Project Title: The Effects of Community Violence on Children in St. Louis and Cape Town

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Project Summary

The primary objective of the project is to investigate the relationship between exposure to community violence and behavioral and psychological symptoms in a sample of approximately 250 children living in St. Louis, Missouri, and a sample of approximately 250 children living in the Cape Town, South Africa area. The design of the research is a survey, with regression analysis to test for the effects of community violence (and the effects of mediating and moderating variables) on psychological distress. The research is a collaborative project between the Department of Sociology and the School of Social Work at UM-St. Louis (Nancy Shields and Lois Pierce) and the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at UMC (Kathy Nadasen and Sharyn Spicer).

This research will ultimately provide data that would allow us to work with schools and social service agencies to design and implement programs to assist children with PTSD and other distress symptoms resulting from exposure to community violence. Because the study draws on our own and other scholarly work, we anticipate that joint scholarly publications and presentations on children and community violence will be other outcomes of the work. Due to the complexity of the project, we anticipate that data collection will conclude in May 2007, and the findings will be disseminated from June-December 2007.

UM-St. Louis Visit

In May of 2005, Kathy Nadasen from the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of the Western Cape visited the University of Missouri-St. Louis through the UMSAEP for the purpose of refining the research design and pretesting most of the instruments that will be used in the project. With the cooperation of Neighborhood Houses in St. Louis, 28 children were interviewed at St. James Center. Based on the feedback that was obtained from the children, the instruments have been revised extensively and are ready for another round of pretesting. Another purpose of her visit was to gain an understanding of the neighborhoods that will be involved in the research at the St. Louis location. We toured the neighborhoods where the three participating agencies are located.

A proposal to fund various aspects of the project had been submitted to the UM Research Board in February 2004. We received a generally positive review, with an invitation to “revise and resubmit” in October of 2005. Kathy Nadasen, Lois Piece, and Nancy Shields spent time together evaluating the reviewer’s comments, and making changes in the research design of the project. Kathy and Nancy also met with Richard Rosenfeld in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice and discussed community violence in St. Louis City. His observations were very helpful.
(also of CCJ) also provided statistics on community violence in St. Louis. The revised proposal is ready to be submitted.

Kathy Nadasen also met with other faculty from the Department of Sociology (George McCall and Harry Bash) and the Department of Anthropology (Sheilah Clarke-Ekong), in an attempt to further more research and teaching exchanges. She was introduced to a UM-St. Louis student (Susan Sanders) who plans to participate in the UMSAEP student exchange program in 2006. She also made use of UM-St. Louis’ extensive on-line data bases to conduct literature reviews for her own and her faculty’s on-going research in other areas.

Kathy Nadasen’s visit established a firm partnership for this cooperative research between UM-St. Louis and the University of the Western Cape. We all look forward to continuing to work together. We would like to thank the UMSAEP Committee for making this visit possible.