STRENGTHENING AID TO THE EVANSVILLE UNDERCLASS IN THEIR

EFFORTS TO TRANSITION INTO A LIFESTYLE OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY:

A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY UTILIZING EXISTING RESOURCES AND

FOUNDED UPON THE PHILOSOPHIES AND METHODOLOGIES OF

SUCCESSFUL FAITH-BASED PROGRAMS

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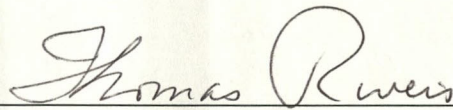University of Southern Indiana

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The American underclass, a particular segment[1] of the poor in America, remain in conditions of poverty even in favorable overall economic conditions. Much assistance has been provided to the underclass and there is much debate surrounding the originating and sustaining factors involving the underclass. For the most part, the actual effort to aid the underclass, despite the tremendous effort expended, appears to be less than effective. However, several faith-based programs seem to be experiencing success integrating the underclass into mainstream lifestyles. This project presents an overview of three major theoretical positions on the nature of persistent poverty, an investigation of the assistance currently being provided in the United States, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs in moving members of the underclass into the mainstream. The philosophies and methodologies of the successful faith-based programs are also presented. **A plan to strengthen assistance to members of the underclass in their attempt to transition into mainstream society in Evansville is proposed.** It is based on a theoretically sound stance consistent with the successful faith-based programs and utilizes currently available resources in the Evansville area.

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[1] The social pathologies associated with the underclass include intergenerational poverty, illegitimate births, and criminality. These characteristics are generally associated with a worldview lacking hope.

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Introduction

The Underclass

> "There are basically three ways to survive in this world, you can get a job—
> which can be a pain, you can go to jail—which in some ways is 'Hakuna
> Matata'[2] and in other ways is a drag, or you can live on what the government
> provides—and lately they're gettin' kinda tight." (T. R. Jones, personal
> communication, March 10, 1997)

So goes one "inspirational talk" to Evansville inner city youths. If you are surprised by
this statement, perhaps it is because you live in a different world. Perhaps you live in a
world where long-term employment is common, where someone in your family knows
your whereabouts daily, and where family members consistently encourage and express
love to you. Maybe you have seen people delay immediate personal gratification in their
pursuit of a greater cause. And if you are one of the elite, maybe you grew up in a two-
parent home. Perhaps you were assured you had self-worth and you could accomplish
anything you attempted with diligence and responsibility. Maybe you grew up with
hope.

"A person can live weeks without food, days without water, several minutes without
oxygen, but not one moment without hope." (Reverend Thomas A. Straight, personal
interview, January 24,1999) Criminality, sexual immorality, and economic dependency
in the underclass may be based not simply on a lack of financial resources, but rather on
shallow or empty hope. Financial "poorness" can be remedied, if only for a time.
However, for many Americans economic instability is only a symptom. This ailment is
not defined by a lack of dollars, it is an absence of hope that defines the worldview of the
underclass.

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[2] Hakuna Matata is slang for "no worries". A prison sentence was later explained as a time of stress-free
living where time passes but the body does not age.

One finds no difficulty locating people, programs, or policies possessing an intention or desire to aid the poverty-stricken. Motivation for providing assistance seems as varied as the perceived causes of poverty. It becomes somewhat more difficult to find a plan of assistance directed at overcoming deficiencies of worldview.

In the midst of this substantial concern and expenditure of resources, there exists a subset of the poor that can be defined in terms other than economics. This subset is known as the "underclass". They are poor people who have a specific perspective on life. Their worldview does not see potential and involves a feeling of powerlessness. Typically, members of the underclass have few role models whose behavior substantiates the idea that hard work and honesty pay off. The underclass have adapted to life under a set of rules unfamiliar to the typical middle-class suburbanite. (Sherman 1997a, 37) These rules support sexual promiscuity, unemployment, drug use, and immediate gratification. In this subculture, there are no strong norms to the contrary. A lack of money is, again, a symptom, not a defining attribute.

Although unemployment, illegitimate births, and an affinity for immediate gratification may be found in other segments of society, the consequences can be different for members of the underclass and members of mainstream society. The support groups, family ties, and the general positions of power can keep the resulting problems from becoming devastating for members of the mainstream. "The problem...is not that poor people are necessarily more sinful than non-poor people. The problem is that sinful behaviors—sex out of wedlock, refusal to work, drug addition—have consequences that can stimulate, exacerbate, or prolong poverty." (Sherman 1997a, 62)

Furthermore, demographic and economic analyses can reduce an investigation of social phenomena to numbers. The underclass are not numbers; they are people. Each has a heart, soul, mind, and body indistinguishable in essence from any other member of society. They were no more in control of when, why, where, to whom, or into what circumstances they were born than anyone else. None signed up for their lot in life, just as no one stood in line to be born with a physical handicap. They took their first breath

and began life the same way as everyone else. Somehow things turned out differently for them. Setting aside for the moment the theories on why this is so, consider the premise that indeed the underclass are members of American society—they are people. This will greatly facilitate an understanding of the principles of meaningful assistance.

The essence of the underclass worldview must be understood in order to aid the underclass transition into a lifestyle of self-sufficiency with a real capacity to take advantage of the opportunities society offers. The underclass worldview, characterized by a lack of hope, leads to debilitating attitudes and self-destructive behavior. For assistance to be effective in the long term, goals must be established, principles formed, methods developed, and procedures applied that will modify the underclass worldview.

Motivation for Concern and Assistance

The number of programs offering assistance to the poor strongly suggests members of mainstream society possess a desire to help those in less fortunate situations. The motivation for providing this assistance is varied. They include social necessity, social imperative, moral compassion, personal reward, faith directive, and passion derived from faith. The motivation for concern is important because it can affect the assistance methodology and the extent of resource expenditure. Some sources of motivation may not be concerned with overall societal effects. Others may not generate the level of commitment and discipline necessary to address the underclass situation in a long-term and meaningful manner. For the most part, a wide range of motivational sources can be drawn upon in providing meaningful assistance to the underclass given adherence to the principles proposed.

Purpose, Methodology, and Cost of Providing Assistance

Providing food to a starving child or providing clothing to a family without the resources to do so themselves, though worthy objectives in a compassionate society, are not the same as helping an underclass family move into mainstream society. Direct relief aid has

been linked to encouraging dependency; this is contrary to the goal of achieving self-sufficiency and reducing the underclass. The goal of the plan discussed below is to assist underclass members to transition into a lifestyle more resembling mainstream society.

The methods of assistance will appear significantly different from other programs and initially may not seem consistent with a compassionate approach. The methodology proposed is developed from currently successful faith-based programs. They do not focus on direct relief and are not highly dependent on monetary donations. They involve personal relationships and the modification of one's worldview and related behavior patterns.

The costs are different from program costs designed to provide only financial aid; however, they are at least as great. There must be significant personal involvement between the underclass member and those who desire to aid in their adoption of a self-empowering worldview. Hand-outs will have little positive effect altering the worldview of someone with a dependency mentality. The proposed strategy involves drawing upon available faith-based resources and the effective utilization of currently available assistance in Evansville. By linking mainstream society members with members of the underclass, personal relationships are built that allow new worldviews to be developed and a support system to be established. Hopefully, the worlds of all involved will be expanded.

Overview of Presentation

Chapter One will investigate the theoretical positions concerning the causes of and substantiating factors surrounding the underclass. Ideological perspectives range from purely structural to purely behavioral. The basic question dividing stances on the issue is to what extent the economic and social structures or individual characteristics are responsible for the underclass.

Chapter Two presents various existing programs of assistance. Descriptions and an evaluation of effectiveness are presented for government-administered programs, private secular programs, and faith-based programs.

In Chapter Three an assessment of the specific condition of Evansville is presented. This section evaluates the presence of an underclass in Evansville and the currently available assistance and faith-based resources.

Finally a plan of assistance for the underclass in Evansville is proposed in Chapter Four. The goal is moving the underclass into mainstream society. The strategy is founded on methods and principles consistent with current faith-based programs. Procedural elements, a detailed model of assistance, and possible steps of implementation are also presented.

Chapter 1 : Possible Causes of the Underclass Existence: Ideological Perspectives

The origin of the unique segment of our society known as the underclass lies at the core of the social welfare issue. Theorists recognize both a set of character traits within this subculture and an overall social setting in which this subculture exists. The debate centers around the degree of responsibility each element possesses in creating and sustaining the underclass. Three perspectives are presented below. Neither the presentation of these arguments nor agreement with any particular stance by the reader will, in itself, alleviate the underclass situation. The purpose of presenting these views is to allow the reader to gain a greater understanding and sympathy for the various views. It is certainly acceptable to seek reinforcement within this presentation for the perspective most aligned with one's current personal view; it may be far more enlightening and ultimately beneficial to search for possible redeeming elements in a differing view.

Conservative Viewpoint: Characteristics of the Individual

The conservative position is sympathetic towards the individual inasmuch it as recognizes that the overall societal environment, which includes social institutions (e.g., family structures), prevailing norms, and the political and economic structures (e.g., the welfare system), influence the outward opportunities and the inner motivations of the individual. However, ultimately the social, political, and economic structure is not seen as responsible for the plight of the underclass; rather it is considered the backdrop that allows underclass behavior to be considered irresponsible and inappropriate for taking advantage of plentiful opportunities. Fundamental to this position is the belief that each individual is responsible for his choices. No assertion is made that all individuals are born into the same circumstances with the same training, similar resources, and identical individual opportunities. Nonetheless, barring special cases involving physical, mental, and/or emotional anomalies, a reasonably similar set of opportunities and resources are available to nearly all members of the society. The conservative perspective sees the underclass as a unique group of individuals who, for the most part, make choices that

may be considered irresponsible or at least not conducive to the overall improvement of one's lot in life. Further, the underclass is described not merely in terms of irresponsible choices amidst plentiful opportunities; the underclass can be defined by their unique mental, social, and emotional make-up. It is this unique body of distinctive characteristics that is responsible for the condition of the underclass.

These characteristics are discussed by Myron Magnet in his book The Dream and The Nightmare. He offers the following description: "[T]he underclass is equipped with different, and sparser, mental and emotional furniture, unhelpful for taking advantage of the economic opportunities that American life offers."(Magnet, 39) Magnet sees the underclass as a distinct subculture with a definite set of characteristics. No lack of opportunities can be cited as primarily responsible for the underclass situation. No sweeping changes to the economic, political, or social structures will erase the traits inherent in the underclass. The underclass "lack the inner resources to seize their chance" displaying "a self-defeating set of values and attitudes, along with an impoverished intellectual and emotional development...."(Magnet, 16) The intellectual and emotional differences are manifested in a worldview either unable or unwilling to remove oneself from the troubled state defining the underclass. The inherent values (or missing values) of the underclass are not conducive to a worldview that promotes self-improvement. "What makes the underclass different ... both today and in the past is its self-defeating behavior and the worldview from which that behavior springs."(Magnet, 38) Their behavior is characterized by "chronic lawlessness, drug use, out-of-wedlock births, nonwork, welfare dependency, and school failure."(Magnet, 38) One can argue whether the behavior originally preceded the worldview or the reverse; however, the point remains—the circumstances in which the underclass find themselves are due to the nature of the underclass values and lifestyles. Furthermore, this subculture is self-sustaining and passed on to the next generation. (Magnet, 16)

How can conservatives be sure economic conditions, such as the lack of available jobs, do not contribute substantially to the underclass situation? Conservatives point to

positive economic conditions in the sixties which is the very period when the underclass began to flourish. (Magnet, 45) There does not appear to be a positive correlation between national economic conditions and underclass unemployment. Jobs are available for which the underclass are suited. Therefore, conservatives find it difficult to hold economic conditions responsible for the underclass plight.

Racial discrimination has also been blamed for the underclass situation. How can conservatives dismiss this obvious factor? They remind us the civil rights movement was in full swing during the time when the underclass began to reach critical mass. (Magnet, 45) This should have reduced or negated the effects of racial discrimination. Racism is also a difficult mechanism to blame in light of the fact that other non-white citizens have not become mired in the underclass, even when starting from a lower economic position than the typical underclass member. Even liberals agree that the total abolition of all discriminatory tendencies will not remove the underclass mentality and behavior patterns. (Wilson, 11; Perkins,54) According to conservatives, racism is arguably an ugly reality, but it is not to blame for the underclass.

Economics, politics, and the general state of social affairs cannot be shown to be responsible for the underclass problem. It's not about economics, nor is it purely a lack of money. The underclass issue involves a poverty of spirit, morality, and social responsibility—it points to a deficient way of life. (Magnet, 39) Conservatives do not wish to merely describe and condemn this aberrant condition; however, this "condition" will not be tolerated as a reasonable excuse for dependency. Social and academic education, along with short-term support, are gladly offered; but the underclass must begin to take responsibility for itself in order for the circumstances of the underclass to experience significant and long-term improvement.

In summary, at the core of the conservative viewpoint is a belief in personal responsibility and self-autonomy. Individuals may participate in the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness; government involvement is to be tolerated insofar as it is necessary to provide the opportunity for these pursuits. That is, the government does not

exist for the purpose of providing life, liberty, and happiness, but rather for the purpose of insuring an opportunity for the pursuit of these. Conservatives recognize a unique worldview and set of behavioral patterns in the underclass. According to the conservative approach, changing the values and beliefs of the underclass will better equipped them to rise above their current situation. Thus, the essence of the conservative viewpoint concerning the existence of the underclass involves traits within the individual rather than characteristics of or flaws in the working of the political, social, or economic environment in which the underclass exist.

Radical Viewpoint: Characteristics of the Society

The radical stance attributes responsibility for the underclass situation entirely to the societal structure that created it. Our society boasts of scientific discoveries and engineering feats such as those leading to placing a man on the moon and our superiority in health conditions compared to third world countries. The economic, political, and social structures in place provided a backdrop which enabled these accomplishments. Is it any less rational to attribute societal responsibility to situations involving less-than-desirable social phenomenon? How can boasts be made of technological advancements as a product of a society while attributing poverty to lack of mental or physical giftedness, poor parental guidance, or a genetic predisposition of individuals irrespective of the societal setting? The radical position asks these questions and attributes responsibility to the comprehensive societal setting that produces actual powerlessness, not just a feeling of powerlessness, among a segment of its members. This political, economic, and social powerlessness created the underclass worldview.[3] Further, the radical approach attempts to expose the rhetoric that conceals the essence of and misdirects the debate concerning the underclass issue. This rhetorical element will be addressed first, then the radical view's assertions shall be presented.

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[3] The idea that a society can create a worldview and therefore is responsible for the resulting behaviors and consequences can be problematic since *any* behavior and associated consequences can arguably be attributed to one's worldview which, as the radical views asserts, is determined by the social setting.

According to radicals, most analyses of poverty focus on the poor person. From the outset, attention is directed toward the person rather than his environment. The issue is typically identified as an investigation into why a person finds himself a member of the underclass rather than how a society can allow for such a division of classes. As much as this rhetorical framing may be unintentional, the ramifications are, nonetheless, real and consequential.

William Ryan, in his book <u>Blaming the Victim</u>, provides many illustrations of the manner in which bias may color one's perception of the underclass situation. For example, underclass children are often considered less intelligent than children from middle-class families due to their performance in school. This assessment does not consider the possibility that some children may have been taught to perceive reality, formulate thoughts, and communicate in a manner ill-suited for the education system designed and operated by mainstream society. The children may not be less intelligent, rather they may possess a different type of intelligence. Ramifications of this coloration are immense. This subjectivity can be transparent to the individual, no matter how genuine his intentions, and it can block his ability to view the problem in a holistic setting. Historically, the focus of the underclass issue has been the underclass itself. This focus has prevented a genuine evaluation of the social, economic, and political structures which, according to the radical view, are the heart of the underclass situation. The term *poor* can give rise to visions of hard-working, honest, and perhaps grateful people in temporary need of assistance. The term *welfare* brings forth images of expensive government programs funded by the middle class supplying money to lazy, arrogant, and unappreciative, even faceless, individuals who use the money for extravagances while ignoring basic responsibilities. This is just one word choice in one setting but it shows the nature of the dilemma.

Tainted rhetoric is not the main objection of the radical view; it is merely a misdirection of focus and effort. Historically, the misdirected focus has centered on the individual. The actual problem is, of course, far more universal. Consider the exceptionalism-universalism dichotomy offered by William Ryan. The universalistic viewpoint sees a

problem as a result of general arrangements within a community and therefore predictable and preventable through public action. The problems involve individuals but there is no indication that the individuals are themselves defective or abnormal. (Ryan 1971, 17) The exceptionalist viewpoint sees social problems as unusual, unique, and exceptions to the rule. They occur as a result of individual defect. According to the radical view, the problem of poverty in America is universal rather than an exception. Ryan makes the following arguments.

Given the widespread and persistent nature of poverty, how can the problem be caused by the exceptions? Would not such a "poverty personality" die out if it were the result of genetic defects or cultural abnormalities? The problem does not lie within the person; the problem is with the social, political, and economic environment. The underclass persists; the underclass shows no signs of regression due to a defective nature. Could this occur due to exceptions, defects, and abnormalities? Clearly the problem lies within a larger context than the individual; it is a product of the overall societal setting. Consider as an analogous situation a scenario in which dozens of people attending a banquet are found ill later that night. It would seem more reasonable to investigate the circumstance universal to all, that is, the possibility of a tainted meal, rather than establishing a prognosis based on the attitudes, behaviors, and recent health history of each particular individual. Similarly, the underclass is a by-product of a set of ailments that are universal in nature. The views of fatalism, apathy, and powerlessness of the individual did not cause their plight, but rather were caused by their societal environment.

Many members of our society have flourished financially within the economic, political, and social structures currently operating in America. However, even if one points to segments of our society that have been economically and politically successful within our societal structure, how can it be said that this system has been, or is currently, fair? What evidence exists in support of the assertion that this system offers an equal opportunity for all of its members? Again, the radical approach pushes these questions to the forefront of the argument, whereas other views focus the attention on the poor person himself.

Consider further that there are different types of "poverties". That is, there is not one homogenous, static, and stable "poverty". Poverty existed in 1930. This poverty affected a different type of person and under a different set of circumstances than does poverty as we speak of it today. Poverty in Appalachia is different from poverty in New York. Is one to believe that the individuals in these various situations of poverty have some shared defect, some set of personal and yet similar irregularities, some lack of fortitude that caused them to be the pitiable exceptions in an otherwise healthy society?

One of the differences in contemporary poverty from the poverty situations of the past is our ability to understand, predict, and influence the sources and consequences. In the past, poverty may have been attributed to specific economic conditions, particular misfortunes, or a unique and involuntary characteristic of the poverty-stricken individual. Today's poverty is not unpredictable. We can state the likelihood of a particular person existing in economic instability and dependency based on limited demographic information. We can see that it will occur and yet we choose to allow its existence. We choose to view poverty as inevitable and perhaps as the lesser of many evils—merely a somber and unpreventable product of our society. We offer solutions which address the symptoms rather than providing a true cure of an ailing society. To further illuminate this ailment, William Ryan describes a hypothetical society determined to provide fairly for its members.

In his book Equality, William Ryan presents the ideas of "Fair Play" and "Fair Shares". The former stresses the individual's right to the opportunity to obtain resources; whereas, the latter emphasizes the individual's right to the resources. Ryan describes how the "Fair Play" concept does not actually provide for equal access to the resources of a society. (Ryan 1981, 10-11) This approach does not even consider the equal distribution of these resources. Under the "Fair Shares" approach, the individual is entitled to a reasonable portion of the resources available to his society. (Ryan 1981, 26-27) The society as a whole gives rise to the availability of the resources. Why would a skewed system be in place for the distribution of the society's resources? Why not arrange for equitable distribution with the same vigor employed in the endeavor to maximize the total

resources available? The "Fair Shares" approach illustrates a working example of such a societal structure.

A key consequence of a seriously flawed societal structure is the uneven distribution of power among the people. This is important in this issue since proponents of other viewpoints note only the consequences of such traits as a sense of powerlessness and consider poverty to be due to these traits. Actual powerlessness is a problem caused by the society. The attitudes and behavior patterns of the underclass are symptoms of this problem. The symptoms did not cause the problem.

Conservative analysts of the underclass situation often note attitudes found in the underclass such as fatalism, apathy, depression, and pessimism. From these dysfunctional attitudes, economic failure, political powerlessness or disinterest, and social ineptitude naturally follow. The radical stance presents the problem in the reverse. A genuine condition of powerlessness manifested in many areas is the cause of the stereotypical attitude of the underclass. There is no power to secure employment. There is no power to choose where or at what standard one is to live. There is no power to provide for one's children as a parent might desire. There is no power to break through the walls of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior.

As much as the mainstream of our society may choose to believe equality exists, there is no equality in the distribution of, or opportunity to secure, this type of power. The ability to move to a different city for the purpose of taking a better job is power. It does not give one the feeling of power when, for minimum wage, he feels restricted to choose a job within walking distance from one's home or along a bus route, near one's family support structure, and suitable for a meager education. It is not the depression and pessimism that begets the powerlessness; it is the lack of power to shape one's life's circumstances that begets depression and pessimism.

To understand how this feeling of powerlessness remains at the heart of the underclass situation, consider the support offered to the underclass. In many cases real and

substantial help is provided to the underclass by other members of the society; in other cases a dependency mentality is only further encouraged. Aid to the underclass originates from many sources. The support can perhaps be prompted by noblesse oblige, motivated by compassion, and of course generated by compulsory taxation. In any of these cases, is the underclass empowered as a result? Does a person feel more like a viable, productive, growing member of the society and in a position to participate in its many opportunities as a result of receiving a hot meal, used clothing, or a rent subsidy? Powerlessness still prevails.

Power is in no short supply in our society. Several significant accomplishments have resulted from the organized and directed use of our society's resources. Our society seemed eager to supply the resources to fund a trip to the moon. The costs were great and the benefits were unknown. Solving the technical problems was not impeded by a lack of money or desire. The problem with abolishing poverty requires a different sort of resource. To end the powerlessness which is at the heart of the poverty situation, society's members must agree to a redistribution of wealth and power.[4] The capitalist argument assures us that society's resources are distributed according to a clear, consistent, and justly applied set of guidelines. Obviously these guidelines do not provide for a reasonably equitable distribution of resources. Wealth and power are not easily relinquished. The radical view makes it clear that the underclass will remain as long as the prevailing societal structures do not accommodate such an equitable distribution of wealth and power.

In conclusion, the radical stance emphasizes that individual responsibility, or lack of it, cannot be a significant contributory factor in the condition of the underclass. Accordingly, the underclass are not distinguished primarily by attitudes, values, or worldviews, but conditions such as a lack of money and power. The current setting causes a debilitating powerlessness among the underclass, not just a misguided sense of powerlessness. The modification of individual members of the underclass will not alter

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[4] It is difficult to understand how a forced redistribution of wealth and power can eliminate the underclass feeling of powerlessness. That is, does a person really have power if he is dependent upon someone else providing it to him?

their circumstances. The radical approach implies society is responsible for the equitable

distribution of the society's resources; power and wealth included. The goods created by

the society are a product of the society as a whole; therefore, they should be divided

fairly among the members of the society in its entirety. In contrast to other perspectives,

the inner traits of the individual and his subculture are not relevant to this issue.

Liberal Viewpoint: Characteristics of the Individual *And* His Societal Setting

The liberal position acknowledges "there is a heterogeneous grouping of inner city

families and individuals whose behavior contrasts sharply with that of mainstream

America."(Wilson, 7) However, the focus of this position is on the external factors

responsible for this inner condition. There are mechanisms at work within a society that

shape the values and behavior of the members. These social mechanisms have created

the self-defeating worldview and behavior of the underclass.

Whereas the conservative approach tends to focus on the individual and the radical

approach focuses primarily on the societal structure, the liberal approach takes both into

account acknowledging their interactive nature. Though the liberal approach recognizes

the importance of the individual's personal attributes, it is the societal structure that

determines a subculture's attitudes, values, and choices. A crude representation of this

stance would include two basic elements. First, the underclass community possesses

characteristics that heavily influence its lot. Second and more importantly, the underclass

community is not primarily responsible for these characteristics or their consequences.

The social environment, through the operation of social and institutional mechanisms,

created the conditions that produced individuals and communities unable to take

advantage of societal resources.

Social mechanisms operate on personal, community, and national levels and can be

shown to be instrumental in creating and sustaining the underclass, according to the

liberal perspective. These social forces include a wide range of phenomena: racism, job

scarcity, low wages, and social isolation.

Social isolation is the "lack of contact or sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society". (Wilson, 60) Mainstream society might take for granted such norms as punctuality, disciplined behavior, deferred gratification, and the conventional family structure. But generally speaking, individuals who are not exposed to these values and the resulting positive consequences will not possess or strive to possess these values. The underclass worldview is transferred between generations as children adopt the attitudes and behaviors of the adults around them. Social isolation is not generally a debilitating factor in mainstream society. For example, if a member of a middle class family exhibits poor values, a child still has other examples from which to adopt standard middle-class values. Being isolated from mainstream society and the prevailing values is, therefore, one factor contributing to the underclass situation.

Further exacerbating the isolation effect, the underclass exists in concentrated masses. Not only are good examples of productive behavior missing, there is an abundance of poor examples. There is nowhere to turn for role models; there is nowhere to turn for personalized assistance. There are "constraints and [missing] opportunities associated with living in a neighborhood in which the population is overwhelmingly socially disadvantaged...."(Wilson, 144) That is, there is a substantially diminished "access to jobs, availability of marriageable partners, and exposure to conventional role models." (Wilson, 144) These concentration effects significantly reduce the chances that a member of the underclass will adopt an attitude conducive to improving his condition.

Not only are members of mainstream society usually surrounded by other socially and economically functioning individuals, these surrounding people can act as a cushion in hard times. Economic setbacks are not as devastating when temporary support is close, personal, and immediate. Unfortunately, underclass communities are not characterized by "the presence of a sufficient number of working- and middle-class professional families to absorb the shock or cushion the effect of uneven economic growth and periodic recessions."(Wilson, 144) Without this type of social buffer, the underclass member who experiences hard times is less likely to recover in a short period of time, if

at all. Obviously this is not a personal flaw nor is the economy totally responsible; this is an operation of a social mechanism.

Further, favorable economic conditions and reduced racial discrimination in suburban housing have provided for the movement of middle-class and working-class minorities from the inner city, leaving a "values vacuum" in their wake. (Wilson, 144) Social isolation, concentration effects, and social buffers are all mechanisms obviously exacerbated by this social exodus. Thus, even conditions resulting in growth and prosperity can negatively affect the underclass segment of the society.

The issue of racism must be considered to understand the liberal perspective. The liberal view has often been advocated by those whose main focus is rectifying racially discriminatory behavior. Wilson suggests racism may be a contributory factor worthy of investigation; however, it cannot be the foundation of a theory describing the underclass situation. (Wilson, 11-12) It is shortsighted in two respects. First, racial discrimination must be discussed in reference to the time and circumstances. Pre-twentieth century racism is surely different than contemporary racism. Organized, systematic discriminatory practices are different than the unintentional application of stereotypes. Second, since the underclass does not consist only of minorities racially discriminatory behavior cannot be the root of the underclass problem. Removing all ill feelings towards minorities will not significantly alter the social mechanisms seen as key to sustaining underclass. Racism is more appropriately viewed as only one of the contributory factors initially giving rise to the underclass rather than a social mechanism currently sustaining it.

A more clearly economic phenomenon that tends to sustain the underclass results from the types of jobs typically held by working members of the underclass. "[T]hose in the low-wage sector of the economy are more adversely affected by impersonal economic shifts in advanced industrial society...[they are]...hurt by deindustialization because of their heavy concentration in the [affected] industries."(Wilson, 12) While this economic trend may cause relocation or retraining for some Americans, it may result in long-term

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unemployment for a member of the underclass. Again, this reality of our economy is not the fault of the underclass, nor does it signal a failure of the overall economic system. However, it is a consequence of an institutional mechanism that can be predicted and prevented from having such a devastating effect.

To recapitulate, the contemporary underclass must be viewed in their current setting and with a view toward the past that has provided the present situation. The liberal viewpoint, though recognizing the characteristics of the individual, shifts the attention toward the conditioning and shaping by social mechanisms functioning within and through his environment. Liberals acknowledge the unique personal characteristics of the underclass; however, their position is that external conditions, in the form of social mechanisms, caused and sustain these subcultural traits. Conversely, the conservative view considers the subcultures of poverty to be largely independent of external socioeconomic forces. Accordingly, the liberal approach attempts to modify these external conditions. By providing conditions and opportunities similar to those of the mainstream, the self-defeating characteristics of the underclass will change automatically. Thus, to improve the conditions of the underclass, one must address not merely the individual, but the social mechanisms responsible for his attitudes and resulting behavior patterns.

Chapter 2 : Current Programs

Over the last century Americans have offered assistance to the less fortunate in many different ways. This section investigates three sources of such aid: government-administered programs, private secular programs including those with government funding, and faith-based programs. Examples will be provided for each category along with an evaluation of the overall effect on aiding the transition of the underclass into mainstream society.

Government-Administered Programs

Throughout the last four decades many different types of government programs have been instituted to aid poor people in America. Programs have been implemented to provide for people temporarily out of work as well as those habitually in need of assistance for survival. Aid has been provided through rent subsidies, food and food stamps, health care, tax relief, unemployment payments, and temporary shelter. Evaluation of the philosophies, intentions, and effectiveness of government programs may prove difficult due, in part, to the number of variables involved; however, an assessment of basic approaches and overall impact on poverty and the underclass seems possible.

An investigation of government-administered programs may uncover programs that, though philosophically unsound insofar as encouraging long-term self-sufficiency, are necessary in a civil and compassionate society. For example, programs providing for the children of unwed teenage women is regarded as necessary in a compassionate society even though they may embody elements not conducive to self-sufficiency.

A review of federal government programs follows focusing on those currently available to the poor in Evansville. This investigation includes a brief historical background, a description of the government assistance programs, an explanation of necessary

programs, and an assessment of the extent to which the underclass are assisted in their

transition to mainstream society.

Historical Background

Throughout the decades programs have been administered for various reasons, in

response to different needs, and with various philosophical foundations and means of

application. Economic conditions instigated the original need for federal assistance for

the poor. Unemployment during the Great Depression rose to over twenty percent and

many who had jobs experienced falling wages. In 1932 the federal government offered

cash to be distributed through state governments to families in need. As much as one

sixth of the population was receiving assistance by 1934. (Gilbert, 253) These direct

relief cash payments were phased out in 1935 and The Works Progress Administration

(WPA) was formed. The WPA financed construction and other projects organized by the

local governments and by 1939 had employed as many as three million people. Federal

assistance remained available for those considered unemployable. Growing out of this

funding was the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Many programs,

including those created by the Social Security Act of 1935, came to be considered

entitlements. That is, the government was required to fund the programs so that the

assistance was available to people meeting the specified requirements.

In the sixties it became apparent that poverty could exist even in favorable economic

conditions. In a time when many Americans were prospering, there still remained a

segment of the population unable to improve their economic situation. In response,

President Lyndon Johnson created programs for the poor proclaiming the "War on

Poverty." His programs provided food stamps for the poor and medical insurance to the

elderly and poor through Medicare and Medicaid. Poverty declined until the mid-

seventies.

Overall, poverty has risen since 1975. The federal government has made many attempts

to balance the desire to provide adequate assistance to the poor, to reduce poverty, and to

act in a fiscally responsible manner. In 1996 new legislation was passed dramatically reducing entitlements and instituting a temporary nature to relief support. The general intention of government assistance remains, for the most part, to provide relief from undesirable circumstances.[5]

Rationale for Government Assistance

The history of government assistance programs reveals the underlying purpose is to reduce the consequences of adverse socioeconomic conditions. Initially such conditions seemed clearly attributed to overall economic situation in the United States. However, at least a segment of the poor persisted in poverty despite economic opportunity and reduced racial discrimination. The intent of the programs remained the same but the cause of the poverty seemed to be different. The underlying principle of government programs was that by supplying assistance to the poor they would, in time, cease to be poor. The assumption is based on the notion that the poor possess the desire and personal resources to improve their condition and to live in an environment favorable to accomplishing such an endeavor. The existence of poverty today suggests that this assumption is in some way flawed.

An additional rationale for government programs of assistance, especially direct-relief programs, rests on reasonable notions of compassion and civility. These programs may provide assistance with no anticipation that such assistance will terminate. These are deemed "necessary" programs in a compassionate, civil, and just society. They are described later in this section. Not all necessary programs are operated by the government; however, they are included in this section since many are currently administered by the government.

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[5] Unlike early relief programs, contemporary programs offer assistance in the absence of widespread problems in the economy.

Descriptions of Government Assistance Available in Evansville

Government assistance is available for a wide range of needs including housing, healthcare, food, and employment assistance. Examples of such assistance are presented below.

Managed by the Division of Family and Children and funded by the federal government, the Indiana Food Stamp Program assists low-income families to purchase food. This is a direct-relief program based on monthly net income with restrictions based on income, resources, and places of redemption. To qualify, the total resources of the family (excluding home) must not exceed two thousand dollars. The value of food stamps for which one is eligible is based on monthly income.

There is no responsibility or accountability on the part of the recipient associated with this program. It is a relief program in every sense and allows dependency with no mention of temporary assistance. It is, perhaps, a product of a compassionate society not desiring that those in the lowest income level suffer due to a lack of food. It makes no attempt to, nor is it suggested that it should, strive to improve the overall economic condition of the poor or move the underclass into the mainstream of society.

Government programs also provide healthcare for the poor. "Medicaid is a federal and state funded medical assistance program that pays for approved and needed medical care for persons who meet specific eligibility requirements." (Family and Social Services Administration, 2) The major eligibility requirements of Indiana's Medicaid Program involve income and dependent children. Co-payments may be required ranging from fifty cents to three dollars.

Housing assistance is available in the form of low rent apartments and rent subsidies. Several agencies provide housing for a minimal fee to low-income or no-income families including Lincoln-Hills Vanderburgh County Center and Evansville Housing Authority. Job skills assessments, job counseling, job training, and job placement are offered

through agencies including Step Ahead and the Evansville Vanderburgh County School Corporation.

Necessary Programs

Necessary programs of assistance in a compassionate society provide assistance with no anticipation that such assistance will terminate; no consideration is given to accountability or responsibility. A society that respects the sanctity of human life would be compelled to provide for those truly unable to provide for themselves (the elderly, young, handicapped, and disabled).

Perhaps without considering the political and economic implications, some suggest the purpose of government assistance is to indefinitely provide for all citizens. Although this may ultimately merge the underclass and mainstream, this is not the intention of necessary programs, nor is it the intention of the plan proposed below.

Necessary programs are borne of compassion and social necessity. The criteria do not include consideration of the cost, the long-term effect, or the efficiency of the program. Under such criteria the necessary programs of relief would include addressing basic health care, nutritional requirements for children, housing for children and their families, and assistance for elderly, disabled and handicapped. These programs are in place and funded by state and federal governments.

It is not the intention of necessary programs to alter the characteristics of the poor nor to aid in the transition of the underclass into mainstream society. In fact, there is evidence suggesting these programs are abused and that they can encourage long-term dependency. Furthermore, these programs do not provide a lifestyle on par with mainstream society, nor is it their intention. These programs are meant to provide a safety net for society's poor. This necessary component of a compassionate society will be viewed as augmenting the objective of the plan proposed here and therefore not contradictory to the principles of sound social policy. It would be important, however, for concerned citizens

to encourage government officials to add an element of accountability where appropriate so these programs will no longer encourage dependency.

Evaluation

Since the main focus of this thesis involves improving the overall circumstances of the underclass, specifically aiding the transition of the underclass into mainstream society, an evaluation of government programs of assistance must consider this point even though this may not be the intention of the government program. With this in mind it is quite easy to say the government programs described here do not support such an objective. It is certainly conceivable that government assistance programs can aid someone temporarily in need so that they may, in time, rejoin mainstream society. The fact that Congress must consider legislation to limit the number of years one may receive welfare relief is an indication that the assistance by itself does not lead one to self-sufficiency. Direct relief and assistance programs, therefore, must be considered, for the most part, inadequate for moving the underclass to the mainstream. They encourage a dependency mentality, offer assistance without accountability, and tend to encourage behavior contrary to traditionally-esteemed values such as marriage, social responsibility, and legitimate child birth.[6] This is not to say that they are not needed, but rather that they do not serve the purpose of reducing the underclass.

Federal legislation passed in 1996 abolished the entitlements to citizens in favor of block grants to states. More recent bills under evaluation address channeling government funding into faith-based organizations for social welfare purposes. These steps are significant but the effects have yet to generate results for evaluation.

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[6] Interviews with several inner-city men involved in monogamous relationships expressed a firm unwillingness to marry since government assistance to their partners (unwed mothers) would cease.

Private Secular Programs and Government-Funded Programs

Agencies and programs of assistance are abundant. Qualifying individuals can procure assistance for almost any need including education, employment, home purchasing, healthcare, and practically any reasonable temporary need. Examples of assistance available in Evansville and some innovative programs in other communities are presented below.

Descriptions of Selected Programs Operating in Evansville

There are numerous organizations and programs operating in Evansville providing assistance to the inner-city community. The sources of funding, philosophical approaches, and motivations for offering assistance greatly vary. In most cases the focus of the support is immediate and specific. The brief descriptions offered below are presented to illustrate the availability of assistance in many areas of need. The United Way of Southern Indiana and the Step Ahead Council of Vanderburg County offer resource guides more fully describing the assistance available in Evansville.

Assistance programs operating in Evansville address physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual needs. The Evansville Urban Enterprise Association "sponsors numerous social, educational, and financial programs to improve the quality of life in Evansville's Enterprise Zone" which geographically consists of Evansville's inner-city. (Evansville Urban Enterprise Association, 2)

Assistance with housing can be obtained from several sources and in many different forms. Both the Evansville Housing Authority (EHA) and the Evansville Coalition for the Homeless (ECHO) can assist in providing or locating low-cost housing. The Evansville Minority Community Development Fund can assist first-time home buyers procure financing, and they offer workshops on budgeting and financing. The Memorial Individual Development Account (IDA) Program assists low-income working people save money to achieve long-term financial goals including home purchases.

Employment assistance can also be obtained in many forms. Job skills training is offered by several agencies including RESPECT, Inc., IMPACT Ministries, and Curtis and Associates. Assistance in finding jobs is also offered by these and other agencies. RESPECT, Inc. can also provide transportation to jobs.

Educational assistance is also available in the form of financial aid and tutoring. The Upward Bound program, operated by Vincennes University helps high school students develop skills and motivation for college. The Memorial IDA advertises money available for job training and college education.

Healthcare is offered by several agencies in the inner-city of Evansville including IMPACT Health Center, Memorial Pointe Health Care Center, and the Community Health Center of Evansville. For a minimal fee most physical and emotional healthcare needs can be addressed.

Descriptions of Selected Programs Operating in Other Cities

Pathways to Independence is a program operated by Marriott hotels in Washington D.C. designed to move individuals from welfare roles to employment. (Milbank, 20-24) The program offers classes, training, and assistance in securing employment. Many of the participants maintain long-term employment. The program's successes resulted mostly from focusing efforts on the "relatively well-functioning welfare recipients who were eager to work." (Milbank, 20) Experimentation with "hard-core welfare cases" has produced much less attractive results. Even graduates of the program experienced difficulty on the job. Employers cited chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and failing drug tests as problems. Marriott has restricted its enrollment so that only a few tough cases are allowed per class.

STRIVE, also a welfare-to-work program, focuses on making the poor in cities like Boston, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia employable. (Rosin, 16, 18-19) It is

funded by local foundations and businesses. In 1997 the placement rate was eighty-one percent and over sixty-five percent remain employed. STRIVE does not offer "hard skills, like word processing; only soft-skills, like general appearance and behavior." (Rosin, 16) STRIVE focuses on attitude modification. This approach is aligned with the conservative viewpoint insofar as the focus is on modifying characteristics of the individual. The majority of those who sign up for the program quit, get kicked out, or fail. The methods utilized to alter the attitudes of the participants may be viewed as extreme by some. Instructors do not tolerate tardiness, defiant attitudes, poor communication skills, or poor choices in personal appearance—much like prospective employers.[7] The program addresses root causes of employment problems and provides meaningful assistance to the underclass that can lead to long-term lifestyle improvements.

Evaluation

The programs investigated in Evansville are functioning effectively in their efforts to provide assistance to the poor. The extensive network of providers allows "clients" to receive a wide range of services. In many cases, a visit to one member of the unofficial network will provide for connection to several support agencies. Based on personal interviews, it seems the assistance providers display a genuine compassion and desire to help their clients; however, in some situations the provider's workload can limit the amount of time the provider can spend in offering comprehensive support to the client. Currently agencies can offer one point of contact, but not necessarily a comprehensive, long-term, holistic approach. Further, the nature of the service does not usually consist of client accountability and sometimes root causes of the client's condition cannot be addressed.

The STRIVE program is designed to address underlying causes of employability problems. The program focuses on those difficult to employ by assisting them in modifying their attitudes and behavior. This is not a cure for all ailments, however, it is

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[7] This approach clearly imposes contingency-based value judgements. That is, certain choices can be proclaimed good or bad within a given context—in this case the context is employment and the judgement involves personal choices regarding attitudes and behaviors.

an example of how internal modifications can lead to improving one's economic conditions. This program illustrates the amount and nature of assistance required to result in a significant change in attitudes and behavior patterns.

The STRIVE program can also serve as an example of how there must be some motivating factor driving an individual to maintain employment. Individuals lacking the inner motivation to work and be self-sufficient may not be helped by the program. This phenomenon is relevant to Evansville; programs that offer opportunities and assistance seem destined to be less than effective without a driving sense of responsibility present in the individual. Private secular and government-funded programs provide tremendous opportunities, however, there must be a drive within an individual for such opportunities to provide meaningful change.

Faith-Based Programs

Charitable actions founded on personal faith and charitable programs established by organizations of faith are not new concepts in the United States. Many faith-based programs offer direct assistance to the poor in the form of food, housing assistance, clothing, and various social, educational, and recreational programs for children. Some programs, by design, focus on economic and social improvement. Some underclass families have utilized the assistance to significantly improve their conditions.

Recently, the success of several programs designed to aid in the transformation of the lives of the underclass has drawn the attention of government officials. Several publications, including Policy Review (Pitts, 58-59; Meyerson, 28-37), Reason (Sherman 1997b), and Time (Cohen, 46-48), have presented stories of success in facilitating a transition to the mainstream. The success of these efforts seems to be contained in program philosophies rather than extensive funding or complex procedures. "Permanent change happens when individuals are given personal attention, emotional support, and moral challenge and are held accountable for their actions." (Sherman 1996, 38-42) These characteristics are rarely a part of a government-administered program nor are they

generally a consideration to the middle-class person desiring to provide warm clothes and food for an inner-city child.

Several innovative faith-based programs addressing underclass transitional aid will be investigated and evaluated to determine their philosophical approaches, policies, and procedures. An overall assessment of the successes of these faith-based programs of assistance for the underclass is also presented. Key elements of these programs with potential application in a strategy for Evansville will also be outlined.

General Philosophy and Purpose

The basic purpose of the faith-based programs investigated is ultimately to encourage a deeper spiritual awareness and understanding. Providing assistance to the underclass, or anyone else, is part of the effort to advance this cause. The assistance is aimed at encouraging a sense of responsibility leading to self-sufficiency.[8] Scriptural directive is utilized not only as the motivation for providing assistance, but serves as a mandate for self-sufficiency. These programs differ from government programs and other private programs in many ways. For example, these programs seem to focus on a more comprehensive concept of the individual and his societal connection. They understand each individual is unique, complex, and affected by his social environment; their approach is personal and holistic. They address not the underclass symptoms but the underclass worldview. They see a lack of hope and strive to instill or restore hope through guidance, encouragement, and the demonstration of empowering cultural values. The methods utilized seem to flow naturally from their philosophy and, though labor-intensive, they are not complex.

Descriptions of Selected Faith-Based Programs

Several successful faith-based programs were investigated for the purpose of identifying

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[8] Inasmuch as their philosophies involve autonomy of the self and promote the responsibility of the individual, faith-based programs are aligned with the conservative viewpoint.

philosophies, methodologies, and procedural elements which may be adapted for use in

Evansville. The programs investigated are in place in communities throughout the

United States, including Evansville, and some of the successful strategies identified are

currently being utilized by some organizations in the local community. The specific

successful elements identified are presented at the end of this chapter.

The Christian Community Development Association

The Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), based in Jackson,

Mississippi, was founded in 1988 by John M. Perkins. The CCDA consists of over 300

organizations working "with Christian Community Development (CCD) ministries to

mobilize spiritual and physical resources in and for communities in need through the

Church in a community-determined way that is redemptive." (Christian Community

Development Association, 4) Although community development activity is undertaken

by churches and the Statement of Faith of the CCDA clearly recognizes the inerrancy of

Scripture and the messiahship of Jesus, the Mission Statement and Statement of Purpose

focus on supporting community development and meeting felt needs rather than

proselytizing. That is, their concern seems to be more physical and social. Of course,

this may be the most potent evangelistic strategy: living the Gospel.

The CCDA recognizes the existence of an underclass. The underclass "is characterized

by substandard education, chronic unemployment, inadequate housing and health care,

and almost total political powerlessness." (Perkins, 55) The philosophy of the CCDA

recognizes both the shortcomings of the underclass individual and the shortcomings of

the societal environment, specifically his local community. In their official handbook,

Restoring At-Risk Communities, the CCDA includes a chapter entitled "Understanding

Poverty". Two theories are offered for the cause of poverty: 1) political and economic

institutions, and 2) defective individuals. Officially, the CCDA contends that the

underclass are a product of both forces. Their policies and principles address improving

the conditions of the impoverished by correcting their social and economic environment

regardless of how they got that way. The CCDA looks for "societal dynamics that may

lead to systematic oppression and thereby aggravate, or, depending on your theoretical

viewpoint, cause individual irresponsibility". (Perkins, 50) The CCDA is not placing the sole blame for the underclass on society, but it suggests it has as much to do with it as any individual shortcomings. Accordingly, CCDA strategies embody a holistic approach to community development.

Dr. Perkins contends that "sin, social evil, and social oppression pervade our cultural values and social institutions." (Perkins, 52) Social institutions are designed to meet the needs of people; however, their tainted condition has reduced their effectiveness.[9] CCD recognizes and addresses three universal needs: the need to belong, the need to feel a sense of dignity, and the need for personal safety. (Perkins, 20) "The extent to which a person has these needs met is the extent to which that person [properly] develops [and] grows...." (Perkins, 20) CCD "begins with people transformed by the love of God, who then respond to God's call to share the Gospel with others through evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice." (Perkins, 21) This approach focuses on the whole person and his full range of needs. It also involves a full range of commitment from the participants. The foundation of Christian community development involves four non-negotiable strategies: reconciliation, relocation, redistribution, and church-based efforts.

Reconciliation refers both to the relationship between God and man and the relationships across social barriers. It is subtly suggested that racial reconciliation, which is more specific than "social barriers" implies, refers to blacks and whites and is required because it is the blacks who need the assistance and the whites who have the desire to help. This notion somewhat evades the underclass phenomenon and pulls the issue more towards racism and racial discrimination. However, the CCDA acknowledges that the condition of the underclass cannot be "exclusively" attributed to racism. (Perkins, 54) General economic trends are seen as having some effect, but blacks are more shaped by the past conditions and lingering racism which further affect their current economic opportunities.

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[9] The degradation of social institutions, especially due to sin, cannot be blamed for the underclass situation since all classes of society are shaped by social institutions and all are plagued by sin. Originating causes of the underclass phenomenon would more likely be uncovered within the degraded condition of the particular social institutions operating in the underclass community.

Thus, one of the underpinnings of this movement is recognizing racial problems, confronting them head-on, and moving towards community-building that benefits all.

Relocation requires that the community builders become part of the community. This allows the problems in the community to become everyone's problems. They can be addressed together and solved as a community. "Relocation transforms 'you, them, and theirs' to 'we, us, and ours.'" (Perkins, 22) The problems facing the poor become clearer as they become the problems of those offering assistance. CCD believes the "single greatest cause of sustained poverty in our inner cities is that they are isolated from the major service systems of the city. Relocation provides connected neighbors who can share the influence that they have in the marketplace, church, the educational institutions, and the political system. The flow of resources can begin to end the isolation." (Perkins, 104) Relocation, as CCD presents it, emcompasses the theoretical ideas presented above in the ideologies section concerning social isolation and the redistribution of power.

Redistribution is the natural result of reconciliation and relocation. Redistribution occurs when God's people with resources become part of a poor community and apply their skills and resources to the problems of the community. CCD suggests that redistribution can work to empower people. Long-term development is the result of CCD finding avenues to create jobs, schools, health centers, and home ownership. The key to redistribution is people-focused, not the accumulation of individual wealth. Redistribution is concerned with the common good. (Perkins, 143) CCD is open in acknowledging the failure of most CCD-driven enterprises to generate a profit. The intended outcome is not profit; it is the development of people.

Christian community development, as practiced by the CCDA, has experienced numerous successes in inner-city community building. Cases of transformed lives abound. The foundation of the program rests on total commitment of those supplying the assistance. Obviously, this plan does not succeed through short-term charitable giving or impersonal direct relief to the poor. Further, it is not market-driven; traditional capitalist goals of wealth accumulation, though in some ways compatible, are not identical to the goal of

developing people. The driving force behind CCDA is Scriptural directive, plain and simple. Mixing goals is warned against. (Perkins, 152-153) The plan, though involving extensive and disciplined commitment, has proven effective.

The Cooperative Ministry

Founded in 1982 by the religious community of Columbia, South Carolina, The Cooperative Ministry was designed to meet the needs of people of the local community in financial crisis. Their efforts are currently supported by businesses, individuals, government agencies, and over 160 churches. The Cooperative Ministry provides for an organized and unified response to the various needs of the community. There are several assistance programs operated by the ministry. The Emergency Assistance program provides assistance with food, medicine, transportation, electricity, and water. The Community Auto Repository provides donated vehicles to those who need transportation to get or keep a job. Clothing, furniture, and computers are also donated and distributed to those in need. The Project Independence program is designed to move the socially-dependent to self-sufficiency.

In addition to offering direct financial assistance, material necessities, counseling, information, and referrals, the Statement of Mission includes addressing the root causes of poverty through long-term programs. An explicit explanation of these root causes is not offered; however the description and plan of Project Independence tends to recognize characteristics in the individual that exacerbate the poverty situation. Personalized assistance is offered with no attempt to alter the person's societal or economic environment. This is not an indictment of the individual, although it rests on the assumption that, through commitment and comprehensive assistance, attitudinal and behavioral modification of the individual can improve his situation. The basic plan and the surrounding rhetoric ring of a conservative perspective; the motivation is serving as an instrument of God's love and reflecting "God's care and concern for the total well-being of all persons in our community." (The Cooperative Ministry, 4)

Project Independence is designed to match a sponsoring group with a family who is living a lifestyle of dependency. The dependent families are interviewed and selected based on their likelihood of being able to set priorities and reach their goals with assistance from outside sources. Both parties enter into a twelve-month covenant relationship. With training and support the sponsoring group's role is to develop a relationship with the family that will nurture and encourage the family. The objective of Project Independence is to help the dependent family make positive life changes that lead to economic self-sufficiency. "Families completing Project Independence will have a clearer understanding of what their family 'can do' when plans are made, goals are set, and they are willing to work hard to achieve their goals." (Project Independence, 2)

Of the over ten thousand families receiving assistance from The Cooperative Ministry during the year, as of the Fall of 1997 there were nine families in a Project Independence covenant relationship. The general operation of The Cooperative Ministry mobilizes numerous and varied resources for assisting the poor; however, the assistance is not necessarily tied to a holistic and long-term program aimed at self-sufficiency. The principles and plan of the Project Independence program, though much more limited in scope, focus on moving the dependent family to self-sufficiency.

Habitat of Evansville
Habitat of Evansville (HE) is a non-profit Christian housing ministry founded in 1983 as an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International. Houses are built with labor, material, and money donated by local individuals, churches, corporations and other organizations moved by concern and compassion. The houses are sold to carefully selected low-income families at no profit and without interest. In addition to a down payment and a monthly payment, the homeowners must invest hundreds of hours of their own labor into building their home and the homes of other families.

The mission of Habitat of Evansville is to "implement the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Evansville...by building homes for God's people in need and by working with them to

create a better neighborhood and community in which to live and work." (Habitat of
Evansville, 1998, 3)

Habitat of Evansville does not offer a publicly-declared stance on how such families find
themselves unable to purchase a home without their assistance. Rather, HE recognizes
the need and organizes and mobilizes the resources of the community to encourage and
facilitate such a purchase. HE selects families that are most likely to be successful at
such an endeavor. The "family selection committee chooses homeowners based on their
level of need, their willingness to become partners in the program and their ability to
repay the no-interest loan." (Habitat for Humanity International, 1) In one sense the
process suggests that the person does not possess internal flaws that must be addressed;
however, in another sense the selection process eliminates those who may have such
tainted traits thereby suggesting that such undesirable traits exist. In any event, HE does
not suggest in any way that the social or economic systems caused the family to be in
need of assistance, nor do they attempt to correct any flaws in these systems.

Among the numerous benefits resulting from HE projects are the interpersonal
connections created within the community through the house building activities, the
increased tax base, the upgrade of housing in the area, a reduction in tax expenditures on
housing, and of course, the benefit of homeownership to the partner family. HE has
placed 149 families into homes as of the end of 1998 and plans to build 100 houses over
the next five years. (Habitat of Evansville, 1999,1)

Faith and Families
The Faith and Families program is a volunteer program facilitated by the Mississippi
Department of Human Services (MDHS). The government does not impose any rules on
the program nor does it supply any funds directly to the faith communities. The program
links faith communities with welfare recipients for the purpose of moving the welfare
recipients to a life of self-sufficiency. Churches and synagogues "extend a helping hand
to families struggling to get out of a life of poverty and public assistance." (Mississippi
Department of Human Services, 2) The program not only links the participants, it

facilitates training, tracks outcomes, assesses performance, and offers necessary modifications. The Stronger Hope Baptist Church serves as the program's clearinghouse.

The focus of Faith and Families is the spiritual and material development of welfare families by helping them become self-sufficient through personalized support. The program recognizes specific characteristics typical of members of the underclass and works to modify the attitudes and behaviors that sustain their dependent condition. Welfare recipients are eligible for the program when they are considered nearly job ready by the MDHS. The faith community support group works with the family to prepare them for employment and strengthen the family unit. Counseling and other practical support is provided but there is no obligation of financial support.

Strategies to Elevate People (STEP)

Located in Richmond, Virginia, STEP was created to address the needs of those living in the Gilpin Court public housing project. Members of Victory Christian Fellowship (located in the Gilpin neighborhood) and a group of suburban Christians joined together "to design ways to serve each other and support those individuals (school officials, social workers, etc.) working for Gilpin Court's betterment." (Sherman 1997a, 25) The focal point of the program is the STEP Academy. Assistance is provided for those desiring to obtain a Graduate Equivalency Diploma or pursue a community college degree. Although other agencies offered support for these endeavors, STEP sought to provide a service uniquely suited to the neighborhood and including services beyond academic assistance.

STEP offers Family Share Teams to encourage and support students of the academy. These teams typically consist of three to six Christians from suburban churches paired with one student. "Family Share Teams meet twice monthly in order to develop a friendship with the student and her family. These cross-racial, cross-class friendships bring people together who might otherwise never have met." (Sherman 1997a, 53) Beyond offering support with schoolwork, the relationships formed create support groups that can address other needs such as emotional, economic, and spiritual concerns. Pastor

Harold Wilson, Jr., of Victory Christian Fellowship, described other benefits of the teams, "The more exposure you get to a wide [variety] of people, the more prepared you are to deal with the marketplace at large. It draws you out of your little closed community, [and] brings you into situations where you talk to people of different mindsets, different educational levels, economic levels, and colors of skin." (Sherman 1997a, 54)

The STEP program also offers weekly life skills discussions, daily motivational talks, and a weekly Bible study, Family Friendship Teams (designed to encourage racial reconciliation), monthly fellowships, and annual retreats.

Evaluation

The faith-based programs investigated which offer assistance to the underclass in their transition into mainstream society require a high level of commitment and the process is slow; therefore, the number of underclass members that can take advantage of this assistance at one time is limited. The success of these programs can be described in terms of renovated cities and the economic growth of communities; however, the key measure of success is the transformation of individual lives. "In Mendenhall, [Mississippi] ...homegrown leaders such as Dolphus and Rosie Weary and Artis and Carolyn Fletcher return to their community to begin a health center, businesses, a Christian school, and a church." (Perkins, 24) CCDA is also responsible for similar successes in Jackson, Atlanta, Denver, and Dallas. The success of Habitat for Humanity can be described on a grand scale with the construction of over 60,000 houses throughout the world and on a personal level by the changes brought about to each individual homeowner. In her journey towards self-sufficiency, Gloria Simms attributes her successful completion of the Graduate Equivalency Diploma program to her Family Share Team. This contribution towards transforming underclass lives by the Richmond S.T.E.P program, by the key measure of success offered above, is significant.

These programs cannot replace the government administered "necessary programs" nor can they expect to solve all social welfare ills. The philosophies and methods of these programs can offer a vehicle for effective and meaningful assistance to the underclass. In a social setting of disappointment with general assistance for the poor, specifically the underclass, these programs demonstrate proven successes.

Elements key to the faith-based programs' successes which may be suitable for Evansville involve focusing effort on the individual rather than the societal structures. They include establishing or strengthening personal connections, recognizing and addressing a more comprehensive set of individual needs, sharing and strengthening faith, promoting personal accountability, and emphasizing long-term commitment.

Chapter 3 : Assessment and Comparison of Needs and Resources in Evansville

The information presented so far addresses the basic issue of the underclass in America and efforts in specific parts of the country designed to provide meaningful aid to the underclass in their communities. The remainder of this presentation focuses on the underclass situation as it exists in Evansville and proposes a strategy designed specifically to strengthen the aid to the underclass in Evansville. This section presents the following: a brief assessment to verify the existence of an underclass in Evansville as defined herein, an assessment of the resources available in Evansville, and a comparison of the needs with the resources.

Needs: Underclass Presence

There are not large government-sponsored housing projects in Evansville providing a reminder of the existence of poverty within a society of abundance. However, portions of the inner-city community of Evansville display evidence of the gap between mainstream society and a segment living somewhat below mainstream living standards. Economic statistics can be a general guide in establishing the extent and conditions of the underclass in Evansville. Of a population of 160,000 approximately 20,000 are considered living below the poverty threshold. (Evansville Area Planning Commission)

Evidence of social behavior aligned with the attitudes and behaviors defining the underclass can be another indicator of the underclass existence. A community needs study sponsored by the United Way of Southwestern Indiana and the Step Ahead Council of Vanderburgh County indicated high rankings for needs consistent with the social pathologies of the underclass (e.g., drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, and drug-related criminal activity). (United Way of Southern Indiana, 2) Personal interviews seem to further confirm the existence of an underclass among this community as well as

the need to address the concerns specific to the underclass.[10] The specific needs of the Evansville underclass are not addressed here; gaining an understanding of these needs is a key component of the assistance process proposed in Chapter Four. At this point, it is sufficient to assert the existence of an underclass in Evansville.

General Resources: Currently Operating Agencies and Programs

The assistance available to the Evansville community address such issues as affordable housing, home purchasing assistance, food, emergency financial assistance, chemical dependency, healthcare (physical and psychological), recreation, job training, job placement, spiritual guidance, child care, transportation, and education assistance. There appears to be no need that is without a program addressing it. Furthermore, there are several organizations addressing the same need. Most of the assistance agencies are within walking distance and on the public transportation routes of the inner-city. The list below is a sample of such assistance agencies categorized by the service offered. (A more complete listing can be found in the resources guides compiled by the United Way of Southwestern Indiana and the Vanderburgh County Department of Health. Contacts for these and several other agencies are listed in the appendix.)

Housing and Home Purchasing Assistance
ECHO (Evansville Coalition for the Homeless), EHA (Evansville Housing Authority), Evansville Minority Community Development Fund, Habitat of Evansville, Memorial Housing Corporation, Memorial Individual Development Account, Evansville Rescue Mission

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[10] The personal interviews involved terminology and descriptions of the defining social characteristics of the underclass somewhat different from that common to journalists and authors on this issue. Nonetheless, the existence of this segment of society was substantiated by these interviews. Several interviews involved employees of service providers within the community who resisted differentiating the underclass from other members of society by their common social pathologies. However, any argument denying the existence of this segment of society within Evansville's inner-city was seriously weakened by the very presence of the services provided and the extent of continual dependency by the "clients". Many interviews were obtained through personal relationships developed over the last three years; they are not specifically quoted, referenced, or cited here.

Food and Food Vouchers

Tri-State Food Bank, Christian Life Center, Evansville Rescue Mission, Numerous food banks and churches, TANF (Food Stamps)

Emergency Financial Assistance

Catholic Charities, Outreach Ministries, Mission of Grace, Christian Life Center

Chemical Dependency

Chrysalis, PRIDE, Memorial Pointe Health Care Center

Healthcare

IMPACT Health Center, Memorial Pointe Health Care Center, Community Health Center of Evansville

Recreation

C. K. Newsome, IMPACT Ministries, St. James Recreational Center

Job Training and Placement

Evansville Urban Enterprize Association, Curtis and Associates, RESPECT, Inc., Evansville Black Coalition (EBC), Philip Lieberman and Associates, Private Industry Council (PIC).

Spiritual Guidance

Evansville Christian Life Center, Evansville Rescue Mission, Memorial Baptist Church, IMPACT Ministries, Nazarene Baptist Church, Numerous churches and religious organizations

Child Care

Memorial Baptist Church, CAPE, Philip Lieberman and Associates

Transportation

METS, RESPECT, Inc., Outreach Ministries

Educational Assistance

Upward Bound, IMPACT Ministries, RESPECT, Inc.

Other Independent and Church-Sponsored Organizations

American Red Cross, Community Action Program of Evansville, Hope of Evansville, House of Bread and Peace, Job Center, Meals on Wheels, Mission of Grace, Neighborhood Ministries, Outreach Ministries, Patchwork Central, Salvation Army, St. Vincent dePaul Society, Step-Ahead, Tri-State Food Bank, YMCA

Faith-Based Resources

Towards confirming the existence of a base of support for providing aid to the underclass as outlined in the proposal presented, the following is a sample of faith organizations currently involved in offering assistance to the poor of Evansville: Bible Center Cathedral, Calvary Baptist Church, Catholic Charities, Central United Methodist Church, Christian Fellowship Church, Church of the Harvest, Crossroads Christian Church, Evansville Area Community of Churches, Evansville Christian Life Center, Evansville Rescue Mission, First Presbyterian Church, Grace Baptist Church, Keck Avenue Baptist Church, Life in Abundance Church, Memorial Baptist Church, New Hope Baptist Church, St. Anthony's Catholic Church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, St. Benedict Catholic Church, and Trinity Wesleyan Church.

Comparison of Needs and Resources

Based on the resources available in Evansville, it seems apparent that no reasonable need is without a program offering assistance in that area. There are tremendous public and private financial resources expended in the effort to assist those in need. A network of program agencies seems to be the vehicle for providing a wide range of individual needs.

Where one agency cannot provide assistance in an area the "client" may be directed to another agency and assisted in his appeal for aid. Agencies such as ECHO and the Evansville Urban Enterprise Association often serve as unofficial "brokers" for the services offered in Evansville.

In light of the availability of extensive resources and the network of support agencies in Evansville, one would expect a noticeable and progressive diminishing of the underclass. I suspect few agencies located in the inner-city providing assistance services would offer unqualified confirmation of this expectation.

What circumstances allow for the existence of an underclass in Evansville? A lack of affordable housing, public transportation, financial assistance, healthcare, employment or educational opportunities can hardly be cited in light of the extensive resource and assistance network described above. Structural characteristics, that is, traits of the economic and social structures cannot provide a convincing answer since many of the consequences of their "flaws" are addressed by the programs currently offering assistance.

One answer involves both the underclass individual *and* the means by which aid is provided. There may be characteristics in the underclass individual that have been overlooked by the assistance offered. An element found in some faith-based programs that may be lacking in Evansville is comprehensive, personalized, long-term attention addressing a wide array of individual needs. Extensive personalized assistance and genuine accountability require a tremendous amount of time and resources. Many of the program administrators interviewed add a personal element to the assistance provided; however, it seems difficult for such an approach to be applied consistently on a widespread basis in the present framework of providing assistance. Most agencies of assistance are not equipped to provide this degree of support.

This type of extensive and personalized support has been effective in the faith-based programs discussed in Chapter Two. However, this alteration of attitudes and behaviors

requires extensive commitment by the participants. Such a comprehensive approach would utilize the existing resources in a manner that genuinely supports a move toward self-sufficiency. The next chapter proposes the implementation of the successful strategies of the faith-based programs in a plan suited for Evansville.

Chapter 4 : A Proposal for Strengthening Aid to the Underclass of Evansville

The proposed approach is based on the basic philosophies and methodologies of the successful faith-based programs. The strategy involves a holistic view of the individual and a comprehensive and individualized method of providing assistance which includes personal guidance and accountability. Strategies focus on modifications within the individual and rely upon support from and connections to the local community. The goal, rationale, principles, and basic procedures are presented below in a manner suited for Evansville. A detailed social assistance model from the first century and several different approaches towards the implementation of this strategy in Evansville are also offered.

Clarification of Purpose

Acknowledging that several benefits varying greatly in nature can result, it is important that one goal be recognized as ultimate in the application of this plan. The goal focuses on developing people. It can be stated as follows:

> *It is the objective of this plan to strengthen the assistance to members of the underclass in their efforts towards a worldview and lifestyle more resembling that of mainstream of society, that is, characterized by long-term economic self-sufficiency and greater access to the opportunities and benefits available in American society.*

There are numerous other benefits associated with such an objective and the result may be merely one step in the attainment of other goals. For example, Christians may demonstrate the love of God by committing to such a plan as part of their ultimate mission to spread the Gospel. Other benefits include decreasing taxes, displaying compassion, societal preservation, and cultural awareness.

This goal is intentionally limited; it does not address many segments of society in need of assistance. Not all of those deserving or requiring assistance for survival and the pursuit of a meaningful life will be supported by this objective; it is not intended to be a community's primary social welfare program. This goal focuses on only one subset of

those in need: members of the underclass possessing the desire and potential to enter mainstream society.[11]

Furthermore, not all members of the underclass can or will effectively transition into mainstream society. This transition may be impeded by a lack of understanding, a lack of sufficient desire, or an entrenchment into a pathological subculture too deep to respond to the degree of assistance available. For whatever reasons, efforts to assist some individuals obtain a better economic situation, a different worldview, or access to resources otherwise beyond their grasp will be ineffective. This assertion is made to promote an efficient utilization of limited resources. All individuals in need should continue to have access to the currently available assistance, though not all will be suited for the approach and intention of the assistance offered by this proposal.

General Philosophical Underpinnings

Consistent with the philosophies of faith-based programs, this approach is based on the idea that in order to assist the underclass in moving into the mainstream the attitudes and behavior of the underclass must be understood and modified.[12] Steps can be taken to alter the societal setting but this is not viewed by this approach as the main agent of change. Also, this approach rests on the concept of *assisting* the underclass in their transition to the mainstream—its effectiveness is directly tied to the desire and commitment of the underclass participant. The strategy to offer assistance to the underclass involves modifications within the individual; however, this is not intended to imply a stance concerning the *origin* of the underclass. Furthermore, explicit agreement

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[11] These qualifications indeed limit the segment of society for which assistance is to be offered. In fact, the existence of potential and desire to enter mainstream society may seem to preclude, by definition, members of the underclass. Voluntary underclass participation in programs such as STRIVE, Pathways to Independence, and Project Independence verify the existence of this unique segment of society. Further, these examples, specifically the culling out processes and drop-out tendency, demonstrate the necessity of *both* desire and potential for successful transition into mainstream society.

[12] The implication of self-autonomy and the reliance upon individual responsibility are consistent with the conservative perspective; however, the proposed strategy also utilizes social influence as the agent of change—a mechanism more aligned with the liberal and radical viewpoints.

on this issue is not essential to the effective implementation and functioning of this plan. This plan focuses on factors which can be effectively and immediately addressed to produce a meaningful and long-term improvement in the lives of dedicated individuals; it is not the deliberate intention of this plan to advance any particular social theory.

The underclass is characterized by unemployment, poor education, poor housing, inadequate role models, and political powerlessness. Attitudes of fatalism, a dependency mentality, and behavior aimed at immediate gratification are associated with the underclass worldview. We cannot rearrange history or radically and immediately revise our social and economic systems, but we can focus on improving the debilitating attributes of the underclass. Even if these traits were directly and exclusively caused by the societal and economic environment, a potent solution to the underclass problem can be found in modifying these personal traits. Integral to the functioning of this plan is identifying and modifying these characteristics.

Further, consistent with faith-based programs, this proposal views personal relationships as the cornerstone for providing assistance to the underclass. The entitlement mentality that fosters dependency with no sense of accountability must be abolished in order to move away from powerlessness. Traditionally, the social institutions of school, church, and family have provided much in the way of personal development conducive to a responsible, secure, and loving self identity. In the absence of the positive impact of these institutions, intentional personal relationships can be the vehicle for promoting these positive personal characteristics.

The element of personal relationships may create challenges in Evansville due to the differences in cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the mainstream and the underclass. The difficulties surrounding this issue involve two separate, yet often combined and thereby confused, concepts: racial tension and cultural diversity. Racism and prejudice have plagued our country; the effects linger. It is beyond the scope of this presentation to fully investigate or propose a plan to resolve this problem. However, the handbook of the CCDA, <u>Restoring At-Risk Communities</u>, offers extensive insight regarding this issue

specifically in the context of whites providing assistance to blacks. Racial reconciliation, terminology used by the CCDA, is a key element in Christian community development.

Cultural differences, when viewed independent from racial issues, pose problems that are not only more likely tractable, but provide opportunities for personal growth. Certain attitudes and behaviors, though stemming from one's cultural background, may not be suited for some environments. For example, promptness is not seen in the same light in all cultures. As one black educator suggested: "White people *meet*, whereas black people *gather*." (S. Washington, personal interview, August 6, 1997) "Meeting" can involve a specific time (e.g., 7:00 p.m.); "gathering" can imply a general time (e.g., after supper). In a grand context it may be reasonable to debate the relative merits of being strictly guided by the social construct of time as measured by a clock. However, the context of our mission is not so grand; our context is framed by specific social, political, and economic systems. Within this specific framework, some attitudes and behaviors are more virtuous than others. Within this specific framework, promptness is a virtue. Attempts to modify attitudes and behaviors so that promptness is viewed as virtuous is not an intentional criticism of cultural practices that view it differently; rather, it is an effort to reorient the practices of individuals desiring to function successfully within a specific framework. Furthermore, to the extent we are not totally and inevitably shaped by this framework, that is, we continue to question the forces it bears upon us, we can grow as a person and as a society. Hopefully, traits from differing cultures that are conducive to brotherly love, harmony, and a strong social fabric will be adopted by this potential mixing of cultures. It is believed that this cross-cultural experience can be beneficial to all parties involved when approached in this light.

The strategies suggested require commitment levels from key participants far in excess of typical assistance. Further, motivation for participation in this plan need not be from one particular source. The plan is modeled after faith-based programs; therefore, it should work with those motivated by Scriptural directive, an overflowing of Christ-like compassion, and the desire to spread the Gospel. However, some elements of the proposal can be fulfilled by those whose motivation is from other sources, such as moral

imperatives, a desire to reduce the tax burden, or a desire to restore or maintain the social fabric of the community.

Specific Underlying Principles

The principles offered below are a combination of the principles set forth or implied by the methods used in faith-based programs. They serve as the basis for the procedural elements provided in support of the objective presented in this proposal.

The Underclass Exists as a Segment of American Society With Specific Characteristics

A segment of American society, particularly a subset of the poor, termed the underclass, exists and is characterized by a worldview and patterns of behavior proven not conducive to taking advantage of opportunities common to mainstream society. Symptoms include intergenerational poverty, crime, illegitimacy, unemployment, indifference or hostility to education, and sexual promiscuity which in combination result in overall economic, political, and social powerlessness.

There Are No Immutable Barriers Separating the Underclass From Mainstream Society

The condition of the underclass is not permanent. Societal conditions and the nature of the individual allow for the transition of members of the underclass into mainstream society. For such a transition to occur alterations in the individual can be addressed or the structure of the economic and social structures can be altered. This plan focuses on assisting the individual to modify his attitudes and behavior.

Specific Values Have Proven Effective in Sustaining Mainstream American Society

Amidst politically correct rhetoric and a general mood of tolerance, some cultural values have proven to be more conducive than others to economic stability and overall well-being. Traditional American family values, which include marriage, financial responsibility, sustained employment, deferred gratification, and belief in God, in general, have, (regardless of socioeconomic class) resulted in better conditions than those associated with a self-centered, fully tolerant hedonism centered in the present.

Personal Development is the Focus of the Assistance

This plan takes the whole person into account. Every person has physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual components. Each of these must be addressed in the individual's particular arrangement and social setting for long-term meaningful change to occur. Furthermore, personal development cannot be forced; hence, the plan involves assisting those possessing a desire to improve their lives.

Scriptural Directive is the Primary Force Driving Self-Sufficiency

Given the tremendous resources available for the taking, it is possible to survive in the Evansville community without being self-sufficient. In a capitalist society, a primary driving force for personal economic independence is personal well-being, independence, and the pursuit of happiness through economic means. This has eluded some in our society. The faith-based approach offers another reason for maintaining self-sufficiency: Scriptural directive. Some of the most direct of such commands is found in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians: "...if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either." (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Paul commands believers to "take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame." (2 Thessalonians 3:14) This measure was more likely a social ostracism designed to alter the behavior of the slacker rather than a formal excommunication from the body of believers.[13] (Ryrie, 1915) Paul also commands believers to work with their hands so as to not be in need but rather have something to share with others. (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 and Ephesians 4:28) Obviously, Scriptural directive is not the only force motivating citizens to be self-sufficient, but it has worked well with the faith-based programs in helping those unmoved by conventional motivational forces.

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[13] We shall assume the circumstances surrounding the underclass participant disqualify him from being considered a "slacker" (if nothing else, his desire to enter mainstream society should preclude this). However, it bears noting that some types of support provided by believers, though certainly compassionate, can be in direct violation of Paul's instructions.

The Primary Objective Is Paramount and Restrictive by Necessity

The goal of the plan is to aid the underclass in moving into mainstream society. This objective does *not* address all worthy or current assistance recipients. Key to the objective of this proposal is offering *assistance* to the underclass in *their efforts* to transition toward a different *lifestyle*.

Adherence To The Stated Purpose Is Imperative

An easy first step to reducing the size of the underclass is to work to destroy the dependency mentality. Government officials support this idea, at least in language, since aid to families is no longer an "entitlement". Beyond the consideration of "necessary programs" discussed earlier, it is imperative that assistance not be given in conflict with the underlying objective of this endeavor. The personal relationships developed are designed to add the element of accountability. Underclass assistance must cease encouraging a dependency mentality.

Justice, Civility, and Compassion Are Concrete Concepts With Definite Applications

The idea of an individual being systematically and involuntarily restricted either from access to common opportunities or from experiencing the fruits of responsible behavior is offensive to the citizens of a moral society. Further, it is both within the power of the citizenry *and* their social responsibility to remedy such a wrongful situation.[14]

Motivation for Transitional Assistance Is Warranted and Abundant

"Each person is created in God's image with inherent worth and diverse talents, and each of us is bound together in various social relationships and responsibilities." (Governor's Advisory Task Force on Faith-based Community Service Groups, 2) Justice, one such responsibility, includes aiding those finding themselves in need through circumstances

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[14] Sympathizers with the radical stance will likely be motivated by such an assertion based on the assumption that the "wrongful situation" was generated and perpetuated by the prevailing social, political, and economic structures. However, the involuntary restriction from common opportunities may be attributed to social mechanisms or individual characteristics thereby motivating those aligned with the liberal and conservative perspectives, respectively.

beyond their control and possessing a desire and commitment to better their condition. Motivation for acting justly is varied. Faith communities may be motivated by Scriptural directive. Other motivations include moral imperatives, social stability, civility, or compassion. Whatever the underlying drive, the purpose is to provide real help that will move members of the underclass toward mainstream society.

Personal Relationships Are The Cornerstone to Personal Development

"Government can do some things, but it cannot reach deep into the human character. Some of our worst social pathologies (e.g., illegitimacy, crime, poverty) can be solved if people experience spiritual transformation; if the hearts of parents are turned toward their children; if respect is restored for human life and property; if a commitment is renewed to care about our neighbor and our community." (Faith in Action, 2) Intentional personal relationships can supply that which was formerly imparted by the social institutions of the family, church, and community. Worldviews must be altered; the agent of alteration is committed, long-term personal interaction between members of the mainstream and members of the underclass.

Personal Commitment is Extensive

The level of commitment by both the underclass member and the mainstream supporter is far in excess of typical assistance programs. Underclass participants must desire to change and agree to measures of responsibility and accountability. Diligent adherence to policies is required by the mainstream participants. The process generally requires long-term, consistent commitment by the key people involved.

Necessary Programs of Assistance Are Required in a Just Society

Some programs are still necessary even though they contradict the specific goal of this plan. Such programs were described earlier and, though not specifically a part of this plan, are still required in a compassionate, just, and civil society. They will not necessarily be considered at odds with this purpose, even though their methods and philosophies differ from those presented here.

Basic Procedural Elements

Although the underlying philosophies concerning social welfare can be complex and controversial, the program methodologies can sometimes be reduced to simple elements or procedures. The methods utilized by the faith-based programs investigated possess a simple common denominator. Each program relies upon intentional personal interaction between those receiving the assistance and those offering the assistance as the vehicle for the transformation of worldviews. The assistance is holistic and driven by Scripture. The specific methods used to build and sustain the relationships vary considerably. The components are presented in rudimentary form to facilitate adaptability to a wide range of interested organizations.

Fundamental Component

The basic vehicle for assisting the transformation of members of the underclass to mainstream society involves *linking members of the underclass with members of mainstream society.* Much of what is missing in the underclass is an awareness and adherence to cultural values held in esteem by the mainstream. Members of the mainstream can share and demonstrate these values within the context of committed, personal relationships. Long-term employment, deferred gratification, and responsibility are a part of the mainstream mentality and can be transferred to the underclass through personal interaction. The linking of trained and committed mainstream families with dedicated underclass families can provide such a conduit for the transferring of these values. A specific plan for establishing this link can be patterned after the faith-based programs discussed in Chapter Two and tailored to the personality of the interested agency.

Prefatory Considerations: Elementary Components

The Purpose of Providing Assistance
A critical educative process involves the reorientation of those people directly involved

with providing assistance to the underclass. Even if the theorists and administrators are in agreement and fully support the objective presented, it will be difficult to apply if supporters provide assistance which encourages a dependency mentality. Clearly, the truly compassionate approach does not include providing direct relief to the habitually-dependent, able-bodied poor. Rather, compassion requires addressing the real need and considering the whole person, his specific set of problems, and the most effective path to the overall improvement of the conditions of his life.

The Focus on Worldviews

Mainstream participants must be prepared to understand a different worldview held by an underclass individual.[15] For some it can be difficult to comprehend the idea that someone else views the world much differently than oneself and can be particularly difficult to sympathize with such a differing view. The sensitivity to the underclass worldview is for the purpose of facilitating the transition to a healthier worldview. The end result will be different attitudes and behaviors; however, the agent of change is the modification in the manner in which one views the world.

Addressing the Whole Person

Some attempts to aid the underclass have not addressed the full range of needs of the individual. The existing network in Evansville includes assistance for practically every area of need; however, the framework within which the assistance is provided does not usually allow for a holistic approach. That is, providers may not be able to devote all the time they feel is required or they may be somewhat restricted from addressing spiritual needs. Given the nature of the approach and a reliance on existing community assistance providers, faith-based organizations seem uniquely qualified to minister to the comprehensive set of needs of the individual.

Utilizing the Existing Provider Network

An unofficial network of service providers is currently in place in Evansville. The

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[15] The intent of this strategy is the alteration of the debilitating characteristics of the underclass worldview. If the focus is limited to the adjustment or mere condemnation of particular behaviors, the effectiveness of the strategy will likely be diminished.

implementation of this proposal does not involve changes to the assistance community or the particular methods of providing assistance. However, it does involve the manner in which assistance is provided. Mainstream participants involved in the proposed approach will likely require education and training concerning the assistance providers and the functioning of the provider network. The Evansville Urban Enterprise Zone and RESPECT, Inc., are knowledgeable concerning this network (see appendix for contact information).

Understanding the Process of Transformation

This proposal involves aiding in the transition of the underclass into mainstream society; it does not require explicit agreement on how anyone became a member of the underclass. The catalyst for this transition is committed personal relationships. Within this framework of intentional relationships, participating underclass members commit to being open to coaching, counseling, encouragement, and direction offered by the supporting families. For example, the process of establishing and enforcing a budget would less likely include explicit condemnation of poor choices but rather involve the demonstration of placing a greater priority to rent and food rather than cellular phones and pagers. The various worldviews associated with either method of establishing priorities will be found equally foreign to the other party. Understanding a different worldview is difficult. The alteration of one's worldview can be expected to take time. Correcting self-defeating behaviors is only one step. The personal interaction resulting from the linking of underclass members to members of the mainstream is the vehicle for adjusting a destructive worldview. This is an essential component of the strategy; however, the process by which the transformation occurs can be as varied as the individuals involved.

Potential Resource Coordination

Resource coordination can be implemented in varying degrees. Some communities have utilized a comprehensive approach involving unified distribution that promotes accountability and increases efficiency by reducing duplicate efforts. Such an extensive approach, though beneficial, is not an essential element of this proposal.

A Detailed Model of Assistance

The faith-based programs investigated are somewhat distinct from other assistance

programs inasmuch as their guiding principles or underlying motivation stems from the

faith of those involved, specifically, Christianity. Furthermore, the success of these

programs is founded on adherence to the Scriptural directive of self-sufficiency. To

illustrate an application of the principles espoused by Christianity, a model of assistance

is offered below. In an effort to remain philosophically sound the example is taken

directly from Scripture.

> Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour,
> the hour of prayer. And a man who had been lame from his
> mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set
> down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful,
> in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. When
> he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking
> to receive alms. But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him
> and said, "Look at us!" And he began to give them his attention,
> expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I do
> not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the
> name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" And seizing him by
> the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his
> ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and began
> to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping
> and praising God. (Acts 3:1-8)

This illustration of social assistance demonstrates several key points which serve as the

foundation of faith-based approaches, specifically the proposal submitted here. Some of

these points are explicitly presented in this proposal and others are inherent to a faith-

based approach. These key points are expressed below as presented in the Scriptural

narrative.

"Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer."

(Acts 3:1) First and foremost, all thoughts, words, and actions should be surrounded by

consistent prayer; programs of social assistance are not an exception. Although the

Scriptural account does not specifically state that the miraculous healing was predicated on the regular prayer of Peter and John, the directive to pray and the result of prayer is made clear throughout Scripture.[16]

The person in need was "a man who had been lame from his mother's womb...." (Acts 3:2) In this particular case it is made clear that the deficiency giving rise to the need, though not the fault of the individual, lies within the individual. The "cause" for the need came from the Creator of the individual rather than the society within which he lived. Peter and John do not address this issue. In much the same way the proposal of assistance offered here is not burdened with diagnosing the "cause" of the need.

Peter responded "along with John". (Acts 3:4) The apostles were acting in one accord. The unity of the body of believers can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the Gospel message as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of assistance through resource coordination.

Peter "fixed his gaze on him". (Acts 3:4) The apostles gave the man in need their attention. An impersonal approach or even a half-hearted acknowledgement is not implied by the phrase "fixed his gaze". Peter and John made it clear they were interested in helping the man, and they had a personal understanding of his need. The faith-based approach involves a personal relationship between the participants.

Perhaps Peter and John wanted it made clear they also were poor when they said to the man: "Look at us!". (Acts 3:4) Maybe they wanted the man to look at them to see the real source of their riches. Or, maybe they wanted the man to imitate their behavior. In any case, personal interaction was encouraged by such a command.

As instructed, the man "began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them." His focus, however, was still on his own need and deficiency. Even

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[16] "They were continually devoting themselves...to prayer." (Acts 2:42) "Therefore,...pray for one another...the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." (James 5:16)

noticing the lack of financial resources of the apostles, the man surely expected that since they could walk and he could not, they should be able to offer him something.

Peter makes it clear he "does not possess silver and gold" but he is willing to offer what he does possess. (Acts 3:6) The point of Peter's comment may not be that he had no silver or gold but that what he had to offer, even beyond the physical healing, was far more valuable than silver or gold. Faith-based assistance functioning in accordance with Scripture provides far in excess of the fulfillment of immediate physical needs. The holistic approach addresses not only the wider scope of economic self-sufficiency; it ultimately addresses the spiritual needs of those involved.

The power evoked for the healing, "the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene", is the same as the power required for the success of faith-based assistance. (Acts 3:6)

Peter's instruction to the man, "walk!", went beyond the man's attention to his immediate financial need. (Acts 3:6) Furthermore, Peter commanded the man to do it himself. The healing, though significant in and of itself, was performed for a greater cause: the glorification of God. Thus, Peter's approach as a model for faith-based approaches embodied a focus beyond the immediate needs, involved a stern command, relied on the individual to put forth effort, and was performed for God's glory.

Peter did not end his involvement with instructions only. Peter seized "him by the right hand" and "he raised him up". (Acts 3:7) Peter provided stern, yet compassionate, personal assistance.

"[I]mmediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and began to walk...." (Acts 3:7-8) The healing was, of course, miraculous. Even though faith-based approaches today rely on well thought-out plans, budgets, and procedures, miracles should be expected.

Perhaps by direct invitation or maybe through a desire to know more about Peter and John or the God they served, the healed man "entered the temple with them". (Acts 3:8) This is a further demonstration of personal relationships which is essential to the faith-based approach.

Faith-based approaches also involve developing and nurturing indigenous leadership. The healed man began "walking and leaping and praising God." (Acts 3:8) Beyond no longer being a burden to the community, he was spreading the good news through his praises to God.

This brief exposition of a biblical example of social assistance is provided as an illustration of the principles set forth in the proposed approach. For any particular individual or organization, the methods of becoming involved and providing assistance to the underclass will be dependent on the individual or corporate talents, resources, and passions. Specific examples of relationship-based assistance are provided below.

Ministry Examples

The brief descriptions of the programs offered below illustrate methods where relational, holistic, and Christ-centered assistance have been provided. These ministries are described in greater detail in Chapter Two. Specific steps that can be taken towards creating similar ministries in Evansville are offered in the next section. The point being illustrated by these examples is the vehicle used for establishing relationships; the cases below are based on education, athletics, and addressing physical needs. Among other possibilities for establishing and building relationships are economic opportunities, general neighborhood improvements, racial reconciliation, drug and gang presence abatement, and mutual interests such as sporting events and hobbies.

Education

The S.T.E.P. of Richmond, Virginia is an example of suburban and inner-city churches working together to aid families living in the Gilpin Court housing development. The

core group consists of leaders from Victory Christian Fellowship (located in the Gilpin neighborhood) and a small group of suburban Christians. The core team identified community leaders and others interested in improving conditions in the housing development.

A tutoring center was established and the group helped refurbish a community center. The S.T.E.P. academy links students desiring aid and encouragement with Christian support teams. These are known as Family Share Teams; they are an extension of the education program and an excellent mechanism for holistic and relational ministry. Family Friendship Teams, consisting of members from suburban congregations and members of Victory Christian Fellowship, were also organized to encourage racial reconciliation. (Sherman 1997a, 25-26)

Athletics

Establishing relationships, building friendships, and developing a holistic approach to an assistance ministry can occur in the context of one's career and athletic interests. Wayne Gordon became a teacher and wrestling coach at Lawndale high school in Chicago. He moved into the Lawndale community. Wayne installed weight-lifting machines in a local store and shared his faith with the athletes. Wayne and his wife held Bible studies that later developed into the Lawndale Community Church. (Sherman 1997a, 23-24)

The Gordon family example includes the CCDA elements of racial reconciliation, relocation, and redistribution. It also shows how intentional relationships can develop from general community involvement and common interests.

Extension of Addressed Physical Needs

One branch of the Cooperative Ministry of South Carolina is Project Independence (PI). The participants of PI agree to a long-term relationship with supporting church members for the purpose of improving their overall lifestyle. Originally the PI participant may have sought the assistance of the Cooperative Ministry to meet an immediate physical need; the ministry offers help with clothing, food, vocational training, and assistance in

finding a job and perhaps obtaining a car for transportation to a job. Relationships of trust and appreciation are built through meeting physical needs which facilitate the PI relationships.

Implementation Plans: General Guidelines

This proposal relies on resources currently available in Evansville applied in a manner consistent with the most effective faith-based program methodologies. The plan does not rely on extensive restructuring of the current institutions providing assistance or hinge on increased public or private funding; it does not require government policy changes.[17] Rather, the plan involves effectively utilizing the current network of resources within a framework of personalized involvement, holistic support, and Christ-centered guidance. This approach involves developing people; it involves long-term personal commitment by the underclass and mainstream participants. The vehicle for meaningful change is the modification of worldviews giving rise to empowering attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles. Faith-based programs throughout the United States have implemented programs in accordance with these principles which resulted in participants transitioning from lives of poverty, crime, sexual promiscuity, unemployment, and/or perceived hopelessness into lifestyles characterized by economic self-sufficiency and adherence to traditionally-esteemed values. It is my claim that this type of change is beneficial to the underclass participants, the mainstream participants, and society as a whole. I further claim the assistance offered in accordance with the principles presented which result in meaningful and long-term changes in people's lives, in contrast to the general notions of social assistance, is socially responsible and Scripturally sound. Finally, it is my belief the application of these principles, policies, and programs can be as effective in Evansville as they have been in other cities.[18]

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[17] Interested readers are directed to Part Three of <u>Restorers of Hope</u> by Amy L. Sherman for a discussion of government interaction.

[18] It is my general stance that the number of programs and extent of resources expended are sufficient to address most social problems in Evansville. The goal is not merely more programs, rather the incorporation of intentional relationships and holistic ministry with accountability in the context of a Christ-centered approach. This may give rise to the creation on new programs, the modification of current programs, or the replacement of existing programs.

In light of the above claims, specific actions are offered below which can be taken towards the implementation of such principles, policies, and/or programs. Three different approaches are provided. First, a comprehensive approach is offered for churches not heavily involved in underclass assistance programs. The second approach is provided as guidance for the leaders of currently operating programs desiring to incorporate the principles and methodologies presented. Finally, a plan is offered for those individuals desiring to become involved in a ministry directed by the principles and methodologies discussed who do not desire to create a new program or whose church has decided not to pursue this area of ministry at this time. These steps are intended as general guidelines; specific situations will affect the specific actions required. The plans of action as well as the examples offered are not intended to suppress anyone's creativity in their own approach but rather to serve as a starting point.

Creating a New Ministry: Philosophically and Scripturally Sound From the Start

The steps below are adapted from <u>Restorers of Hope.</u> (Sherman 1997a, 157-170) This approach presumes the existence of a passion for providing this type of assistance by members of a church congregation in which there may be little involvement in social assistance programs. The success of such an endeavor is not guaranteed by adherence to this list of steps. These are provided as a guide; God may lead your efforts in a different direction. The specific actions a particular church may take will be dependent on the particular passions and resources of the church and the specific needs of the area of the community addressed.

Foundational Steps

Step One: Resource Assessment and Scope Definition. The extent of commitment and resource allocation required for the proposed program must be considered. Although the financial resources required may not be great, the general support of the church body and leadership is required as well as a reasonable pool of church members with a passion for this type of ministry. The interests, skills, and demographics of the church body can

guide the direction of the ministry. That is, some congregations consist of members qualified to serve as coaches for a sports program and suited to help with home or car repairs, others may have the capabilities to start a small business, open a health clinic, or provide educational assistance. The general level of interest, type of resources available, and extent of resources will influence the size and scope the ministry.

Step Two: Community Awareness. A study of the demographics and socioeconomic situation of the community or a particular neighborhood can help guide the establishment of the program. Personal involvement in the community will likely be required to gain an understanding of the underclass situation. This involvement can be through inner-city churches, neighborhood associations, sports leagues, and volunteering in currently operating inner-city ministries. Contacts for several churches and organizations are listed in the appendix. A survey of perceived community needs is conducted periodically in Evansville; this information can be obtained through the United Way of Southwestern Indiana (see appendix). Knowledge of the community/neighborhood will continue and become more meaningful in future steps.

Step Three: Identification of Current Programs. There are numerous churches, organizations, and government programs offering assistance to Evansville's inner-city; many are listed in Chapter Three. Awareness of these programs will grow as the church's involvement in the community grows. A brief survey of suburban churches with inner-city outreach programs as well as active community-building churches of the inner-city can offer insight regarding the programs currently operating and the possible areas of need. The "provider network" contacts discussed in Chapter Three can also provide information regarding programs and needs of the inner-city.

Building and Focusing a Team
Step Four: Establishment of Core Community Team. In the process of becoming familiar with the community, individuals can be identified within the community who share the vision of Christian community development. Some of these key individuals may be currently involved in community building and would welcome the support and additional

resources. Others may not be as outwardly involved though they share your passion for this type of ministry; these people would likely welcome your partnership. By whatever means they are assembled, the core of community members have proven essential to the successful functioning of the programs investigated. This team is necessary for understanding how the community functions, helping determine the areas of need, and providing stability to the program. "For the long-term sustainability of the ministry—and more importantly, for the community's own long-term prospects for development— indigenous leadership must be developed and empowered." (Sherman 1997a, 161)

Step Five: Selection of Specific Focus of the Ministry. Given the assessment of the church's resources and the input from the core community members regarding the community needs, a specific ministry focus can be developed. Churches may choose to focus on a well-defined geographic area, a specific demographic characteristic, or a shared interest or need. This ministry is the vehicle for developing the personal relationships which serve as one of the cornerstones of the faith-based approach. The examples provided in the previous section illustrate various types of ministries as well as the manner in which the ensuing personal relationships lead to the transmission of attitudes and behaviors resulting in meaningful life changes.

Programmatic Issues

Step Six: Establishment of Basic Organizational Policies. Administrative issues, such as staffing, fund-raising, and governing policies can be handled in a manner similar to the addition or modification of any other church program. The mission statement, general ministry philosophies, and practical guidelines can be adapted from the information provided in previous sections of this chapter which are a compilation of the principles and methodologies of the faith-based programs investigated.

Step Seven: Participant Readiness. The recruiting, screening, training, placing, and affirming of church volunteers for such a ministry can be a complex task. Many churches have ministries dedicated to coordinating lay involvement. The size and scope of the ministry envisioned will certainly influence the difficulty involved in preparing and

supporting participants. As with the administrative issues, volunteer coordination can be handled similar to many other ministries within the church.

Modifying a Program: Incorporating Successful Faith-based Principles and Practices

For currently operating ministries offering assistance to the inner-city desiring to incorporate the principles of the faith-based programs discussed, several key components are presented below. In many cases the focus of the ministry may become altered over time; it is also likely the depth of the assistance provided may decrease to allow for an increase in the breadth of the ministry.

Relational

The faith-based approaches investigated rely upon personal, face-to-face, long-term relationships. Assistance programs can operate effectively without this component; they can meet real needs, though they may provide no assistance leading to empowerment and self-sufficiency. The intentional personal relationship component serves to enlighten, inform, and enlarge the worlds of the participants. This component also provides for accountability—an essential element in the success of such a ministry.

Holistic

The faith-based models attempted to address the comprehensive set of needs of the underclass participants. Ministries exist in Evansville addressing specific needs; for example, nutritional, educational, recreational, or spiritual needs may be the central focus. It may become necessary to limit the extent of such assistance as the focus becomes more holistic. That is, incorporate components that address the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of each participant. Several inner-city churches and organizations in Evansville have already begun incorporating this holistic approach.

Indigenous Involvement

Involvement and leadership from the community is essential to functioning and long-term success of the faith-based programs. Organizations and churches not which do not incorporate inner-city community members are encouraged to incorporate these members in the core ministry team. This component can also support the personal relationship component and the element of accountability. Again, the size of a ministry may be initially reduced by relying on inner-city volunteers; however, the result should justify the risks or consequences involved in incorporating this component.

Christ-centered

The faith-based approaches rely upon Scriptural directive as the motivating factor for economic self-sufficiency. (See section entitled Specific Underlying Principles) This element has not only proven successful towards establishing economic self-sufficiency; it is integral to the spiritual portion of the holistic approach.

Joining a Program: Serving Soundly

For interested individuals not desiring to begin a new ministry or whose church has decided not to pursue this type of ministry, the following ideas are offered. Learn about the community by volunteering at currently operating inner-city programs and/or become involved with inner-city churches. (Also see Step Two above.) A growing awareness of the community will not only enhance one's understanding of the underclass phenomenon, it may uncover potential ministries open to providing assistance in accordance with the principles presented here. Several inner-city ministries that would welcome volunteers interested in Christian community development are listed in the appendix.

Comments, critiques, or questions are welcomed on any aspect of this presentation.

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Appendix

Information on obtaining The Community Resource Guide published by the United Way of Southwestern Indiana can be requested at (812) 421-2800.

Information on obtaining a recent Needs and Capacities Study sponsored by the United Way of Southwestern Indiana and the Step Ahead Council of Vanderburgh County can be requested at (812) 428-3533.

The RESPECT, Inc. office can be reached at (812) 423-7770.

The Evansville Urban Enterprise Association, Inc. can be reached at (812) 426-2490.

Inner-city churches involved in community building include:
Nazarene Missionary Baptist Church
424-7368
Memorial Baptist Church
422-7676

Suburban churches with inner-city ministries include:
Christian Fellowship Church
867-6464
Bethel Temple
477-8888
Crossroads Christian Church
476-8668

The following inner-city programs would welcome volunteers.
IMPACT Ministries
422-7607

Christian Life Center
423-9222

Evansville Rescue Mission
421-3800