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Lecture at UCSB to Address Aggression and Delinquency Among Young Girls

At a lecture sponsored by the Center on Police Practices and Community (COPPAC) at UC Santa Barbara, Erin K. Willer of the University of Denver and Sergeant David Henderson of the Santa Barbara Police Department will discuss aggression and delinquency among young girls.

The lecture, titled "From Looks That Could Kill to Hands That Will: Mean Girls, Aggression, and Violence in Cliques and Gangs," will begin at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 4, at Mosher Alumni House. Co-sponsored by COPPAC and UCSB's Department of Communication, it is free and open to the public.

Willer, an assistant professor of communication studies at the University of Denver, will focus on social identity and resource control theories, both of which provide insight into why girls in particular communicate in an aggressive manner. They will address the negative and positive impacts of such behavior on girls, their relationships, and their communities. In addition, she and Henderson will offer suggestions for how researchers and law enforcement personnel can collaborate as they develop gang prevention and intervention strategies.

Willer is currently conducting research on how young people's individual and collective well-being are impacted by antisocial communication. She has written

extensively about social aggression within interpersonal and intergroup relationships among girls and women, and is the author of "From Looks That Could Kill to Hands That Will: Mean Girls, Aggression, and Violence in Cliques and Gangs." Her most recent work focuses on interventions aimed at helping middle-school girls communicate about -- and cope with -- social aggression.

Henderson, who has been with the Santa Barbara Police Department for 19 years, has served in a variety of areas, including the crisis negotiation response team, special weapons and tactics team, crime scene investigation, and as a detective working cases in narcotics, vice, and intelligence on organized crime. More recently, he has turned his attention to issues of gang violence in the Santa Barbara community.

"This second COPPAC lecture is a first public testament to the fact that the UCSB Center on Police Practices and Community is marshalling its many rich resources with law enforcement to tackle gang problems in Santa Barbara and other urban centers," said COPPAC director Howard Giles, professor of communication at UCSB, and a reserve lieutenant with the Santa Barbara Police Department. "Dr. Willer brings expertise in helping girls cope with and communicate about social aggression in ways that reduce very real negative consequences for them," he said. "Her insight provides hope for helping young women -- and men -- manage gang involvement."

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.