

New York Performance Standards Consortium

Center for Inquiry in Teaching and Learning

Moderation Study

2007-08

Student Exemplars in Social Studies

7

New York Performance Standards Consortium

Exemplars of Consortium Student Work

The teachers of the New York Performance Standards Consortium schools participated in a moderation study conducted by the Center for Inquiry in Teaching and Learning, the Consortium's professional development center. The student work included in this booklet was assessed by hundreds of Consortium teachers involved in the moderation process. Using the Consortium rubrics and evaluating papers from schools other than their own, the teachers reached consensus on the level of accomplishment of each paper.

The Moderation Process— Phase I

In the spring of 2007, Consortium staffs submitted student performance assessment papers (known as PBATs, performance-based assessment tasks) and the rubrics used to evaluate the work. Each school submitted three papers in each of the following academic disciplines: English, social studies, math, and science. The papers represented the span of the rubric rankings: Outstanding, Good, Competent, and Needs Revision.

From the hundreds of papers submitted, 33 were assembled for Phase I of the process. Papers at either extreme of the assessment rankings— exhibiting either very highly- or lowly-skilled work— were removed since they were more reflective of individual students than of the general Consortium student population.

Phase II

On a Saturday in late September, 150 teachers from the Consortium schools gathered to assess student work. Each teacher individually assessed three to four papers, then met with a group of about ten teachers, each representing a different Consortium school. They discussed and debated the quality of the papers and assignments, their individual assessments, and then worked together to complete a "consensus rubric."

Using the papers that had achieved the greatest consensus, packets of 3 papers each, in each discipline (a total of 12 papers), were distributed to the Consortium schools for school-based assessment using the Consortium rubrics.

Results

The moderation study results are considered "reliable" for papers that received a passing score (i.e., Competent or better) on 80% or more of the consensus rubrics. Those papers are included in this collection, along with their modal score.

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**A Better Future:
Was the Ruling to Integrate in Brown vs. Board of
Education a Success or a Failure?**

Assessment: Good

**A Better Future, Was the Ruling to integrate in Brown vs. Board of Education
A Success or a Failure?**

The Brown vs. Board of Education case was one of the most important cases heard by the Supreme Court in the history of the Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor but must be demanded by the oppressed."¹ This is what little Linda Brown and her family did. It was unfair that Linda, and many other black children, had to walk miles to go to a school because the one in her neighborhood was only for white children. Linda could not attend the Sumner School, which was closer to her home, because of the color of her skin. Being tied down by these "separate but equal" laws was an injustice to the Brown family, to all African Americans, and to any individual who believed in equality. Finally, African American citizens had enough of it and took it to court. In this paper, I will show how this case was successful. First, I will show how these laws were upholding legal segregation making black children believe they were inferior. Second, I will show how the Brown vs. Board of Education case overturned "separate but equal" laws that ended segregation de jure. Third, I will show it was successful in leading to other civil rights actions like boycotts and Sit-ins. Finally, I will show how Brown vs. Board was successful because it helped integrate all formerly white schools in the South.

The question of what is equality is so controversial it can only be an opinion. In the dictionary it states being equal means "alike in amount, rank, value, size and etc."² The Fourteenth Amendment says

¹ King, Letter from Birmingham Jail.

² "Equality": American Dictionary Fourth Edition

No state shall make or enforce any law, which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.³

This means for anyone born or given citizenship in the United States, their life, liberty, and property will be protected and cannot be violated without proper due process of law.

Given both of these definitions, how can "separate" be equal? Any human being should be allowed to eat, live, work and just live life in the same area without being judged based on the color of their skin.

In the Plessy vs. Ferguson case in 1896, however, the "separate but equal" doctrine was upheld by the Supreme Court as consistent with the Fourteenth Amendment in 1896. After this, *segregation de jure* quickly expanded throughout the South to schools, trains, restaurants, theaters, and bathrooms. The Plessy case prohibited blacks from using "white" property. Homer Plessy was a one eighth black and seven eighths white. In 1892, he chose to sit in the white car of a Louisiana railroad train. Because he was one eighth black, he was arrested. Plessy took the state of Louisiana to court for violating his Fourteenth Amendment rights. Plessy, however, was found guilty. He then appealed the case and took the case to the Supreme Court. He was found guilty again and the "separate but equal" doctrine became legal in the south. Judge Henry Brown who wrote the majority opinion said

The object of the Fourteenth Amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either.⁴

³ Hakim pp. 164

⁴ "After the Civil War"

Brown believed the Fourteenth Amendment did not intend to bring races together. Blacks were entitled to have the same things as whites, in his opinion, but separately.

The Brown family, their attorney Thurgood Marshall, and Dr. Kenneth Clark proved Judge Henry Brown wrong sixty years later. In *Brown v. Board*, the Court held that segregated schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment's doctrine that "No state shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law."⁵ What was key to the success Brown case was Clark's the "doll study."

Dr. Kenneth Clark was the first black to earn a doctorate in psychology from Columbia University. He believed that the "racist system in the U.S inevitably destroys and damages human beings; it brutalizes and dehumanizes them, black and whites alike."⁶ Thurgood Marshall told the Supreme Court that segregation was affecting black children mentally. Marshall had to prove this to the court. Dr. Clark a native of New York, traveled to Clarendon County in South Carolina, where he conducted a test on 16 black children. In the study, Clark showed each child a black doll and a white doll. Then asked them what they thought of each. The results of the study were that "Eleven of them said the black doll looked "bad" and seven of them said the white doll was "nice".⁷ Dr. Clark came to the conclusion that black children saw themselves as inferior, and they accepted the inferiority as part of reality. His study helped make the Brown case successful because he showed that separating children based on race cannot be consistent with treating them equally. The Brown case led to the fight that allowed African-American children like myself to have the opportunities we have today.

⁵ Hakim, p.162.

⁶ Richard Severo, p.1

⁷ Richard Severo, p.2.

With the help of Dr. Clark the Brown vs. Board case overturned "separate but equal" laws laid down by the Plessy case. This was a great accomplishment. There were several other cases that tried to overturn this law but failed. Of course it wasn't a "big bang" in the sense that blacks and whites integrated themselves easily but slowly and surely blacks were integrating schools. Statistics show that in 1954 there were 0.001% black students in majority white schools and in 1976 it went up to 37.6% black students in majority white schools (Orfield). In twenty-two years, this may seem like a long time but many big changes come in time.

The decision on segregated schools was seen as an atomic bomb to racist whites. They could not deal with the fact the blacks were being treated as equal citizens. The comparison people gave blacks gaining there equality were shocking "When you look at Brown you are looking at a moment so powerful it is equivalent of the big bang in our solar system."⁸ Not only did the Brown case decision desegregate schools, it also gave blacks the encouragement to fight for their rights.

Many people believe the Brown vs. Board of Education case was a failure. Even though the "separate but equal" laws were finally made illegal after Brown in 1954, many whites continued to keep blacks down through terror groups like the Ku Klux Klan. In addition, blacks have been continually ostracized from mainstream society through employment and being denied credit to obtain a mortgage for a home. Andrew Hacker showed statistics that in 1990 that white males had a 47.2% of white collar jobs and a 39.4% blue collar jobs while blacks had a 30.4% white collar jobs and 48.3% blue collar jobs (Hacker 233). It may be a law that "separate but equal" violates the Fourteenth Amendment but minorities and whites continue to separate themselves because of

⁸ Brain Willoughby, p.1.

segregation de facto. A final way that segregation still exists is in schools. Brian Willoughby ~~“There, and in other areas across the country,~~ ^{//} black and Latino student live in segregated, urban neighborhoods and attend overcrowded, under-funded, low-achieving schools, while most of their white counterparts attend affluent, nearly all-white schools in suburban America.”⁹ This is an example of segregation de facto.

I believe we have a choice, a voice and bright futures. The Brown case gave African Americans the hope they needed. Blacks began to work to together, “It led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Right Act of 1965. It led to sit-ins and bus rides and freedom marches.”¹⁰ The black community went from not speaking up for themselves and knowing the fact that their children were beginning to believe white children were better than them, to demanding their rights despite the obstacles. Black and Hispanic children may attend low funded schools, but they have the choice to go to any majority white school if they wished. Racism is surely still alive today and whites may try and push colored people into little neighborhood and make them believe there getting the same equal treatment as white but they’re not. Because of Brown vs. Board of Education we have children in school educating themselves to become leaders like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Rosa Park and other strong, intelligent African-American individuals.

In conclusion the Brown v. Board case was a fight that is remembered in the United States because it had such an impact on communities so did Plessy vs. Ferguson. Movements like these were not only a change for then but forever. It’s a fact that African-Americans will have to always fight for their rights, because racism will always

⁹ Willoughby, p.3.

¹⁰ Willoughby P.1.

History PBAT

be in some people's hearts and minds but hoping that the Brown vs. BOE has changed
people for the better and has encouraged black and white children of today want to help
continue fighting for African-American rights and their children's rights

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Latin America Leaning Left

Assessment: Good

Latin America Leaning Left

Bolivia is one of the poorest and least developed countries in Latin America. It is a landlocked country with plentiful natural resources such as tin, natural gas, petroleum, zinc, tungsten, antimony, silver, iron, lead, gold, timber, and hydropower, but unfortunately the country has little to show for it; 64% of Bolivians are living under the poverty line (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bl.html>), and Bolivia remains dependent on foreign aid from a variety of lenders, both foreign governments and corporations. Bolivia also has a huge deficit with the World Bank which prevents foreign countries from investing in terms that are good for Bolivia. These difficulties are a modern version of Bolivia's historical problems. Since the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, living conditions of the indigenous people, who are still today most of the population in Bolivia, have been appalling. They were "forced to work under primitive conditions in mines and in nearly feudal status on large estates. [They were] denied access to education, economic opportunity, or political participation" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolivia>), while the minority white elites ran the country.

Evo Morales, an Aymara Indian and former coca grower, is the newly elected president of Bolivia. As the first indigenous leader he promises to turn his country around and bring liberation to the "his people," the population that has been overlooked for so long. To achieve this, Morales has proposed writing a new constitution, nationalizing some of Bolivia's resources, redistributing land to peasants, and legalizing the coca industry in his country.

Each of these proposals attempts to address specific wrongs that have been perpetrated against the majority of Bolivians. When rewriting the Bolivian constitution, for example, Morales hopes to include much input from the poor and indigenous people of his country, who only got the right to vote in the 1950's. "Bolivians will elect three people from each district, which would constitute a parliament of around 200 members. Then the assembly will have to work for some months, after which their proposals will be voted on in a public referendum."(<http://www.inthesetimes.com/site/main/article/2438/>). This would be very meaningful to the indigenous people in Bolivia, because they will finally be better represented in the government.

In terms of nationalizing Bolivian resources Morales plans to negotiate fairer contracts and he will be teaming up with the Venezuelan oil company. He also plans to redistribute land so that land that isn't in use by landowners who own vast amounts of property will be redistributed to peasants which he is willing to pay for. He is going to nationalize Bolivia's resources and increase companies' taxes. His words are:

We will nationalize the forests and the petroleum and natural gas reserves. In several cases the management of the companies has been disastrous. To develop the country, we have to get rid of the colonial and neoliberal model. We want to tax the transnational in a fair way, and redistribute the money to the small- and medium-size enterprises, where the job opportunities and ideas are.

By nationalizing resources in Bolivia and increasing taxes Morales will be giving the government more control over the resources so that the country profits from them. They had been privatized in the 80's due to pressure from foreign banks in order to receive loans. Conservative critics say that a trade market will benefit the country more and that Morales' policies do not respect the peoples' property. One of these critics, Rigoberto Stewart, an American, disagrees with Morales' proposals and says: "instead, [Evo

Morales] should strengthen property rights and the rule of law by honoring contracts and resolving disputes over foreign investment in a legal manner." Stewart is proposing that Morales not redistribute any land, because this would be dishonoring property rights and he believes people have a right to keep the property they have acquired no matter how they acquired the property or wealth. He is also suggesting that Morales have negotiations with foreign investment corporations over the disputes about contracts, rather than just forcing a new financial relationship.

There is nothing illegal about what Morales proposes and he is certainly within his right as a president to try to reform the economy in a way that benefits the Bolivian people. One could argue that he is pushing corporations away, but the fact of the matter is that these same corporations have been gaining much profit from Bolivian resources and taking advantage of the country's corrupt and unstable government. "Private companies had virtually complete control over the production and sale of oil and gas, and paid only 18% royalties and no taxes—a deal that even government and industry insiders who helped write the law and negotiate the contracts now privately admit is a bad deal for Bolivia" (Daphne Eviatar, "Bolivia's Home-Grown President" <http://www.thenation.com>, 12/21/05). These corporations should be charged more in taxes so that the country can also profit from the corporations being there. The contracts and property laws were the problem in Bolivia so why should he honor them? In the same article Stewart writes about how the rich elites who owned vast amounts of the land, exploited the people and controlled Bolivia for years; he puts the blame for Bolivia's ongoing poverty on their corruption rather than on the neoliberal economic policies they agreed to bring to Bolivia. If these elites were exploiting and accepting money from the corporations for themselves then why shouldn't Morales step in and make policies for the people he

represents rather than honoring contracts that were signed by the rich and for the rich? Isn't it okay for him buy land and give it to the people who have been exploited and neglected by the current policies and by hundreds of years of exploitation? If land is not redistributed then the power will remain with the few rich. I believe that this redistribution of land and power will finally give the peasants a chance to make some money and live a better life.

The U.S. has economic interests in Bolivia: there is a Texas oil corporation invested there (Bolivia's Home-Grown President), and Cochabamba's water system is "dominated by U.S. based Bechtel Corporation" (William Finnegan, "Leasing the Rain" The New Yorker). And it is not only the U.S. — the World Bank, which is effectively run by the U.S., the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other influential banks and investors who have practically forced Bolivia to privatize their water, railways, the telephone system, the national airlines, and the tin mines which have all been sold to foreign investors, in order to pay off their debt. "the poverty rate is higher today than it was in 1980—after a full generation of nominal democracy and ever-increasing free trade"(Leasing the Rain). This privatization of public enterprises, which began in the 1980's and benefited foreign corporations and governments, has placed more power in foreign hands and is increasing the cost of living for the average person in Bolivia.

"The IMF and World Bank have been empowered by the governments which control it (led by the U.S., the U.K., Japan, Germany, France, Canada, and Italy -- the "Group of 7," which holds over 40% of the votes on their boards) with imposing economic austerity policies in the countries of the so-called "Third World" or "global South." Once Southern countries build up large external debts, as most have, they cannot get credit or cash anywhere else and are forced to go to these international institutions and accept whatever conditions are demanded of them. None of the countries has emerged from their debt problems; indeed most countries now have much higher levels of debt than when they first accepted

IMF/World Bank "assistance"

(<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/wbimf/facts.html>).

There are concerns, especially in the Latin American community that the U.S. may intervene in Bolivian affairs for economic reasons and may go as far as assassinating Morales. This concern is common for Latin American leftist leaders because of recent history in Latin America where the U.S. intervened, violently in some cases. Take the history of Cuba for instance. Cuba and the United States' government were on "good" terms until the Cuban Revolution and the nationalization of its sugar. The U.S. responded by stopping all trade with them. Castro struck back by nationalizing all U.S. owned corporations in Cuba and the U.S. retorted by implementing sanctions. Cuba is suffering today because of these sanctions and limited trade. The CIA has reportedly tried to assassinate Castro several times and in 1961 they began to train Cuban exiles to invade the island (Castro and the Nationalization of the Sugar Industry, www.historicaltextarchive.com/).

In Chile Salvador Allende was an elected socialist president who had similar ideas as Morales. Allende was elected in 1970 after three unsuccessful runs for office. He wanted to nationalize the foreign owned copper industry and broke up large estates to give to the poor.

[Allende] had many foreign opponents, especially the United States government, which was hostile to Allende's Socialist policies and opposed nationalization of companies owned by the United States corporations. The United States discouraged new private investment in Chile and blocked funds from the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and Interamerican Development Bank. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency secretly sent at least \$10 million to Chilean groups that opposed Allende."(Microsoft Encarta)

In 1973, the CIA backed General Augusto Pinochet' violent military coup against

Allende. They bombed the palace where the president was living and killed him. After Pinochet came to power he terrorized and murdered socialist in the country and it is only in the last decade that his crimes against Chile are becoming known in the country.

Another example of U.S. intervention in response to a fear of socialism is what happened in Guatemala in 1954. The Guatemalan government led by Arbenz Guzman was ultimately toppled by the U.S. because he was going to purchase land from the United Fruit Company and redistribute it to peasants. UFCO was a U.S. corporation that controlled the banana trade and owned much of the land in Guatemala at the time.

UFCO was able to prevent the government from distributing banana lands to peasants. If a particular government or a particular leader disagreed with UFCO tactics and refused to give them what they wanted, the UFCO usually took steps to have the government discredited, undermined, or removed altogether. As a result the UFCO became a political force opposing democratic social and political reform whenever and wherever it developed in order to preserve its dominant place in the banana trade (The United Fruit Company in Guatemala).

The United States intervened because it had a large corporate investment and control through the UFCO.

The U.S. has intervened in the political affairs of other Latin American countries as well, such as Argentina, Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Uruguay, Grenada, Bolivia, and most recently in 2002 attempted to remove President Chavez of Venezuela through a coup, and in 2004 successfully removed President Aristide in Haiti. U.S. troops now occupy Haiti.

These hardships of leftist governments trying to break away from U.S. colonialism and dependency have in some cases ground socialism to a halt. But one thing these countries have in common is that they stood up against the U.S., and often did so alone. Castro is an exception because he had the Soviet Union behind him (which

many people argue is probably why he lasted this long). Today, however, leftist leaders are being democratically elected or are in the running in many of the Latin American countries; Morales is not alone. For instance in Chile, Bachelet a Socialist ran for president and won with nearly 46% in the first round vote, in Peru Ollanta Humala, who had been polling at 12% before Morales was elected is now polling at 22%, and in Mexico where the former president Vincente Fox is a close ally of the U.S., an anti-United States left-wing candidate Manuel Lopez is in the lead. This move leftward has created a sort of "domino effect" in the area that is exciting for some and worrisome for others. If these countries were to work together to stop slow American imperialism then America wouldn't be as much of a threat to these socialist leaders. Castro and Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez have formed an alliance and now Cuba is getting oil from Venezuela. If Cuba had all of Latin America to trade with I'm sure the economy would be a lot stronger.

However there are some problems with regional integration throughout Latin America because of the countries' specific agendas and old conflicts between them. Bolivia and Chile, for instance, are still battling over a water route because Bolivia is landlocked and Chile sits on the coast. The dispute is mainly over the Silala River which would be Bolivia's only access to the Pacific Ocean, but Chile claims it is an international river despite the fact that 94 springs that supply the river are in Bolivian Territory. Latin American countries are also competing with each other for foreign investments and large companies to replace American ones. "Brazil had fashioned a new foreign policy, clearly distancing itself from U.S. proposals and becoming a point of reference not only for the countries of the region, but for a large number of southern countries throughout the

globe... diplomatic efforts have led to substantive agreements with emerging countries such as China, India, and South Africa, aimed at breaking trade dependence on the European Union and the United States... In Lula's words, Brazil got 'what we had been dreaming of: making an FTAA only where possible, and leaving the rest to fight over at the World Trade Organization.' This is not to say that Latin American community of countries does not try to work together — they have had, for example, summits to address regional integration. Brazil held the Mercosur summit after the Free Trade Agreement was signed with the CAN an alliance of Latin American countries. "A fierce struggle is being waged, since some of these countries are negotiating or have already signed FTA's with the United States. In some cases, the difficulties stem from old disputes. But above all, there are confrontations stemming from the subordination of nearly every government to the large companies, domestic or multinational, that are attempting to impose their particular agendas." The Mercosur secretariat has said that "the institutional model in effect today does not necessarily reflect a collective project, or common vision of regional integration." (Raul Zibechi) It seems they haven't quite gotten it together or are ready to discuss regional integration, but are trying to make a collaborative effort towards that goal. Venezuela seems to be the exception to these conflicts because of it's wealth in oil. In other words, countries without Venezuela's kind of resources have a hard time building Latin unity because they are sometimes in conflict with businesses in their own nation.

Even so, the fact that these countries came together to discuss regional integration and are aware that their governments have been cheated by companies shows improvement and a start. All of these countries, including Bolivia, have historically

endured unstable or corrupt governments as well as exploitation from greater powers.

They share common element of history, language, and culture. If they were to share this common objective to liberate its people from neoliberalism and come together I believe they can become nations that are stable and more economically self sufficient. I believe that Bolivia has proved that it is already part of this process and they have proved that by electing a president who is very interested in becoming self sufficient and is an active participant in this change of course for Latin America, and perhaps his example will influence other countries in similar situations to do the same.

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**Economics Research
The Minimum Wage**

Assessment: Competent

Economics

Writing Guide for Economics Research Paper (Introduction)

- Economists conduct research everyday.
- They study everything from whether or not minorities get treated fairly by banks to whether school vouchers do a good job at helping disadvantaged children.
- For the next couple of months you will assume the role of an economist and do the following.
 - Pick a topic that deals with or affects poverty.
 - Meet with your mentor and discuss inquiry with them (book, internet research suggestions)
 - Share your findings with your fellow young economists.
 - Discuss findings with class during journal/colloquium meetings.
 - Create an economic **policy** and economic **model** that proposes to eliminate or alleviate the problem.
 - Research, brainstorm and write!
 - Your first rough draft to your introduction will be due:
- Team H December 18, 9:00am
- Team G December 19, 10:00 am

INTRODUCTION:

Your introduction should familiarize the reader with:

- Fundamental economic concepts,
- A working definition of poverty
- History/background/explanation of the topic you will be writing about. (Who, What, Where, When, How and Why)

- 2-4 pages
- Times New Roman font, size 12, double spaced.

Writing Guide:

1. What is the topic you wish to address and research?
2. Define Poverty:
3. Economists look at problems in a special way. Explain some of those ways.
 - **Methodological Individualism** (Why do economists place great emphasis on the study of individuals?)
 - **Rationality** (What do economists assume of individuals?)
 - **Scarcity** (What is scarcity?)
 - **The use of models** (Economists study models of economies. Why are models an abstract replica of society?)

Economics/Government
The Open-Ended Research Paper

You are allowed to write about whatever topic you choose as long as we have discussed this topic during our Economics/Government colloquium sessions. Please refer to your economics/government journal and choose a topic. Find a way that this topic is related to poverty. Your paper must make recommendations that can alleviate the plight of poverty via the topic you choose.

Brainstorm:

Review:

Review your class notes and journal notebooks.

Expand:

Check out related websites, message boards and blogs to see what experts and non-experts are writing about your subject.

Talk:

Chat with your classmates, mentors, facilitators about your topic search.

Remember brainstorming for a research paper is different from brainstorming for an essay. A research paper relies on outside sources and you often won't know what sort of arguments you want until you start reading sources and taking notes.

When you're brainstorming for an open-ended research paper, focus on finding a topic that is, in and of itself, appealing to you. Focus on making connections between your own interests and the topics we have discussed in class.

*** Do preliminary research!**

When writing a research paper, you face the challenge of choosing a topic that you'll be able to research effectively.

Look around the internet and take a quick trip to your library just to see what's out there.

Keep these questions in mind as you look:

- Are there plenty of resources – books, articles, reputable websites, and journals on your topic?
 - Will you be able to understand the resources available?
 - Will you be able to access all of the resources necessary to write your paper?
-

Government

Thesis

Although small businesses complain about raising the minimum wage because they fear their businesses would suffer, the minimum wage is a vital tool against fighting poverty. By raising the minimum wage we can guarantee families a better way of living.

Introduction

Minimum wage is something that many people go through. This topic interests me because I get to see who in reality minimum wage affects. This paper shows some effects of minimum wage, whether it is good or bad. People care about this topic because it is an important one.

Minimum wage is something that affects people and their income. I want to show how raising the minimum wage could change everything. I want the minimum wage changed. This meaning that I want the minimum wage to be raised higher. It is very interesting to read about the effects it has on people. The minimum wage affects families. Not everyone makes minimum wage but many do.

Minimum wage is the least amount someone can get paid legally. With the low wages and rising prices in this country it is hard to make a living on minimum wage. Minimum wage hasn't always been around. It came about in the year 1938. There have been many discussions on whether or not the minimum wage should increase or stay the same. The discussions have been about who the minimum wage affects and the possible

outcomes. Even though the minimum wage does not help everyone it does those who need that little bit of a raise in their wage to live better.

First Argument

Most minimum wage workers are adults. Many people think that it will be teenagers who will be affected if there was a raise in the minimum wage. That isn't true. Pelosi states "the majority of minimum wage workers are adults (68 percent) not teenagers." (Pelosi: Higher minimum wage will help women and children.) Adults take minimum wage jobs such as working in McDonalds because it is hard to find a job that pays better who will hire them. Many adults have families. They need a good paying job to support their families. If the wage was raised it would affect the directly but because they have families to support it affects them too. "A higher minimum wage directly affects only the individual's earnings of low wage workers, it could affect the family incomes." (Card and Krueger 279). In the end more than one person gets affected by an increase in the wage which affects the income. Many people will be directly affected by a raise in the minimum wage. "A minimum wage would directly affect 5.6 million workers currently earning less than \$7.25 an hour, according to the labor-backed Economic Policy Institute."(Zappone 1)

Honestly minimum wage does help minorities. Who can really afford to live on the wages they are earning now if the prices of things are constantly going up. This is another issue in the whole minimum wage problem. Inflation is taken into consideration. Inflation is where prices of good are rising but people's salaries aren't. If salaries were raised to keep up with the prices of good it wouldn't be inflation. Since it was already a

struggle for some to afford things, inflation makes it worse. This is why I feel a raise in the minimum wage is needed. As prices go up people's salaries should too to keep a balance between things like being able to afford food and afford shelter. Even though people have jobs there are still some people that end up homeless. "I could find no statistics on the number of employed people living in cars or vans but according to a 1997 report of the National Coalition for the Homeless "Myths and Facts about Homelessness," nearly one -fifth of all homeless people (in twenty-nine cities across the nation) are employed in full- or part-time jobs." (Ehrenreich 26). I feel if the minimum wage were raised people would have more money in their pockets to be able to afford somewhere to live.

Second Argument

Raising the minimum wage would help fight against poverty in some ways. It will make a difference even if it is by a little. For a family of three the estimated 2007 United States "poverty line" is \$17,170. A poverty line is the lowest amount a person can live on and still be able to afford the necessities like food, clothing and a roof over there head. The government sets an income which they think would be enough for a family to live okay on. Aber stated that "the official poverty measure has a lot of flaws." (Gotham gazette New York City news and policy). He also states that there is a "difference" in what it takes to live now than what it did to live in the 1960's. There are many flaws in the poverty measure. Based on a documentary by Weisberg he stated, "Thirty million Americans make less than \$8.70 an hour, the official US poverty level for a family of four." Even though this is the statistics for a family of four this proves what I am trying to

state. The government doesn't take into account how a certain set income for a family of three might not be enough for another family of three. One family could be more "economically stressed" than the other one. By economically stressed I mean one family has a great deal of debt they owe and are trying to pay off. They could be paying for more things than the other family and still have the same income, so it won't be enough for that family to live on. Although raising the minimum wage doesn't mean that everyone would be pushed over the poverty line. It does mean that people will have less struggle. This does fight poverty because even if they aren't pushed over the "poverty line" their income is increasing.

Minimum wage helps families. It gives them that little push that is needed. Supporting a family on minimum wage is hard. In supporting a family you need to pay bills like rent, buy food, clothes, etc. Living on minimum wage makes it hard to afford those standards of living. In raising the minimum wage it would help. Some people live paycheck to paycheck. Having that paycheck is the only source of money they have for that week. They rely on that paycheck to pay for food, rent, bills, etc. They would have to be able to manage their money. Megan Shannon states "in a report released by CareerBuilder.com showed that nearly half of all Americans live paycheck to paycheck but women are in worse shape than men. Forty-seven percent of women live paycheck to paycheck compared to 36 percent of men". (Shannon, 1). They usually don't live comfortably and are always worried about running out of money. Shannon states "forty-one percent of women said they do not have enough money to live comfortably". (Shannon, 1). Of course raising the minimum wage doesn't mean all their problems will

be solved and some people will continue to live paycheck to paycheck but it does help to have more money coming in. it does makes their situation somewhat less stressful.

Third Argument

Raising the minimum wage helps because it increases employment. In raising the minimum wage employment grew faster for example "Fast food restaurants in Texas that were forced to increase pay to meet the new federal minimum wage standard had faster employment than did those that were already paying \$4.25 per hour or more," (Card and Krueger 21). People who are looking for jobs try to get ones that pay good. It also helps employers/owners get the workers that are needed to fill the job. A raise in the minimum wage helps out both sides. People see a job with better pay and they go after it. I believe that instead of closing opportunities for people to get jobs it opens its up. There are people that have two jobs in order to make an okay living. "In 1996 the number of persons holding two or more jobs averaged 7.8 million or 6.5 percent of the workforce." (Ehrenreich 45). If the wage was higher there is a good chance that since the person who hold two jobs would be making enough at one job. So that person might end up quitting the second job. This opens up an opportunity for someone else who is need of a job.

This benefit of having more employees makes it easier for the job to get done. Instead of just having one person doing the labor there will be two. This makes it easier in the work place. One person won't have as much stress in order to do the job. Especially it would be more stress if the pay wasn't worth it. Even though it is about making a better earning/living it does help the environment in which you work in stress free. This is an added benefit if the minimum wage was increased. Many people think

that increasing the minimum wage will cause employment but honestly no one knows if that is going to happen. I say that people should take a risk and see what happens. I don't believe that small businesses will be affected by this change. If they are affected I feel it won't be a drastic affect.

Counter Argument

Even though raising the minimum wage is a good thing just like everything else it does have bad side affects. A reason as to why people feel it is a bad idea is because people feel it will hurt small businesses that might not be able to afford some employees anymore. Small businesses will likely fire some employees because of the raise. "Rely services were forced to fire 15 workers and eliminate the night shift when it lost that contract..." (Heupel 2)

Small employers struggle with their small businesses raising the minimum wage would add to their struggle. I still strongly feel that this won't happen because the more people have the more they spend. This brings profit to small businesses letting them make money. So I feel that it doesn't really hurt small businesses. But I understand that there is a possibility of things going in the wrong direction. Of course we have to consider both sides of the minimum wage increase debate. There is this side that says raising the minimum wage won't help anyone. Then there is this side that says it will help many people. It goes both ways. Although there is a chance that it might put some kind of a hurting on small businesses there is a great deal of other reasons as to why raising the minimum wage is better.

Conclusion

I really strongly believe that the minimum wage should be increased. I feel that an increase in the minimum wage is a way of fighting poverty. As I stated before it does make a difference. Differences like people will have more money on them, be able to pay more things that they owe. It is not a huge difference, but those I feel are steps against fighting poverty. The minimum wage does have an affect on people's lives. If it stays the same then they are stuck in the same situation: Broke. If it were raised they would have more money in their pockets to save. This increases their income which makes their standards of living more bearable.

Minimum wage affects everyone, not just people who are living in poverty. If the minimum wage were changed then many things will be changed too. In changing the minimum wage you would have to change other things around too. Things like whether or not the people who were earning higher than minimum wage would get a raise too. Another thing in order to get money for this raise in the wage that means that something else would have money taken away from it. In changing the minimum wage many thing become off "balance". Economically things would change. I feel as if the minimum wage should be raised. I think at least if they are worried about how it will turn out they should test it out. They should raise the wage for those who are in need of a raise. Then they should see how whether it benefits those people or not. They should see how this changes things in their lives. Things like how it could become easier for them to pay bills or food. I think if they tested out first how the minimum wage would be then more people would agree with a raise in the wage.

The point of raising minimum wage is to make people who live in this country live better. It will be better for people and their living situations. Raising the minimum wage would give them a good amount of money in which they are able to buy the things that are necessary like food, clothes and pay for some kind of shelter. There are many good affects to raising the minimum wage to deny that it will help fight poverty. My research shows that overall raising the minimum wage is the way to go.

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