



University of the  
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## Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Reality Unraveled Through Camera Lenses: Environment as a Key Issue Surrounding Infant Mortality in St. Louis City.

- **Format:**

Written paper / Presentation (pre-recorded)

- **Author(s) Name:**

Vindhya Kakarla, MBBS; Anne Niyigena, BS; Pamela K. Xaverius, PhD, MBA; Deborah Kiel, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC; Edie Barnard, MA.

- **University or Company Affiliation:**

Saint Louis University - College for Public Health and Social Justice.

- **Abstract (300 words):**

**Background:** Too many babies are dying in St. Louis City before their first birthday, with the odds of death for an African American baby being more than three times the odds of death for a white baby before their first birthday. Moreover, St. Louis City presents inadequate opportunities to health, because of high unemployment, poverty and crime rates, and low high school graduation rates. While evidence exist that access to prenatal care, maternal behaviors, and chronic conditions affect the survival of newborns, environmental influences are less explored. The voices of women who live the experience of infant death can provide a more integrated approach in considering environmental influences on infant mortality.

**Objective:** To explore women's perspectives on the impact of environment on infant mortality in St. Louis City using Photovoice methodology.

**Methods:** We applied photovoice methodology to collect photos, narratives, and themes. Ten women from St. Louis City were recruited and trained on how to take photographs. Pictures and narratives were collected via mail/a secret Facebook page. We conducted face-to-face sessions to identify overarching themes of the pictures. A photo exhibition was developed to convey the stories of these women regarding their experiences behind infant mortality.

**Results:** Women provided forty-six pictures portraying the role of environment in the immoderate infant deaths in their communities. Five recurrent subthemes emerged from the photos: housing, physical environment, economy, community safety and community engagement.

**Conclusion:** The environment in which these women live is confronted with low perceived safety, dilapidated housing, disinvestment and disordered physical environment.

**Public Health Implication:** Stories told as a part of this project may guide policy-making processes aimed at improving infant health outcomes in St Louis city. Furthermore, our research offers insights into probable risk factors behind infant death and survival in urban area of St Louis city.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Dr. Pamela K. Xaverius is an associate professor of epidemiology at Saint Louis University, College for Public Health and Social Justice (SLU-CPHSJ) and director of the maternal and child health (MCH) concentration in the Masters in Public Health program. She has a doctorate in child psychology and Masters in Business Administration, concentrating in health services. She teaches courses in MCH epidemiology, social determinants of health, and advanced research methods. As the founding MCH epidemiologist for Missouri and a former NIH Health Disparity scholar, her work in preconception and prenatal care has been funded by the local chapter of the March of Dimes (MOD), Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, St. Louis Regional Health Commission, Missouri Foundation for Health, Institute of Clinical and Translational Sciences, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.