2017

The Human Library Project

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Introduction
The Human Library Project was founded seventeen years ago as a way to protest youth violence. Over the years, it has evolved into an event in which people who represent stereotypes, biases, etc. have conversations with people to talk through these issues as well as current events. My goal was to get members of the local URI community together to have these conversations.

Methods
Two types of participants were studied. The “books” who represented a stereotype, and “readers”, who checked out the book and had a conversation. “Books” were chosen based upon their ability to participate during the day of the event. “Readers” were not chosen, they were simply participants who showed up during the day of the event to participate. To gauge the impact the event had, I had both the “books” and “readers” complete before and after questions (before the conversation and after the conversation). The “books” were the main group that we used to gather the level of impact from, and so they filled out an additional form meant to observe their reflections.

Results

Books’ feedback: “This event exceeded my expectations. I was able to learn about another person’s life and interests”.

- “The most meaningful part was having that free time to connect so quickly and so rawly with strangers. I learned that I am more interested in learning from others than them learning about me. Even though I was a book, I was more curious about the people who wanted to read me.”

“I don’t know if I impacted everyone I spoke with, but I know for certain I impacted one. She loved our conversation and we felt it was fate bringing us together that day.”

“This event exceeded my expectations. I had a long, meaningful conversation with a stranger and it felt good to learn from each other.”

“I think this experience will help me better communicate with individuals about pressing issues. I think it is important to help individuals have a space to talk about important issues. If this event were to happen again, I would definitely attend.”

Readers’ feedback: “I think [this event] reinforces how everyone has a story to tell and how it’s important to always remember that.”

“I think [this event] was a nice reminder to learn about others, ask questions, and have discussions.”

“(This event] will probably make me have a better opinion of people and better judgments in general.”

Discussion
My goals for this project:
• Have participants be impacted
• Their conversations serve as an opportunity for learning about themselves or others.
• The results clearly demonstrate that the participants were affected by the event
• Each participant, whether they were a “book” or a reader” had a positive experience and had positive reflections about the event.
• This demonstrates that events like these are extremely important to have and are very beneficial and impactful to people

Next Steps
• Hopefully, this event serves as a template for future events
• The reflections from participants will be used to formulate a paper analyzing the discussions that took place

Acknowledgements
I’d like to thank Dr. Bryan Dewsbury, my honors project advisor, for agreeing to sponsor my project, and I’d also like to thank the Honors Program for giving me the resources to complete this project.
Also, a special thanks to my participants: you made this project better than I could have imagined!