Understanding and Harnessing Trust in Faith Spaces to Address Structural Inequalities

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ABSTRACT

Structural inequality and the subsequent negative outcomes of it for marginalized and minoritized populations is a common problem facing mankind. People across the world suffer negative life outcomes as a result of disparities in wealth, resources and access to services and provision. This paper builds on the concept of dialogic spatiality to enhance the understanding, and harnessing, of participant trust in faith spaces as vehicle for addressing structural inequalities. The trust that participants place in the institutions and individuals facilitating dialogue is an under-researched factor and one which impacts both participation in it and the final outcomes of it. The findings of this research are drawn from studies of faith-based social action programmes in the United Kingdom. These aimed to address structural inequalities around either health or integration for communities which have been traditionally termed as "hard to reach". Findings show that participant perceptions around the shared values of faith organisations, the hyper-local locations of faith spaces and pre-existing social and community networks are all key factors participants trusting and engaging with interventions in faith spaces in a way that they would not do in secular or statutory spaces. This paper makes an important contribution to academic knowledge and dialogical practice by using frameworks of organisational and interpersonal trust to further understanding why minoritized groups choose to or not to engage in dialogue. Practical recommendations are made as to how best plan meaningful dialogue to engage fully with minoritized people who are at risk of exclusion and structural inequality.