

Faculty Name Williams, Roman

Dept. Sociology

Project Title Faith Through the Lens: Photovoice and Interfaith Dialogue

Project Abstract Photovoice is a participatory-action research technique combines amateur photography and small group dialogue using participants' photos as a means to foster critical discussions about shared concerns and to pursue social change. A typical project culminates in a public exhibition, which opens with an event featuring participants who describe their photographs to invited guests. The goal of the exhibition is to give voice to the project outcomes and participants through photography. The Interfaith Photovoice (IFPV) initiative is the first project to systematically use and study the effectiveness of photovoice in interfaith dialogue (IRB No. 18-001).

In 2018, the project team, which comprises two sociologists of religion and three clergy (two pastors and an imam), will facilitate photovoice in four locations: Richmond, Virginia (spring); Grand Rapids (summer); Fredericton, New Brunswick (early fall); and New York City (late fall). In each location, a member of the IFPV team will facilitate photovoice sessions with a group of 20 people with a fairly even split of Muslims and Christians. Photovoice participants will use their own mobile phones or digital cameras to make photographs, which will be submitted electronically to each local facilitator and printed for use during the subsequent meeting. In the first photovoice meeting, a local facilitator will explain the project, distribute/explain/collect informed consent materials, and conduct a brief training about ethical photography. Participants will leave with a photography assignment. During subsequent meetings, participants will be guided through a discussion of their images using the S.H.O.W.E.D. technique popular in photovoice:

S - What do you See?

H - What is actually Happening here? What is the unseen story behind the photo?

O - What does the photo say about life in your cOmmunity?

W - Why are things this Way?

E - How could this photo Explain your perspective?

D - What can/should be Done?

After a series of 3-5 meetings in which their ideas are refined in this way, participants select their best photographs and create a caption/description. Their images will be enlarged, framed, and hung for public viewing. A public, gallery-like opening night event will include participants briefly discussing their images; likewise, images may be physically or electronically displayed for several weeks or months in a gallery, congregation, or partner organization.

During photovoice meetings researchers and facilitators will collect the materials participants generate and after each meeting they will also write descriptive reports (ethnographic fieldnotes) and document the event photographically. The project director (R. Williams) will visit each site at the time of their opening night event, and will interview 4-6 participants in each location to explore their experiences in the photovoice project. All interviews will be semi-structured, incorporate photographs from the location's photovoice project, and audio-recorded. The audio recording will be transcribed for analysis by a research assistant. Reports, photographs, and interviews will be analyzed by applying an open coding strategy facilitated by qualitative data analysis software. Of particular interest will be understanding the effectiveness of photovoice in interfaith dialogue, the impact of public engagement events, and best practices for advocacy/interfaith work using photovoice.

Project Outcome 1. An immediate outcome will be contributing to the completion of a book chapter for the forthcoming volume, Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion, Volume 10: Interreligious Dialogue: From Religion to Geopolitics. While the McGregor Fellow will not be a co-author, they will be acknowledged in the piece.

2. The McGregor Fellow will gain exposure to and experience in facilitating photovoice and interfaith dialogue.

3. By working on two literature reviews (interfaith dialogue and photovoice), the McGregor Fellow will help lay the groundwork for future writing and will be acknowledged in any writing that draws upon their work.

4. Ultimately, this project aspires to build relationships between Muslims and Christians in a way that promotes understanding, empathy, and trust.