

FAMILY GROUPS SPEAK OUT

A SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUPS CONDUCTED FOR THE KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION,
OF KANSAS CITY, MO, AND THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

In 1992, amidst the rancor of a presidential campaign that at times centered on a debate over family structure and family values in the United States, the Kauffman Foundation and the Missouri Department of Social Services set out to find out exactly how Americans talked and felt about families, family issues, and family programs.

The research, conducted in eight cities by Vince Breglio of Research/Strategy/Management, Inc., revealed that many Americans believe that the condition of the nation's families is the nation's most pressing issue. Most groups felt that programs should center on the family holistically and parental relationships rather than individual members of a family.

If you're going to focus on one or the other, you should probably focus on the parents because the children ... are more likely to grow up the way their parents are." (Female, St. Louis, Mo.)

But at the same time, the focus groups showed that people harbor a deep hostility, even a sense of betrayal, toward government's efforts to help families. Government, they believe, works against families by concentrating too heavily on individuals and their isolated problems and by being unresponsive to local communities and families. Participants distrusted government and said too many government programs become an anchor rather than a safety net.

In every group, a solid majority view the family as faring worse today than just two or three years ago. Three aspects of family life combine to form this perception:

- **Financial stress and a falling standard of living:** This disrupts families by sending both parents into the work force, leaving them little time to spend with their children and spouses, and creating a sense of fear and uncertainty over the future.

Financial pressures are causing families to lose interest in each other because they're spending so much time focusing on financial needs. (Male, Baltimore, MD)

- **A society that has lost touch with basic values:** This results in weak commitments to families and children, high divorce rates, rising births to unmarried parents, and misplaced priorities that undermine family life.

It's a moral issue, the breakdown of most families. (Female, Kansas City, MO)

(more)

What is hurting family structure is all these outside influences that are coming at us. You have to control the things that are bombarding the family structure. (Female, Tampa, FL)

- **Lifestyles that are hectic, scattered and “stuck in fast forward:”** This also contributes to family breakdown as well as a paucity of family time. Because of this, kids are forced to grow up too quickly.

You don't sit down and eat a meal around the table every night, you don't have the family time. (Female, Tampa, FL)

I find out that this five-year-old boy who is playing with my five year old has parents who are divorced because his father was a drug dealer and the mother is a topless dancer, and I'm just like, “Oh my gosh. Do I need to interview these families before I can let my children go and play?” (Female, Detroit, MI)

Despite the decline in family life all groups, regardless of income, said they relied heavily on their immediate and extended families in times of trouble. Government was a last resort. The majority of participants expressed hostility and distrust toward government efforts, especially at the national level, to help families. People are tired of politicians who pay lip service to family issues.

Politicians will continue to promise us the world and give us nothing. (Female, Orange County, CA)

When designing ideal programs to help families, participants said that the programs would focus on ways to keep families together. People disliked programs that were described as “children’s programming,” or “child focused,” but were supportive of programs that targeted families holistically.

The family has to come first, before anything else. (Female, Tampa, FL)

(end)



Research/Strategy/Management

FAMILY GROUPS SPEAK OUT

August 1992



Research/Strategy/Management Inc.

FAMILY GROUPS SPEAK OUT

**PRESENTED TO:
Department of Social Services
State of Missouri**

Project Director: Dr. Vincent J. Breglio

August 1992

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME I

	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction.....	1-7
II. Families First.....	8-14
III. Searching for Solutions.....	15-33
IV. Foster Care and Family Preservation.....	34-37
V. Words and Ideas.....	38-50
VI. Summary.....	51-54
APPENDIX AA Research Design.....	55-57

I. INTRODUCTION

Voter confidence in the ability of elected representatives and government to deal with the problems facing families is approaching an all-time low watermark. For the better part of a year, seven out of ten voters have expressed the feeling that somehow the country is on the wrong track (NBC News/Wall Street Journal Polls, January-July, 1992). Moreover, a majority (54%) believe the American political process is not working well and needs major changes (NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll, May, 1992). Still, the same people expect political leaders and government to do something about the issues which they feel incapable, even powerless, of dealing with themselves. One of these issues is strengthening the family.

Is strengthening the family an important national issue agenda item? YES! In a July 1992 R/S/M survey for the Communication Consortium and the Ford Foundation, it ranked equal in overall importance with elementary and secondary education, healthcare and crime/drugs (eight out of ten ranked it very important).

This study examines many of the issues important to strengthening the family such as; how voters view conditions within the family today, what is working for families and what isn't; different ways of looking at family problems such as foster care, parent/child relationships and the availability of resources to help in times of crisis. Addressed in this study are some of the sources of satisfaction and frustration experienced within all socio-economic levels of society when dealing firsthand with family experiences.

Nearly all voters express frustration with the ability of government and elected leaders to deal effectively with the issues facing families. However, those most dependent upon the system for help (i.e., low income, poor job security, poor education, history of substance abuse, etc.) are more likely to have experienced firsthand the frustrations of dealing with government bureaucracy. Their frustrations appear more resigned to the status quo and somewhat less likely to turn to anger. On the other hand, frustration with the power structure responsible for family policies and programs soars among more affluent participants. More than just frustrated, these voters express resentment of government programs and policy that seem to defy common sense, don't accomplish their stated goals and appear to become more of an anchor than a safety net for those forced to use them.

Four objectives provide the structure for this study. Within each objective, specific research questions add direction to the discussion of attitudes, perceptions and opinions of this small cross-section of American voters. Results are reported from eleven separate small group interviews (focus groups) of approximately ten persons each. A detailed description of the research methods may be found in Appendix AA. A summary of the findings and highlights follows.

Objective #1. Determine how best to frame family issues.

1. With regard to families, what are people seeing, feeling and expressing today? That is, what is most likely to move voters to action?

In every group, a strong majority of voters view the family in a state of operational and, to a lesser extent, structural decline -- worse off today than it was just three years ago. Three facets of family life combine to drive this perception:

- A. Meeting family financial commitments in sluggish economic times;
- B. Living "life in the fast lane" or "on the margins" of society; and
- C. Looking for values and structure to provide direction.

No single issue emerges as "the hot button" of the family agenda. Rather, a number of different issues within these three broad topic areas appear capable of activating voters interested in family life.

2. What is the level of intensity associated with these feelings and emotions? What is the level of excitement or frustration with regard to particular issues? Do voters have specific suggestions on how to deal with their frustrations?

For the majority of participants, intensity of feeling on the key issues runs deep and disapproving. The family needs attention. The following issues are addressed by almost every group with a sense of frustration, anger and frequently resignation:

- A. Meeting Family Financial Commitments. Particularly --
 - * The stress of working spouses/Two-earner households
 - * The fear of unemployment/Making ends meet
 - * The realization that financial commitments supersede family commitments
- B. Living Life in the Fast Lane or On the Margins of Society. Particularly --
 - * Finding time together/Time management
 - * Divorce/Single parents
 - * Drugs and physical safety
- C. Looking for Values and Structure. Particularly --
 - * Family traditions
 - * A belief system frequently identified with Church/God

Government and politicians contribute little to solving these frustrations. Among affluent, better-educated voters, frustration and anger with government is very pronounced. Politicians receive poor marks among all groups as appeasers, glad-handers and "say anything, do nothing" frauds. When asked how to deal with their obvious frustration with politicians, the majority say "just vote them out." It remains to be seen if this threat will be acted upon. Answers to other frustrations are neither so obvious nor so easy.

- 3. How should family issues be addressed? Should they be set in the context of changes in society that impact the world of families, the world of children, or should they be set in the context of policy orientations as determined by government?

Family issues should be set in the context of help for families -- preferably without raising the choice of serving children or parents alone. To the extent possible, do not emphasize the role of government when addressing policy and programs designed to help families. Voters believe government solutions to strengthening the family should be closely identified with the community targeted for service, and, most importantly, its business and civic interests. Policy and

administration should be more of a shared responsibility with those who receive services and community leaders through active advisory committees. The closer family services and programs are perceived to be to the people needing help, the quicker these services and programs will be adopted by the community, the voters and most important, the users.

Objective #2 -- Assess the role of government and/or elected leadership in family issues.

1. What are people's thoughts and feelings regarding politicians and their ability to solve family problems?

Nearly all politicians have a credibility problem on family issues. They are believed to care only as far as the ballot box on election day. Voters recognize they are, in part, to blame since they haven't held their politicians accountable after election day. Most say this will change. Stay tuned!

2. What are people's thoughts and feelings regarding the government's ability to solve family problems?

Government needs a major overhaul. Most voters wish to avoid involvement with any of the programs because of perceived stigma, inefficiency and incompetence. "Only as a last resort" is a statement made by the large majority of voters whose economic circumstances currently allow them to consider other alternatives in a crisis.

3. Given the high levels of cynicism toward government solutions in general, how might the cynicism towards government solutions to family problems be reduced?

Government might do three things to improve its credibility:
1) **Place greater emphasis on state and local government** -- both have more credibility than the federal government on family issues; 2) **Acknowledge that the present system of programs and services isn't working and needs a major overhaul**, then get community and business leaders as well as members of the target population to help shape new, simpler systems; 3) **place more emphasis on programs and policies that build individual self-reliance.**

Objective #3 -- Evaluate several ideas and current program options in the area of family services.

1. How might the current system of family programs and services be changed or improved in order to accomplish real solutions?

Specific suggestions for improving family programs include:

- * Develop advisory boards that include representative proportions of program users;
- * Change the regulations to fit "common sense" situations;
- * Provide a way for more community groups to assist in the delivery of services;
- * Make users accountable for their behavior -- curtail additional welfare payments to women who continue to have children out of wedlock;
- * Reduce the number of programs to a more manageable size; increase support for those with a proven record while eliminating those with mixed or negative results.

2. If voters could create an ideal family program that they believe would help families and children faced with problems, what is it specifically that voters would like to see in such a program? What would they call it; what might be its objectives; how might it operate?

For most voters, the ideal program should focus on ways to bring families back together. Topics for such a program might include:

- * Family Unity
- * Self-esteem Training
- * Youth Guidance/Parenting Skills

Most of the names suggested for the ideal program used the word "family." For example:

- * All in Our Family
- * Forward with Families
- * Family Business

The specifics of the ideal program are nearly as diverse as the number of participants. Many favored an educational/counseling format where the family essentially become participants in learning parenting skills or problem solving as a family unit. Others preferred a format that emphasized a personal one-on-one support program for a single target family.

3. What is good and what is bad about the Foster Care Program? How far will voters go to keep children in the home rather than have them taken out?

Foster care receives mixed reviews. Most have heard horror stories about children placed in foster care homes. Several participants are products of foster care -- either placed as children or having served as foster care parents. Their personal experiences are not positive.

The prevailing view in all groups -- affluent or not, Black or White -- seeks first to keep the family together and avoid foster care. However, consensus exists that at the first provable sign of harmful physical or sexual abuse, a child should be removed from the home for their own safety. Verbal abuse is a more difficult question. Some feel it could be grounds for removing a child from the parents; most are reluctant absent proof of physical or sexual abuse. As strongly as voters want to see the family unit preserved, the thought of harm coming to a child is enough to elicit even stronger feelings of protection. Participants don't think that a child should be removed for poor housekeeping; poor control of verbal or physical abuse is another matter.

4. What is it that voters see as good and bad about some new ideas for specific programs to help families -- ideas such as "one-stop shop" or "family preservation" programs?

Keeping families together is a priority for all eleven groups. Not unexpectedly, programs designed to preserve the family are well received in all groups. The only challenge to their widespread acceptance comes from a few voters at both ends of the socio-economic continuum who question the number, qualification and dedication of those who become intensive counselors to families in crisis.

The one-stop shop is also received with considerable enthusiasm among the eleven groups. A large majority believe counseling which advises and directs families needing assistance to a broad range of services will save time and frustration as well as hasten the solution of the problems

that cause families to seek out social services in the first place. Most express reservations, however, about placing such a center directly in a school setting. The principal reasons for the reluctance is a fear that such a center will a) attract large numbers of people and produce a bothersome diversion from the business of education, and b) attract the kinds of people kids should avoid.

Objective #4 -- Capture the descriptive language used to depict the images associated with various solutions to family problems.

1. From among eleven short descriptive phrases that might be used to describe a family program, which are the most liked and which are the least liked?

Most liked:

- * Families First
- * Investment in the Family
- * Caring Communities
- * Family Preservation
- * Family Centered
- * Family Support

Least liked:

- * Children's Programming
- * Child Focused
- * Family Empowerment
- * Parent Support
- * Family Friendly

2. Where do voters get the language that they use to describe family programs and services as well as family situations? What media sources do they turn to? How are they most influenced by communication on family matters?

Voters get their language to describe family programs and services from other people -- family, co-workers, friends. Word-of-mouth is the surest method of communication. Within a community, business and religious leaders must be considered as excellent primary sources of family information. Many persons say they read or hear things on TV but don't pay attention until it reaches them from a significant other person.

II. FAMILIES FIRST

A. BETTER OR WORSE OFF TODAY?

As voters speak candidly about their experiences with and observations of family life today compared to several years ago, emotions run high. Feelings of frustration, anger and in some cases resignation are expressed. The complaint voiced most often focuses on financial stress, particularly both parents working outside the home.

"Financial pressures are causing families to lose interest in each other because they're spending so much time focusing on financial needs." (Male, Baltimore, MD)

" I think what's really hurt (the) family structurally is two working parents, no guidance or moral standards for their children. . . our economy these days, it used to be the opposite of an hour glass in terms of the middle class, we had a large middle class, now it's one extreme or the other and we are in an hour glass shape . . . " (Male, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

"I feel like a lot of us lost a lot of buying power . . . We didn't have a lot of money, but we didn't need a lot of money. The way the economy is today, everyone works. You work from sun up to sun down and you don't see each other very much." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

For many, economic pressures are exacerbated by the quick pace of a society stuck in the fast-forward position. Voters feel there is little time for each other and the perception of increasingly hostile neighborhoods with little or no sense of community seems to be widespread.

" It is like we grew up in the slow lane and our children are forced to grow up in the fast lane." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

" . . . They (children) spend the time with their friends. The children think they have to be constantly stimulated . . . When I was growing up, we didn't do something all the time. We never went out to eat. We ate a dinner every night around the table. You don't sit down and eat a meal around the table every night, you don't have the family time." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

" I remember how I used to be able to live in Detroit right in the city and I used to be able to go to my friend's house and just barely knock on the door and walk in and go hello, I'm here, let's play. Now, I send my future stepsons off to play, and I find out that this five year old boy who is playing with my five year old, has parents who are divorced because his father was a drug dealer and the mother is a topless dancer and I'm just like 'oh, my gosh, do I need to interview these families before I can let my children go and play?' (Female, Blue Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

For others, the problems of family life are compounded by a traditional value vacuum filled all too often with the bad things that happen in families. Divorce, the diminished importance of traditional family values, too much focus on monetary gain (i.e., a second car, a bigger house, material things for the children instead of quality time together) and moral decline are frequently identified as pressures more difficult to deal with today than several years ago.

" I think American families are in a crisis right now because the values are gone It's the stress, high stress that we bring into the home. I don't want to work, I'd love to stay home. I've been a nurse for nineteen years, I'd love to stay home." (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

"Divorce has to be a big factor. Can't keep families together when the parents can't stay together." (Male, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

" When I grew up my parents didn't have to worry about me getting wasted in school, someone blowing me away, me coming home hooked on cocaine. The worst (thing) was that I might start smoking but I think these are things that all of us worry about every day. Every waking moment, you don't know. That pressure is there for everybody to worry about." (Male, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

In every group, a few express the hope that awareness of the problems will mean change. (Positive attitudes come in the form of "things can't get any worse....so, maybe they'll get better.")

" it can't get any worse and people are realizing that maybe the dollar is not the reward in the final outcome it is staying home with the children, making sure they have parental guidance, help them be a better citizen, providing love and shelter, not just shelter and sending them off to school, or pre-school or day care. (Female, Yuppie, With Children, Orange County, CA)

"I think it's going to get better because I think that the average family such as perhaps my family is going to get tired of the way things are and they're going to start voting differently." (Male, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

"We are starting to look at issues that we should have faced long ago. (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

The more optimistic group members feel families are finally beginning to realize what they have been doing to themselves over the last several years. For them and people like them, the tide is beginning to turn. These voters are beginning to focus on values, on their children and on some of the problems facing families.

Across all groups, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic status, education or race, the sentiment generally is the same.....Families today are in trouble. The hope is, maybe things won't get any worse.

B. DESIRED CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

Voters would like to wave a magic wand and change some things about families. If they could they would eliminate some bad things and add some good things to family life. One bad thing they would like to see stop happening is poor education. This is mentioned in most groups by parents with school-age children.

"Lack of education, either with the parents or with the children not learning. The environment that they are in. They just can't learn at school." (Female, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

". Parents are depending on schools to do their teaching for their kids. . . Sex education is not for the school teachers to teach, it's for mom and dad to sit down and to talk to them . . . these kids are hungry for home environment . . . So if it's a bad crowd and they were the ones that let the kid in, they'll join because there's nothing at home for them. They're orbiting on their own. They're not orbiting as a family unit . . . So there can be a thousand programs out there but kids aren't receptive to it because they're hungry for structure in the family . . ." (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

Older, more conservative voters would like to see the family remove unhealthy outside influences, limit TV and improve discipline. Some senior citizens even blame today's problems on the permissiveness of the '60's.

" . . . What is hurting family structure is all these outside influences that are coming at us You have to control the things that are bombarding the family structure . . . " (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

" . . . families should stop using TV or other devices to pacify your children and start listening to them. . . ." (Male, Baltimore, MD)

"I think what's happening today is that parents are so permissive because it's easier than discipline. It takes time to discipline and to follow through . . . " (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

" . . . I heard somebody mention this a while ago, about parents that are almost afraid to spank their children because if they're reported, they'll come take your kids away. . . ." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"These people who are raising kids today were being raised in the '60's and that's where I think so much of it has come from... The drugs were being brought in at that time and the movements, I'm going to do it my way, I'm going to find myself, all this." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

Good things voters would like to add to the family often focus on values which provide structure and direction for the home. Participants in these groups sense the family, when stable, is the basis for a stable society.

Consensus exists on the merits of returning to or reinforcing more traditional values and lifestyles within the family. For many, turning away from traditional values is the reason for the breakup of the family; a return to these values may restore family unity. The overall perception is...Let's bring families back together!!

"I think the influence of the church and moral issues has a big influence. Over the years, these priorities have become less and less important to a lot of people and the two jobs, and that kind of lifestyle has become more important to people. They have lost perspective." (Female, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

" Material things don't really matter to me but I do think about the future of my children and giving them a good education . . . my main goal is to be able to give a future to our children. You can still maintain that - - the religion, teaching your children the values of life overall, self respect and everything else... " (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

"It is a moral issue. The breakdown of most families. You have a mother and father who want to work and maybe because they want two cars, they want a three-car garage, they want a house at the lake. I have never had those things. My family is very close. If mother and father are working and the kids are home by themselves, that is a chosen situation. . . " (Female, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

Almost never do voters look to government to add anything good to family life; rather the individual and the extended family unit must assume responsibility for bringing about positive changes. Community organizations and religious organizations play support roles in strengthening the family.

" You've got to get involved. If somebody doesn't make it happen, it's not going to happen. If you feel like you want a better neighborhood, do it yourself We can teach our children to make it better. We may not be able to do anything any more, it's ok the world is bad, but we can make it better" (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

"I think it's me, respecting myself and showing other kids coming to my house, showing my kids that, showing my friends that, showing everyone in the community that wherever I'm at it means not stealing, not throwing garbage down, it means doing everything that makes you proud of yourself and makes others proud of you and want to be around you." (Female, Blue Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"Part of what makes families hang together in some ways are the mutual experiences they have, there may be some tradition...those people are really tight because they have the same traditions and they understand each other..." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

Preventing divorce to strengthen families is a belief shared by some in the groups. Clearly, they feel divorce is one of the problems facing families and children today -- a problem made more difficult to deal with because of its widespread acceptability.

" . . . our generation says that you try to stay married and till death do you part. That's what's been instilled. However, our children that are growing up see it (divorce) all the time. They probably know very few children that are not from divorced families so for them it would be easy as 1-2-3. It's a given. It's not taboo." (Male, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

The needs of single mothers are addressed in terms of help from government and employers:

"...there needs to be more programs that help a single mother. It's too easy for single mothers to sit back and draw on welfare, and I'm at an in-between spot where you know it's like I don't really make enough money...You make too much money to qualify for programs, but you don't make enough to live comfortably. It would really be easy for me to just sit back." (Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

"...it would be nice if there were employers that would offer more flexible sort of work hours because I don't have my kids every other weekend and it's almost impossible for anybody to understand that (on a) particular weekend, I can't work...Four days out of the month I can't work and...they always want me to work and it would just help if they were more understanding. I do have a schedule set up and I'm limited, it's only four, a handful of days out of a month....(Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

III. SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

Voters respond with strong opinions when focusing on possible solutions to family problems. Several specific issues, concepts and programs are probed:

- * Response to a family in crisis
- * Knowledge of existing programs
- * The role of government and politicians
- * Program focus: On the children or parents
- * The creation of an ideal program
- * Improvements to existing programs

A. HELPING A FAMILY IN CRISIS

Groups were presented the following case study:

The father, an alcoholic, is out of a job; the wife is a terrible housekeeper and poor money manager. The four kids, clearly neglected, poorly dressed and poorly fed, are falling further and further behind in school. For the third time in the space of two weeks a late night shouting match brings police to the house. Each group addressed the question "What is best for the children and the parents under these circumstances?"

The message from voters based on solid group by group consensus whether working poor or affluent, is to do everything possible to keep the children in the home and keep the family together.

Finding help for the family in the form of counseling heads the list of "things to do" in most groups. In the more financially

secure, upper income groups, counseling help is expected to come from the professional community -- doctors, psychiatrists, clinics and so forth. Many voters in these groups thought the husband's former company would probably stand good for the insurance cost of such treatment. In middle income groups, the extended family or agencies within the community such as Alcoholics Anonymous got first call for counseling. Also, the church is high on the list of helpers. In the groups containing the working poor or welfare clients, the pattern of outreach for assistance is much the same as for the middle class with the addition of a few government programs.

Majorities in all groups believe the children should be included in the healing process with the parents. Further, they should receive separate counseling so they clearly understand they are not the cause of the problem. Most respondents agree that the primary counseling focus should be on the father's problems -- his lack of work and alcohol abuse. The feeling is that if you can help the father (or the parents together) the children will heal more quickly and totally.

There is overwhelming support for keeping the children in the home. In fact, a white collar worker in Detroit, MI, suggests that "the children should be left in the home and the parents be removed. After all, it's not the children's problem. When they are removed,

it gives them the feeling they are the ones who caused the problem and it also leaves the parents feeling the kids may have caused the problem." One idea suggests that "mobile foster parents" be brought into the home, while dad goes into rehabilitation and mom learns from a social worker. Interestingly, this idea is greeted with positive response from other group members.

The case study reinforces the general attitude that people need to help themselves first. One Baltimore, MD, woman said, "Expecting other people to step in and help us when we're not helping ourselves....I think we need to help ourselves before we look for the government to help us."

A few voters tried to get beyond treatment of the symptoms to the causes of the problem:

" You are dealing with the symptoms, not the cause which is lack of self-esteem, lack of confidence because he doesn't have a job and provide for his family, so he takes it out on the family."
(Female, Yuppie, With Children, Orange County, CA)

Some feel that only prolonged counseling will help change the roots of this family's esteem problem.

B. EXISTING FAMILY PROGRAMS

Voters describe the ways they would personally seek out assistance and resources to deal with family problems similar to the case study in different ways depending on their socio-economic environment.

In Figure 1, the pattern of outreach for family assistance described by upscale, white collar/professional, managerial voters is presented. In the first line of defense are professional resources such as doctors, psychiatrists, clinics and hospitals. For many in these affluent groups, the first move in an emotional/social crisis is to find professional help. The extended family unit and community based services (AA for example) are seen in supporting roles. Government resources fail to make the list of perceived resources. In fact, they are not mentioned at all unless raised by the moderator. Even then, government sponsored programs and services receive only grudging acceptance as a last resort option.

In Figures 2 and 3, the outreach patterns for middle income and the working poor are shown. Middle-income voters rely extensively on the resources of the extended family unit and the community as their first line of defense when a crisis strikes. Religious organizations and clergy blend with other community resources for

FIGURE 1
UPSCALE VOTERS: OUTREACH FOR FAMILY
ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

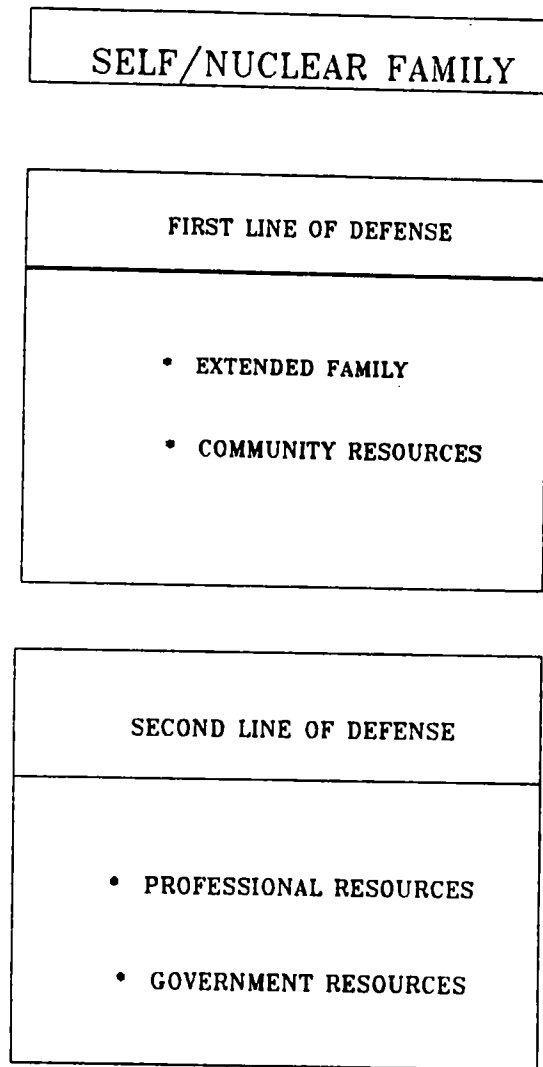
SELF/NUCLEAR FAMILY

FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE
• PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES • EXTENDED FAMILY • COMMUNITY RESOURCES

LAST RESORT
• GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Voters in mixed groups with personal incomes above \$60,000/Yr from Tampa, FL, and Orange County, CA, provide the anecdotal evidence for the above chart.

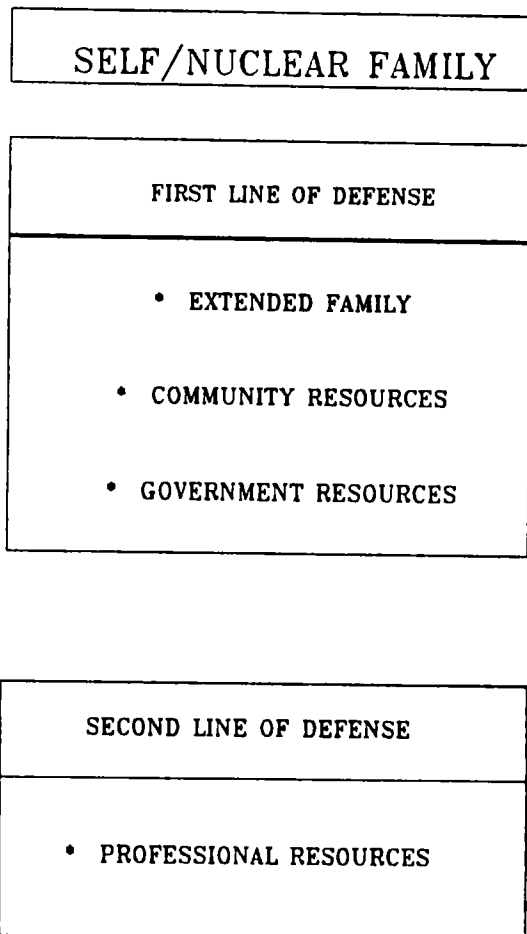
FIGURE 2
MID-SCALE VOTERS: OUTREACH FOR FAMILY
ASSISTANCE RESOURCES



Voters in mixed groups with personal incomes between \$30,000 and \$45,000/Yr from Baltimore, MD, Detroit, MI, and Kansas City, MO, provide the anecdotal evidence for the above chart.

FIGURE 3

LOWER-END VOTERS/THE WORKING POOR & OTHERS:
OUTREACH FOR FAMILY ASSISTANCE RESOURCES



Voters in a seniors' group in Tampa, FL, a Hispanic group in Houston, TX, a mixed rural, mid-western group with low incomes in Lawrence, KS, and a group of working poor and welfare clients in St. Louis, MO, provide the anecdotal evidence for the above chart

middle-income voters. Religious groups are also much more important for these voters. Professional and government resources are mentioned but mostly as second lines of defense. When government does surface, some stigma exists against seeking out public services but less so than among the affluent. Government programs are elevated from "only as a last resort" to "necessary but not desirable."

Among seniors, the working poor and welfare users, government programs are a fact of life. Public resources are often an important part of the first line of defense when a family crisis strikes. It would be a mistake to assume less affluent voters accept this situation without strong, negative feelings. Indeed, they express as much reluctance over accepting assistance from government resources as their more affluent cousins. Given the option, nearly all say they look first to extended family or community resources for help.

Consider the kinds of specific organizations voters mention as resources for the family in a time of crisis. The majority of examples are community sponsored, volunteer organizations. Top-of-mind responses focus on churches, scouts, YMCA, PTA, Big Brothers and Sisters, various athletic organizations and leagues, Latch-key kids, youth groups, vocational centers and support groups.

Very seldom are specific government programs mentioned. One affluent man from Orange County, CA, who has no children said:

"I don't have a lot of faith in the government. I have seen too many inaccuracies, too many practices from personal experience of people that I know. I think some of these (non-government) agencies would be much more capable of helping, and there is not a lot of red tape in these agencies." (Male, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

A few government programs, however, do surface and two of them in particular are applauded when identified. A woman from Baltimore, MD, pointed to Headstart as a "total program." She said:

". . . You start with the child to get them into that environment but the whole Headstart Program brings in the parents, they're a very important part of it and with health screening, dental screening, drug awareness so that brings into the whole focus of the family to give the child a "headstart." It has to involve the family. (Female, Baltimore, MD)

WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and social services are also mentioned. WIC is praised by a woman who had personally benefitted from its services.

"The health department has the WIC program for low income mothers that are pregnant or with pre-school children . . . it's working. I was on it for awhile and it helped a great deal." (Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

When brought to the attention of affluent voters in Orange County, one has this to say about social services:

"Social services shouldn't be overlooked at least from one aspect. If there is a troubled family, and they are saying, what do I do, what are my options, social services can sit down, they may not be able to do anything because they are overloaded, but they can give

them options. These are different roads you can look down. These are different areas that you might have a lot of problems and you tackle one at a time. Here is what you do. Here is where you can go." (Male, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

Still, when voters are asked where they would turn for help in trouble, whether emotional or financial, the majority indicate they would turn first to family and friends:

"Extended family, if it goes beyond your own little nucleus, people are reaching out to their parents, their uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters for help these days. More than they did in the '80's. It is not considered quite as embarrassing to ask for help because everyone knows that we are in a pretty bad economic situation." (Male, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

In summary, when families have problems, voters see themselves calling on other family members for help as well as neighborhood friends, churches, community-based organizations and professionals; then, as a last resort for most, turning to government as the final safety net.

C. ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND POLITICIANS

Government and politics added to a discussion of family problems stir the pot of feelings with considerable energy. Few are without strong opinion. The majority express anger, skepticism and a sense of betrayal over the way the government and elected leaders have used their tax dollars to solve family problems.

" . . . I'm tired of paying for everything. The middle income person gets to pay for everything. The rich people get all their little loopholes. They don't pay any taxes and the poor people don't have the taxes to pay. So what happens? More and more taxes come out of our paychecks. . . They say they're going to do all these wonderful good things and they never get to those things. They go for administration, or fancy cars, or all kinds of little perks. How much dribbles down to the people or the thing that it's really earmarked for?" (Male, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

"I think the reason everyone is not crazy about new taxes is because every time we turn around and pay more taxes we don't see any benefit from it." (Female, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

There is no shortage of cynicism among voters as they describe government's role.

" . . . first of all, if you want some money from the federal government, you'll get lost in the paperwork " (Male, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

"Actually (if) we're getting it (money) from the government, we're getting it from the moon because the government doesn't have any money . . . They've been in the red for the last 25 years. The guys in Washington can't deal with it. I have to deal with late notices and paying my bills on time. Those guys . . can't deal with it and yet it's my fault for voting those guys in. . . " (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

Still, a few voters in every group believe tax dollars should be spent on programs for the family, pointing out that some programs, in order to work, require government money.

"When you look at successful ones like Headstart and the economic levels of those families, they wouldn't work if the families had to fund it . . " (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

Most agree tax dollars will have to be spent on family programs to make them work, but think funds for family programs should be controlled on the local rather than the federal level:

" . . . I think these services are worthy of tax dollars . . . unfortunately when the government gets involved, there's a lot of inefficiencies in the way the monies are spent. I think that people get very frustrated with that. But I think with these type of services, they warrant tax dollars. " (Female, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

"If it is government money, I would like to see it more local government rather than federal government for sure. That way you can tailor it more to the things that apply to you." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

" . . . I would support state or local tax dollars because I want the money that I'm putting into the pot to go to the people that are in my state or in my neighborhood. I don't want it put into the federal pot to help the people in North Dakota." (Male, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

"I don't have a problem paying taxes and knowing that my tax dollars are going to help a lot of people . . . I have a big problem paying as much taxes to the federal government as I do because I think it is a very inept organization and I would feel a lot better paying a much higher percentage of my taxes to local and state agencies and knowing that the accountability would be higher at those levels if they had money to work with instead of the pittance they are doled out by the federal government . . . I just want to be able to feel that I'm a little bit more in control of what I'm handing out or what's being taken from me." (Female, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

Some respondents offered their own alternative to funding family programs. One suggestion, made by several respondents, shouldn't come as a surprise considering the focus groups were held during tax time, in mid-April. They suggest putting a check-off box for a voluntary contribution of \$1.00 to help support family programs on the federal income tax form, like the one-dollar check-off box

for Presidential campaigns.

While discussing the government and its role in family programs, group members were asked the following question: "How do you get your elected officials to pay more attention than just lip service to family programs?" The most frequent answer is....."Don't re-elect them if they fail to deliver!"

"If we vote for somebody that has a platform that says they are going to do these things and once they get elected they are not doing those things, I don't think they should be re-elected. I think we have been very remiss in our responsibility as voters in letting politicians get to this point. There was a time when I had faith in government, I don't have faith in government anymore . . . I know that they are running scared and I think they should be . . . I have talked to several people and they are saying that everyone who is an incumbent, I am voting out. I am real tempted to do that myself. I don't know if that is the answer, but I know that unless we do something, politicians will continue to promise us the world and give us nothing. (Female, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

"I think a lot of people are fed up and they are doing the opposite. They are saying, forget it, I am not going to vote. They are all a bunch of crooks, they all have their hands in the cookie jar, it is so corrupt. I don't know if people will get mad enough that they will realize that they do have a say, that things are going to change, but right now, I see people going the opposite direction." (Male, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

"I think the public has a great responsibility and we fall short of that responsibility and we need to start paying attention not to what they're saying, but what they're doing. We don't do that. We need to start holding them accountable with our votes and start voting them out if they do not perform to our expectations." (Female, Baltimore, MD)

"Necessary, but not effective" may summarize the majority view of group members assessing the role of government and politicians in

providing programs for children and families. It is also true, however, that government must continue to provide services to some and a safety net for all while politicians develop the policies that direct it. A majority of voters in these groups want to see both government and politicians become more accountable for their actions -- particularly their effectiveness. Most haven't given up hope for improvement. Some clearly have as this Hispanic voter demonstrates.

"If you put everything - - the drugs, the crime, everything, - - I would put it under one category, lack of faith. I have a lack of faith in my government, a lack of faith in the President, a lack of faith in the Mayor, a lack of faith in the Governor, I have a lack of faith in the police department. I have a lack of faith in the establishment to do what it's supposed to do . . ." (Male, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

D. PROGRAM FOCUS: PARENTS OR CHILDREN

Where should programs for the family place their emphasis -- on the children or the parents? Voters are most positive to programs which emphasize the total family. If forced to focus on one or the other, the focus should be on the parents. If you heal the parents, the children will be in better hands.

"If you're going to focus on one or the other, you should probably focus on the parents because the children use parents as their role models. And they're more likely to grow up the way their parents are." (Female, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

E. AN IDEAL PROGRAM

What would small groups of total strangers pull together in the matter of ten or twelve minutes when asked to create an ideal family program, one that they would use themselves. Such a program would have to be one that they believed would make a difference in the lives of families and children. An example of how this worked will be helpful. One of the most involved and excited groups to undertake this task was the blue collar workers in Detroit, MI. Here is their approach.

The first thing the group did was to set objectives.....

- * Establish Family Unity
- * Promote Self Esteem
- * Provide Education and Life Skills
- * Emphasize Youth Guidance with Early Intervention
- * Provide Vocational Guidance
- * Provide Twenty-four Hour Availability
- * Include Specialized Help Programs

Then, in a quick brain-storming session, programs to meet the above objectives were discussed:

- * Workshops focusing on communications
- * Diverse kinds of skill activities and training
- * Counseling with the focus on trust and respect
- * Personal support groups

- * Recreational activities
- * Parenting education

When asked what words they would use to describe their ideal program they mention the following:

- * Inspirational
- * Together
- * Positive
- * Us
- * Our Future
- * Unity

And, this is what they would call it if they gave it a name:

- * All in our Family
- * Tender Loving Care
- * Forward with Families
- * Family Business

Comments from other groups concerning an ideal program include:

"You would get together, have a family night" (Family, Blue Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

" You need to give the life skills to the children to educate them and also parenting education at some point before people have children" (Male, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"Caring. Unity. Nurturing. Unselfishness." (Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

In discussing the creation of an ideal family program, cultural genocide is addressed by the Hispanic group. There is some resentment among Hispanics; a feeling that the U.S. has forced the Latinos to give up their cultural heritage. This loss is identified as one of the reasons for the lack of family values in Hispanic neighborhoods. Hispanic group members believe in the strength of their cultural heritage; particularly in their traditional, family values. If the U.S. encourages the Hispanic culture to continue its traditions, perhaps it would have a positive influence on this country. They believe their culture practices include the concepts that society is now trying to re-invent. One respondent cites the example of caring for aging parents. *"We fought over who got to take care of our parents and grandparents when they got older, not.....who had to."* She further states that the grandparents help raise the children, not child care centers.

One Hispanic female in Houston, TX, says:

"Establish families around what God meant it to be. Dad is supposed to be the head of the house . . I'm not just talking about mom and children, I'm talking about dad and children . . ."

Interestingly, the re-introduction of religion or God into family life is a frequent suggestion for the ideal family program across nearly all groups. Another is encouraging families to work together and to teach pride and responsibility to their children.

Seniors are particularly strong on both topics.

A consensus among Seniors (Tampa, FL) is that the most important objective for their ideal program should be to teach parenting skills:

- * To strengthen the family by encouraging them to work together
- * To produce a good, well-balanced responsible citizen
- * To improve education
- * To re-introduce religion into family life

In fact, one of their favorite titles for the program is "Back To The Basics in Parenting."

"Produce ... an adult that is capable of being a good, adult citizen in our world. To give something back into the community. Well-balanced adult. Responsible." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"Create pride and respect . . . I think creating pride in something would give them a little sense of direction." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

Other comments focusing on the creation of this ideal program include:

" start with just basic needs, food and shelter. Medical care." (Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

"I would say create a certain type of program that makes the individual feel like they are actually earning . . . But let's train you here so when you're finished you go out and you earn yourself a job, give your children a better living environment and provide better for them for the future." (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

Every group mentions a desire to keep their ideal family program free from the problems that doggedly stick to government efforts.

Avoiding a bureaucracy is on most everyone's list

"Keep bureaucracy to a minimum by the time the program is created it has so much aggravation there that it no longer functions and then you can't get rid of all the bureaucrats. Don't let bureaucracy ever come into it." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

A few offered high-tech surrogates for counseling.

" an 800 number. . . people will tell you more over the phone and bare their soul and will listen over the phone if they know you can't see their face and you really don't know who they are, they will respond more to you than if they're looking at you eyeball to eyeball." (Male, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

F. IMPROVING EXISTING PROGRAMS

Voters offer a rich variety of changes to the operation of family programs -- particularly those run by the government. The system of government programs is not working as it should. Voters call for changes -- some as extreme as replacing the present system with community based programs; others less extreme look to improving the motivation of the participants by changing the policies that guide family programs and making participants more self reliant.

The real hardliners feel people won't start taking responsibility for themselves until the government programs are gone.

"Get rid of them. There are way too many programs . . . You have so many different programs . . . designed to take responsibility away from people. That is not the design but that is the ultimate result of it. The design is presumably to help out people in need, but it really happens that it takes all the responsibility away from people . . . All the programs you can eliminate, the better, especially government-sponsored programs." (Male, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

Others want the community and/or the church to be more involved.

" . . . I think church should be up there . . . It can give a bonding to the community that perhaps the government can't give. Also in my opinion if you look at, like the social welfare system, any time and I have dealt in that area it seems like they bring up a natural resentment in me. One case worker in particular made me feel as if just being a family member to someone who had a child removed, my sister had a child removed from the home, made me feel like there was something wrong with me . . . something horribly wrong with the whole family because one child was removed from her home. I think I resented the whole system that imposed some sort of better than thou, we're paying for this child now that it's in our system, you guys failed, or I don't know some sort of heavy shroud feeling to us and I really resented that and I feel from the church, the one that I attend particularly, when they help it doesn't seem like it's so foreboding. I just resent the government's heavy hand." (Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

The value of work needs to be enhanced according to a number of voters.

" . . . they need something to supplement their income (to) encourage them to go out and work. If they make more, you cut it back." (Male, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

"Work for your money." (Male, Yuppie, With Children, Orange County, CA)

Many voters look for changes in policy. Expanding the available feedback is a popular change among the less powerful, particularly by including people who understand the problems.

"Let people run these programs who have been through these programs. At least let there be a advisory board for people who got through these things, they can give them the feedback they need. You want to know how to make your programs more efficient....get down and listen to the people because they will tell you. They will tell you, the people who are running these programs are so out of touch . . . " (Female, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

Other voters are looking to make access to government programs more restrictive, the requirements more demanding:

"I'm sorry, it's a lot of young people that are on family services that are receiving checks and things and when the jobs were here a lot of them wouldn't get up off of their buns and go look for a job. This I disagree with. There were jobs here . . . Maybe I'm being cold but I just think it's wrong because you've got families, you've got it started off with the grandparents on welfare, the mother is and then the children and the children and it goes down from one generation to the other and I'm sorry I just don't agree with that. It should be now that's what the government should work on . . . But there should be programs for that where these people would get up and try and do something. . . . " (Female, Welfare/Working Class, St.Louis, MO)

"That is one of the reasons they are trying to pass a bill right now, saying if you have one child out of wedlock, that is fine, we will support that child, but if you have two, we are not going to increase (Support). My stepsister back in Michigan and she has children just to increase her welfare payments. I think she is up to six. Her last child will be five next year so she is planning on have another child out of wedlock because once they turn five...(and go into shock) it drops. So she is going to have another child next year on purpose. They all have different fathers. She beats them and abuses them and they go in and out of foster homes. She does it to get the money." (Female, Yuppie, With Children, Orange County, CA)

In every group one or two voters hold the view that government, despite its problems, is still a pretty good solution to a difficult problem.

" . . . It would be nice, an idealistic world to think that all these people in the community are going to come together and help all these needy families. That doesn't usually work that way. So I guess I feel strongly that the government should be involved because what if these people don't have somebody else to help them . . . " (Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

IV. FOSTER CARE AND FAMILY PRESERVATION

A good deal of time in each group was spent discussing how best to help children in bad situations. Foster care was one of the main topics addressed. Many comments centered around the decision to remove a child from the home.

Agreement across groups is nearly unanimous, everything must be done to keep families together, but if physical or sexual abuse can be shown, the child should be removed immediately.

(Remove the child) "Sexual abuse, the first time." (Male, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

" . . . It's amazing how they can cope with, not all of them, but some of them can... (If) It's a danger to their safety then I think they should be removed. I think definitely if it was a case of any kind of sexual abuse they should be removed. I think if it was a case of being beaten and they were in danger, they should be removed." (Female, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

A few voters are concerned about the identification of abuse and fear misjudging of a situation. It is generally agreed that overly aggressive social workers may remove children from homes unnecessarily. As a result, many voters are cautious about identifying how serious a situation must be before removing a child.

In some groups, participants had first-hand experience with foster care programs. They speak of the strong desire children have to be with parents despite the conditions in the home.

"I was a foster parent. I had two children, one six and one seven who were taken from their mother, (a single) parent. From my experience with these children, they did a lot of rebellious things because they wanted to be back with their mother, even though their mother abused them . . . they didn't want to stay with me. . .they really cared for their mother and they wanted to be with her. . ." (Female, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

" . . . I was a foster kid, not because of abuse or anything, my mother, she committed suicide and my father wasn't fit to take care of me, so I fell under social services and was a foster kid for awhile. Not once did they try to get you back to your family and that is really where you want to be. As a foster kid you want to be back with your people. . . You want a family, uncles, aunts, sisters and brothers . . .Not once has anyone mentioned family. That is what really counts." (Male, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

Most of the respondents recognize some serious problems with foster care, but they also believe it is needed.

"I think it's a great program if it works right." (Male, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"I know that some foster homes are very good because I know some people that are foster parents. When I was growing up, I went to a high school where we had a children's home close by. Those were the best kids that you ever want to meet. They were always clean, well dressed, they were well behaved, they got super care and it was run by the community, it wasn't the government. It was children from broken homes. It was run by donation." (Female, Rural/Farm Household, Lawrence, KS)

Some voters think a twist on the Foster Care Program might serve the interests of children even better.

"Leave the kids there and get rid of the parents. The kids are always the ones that are displaced, pulled out, moved around, carted off. Get rid of the parents. Make them go out. The kids whole nucleus, their whole world, their homes, they don't have their bed, they don't have their neighbors, their friends, their school. They're always the ones that are the victims all the time." (Female, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

FAMILY PRESERVATION

In an effort to provide needed services to children in families in crisis and at the same time keep families together, some social service agencies have developed an approach that devotes intense supervision, crisis intervention and regular visits into the home to teach problem-solving techniques to help families resolve their own problems. This approach was introduced into each group for discussion of its strengths and weaknesses.

Overall, strong majorities in each group believe the idea has merit:

"It is a good idea. Any time that you separate a family there is going to be some member of that family that is going to feel that they are the one that has to carry the blame out the door. . . Any time when you can keep the family together and have other members of the family witness. . . their lives becoming functional once again, I think it is going to help the family long term. For a taxpayer, that is a much better investment in my mind than the type of throw-away programs that we have right now." (Male, Yuppie, With Children, Orange County, CA)

"Bring somebody in to straighten out the family problems together. If it doesn't work, then put the children in foster homes but first try to keep the family together." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"I think that would help certain families. I think parenting is something that needs to be taught to a lot of people. . . if someone came in and taught them the basic skills, raise their self-esteem levels a little, praise them (a little). . . I think it might help. . . There are parts of Orange County where (for) two or three generations... the family unit is just gone, it is non existent." (Female, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

"I think going to the home visits are a good thing. You're teaching the family in their own environment so they're not walking out a building saying, 'Oh, we left our home behind.' It's being done right in their home so maybe it will last. But at the same time, someone's coming to them. I mean they can't call up and say 'I can't make it, my car is broken down.'" (Female, Blue Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"I think it sets a precedent for life that you have to understand that things are not always easy even though that's kind of a tough lesson for children to learn but you don't give up, you work things out and try." (Male, Baltimore, MD)

A few express some doubts about this approach. Some question the legal and ethical basis for such an undertaking. Others express concern over the quality of professional staff available to make concentrated home counseling work.

"Going into the home is an invasion of privacy and also taking away the home structure. . . ." (Male, Blue Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

" Who are you going to put into the atmosphere, a trained social worker, yes, but how trained? And when do they pull the plug on the program? When do they say, this is not working. . . That would be a great concern to me. How many families would each case worker have? What portion of their time? How would they divide their time?" (Male, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

Overall, however, the groups are open and favorable toward trying such a program.

V. WORDS AND IDEAS

Group members reviewed a variety of words and phrases that might be used to describe a family program. Four phrases surface as the most popular:

- * Families First -- *"This is where the whole thing starts, it sums it up." "It's what our country is all about, families."*
- * Investment in the Family -- *"It means being in for the long haul. You get a return on your investment."*
- * Caring Communities -- *"I would love to live in a caring community."*
- * Family Preservation -- *"It does make (the family) sound like an endangered species....I think in some ways it helps with the seriousness of the situation."*

Two other phrases that surface as positive but not always favorites include:

- * Family Centered
- * Family Support

Table 1 shows the average number of positive responses to each of the phrases tested. Average positive responses to eleven different phrases are shown. Following are top-of-mind reactions to the top six phrases:

TABLE 1
POSITIVE REACTION TO PROGRAM DESCRIPTIVE WORDS

Families First	6.4
Investment in the Family	6.1
Caring Communities	5.8
Family Preservation	5.7
Family Centered	5.4
Family Support	5.3
Family Friendly	2.7
Parent Support	2.1
Family Empowerment	2.0
Child Focused	1.9
Children's Programming	1.1

A. FAMILIES FIRST

Voters in every group like "Families First." It is an easy, light, catchy phrase that puts it all together for many.

"Because it just stressed that, it's catchy, it was family first . . ." (Female, Blue Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

". . . The family has to come first. Before anything else." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"Just from a public relations sense, it had a little ring to it." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"I know it's a program in this city. I believe it is. . . ." (Female, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"It sounds like a togetherness kind of thing." (Male, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

". . . I look at it like that's the starting point, families first." (Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

B. INVESTMENT IN THE FAMILY

These words hold an appeal to those interested in investments and finance. For example, this phrase is most mentioned by older, more established voters. Still, "Investment in the Family" is very popular across all groups.

"This would be great if it came from Washington and all of sudden it was all over TV, now we're going to start investing in the family programs. . . we invest in countries that hate us. . . why don't we invest in the family?" (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

"As a positive, I find it a means of being in for the long haul. A lot of times when you invest, you invest for the long haul not the short run. I find investment in the family is for the long haul." (Male, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"When you make investments, it's not to lose, it's to make things better and you're investing in your family . . . " (Male, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"Because I think if the family can get something invested together, . . . maybe things won't be so hard for the family. We could invest in it and then the family can work together and pull together. We need a goal, something to pull us together and the way things are now the family's pulling apart. We need a goal that the whole family can work together with." (Female, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

"You get a return on your investment." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"I think that will appeal to people who are always investing in something." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

". . . If parents look at the time they invest in their children when they're little as they would the investment of money. . . you have to sacrifice to invest money. . . " (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

C. CARING COMMUNITIES

There is a certain nostalgia associated with "caring communities." Those who like these words think of their own childhood defined by caring neighbors and friends in close-knit communities. Those most attached to "caring communities" seem to be younger family-age voters who fear their children will miss the community-based experiences they enjoyed.

". . . I remember when neighbors would help each other when there was a problem. I would like caring neighbors or neighborhoods. It would be nice to help somebody get a job, if someone needed food or whatever." (Female, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

"A lot of neighborhoods where there are a lot of children, there should be some interaction. Support structure. Keep an eye on your house. A network." (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

"I liked it because I would love to live in a caring community." (Female, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

D. FAMILY PRESERVATION

This phrase has particular appeal to those who think survival of the family is threatened by the stresses and strains of society.

". . . . Pulling it together, keeping it together, making it stay together or giving it the peanut butter to hold it all together."
(Male, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"It does make it sound like (an) endangered species, though. I think in some ways it helps with the seriousness of the situation."
(Female, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"Because if you preserve something, it just will be better because if you care about your family and say I'm going to make this work no matter what I have to do, it'll come out much better if you don't try to preserve it and just don't care. You're going to get results that you didn't care." (Female, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

E. FAMILY CENTERED

"Family centered" brings a message that is close to home and very personal.

"Implies a place as well as an activity." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"That's where your center is - - around the family." (Female, Blue Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

"When I hear family centered, it seems like happiness. . . ."
(Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

". . . . To me, family centered is when we get together, it's great. . . I see us doing things together. . . I see family centered as my kids enjoying their aunts and uncles. I think family centered also in the church, we get involved with other families. . . ." (Female, Farm/Rural Household, Lawrence, KS)

". . . . that's what you center everything on, based on your family and it all goes on down the line, morals and what have you."
(Male, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

"Family centered gives me the vision of the family having dinner at night together. . . " (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

F. FAMILY SUPPORT

"You are supporting the family, all around. Any kind of general problems, money, lack of jobs, alcohol or drug problem or any problems with the father, mother or children. Family support should encompass that." (Male, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

G. WORDS AND PHRASES TO AVOID

Politicians recognize the flipside of most image strengths are perceptual weaknesses in the minds of certain voters. In each group, a few participants react negatively to one or more of the phrases liked by the majority of their cohort companions. Still other phrases are disliked by the majority of voters in these groups. These phrases are to be avoided in the description of family programs.

The following five phrases are disliked by a majority in each group:

- * Children's Programming
- * Child Focused
- * Family Empowerment
- * Parent Support
- * Family Friendly

Illustrative comments on each follows:

*** CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING**

"It is a family program, not a children's program. I didn't like singling one unit, it should be global." (Male, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"I think 'programming' is a bad word." (Male, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"Like you are trying to brainwash." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"Saturday morning TV." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"It sounds like it's just for children and we're talking about family oriented." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"Sounds like mind control." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"Programming sounds like something for the parents to give somebody else to take care of them . . ." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

*** CHILD FOCUSED**

"Child focus bothers me because I think we're talking about family focused here, and I think that's part of the problem is that we are too child focused in many organizations." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

" . . . you turn them into little brats because your life revolved around them." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

" . . . When I thought of the word, I thought of something that's infantile . . ." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"Because it's just the child and not the whole family." (Female, Blue Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

* **FAMILY EMPOWERMENT**

" . . . I think of my dad. He was such a ruler . . . Power."
(Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

"Power is too strong, too severe." (Female, Hispanic,
Houston, TX)

"Didn't like power." (Female, Hispanic, Houston, TX)

"Empowerment would scare the hell out of me." (Female, Middle
Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"I thought it sounded a little too dictatorial. Who has the
power?" (Female, Middle Class, Kansas City, MO)

"I thought Family Empowerment was more radical. Arming them."
(Female, Yuppie, With Children, Orange County, CA)

* **PARENT SUPPORT**

" . . I think it doesn't have the emotional appeal some of
these other phrases have." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"Parents support sounds like it's only for the parents. It
just sounded limiting. If you aren't a parent, you can't
play." (Female, White Collar Worker, Detroit, MI)

* **FAMILY FRIENDLY**

Many in the groups said "Family Friendly" sounded like
instructions for a computer program -- "User Friendly."

H. COMMUNICATION FLOW

Figure 4 suggests a pattern of how voters hear things about family services and programs. The main source of ideas, words and phrases for dealing with families is the nuclear and extended family.

"The only thing I know is what my father told me about. I've seen it in the paper, but I never knew that much about it until he started talking about it." (Female, Baltimore, MD)

"Stayed within the family." (Female, Seniors Tampa, FL)

Beyond the family, voters turn to friends and influential others like clergy and professionals for information. Answers about sources of information are short and to the point: "My doctor."

"My pastor." "A counselor."

Mass media in the form of direct mail, print, radio and television is an ever-present but not necessarily effective source of ideas, words and phrases about families.

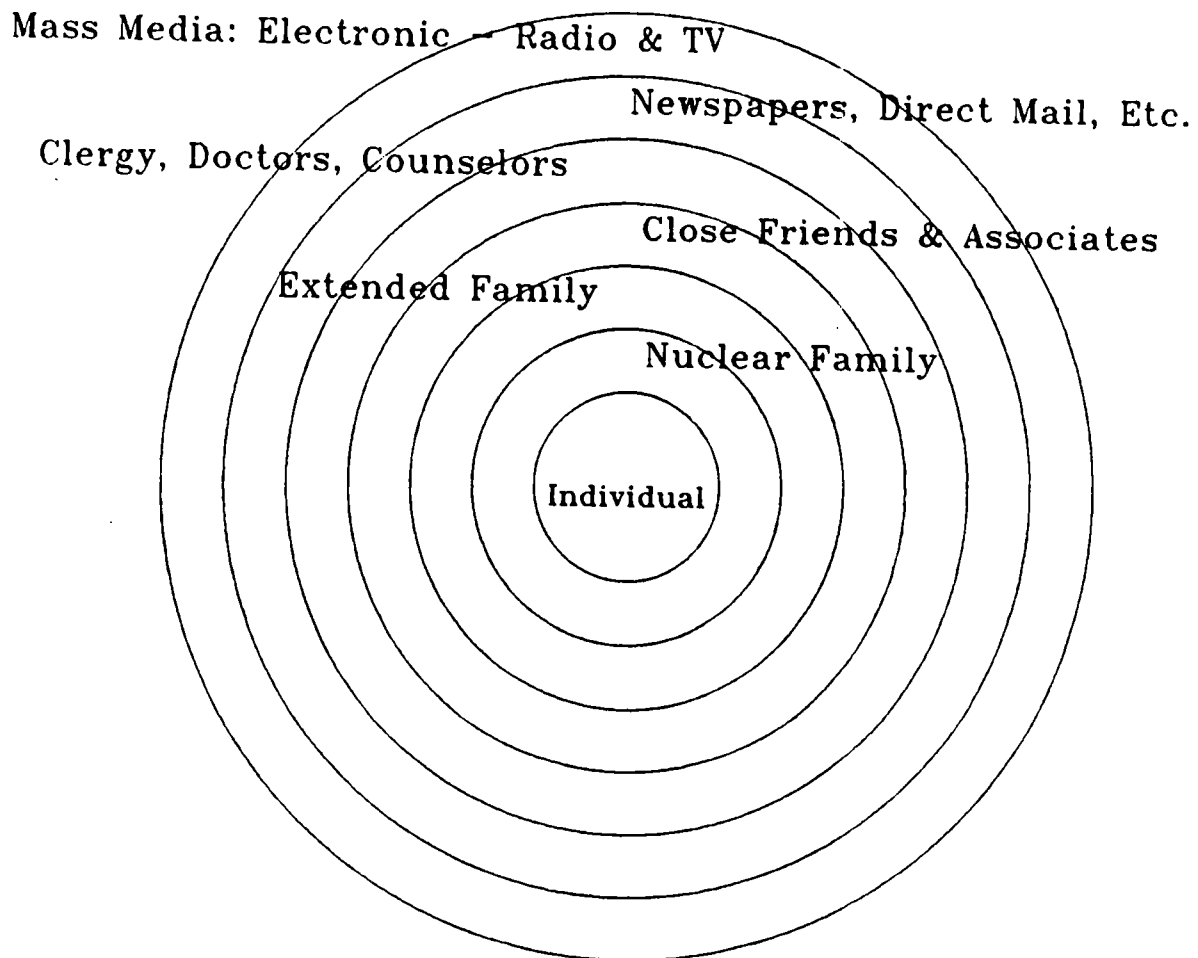
"Everybody watches television." (Female, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

"Not the mail, because people throw mail away without reading it." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

Several people commented on the value of an 800 number as a resource for family issues and a way to advertise and inform people about family programs.

FIGURE 4

CIRCLES OF COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS



I. THE ONE-STOP SHOP

Voters respond very positively to the concept of a one-stop shop. When asked to define a One-Stop Shop Resource Center for family services, there is no shortage of ideas and most of them accurately anticipate the correct description. Some even sound like they stole a look at the group leader's description:

"A job referral, retraining, day care, counseling center with a warm atmosphere and friendly, non-condescending manner to find out about services." (Male, Yuppie, With Children, Orange County, CA)

Most responses include perceptions of a simple system to gain access to services and counseling without bureaucratic red tape.

" the church should be a place that you could go for a one-stop shop resource for family services. You should be able to go to your minister and church for counseling, for almost anything which would include counseling for yourself and family. I think a church is a one-stop place that you could use." (Female, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

"I guess it would be like a hotline for families, a place where you can go for anything like counseling, referrals. If someone needs to see a doctor or whatever." (Female, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

"Basically a place where a person or a family could go to find out what resources were available and their options without the red tape and confusion of the governmental agencies now in use." (Female, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

Not everyone thinks that such a situation is possible to create.

" I hate to be the grinch but when you asked me that question, I couldn't think of no such place that exists like that. I think it would be wonderful, but I think it's unrealistic. There are so many things that (a) family would need. A family may need a home, they may need food, they may even need cash money. Where is one place going to be that you go and get all of those things?" (Male, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

After completing this exercise, the concept of a One-Stop Shop Resource Center was defined for the group. It was described as a coordinating service for families that combined programs from many different agencies like family drug abuse counseling, job training, primary healthcare and immunizations, etc. Participants were told that needs for these services would be identified at one location where people receive comprehensive referral services and some direct care.

Voters are nearly unanimous in their support of a one-stop shop -- it is a good and probably workable idea. However, other than being accessible to its users, opinion is diverse on where such a facility should be located. The following are some reactions to the question of location:

" Accessible to people without transportation. . . ." (Male, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

"Where they're needed most - - malls." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"I don't agree on a mall." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

On balance, a majority of group participants reject the notion of putting one-stop shops into the schools.

"I think it would be too disruptive to have it in school although I do like the idea of have several offices whether they break them up by school districts or whatever." (Female, Baltimore, MD)

"It might embarrass a child if they saw their mother going in a school maybe the parents wouldn't want to go in for fear of . . ."
" (Female, Yuppie, Without Children, Orange County, CA)

"First off, there are certain things children should not be exposed to." (Male, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"There's so much going on at our school, so many kids in one classroom that the teachers and the principal and all the assistants, I don't know unless they just set up a whole separate something, schools seem already overloaded and too busy. It seems there's just too many problems already to put it in the school."
(Female, Welfare/Working Class, St. Louis, MO)

"I think it's bad near the schools. Different types of people coming." (Female, Senior, Tampa, FL)

"Dangerous. You don't know who's walking in there." (Male, Seniors, Tampa, FL)

Voters appear reluctant to put one-stop shops into schools because:

- * The job of schools is to educate, one that is not being well performed; schools should not be forced to endure more distractions from their primary goal.
- * Locating one-stop shops in schools might lead to awkward situations for students and parents/users of the center.
- * It might be dangerous.

A few participants held contrary views; they support school locations for one-stop shops.

"I think that's excellent." (Female, Middle Class, New Resident, Tampa, FL)

"But a lot of the social issues revolve around children. The only way they are all covered is through the school. I don't now how else you can reach out to that segment." (Female, Yuppie, With Children, Orange County, CA)

VI. SUMMARY

American families are taking a perceptual nose-dive. As perceptions of the overall well-being of the family drops, the federal government and elected leaders are viewed as part of the problem, not the solution. The search for solutions relies on action much closer to home. Self-reliance, the help of extended family and community plus an economic turnaround offers the most sure cure for what ails the family. As a last resort, government programs, particularly state and local programs, should provide a safety net for those who need it.

Voters believe families are worse off than several years ago. Economic woes, divorce, lack of values and morals, both parents working, raising kids without adequate parenting skills, poor communication among family members, materialism, alcohol and drug abuse and the lack of tradition and faith in homes are frequently mentioned as driving forces which push the downturn in family conditions.

As respondents addressed the condition of families, frustration and anger are often present. Voters are looking for someone or something to blame. Asked for solutions voters have some interesting ideas and a sense..."That it can't get any worse, so maybe the tide is turning!!"

With very few exceptions, voters agree that community and church programs are more successful than most government-run services. Assuming personal responsibility is an important theme and, in fact, is discussed as an essential part of the solution to the problems facing families. Keeping the family together in times of crisis makes sense to the overwhelming majority of voters in this study.

Solutions often include a heavy dose of nostalgia for a simpler lifestyle, a return to traditional values or back to the basics of family life via parenting education and counseling for parents as well as children; helping families re-establish values; reducing divorce rates; the need for jobs and job security; and housing assistance. A return to God and church are also mentioned. One middle-class, Tampa, Florida, woman said, "You have to control the things that are bombarding the family structure."

Funding solutions to assist this process include user fees, government (without strings) corporate and business funding, tax deductible donations and fundraisers. Great diversity of opinion exists regarding the funding of family services and programs -- particularly the helpfulness of federal tax dollars.

Asked where they would turn for help if trouble strikes, group participants look first to themselves and their families. From

there, friends, community-based organizations and professionals serve as resources. As a last resort, voters turn to government programs.

Within the debate over the value of government services, Headstart, WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and the work of social service agencies receive some praise. A middle-class female from Kansas City said, "...I think these services are worthy of tax dollars..."

As for other programs, respondents express considerable doubt over how their tax dollars are spent. Voters believe state and local governments do a better job than the federal government. Still, government at all levels receive poor marks for management and efficiency.

With few exceptions, voters say in times of crisis every attempt should be made to keep children in the home while counseling the family. Programs designed to do that are praised by a strong majority of voters.

Response to a proposed program called a "One-Stop Shop" that would coordinate services for families and combine programs from many different agencies in one location is strongly favorable. Near unanimous agreement argues the one-stop shop concept would be a good idea. However, debate is more vigorous over where it should be

located: Malls, Schools, Community Centers, etc. Indeed, there is some concern over locating one-stop shops in schools because of the client population and the added burden to an already full plate of school activities.

Positive words and phrases which might be used to describe family programs and services that come out of the dialogue are: Families First, Investment in the Family, Caring Communities, Family Centered, Family Preservation, and Family Support.

Voters insist every effort must be made to preserve families, to find ways to restore their sense of well being; they look for families on a sounder economic footing and with simpler lifestyles. There is little reliance on government services to do this for the nation's families; better to trust extended family as well as community and church programs. Treat families in crisis as a unit. Help parents with parenting skills; keep children in the family unit until physical or sexual abuse is proven.

APPENDIX AA. The Research Design

An overview of the family issues focus group research design is presented in Table 2. Eleven groups of ten to eleven participants each were conducted in seven different states over a two-week period (April 13 to April 23, 1992). The sites ranged from Baltimore, Maryland, to Orange County, California; from Detroit, Michigan, to Houston, Texas.

A group was composed of both men and women -- a feature shared in all eleven groups. The remaining socio-economic and racial characteristics of each group varied depending on the type of audience sought.

Table 2 describes the kinds of voters in each of the eleven groups. Groups were held for seniors and Hispanics. Three groups were all White -- Lawrence, Kansas, a rural, low-income (less than \$30,000) group where most depended on farm income to some degree; Orange County, California, yuppies with no children and incomes of \$60,000 or more; and, Tampa, Florida, where all were new residents with high incomes (\$50,000 or more).

Each of the remaining six groups were racially mixed, African-American participants averaging between two and three per group. In St. Louis, Missouri, the discussion group was conducted in the

inner city among lower-income voters (incomes less than \$30,000); the majority of this group were receiving some form of welfare assistance. Of all groups, the members of this one were closest to the government system and many were actually using some of the family services under discussion. Least likely to be familiar with or use the services discussed, were the yuppies in Orange County who had no children. In this group, ten White adults assessed their perceptions, attitudes and opinions on the subject of families with very limited first-hand knowledge.

The groups were conducted by Dr. Vincent J. Breglio and Ms. Cathy Chamberlain of R/S/M. Each group lasted approximately one hour and forty-five minutes. An outline providing an index of the questions asked in each group is provided in Appendix A. Transcripts for each group are provided in Appendix B.

It must be remembered that one hundred and ten interviews represent only those who provided the information. The reader who generalizes beyond the limits of what is said does so at great risk.

TABLE 2
FAMILY ISSUES FOCUS GROUPS
RESEARCH DESIGN

SITE	SOCIO-ECONOMIC DESCRIPTION	RACIAL MIX
Baltimore, MD	Urban and suburban dwellers, lower and middle income	2 African Americans 8 White Americans
Detroit, MI	Blue collar workers, middle income \$30k-\$50k	8 White Americans 3 African Americans
Detroit, MI	White collar workers, middle income \$30k-\$50k	9 White Americans 2 African Americans
Tampa, FL	Seniors, 60+	10 White Americans 1 African American
Tampa, FL	New "south" residents, income \$50k+	11 White Americans
Houston, TX	Hispanics	11 Hispanic Americans
Lawrence, KS	Rural, some with farm income dependence, low family income, under \$30k	11 White Americans
Kansas City, MO	Upper middle class, income \$40k-\$70k	6 White Americans 4 African Americans
St. Louis, MO	Inner city poor/welfare clients, income under \$30k	7 African Americans 3 White Americans
Orange County, CA	Upper bracket yuppies, no children, income \$60k+	10 White Americans
Orange County, CA	Upper bracket yuppies, with children, income \$60k+	10 White Americans 1 African American



THE NEW HOPE PROJECT, INC.

623 North 35th Street • Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

Telephone: (414) 342-3338

Facsimile: (414) 342-4078

UPDATE ON THE NEW HOPE PROJECT

JULY 1, 1993

The New Hope Project is a three year demonstration project that will assess the effect of subsidizing work for individuals and families who are currently poor. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) has been selected as the evaluator.

Pre-Pilot Program

For the past fifteen months, New Hope has run a pre-pilot program with fifty two participants. The purpose was to test our procedures, and use the experience to make changes in the program or administration prior to moving to the full-scale pilot of 600 families.

This experience has been invaluable. We have generally found that the offer as it is now constituted seems to help the majority of the participants get into the labor market. [We are not, however, drawing conclusions about the offer for policy makers just on the basis of our pre-pilot.] When the current fifty two participants entered the New Hope Project, thirty four were receiving AFDC, twelve were receiving food stamps only, and four were receiving no help of any kind from the welfare system.

As of June 1993, forty one participants are working full time. Of these thirty workers have regular sector full time jobs, and eleven workers have community service jobs. One worker is working part-time. Six workers are unemployed and in full-time job search, and four participants are inactive.

In June, participants received wage supplements (based on May earnings of \$31,355) totalling \$10,730.

As a result of our experience in the pre-pilot, we are working on changes in two parts of the basic offer: the wage supplement and the adult crew of the community service jobs. More detail on this can be found below.

Progress toward Implementation

There are several task areas that must be completed before the New Hope Project can be implemented at the full-scale level. This report will now discuss progress in each area.

1. Program Changes/Improvements

a) **Re-structuring the wage supplement:** this effort has attempted to solve several problems at once, with greater success in the single-parent wage supplement than the two-parent wage supplement. Members of the National Advisory Board have worked closely with New Hope staff and board members to make these changes. The New Hope Board (and the State of Wisconsin) approved the single-parent wage supplement structure in April, and we are in the final stages of re-design with the two-parent families. We have included some of these tables with this report. We expect to make final decisions before September 1st, which would keep us on schedule for full-scale implementation.

b) **Modifying community service jobs:** we have had two types of community service jobs in the pre-pilot--youth corp through the Milwaukee Community Service Corp and individual placements in non-profit and government agencies. These have worked well for the most part, but we have identified a need for a Service Corp model that would work with adults over 23. The first trial of an adult crew took place in June, and did not prove to be viable. We had only 3 potential crew members, and that was not enough people to start a crew. One individual did get hired in the private sector, so the failure of the crew was not a total failure for the project or participant.

We have a number of design challenges ahead. The pre-pilot does not offer the number of participants necessary for a real trial, so we will use this time to plan. We can move to full-scale implementation of the Project without having an adult crew, but we will have a better design in place as a result of our recent experience.

2. Administrative Improvements

a) **Computerized data base:** at this time, all collection and verification of data is done manually. Before we can implement the full-scale project, we need to create a networked computer system and database. We have made significant progress since December on both hardware and software development.

Kaiser Group won the bid for developing our software, and has completed much of the programming. New Hope staff and Kaiser Group are working with MDRC to ensure that our database meets their needs in the evaluation. Software development should be

completed by August 1993.

PM Computer Systems won the bid for networking and hardware purchases. They are in the final stages of setting up the file server, and will be installing the system in July 1993.

b) **Accounting system:** we have computerized our monthly accounting system as of April 1993. Staff and fiscal committee are currently using automated system. Further improvements (necessary for full-scale implementation) will include linking the accounting software to the database software. This should be completed by September 1993.

c) **Re-writing the Operating Procedures Manual:** we are in the process of revising the manual to reflect the experience of the pre-pilot. The revision is about one-third complete, and should be ready by late September 1993.

3. Evaluation

a) **Contract with MDRC:** we signed the contract for the New Hope evaluation with MDRC in April 1993. The contract calls for two phases of work. The first, and much smaller, phase is the Design phase. This includes finalizing the design of the research plan; providing technical assistance on aspects of our program and budgeting process; coordinating the development of the database to ensure that it is compatible with the requirements of the evaluation; and helping to raise funds to get the Project implemented at full-scale. We have set a deadline of December 1993 to complete the first phase.

b) **Finalizing the research design:** MDRC staff will arrive in Milwaukee July 15th to continue work already begun on this area. It includes the plan for how to recruit and select the process using a random selection technique. At this time, we are exploring the possibility of building the pool of possible participants from a series of lists that could be used to represent all segments of the target neighborhoods that would be eligible to enter New Hope. We are also discussing the possibility of "over-sampling" single individuals.

MDRC and New Hope staff will be meeting with members of the New Hope Board and several state legislators on July 16th to present plans for the evaluation, and get feedback.

c) **Providing technical assistance:** MDRC and New Hope staff are working with National Advisory Board member Rob Hollister to finalize the wage supplement. MDRC staff have also reviewed the work of UWM professors who came up with a forecasting model to help us budget based on the 1990 census data of the target neighborhoods. There is more work to be done here, but they are satisfied with our current approach.

d) Coordinating the development of the database: we reported on this task above.

e) Helping to identify possible sources of funds: MDRC staff have had two extensive conference calls with New Hope staff to discuss national private foundations and federal funding. We are setting up joint meetings with Ford and Rockefeller for August.

4. Fundraising

a) Private fundraising: we have contracted with Mark Block and Associates to help raise the local private funds, with a target of \$2 million per year. They are now in the process of working with our Fundraising Committee members to do this. We are pursuing national private foundations, as well. The Mott Foundation visited in early June, and has invited a proposal. The Rockefeller Foundation remains interested, but with no specific timetable. We hope they will visit in the next few months.

b) State General Purpose Revenues: as of June 1993, the New Hope Project was included in the state's FY 93-95 budget for a total of \$1 million. We have also overcome the difficulties that had held up our \$550,000 from the FY 91-93 biennium. We signed our contract with the state in April 1993, and have received the support of Governor Thompson in this latest budget process.

c) Federal funding: New Hope funding was included in the House Reconciliation bill, but was stricken from the Senate bill on a technicality. We are trying to get back in through Conference committee. If we are unsuccessful, we will pursue either a stand-alone bill or a trailer bill that would include all the other items thrown out on the technicality. There is no opposition to New Hope that has surfaced; we are just at the mercy of a much larger process.

This funding is crucial to our ability to implement the full-scale project. If we are unsuccessful in the next few months, it will delay us until 1994. The Congressional delegation from Wisconsin is working hard to help us.

The Labor Department has invited us to submit a concept paper on funding for community service jobs and the wage supplement. This would be the precursor to a full proposal.

Based on our experience in the pre-pilot and struggling with the re-design of the wage supplement, we have drawn some conclusions about the need for changes in the tax code. If the Earned Income Tax Credit is to be significantly expanded, major revisions should be made in the tax laws to compensate for punishing marginal tax rates that occur as the EIC is phased out.