

# Developing a Photographic Essay - Making a Public Statement About a Social Problem or Issue

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## SUGGESTED CITATION

*When using resources from TRAILS, please include a clear and legible citation*

Jenkins, Carol. 2020. "Developing a Photographic Essay - Making a Public Statement About a Social Problem or Issue". *TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology*, October. Washington DC: American Sociological Association.  
<https://trails.asanet.org/article/view/developing-a-photographic-essay-making-a-public>.

## Abstract

Each student will develop a photographic essay of a social problem important to the student (a personal, reflective, integrative public statement about a social problem). Essay development enables students to demonstrate the intersection of personal problems and public structural contexts (C.W. Mills 1959 - "Sociological Imagination"), then propose resolutions to those problems. Using five to eight photographs the essay will reflect the social problem under consideration (first image), demonstrate the extent of the problem/issue (intermediary images), and provide a statement of individual and societal resolution (last two images). Photos must be presented and framed in such a way that they "read" like an essay. Sample distinguished projects are attached for viewing.

## Details

**Subject Areas:** Introduction to Sociology/Social Problems

**Resource Types:** Assessment

**Class Levels:** Any Level

**Class Sizes:** Any

## Usage Notes

Photo essays are developed outside of the classroom. In-class "Gallery Walk" estimated time: 20 minutes. Selected essays for voluntary in-class presentation estimated time: 30 minutes. Recommendation: have students discuss the "topic" with the instructor. Ex: "poverty" is too broad; encourage student to focus on a particular area of "poverty". Internet image downloads are permitted but must not violate copyright laws. Sources must be cited.

## Learning Goals and Assessments

### LEARNING GOALS

... to develop, strengthen and apply the student's sociological imagination to a social problem and/or issue

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Objective-1: using 5-8 photographs the essay will (1) reflect the social problem under consideration (first image), (2) demonstrate the extent of the problem (intermediary images), and (3) provide a statement of resolution (last two images).

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Objective-2 ... to demonstrate the extent to which students can use the sociological perspective to understand the relationship between personal problems and social issues (C.W.Mills 1959) a reflection component is included.

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### ASSESSMENTS

Objective-1: an assessment rubric has been developed to systematically evaluate photo essays with expected success rates exceeding 70 percent.

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Objective-2 selected reflection questions are included with expected success rates exceeding 70 percent.

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## Resource Files

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