Title: Interfaith Dialogue for Community Building: A Pilot Investigation on Community Stakeholder’s Perceptions of Christian–Muslim Dialogue

Advisor: Dr. Julia E. Whitcavitch-DeVoy, Ph.D., Counseling, Developmental, and Educational Psychology Faculty at the Lynch School of Education

Previous research argues that regular engagement between different religious and faith groups is important and builds peaceful coexistence. This pilot investigation explores the relevance of interfaith dialogue, specifically Christian–Muslim dialogue, in community development and improvement. This sample included community stakeholders, ages 23–approx. 65 (n=9; 4 Christians, 4 Muslims, 1 Other). Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually. Considering the level of globalization and immigration over the past century, the religious and cultural landscape of America is becoming increasingly diverse and interfaith dialogue is critical to improving the human condition. Findings for the pilot study suggest (a) respectful and genuine dialogue between Christians and Muslims can impact the growth of one’s personal faith, character and understanding of others, (b) good communities generally have authentic interpersonal relations and members who are aware of each other and (c) dialogue and cooperation needs to occur on all levels of society, especially at the grassroots, for progress in community integration and advocacy. Given these findings, interfaith dialogue is relevant and beneficial to communities. Further research should be conducted to investigate other manners in which interfaith dialogue can positively impact community development.