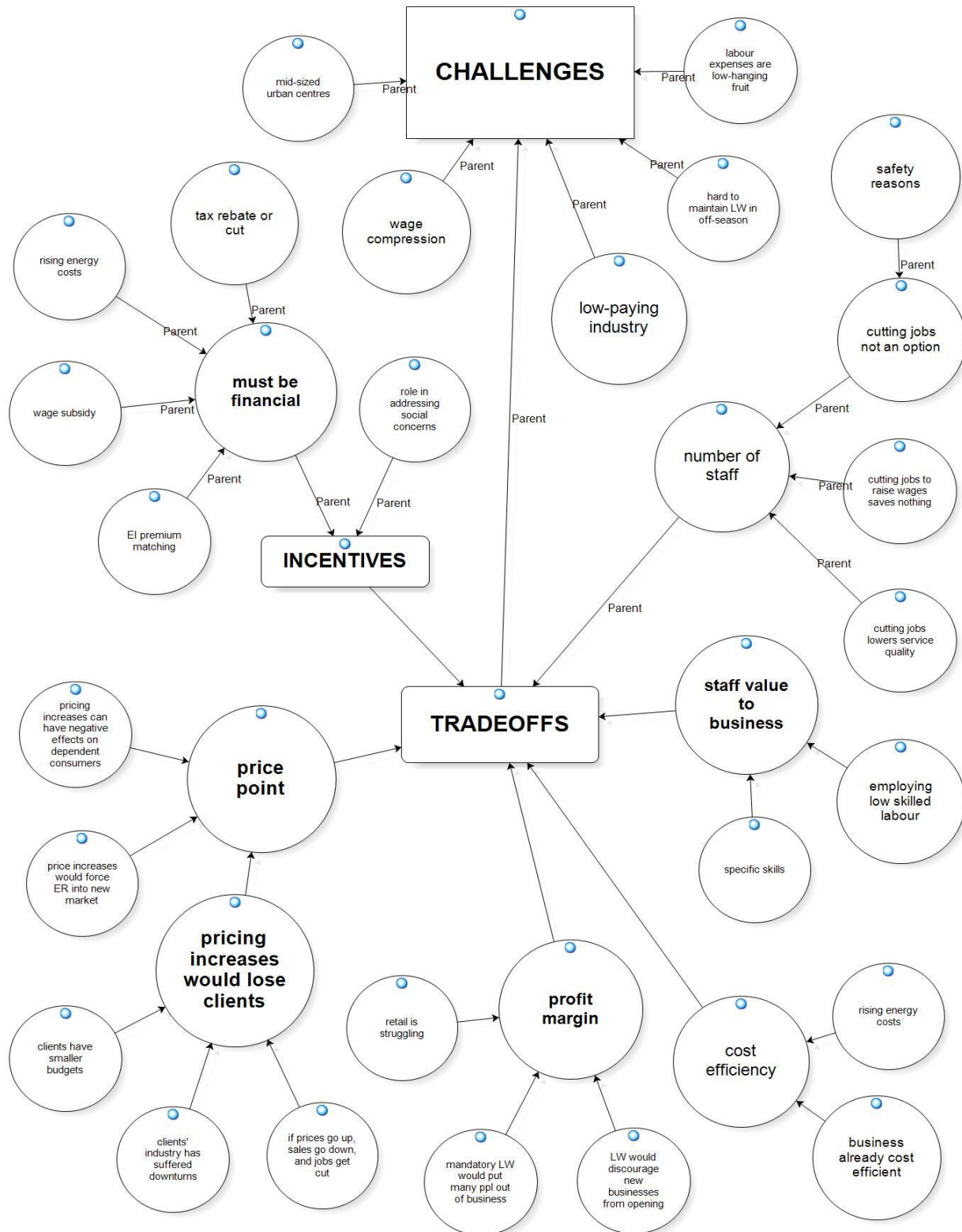
Appendix I

Network Diagram: Feelings



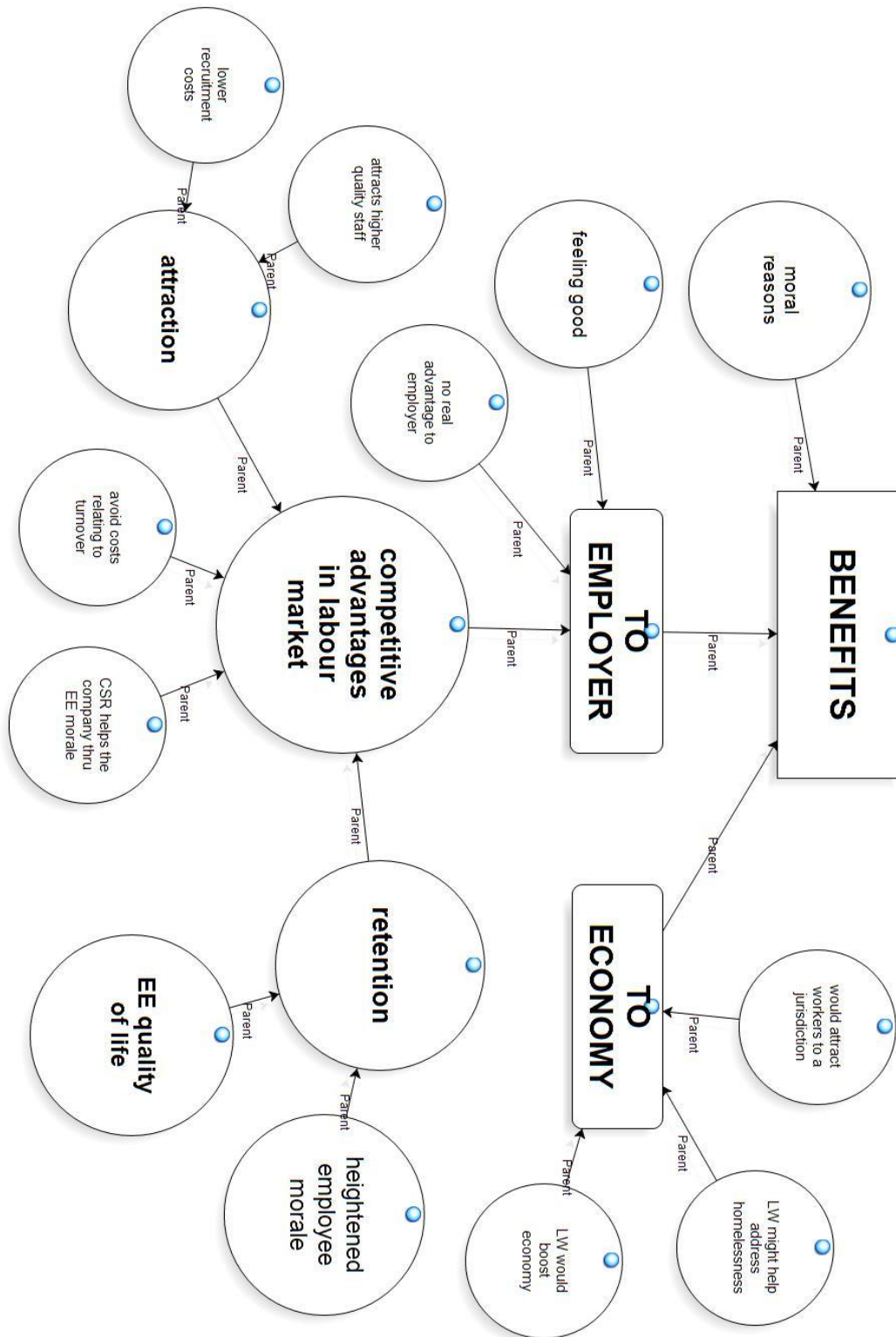
Appendix J

Network Diagram: Challenges



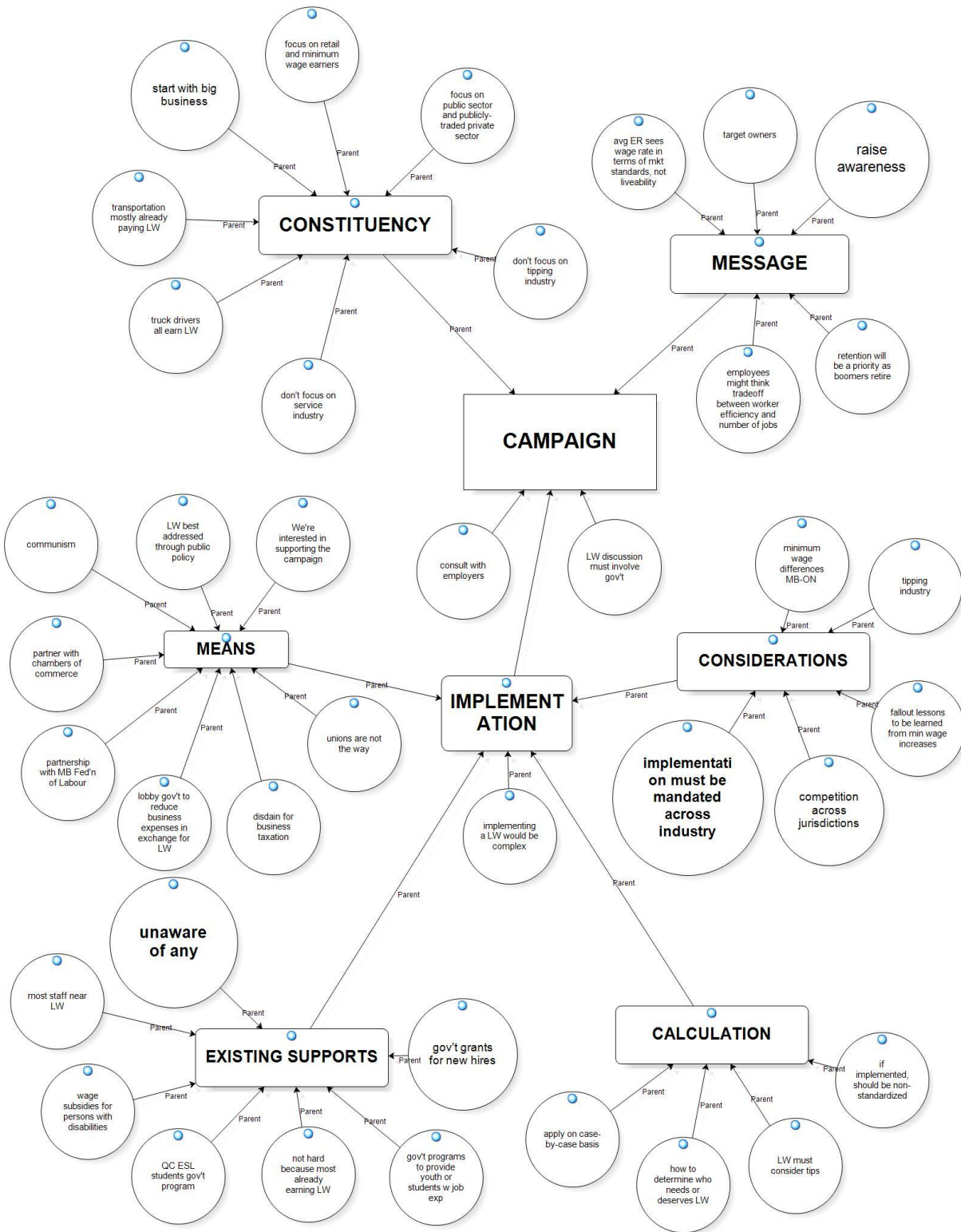
Appendix K

Network Diagram: Benefits



Appendix L

Network Diagram: Campaign





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