American DREAM
(Developing Research and Resources to Raise Economically-poor Americans into Middleclass)

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Introduction: Central Valley California, particularly Fresno, has the highest poverty rate in California, and one of the highest in the U.S. Over 26% of people in Fresno live in poverty (U.S. Census, 2011), and nearly 40% of children live in poverty. Its poor residents are among the most isolated of any American City (Century Foundation, 2015). Fresno also has the highest concentration of poverty. Over 51% of poor Blacks and over 43% of poor Latinos are concentrated in high poverty neighborhoods (Brookings Institutions, 2014; Century Foundation, 2015). Over a dozen school districts in the Central Valley California have poverty rates above 50%. Migrant farm workers and immigrants are believed to constitute a large section of the poor.

Background: Poverty in Central Valley California is not a new problem. In 1984, Fresno was ranked the least livable place in the U.S. (The Fresno Bee, 2015). Since then poverty has only increased, and continues to grow still today. However, despite its long history, very little has been done to stop this problem. No public or private efforts have demonstrated evidence of significantly reducing poverty in Fresno. Innovations in social development are urgently needed to break the cycle and continuous growth of poverty in the Central Valley California.

Methods: American DR3EAM (Developing Research and Resources to Raise Economically-poor Americans into Middleclass) project was developed in response to this problem. The goal of this project is to develop and test innovations in social development that can transform conventional thinking about poverty and move the scholarship forward to generating specific, targeted and evidence-based methods that can effectively uplift the poor into the middle class. This is a project in progress. This presentation will discuss current progress towards achieving this goal.